



12 SWISS BOOKS

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12 SWISS BOOKS

- 4 **THOSE WONDERFUL YEARS: THE DAYS WHEN WE
 TRAVELLED THE WORLD / WUNDERBARE JAHRE.
 ALS WIR NOCH DIE WELT BEREISTEN**
Sibylle Berg
- 6 **NEW DAYS OF DUST / NUOVI GIORNI DI POLVERE**
Yari Bernasconi
- 8 **GOTTHARD / GOTTHARD**
Zora del Buono
- 10 **YESTERDAY'S LIES, TODAY'S LIES /**
LÜGEN VON GESTERN UND HEUTE
Ursula Fricker
- 12 **A NOBODY / EIN NIEMAND**
Daniel Goetsch
- 14 **THE STAKE / DER STACHEL**
Markus Kirchhofer
-
- 16 MAX EASTERMAN INTERVIEWS
 PATRICK SPOTTISWOODE
- 19 COLUMN: HARTMUT FÄHNDRICH
-
- 20 **WIDOW WITH CHILD / LA VEUVE À L'ENFANT**
Daniel Maggetti
- 22 **TWO COUPLES, NO SEX, IN THE SPOOKY WOODS /**
ZWEI PAARE OHNE SEX IM WALDVIERTEL
Andres Müry
- 24 **ORGANISING THE VOID /**
L'ORDONNANCE RESPECTUEUSE DU VIDE
Marie-Jeanne Urech
- 26 **THE GREEK WALL / LE MUR GREC**
Nicolas Verdan
- 28 **A SUMMER'S TALE / KREUZFAHRT**
Mireille Zindel
- 30 **THE CLOUDS WERE FLUFFY AND WHITE AND**
DRIFTED ACROSS THE SKY / DIE WOLKEN WAREN
GROSS UND WEISS UND ZOGEN DA OBEN HIN
Matthias Zschokke
-

- 32 6 MORE UNMISSABLE SWISS BOOKS
 33 THE COLLECTED POEMS OF GIORGIO ORELLI
 34 INFO & NEWS

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends of Literature, dear Publishers and Translators

If you are among those who continually long to head for the sunny south, then you will certainly know the place I'm talking about: the Gotthard Tunnel. It links the German- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland. After seventeen years under construction, a new tunnel under this legendary mountain was opened in 2016, making the subterranean trip by train now 57 kilometres long, and cutting down the journey time from Zürich to Milan to little more than two and a half hours.

So for once I won't use the hackneyed metaphor 'bridge-builder' to praise the profession of translator. This time, 'tunnel-borer' will be pressed into service: great ingenuity, enormous stamina and almost unending patience are what drive both tunnelers and translators to bore their way into the real, and the textual, rock. There are days, when giant boulders are hewn out; other days, when only a few centimetres of progress are made, if that.

And as they dig deeper and deeper, the mountain reveals to their practised eye its spectacular inner life, layer by layer. Indeed, they blast the mountain, give it some hard knocks – but then, if the translator and the tunneller are good at their job, the mountain withstands their onslaughts and their work can endure. It's a case of 'joining-up' – canton Uri with canton Ticino, for example, or German with Italian. And when the light appears at the end of the tunnel, the patron saint of translators, Jerome, and the patron saint of tunnellers, Barbara, will for certain rejoice together.

In this issue of *12 Swiss Books*, we are once again recommending new books for translation. 2016 has been a rich and diverse year, and indeed the Gotthard Tunnel plays a role in our selection. In order to give you an even greater opportunity to tunnel deeper into our twelve books, this year we've prepared longer extracts for you to read, in addition to the short samples here in the magazine. You'll find them on our new website: www.12swissbooks.ch.

Happy tunnelling everyone! Enjoy those precious discoveries on your journey and enjoy the literary lights at the end of the tunnel!

For the editorial team,

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

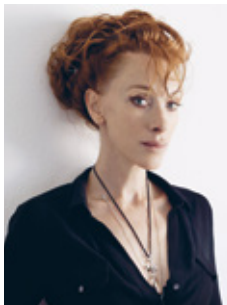
THOSE WONDERFUL YEARS: THE DAYS WHEN WE TRAVELLED THE WORLD

WUNDERBARE JAHRE. ALS WIR NOCH DIE WELT BEREISTEN

GENRE Essays, LANGUAGE German



"Nobody understands better than Sybille Berg the perversion of our global aspirations. *Those Wonderful Years* is the logbook of a journey into cultural catastrophe." PHILIPPE THEISOHN



SIBYLLE BERG was born in Weimar, in the former German Democratic Republic. Today she divides her time between Tel Aviv and Zürich, where she works as a playwright and author. She has written fifteen novels, seventeen stage plays and innumerable essays. She's been translated into thirty-four languages. Hanser Verlag has published *Der Mann schläft* (2009), *Vielen Dank für das Leben* (2012), *Wie halte ich das nur alles aus?* (2013) and most recently *Der Tag, an dem meine Frau einen Mann fand* (2015).

PHOTO © Katharina Lütcher

Paris, Vienna, Tel Aviv, Thailand... places we long to go to and to explore, because we regard them as beautiful, romantic, exotic, perhaps even a little bit dangerous. But – are they still? Sibylle Berg's view is: "no". The days when we longed to escape are gone, she says, and the world of the 21st century has become somewhere we wish to escape from. Her pen is sharp and caustic, but also funny and discerning, as she writes how travel is not what it once was. Beaches are battlegrounds, cafés are bombing zones, cruise ships are "environmental killing fields" where "personal space is portion-controlled". These essays and columns, written over the past twenty years and revised and expanded for this book, are Berg's very personal travelogues. And she's no armchair traveller: she's been there, done that and tells us about it soberly, idealising nothing, but never without emotion. This is a highly intellectual and readable "anti-guidebook".

TITLE Wunderbare Jahre. Als wir noch die Welt bereisten

PUBLISHER Hanser, Munich

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WUNDERBARE JAHRE. ALS WIR NOCH DIE WELT BEREISTEN
SIBYLLE BERG

German original (p. 2)

Wie seltsam schnell und doch verzögert in der Wahrnehmung sich die Welt verändert. Hat. In den Synapsen stecken immer noch Bilder von früher. Von reizenden Reisen. Da einem, außer einer Darmgrippe, nichts passieren konnte. Entspannt fuhr man nach Griechenland, durchquerte die Wüste Gobi, hockte im Jemen und beobachtete Menschen beim Leben und reiste nach Paris. Cafés unter grünen Platanen, immer schmerzende Füße vom zu vielen Laufen, Endorphine. Das ist gespeichert, das macht ein Ziehen in der Brust, und das überlagert die realen Bilder. Die Metro mit mir darin, die von ungefähr dreißig gewaltberauschten jungen Männern terrorisiert wird. Die Straßen voller obdachloser alter Menschen, die verspannten Gesichter der angeblich so entspannten Pariserinnen, die mit einem Lächeln Kinder und Job meistern. Die gibt es nicht. Es gibt nur gestresste Frauen und Männer, schlecht bezahlt in Verkehrsmitteln gedrängt, in beengtem Wohnraum, verstopften Straßen, sich durch Touristen quälend, die Baguettefotos machen. Der Gestank von Urin auf den Straßen, der Stau auf den Straßen. Und neu im Programm: Die Terroranschläge, die Unsicherheit, Romas auf kleinen Freiflächen zwischen den Autobahnen zusammengedrückt, und ab in den Tunnel. Ah, der tolle Tunnel durch das Wasser nach England! Gab es da schon ein Attentat, oder sind es nur die Flüchtlinge, die jetzt täglich versuchen nach England zu kommen? Ja, du Europäer, da nimmst dir die Welt deine behagliche Tunneltour weg, nimmst dir dein Kitschbild von Paris, und nun bist du in London. Das stand immer für verpasste Gelegenheiten. Die Stadt voller Models, Rockstars, aber du blöde Touristin bist aus Versehen in Whitechapel gelandet, mit deiner unzumutbaren Frauenausstattung, die nicht verhüllt ist. Die ist nicht verhüllt. Dieses niedliche, immer zugige London mit freundlichen Einheimischen gibt es nicht mehr. Gut, da muss man ja nicht hingehen, dann geht man eben woanders hin. Italien ist immer noch reizend; wenn man die 40 % jugendlicher Arbeitsloser wegdenkt, kann man noch ans Mittelmeer, Sie wissen schon. Die Boat-People. Es muss ja auch keiner mehr verreisen. Es gibt auf 3Sat und Arte täglich diese wunderbaren Sendungen, in der die Welt in Ordnung ist. Einfache, herzensgute Menschen machen Handwerk, sie sind gastfreundlich, und Attentate finden nicht statt. Entführungen gibt es nicht. Den Ekel vor dem weißen Touristen sehen wir kaum. Und wer nicht fernsehen will, kann Geschichten lesen, von früher. Als wir noch die Welt bereisten.

THOSE WONDERFUL YEARS: THE DAYS WHEN WE TRAVELLED THE WORLD
SIBYLLE BERG

Excerpt translated by Damion Searls

It's strange how quickly the world changes, though some time passes before we become aware of it. How quickly it *has* changed. Images from before still linger in our synapses. Exciting trips, with no danger of anything worse than a stomach bug. You flew to Greece, carefree, or crossed the Gobi Desert, or sat in Yemen observing how the people lived. You took a trip to Paris – cafés under green plane trees, constant sore feet from all the walking: endorphins. All this is stored up, it tugs at your heart, and it overlays and conceals the real pictures. Like when I was in the Métro with some thirty young men drunk on violence, terrorizing the other passengers. Streets full of elderly homeless people. The tense faces of the Parisian women – they were supposed to be so relaxed, balancing kids and career with a smile, but such people do not exist. There are only the harried and stressed, underpaid men and women crammed into public transport, cramped apartments, and traffic jams, harassed by tourists posing for photos with a baguette. The stink of urine on the streets, the congestion on the streets. And now something new: terror attacks, uncertainty, Roma people squeezed onto the central reservation of motorways and heading down into the Tunnel. That insane underwater tunnel to England! Have there been any attacks there yet, or is it just the refugees daily trying to get to England? Yes, you Europeans, the world is robbing you of your comfortable Chunnel journey, taking away your kitschy image of Paris, and now you're in London. A city that has always stood for missed opportunities, a city full of models and rock stars. But you, you stupid woman tourist, you ended up in Whitechapel in your unsuitable clothes, which don't cover you up properly. Not covered up. Cute little draughty London with its well-meaning natives no longer exists, but fine, you don't have to go to London, there are other destinations. Italy is still exciting; there's still the Mediterranean, if you refuse to think about the 40% youth unemployment, you know, or about those 'boat people'. And the fact is, you don't have to go anywhere anymore. There are wonderful shows every day on television travel channels, and there the world is as it should be. Simple, good-hearted men and women handcrafting local goods, hospitable and welcoming. No terror attacks, no kidnappings. Hardly any sign of revulsion at white tourists. And if you don't want to watch it on TV, then you can read about it in books, as we once did... in the days when we travelled the world.

"This author has written a good dozen novels and many more plays about the contradictions and incongruities of life. These texts naturally enough have an element of meanness and disenchantment to them, but also a whiff of sentimentality." BERLINER MORGENPOST

NEW DAYS OF DUST

NUOVI GIORNI DI POLVERE

GENRE Poetry, LANGUAGE Italian



Awarded the 2016 "Terra nova"-Prize
of the Swiss Schiller Foundation

Yari Bernasconi's voice is notable for being both forceful and strikingly identifiable in contemporary Italian poetry. He balances both narrative and epigram with great precision: he makes clear and firm statements, of such great severity that they sometimes border on the ascetic, yet are at the same time skilled and subtle. He writes as if firing his text at the reader, snapshots from modern-day trench warfare. The enemy is, above all else, indifference; that human longing for peace and comfort, which, when faced with hostility, deformity and violence, gives in to the temptation to flee.

This book stands out for its use of a language of gesture, both figurative and symbolic. Sharp-edged, realistic, photographic detail is distilled onto the page and into stark images of barbarism in action. Herein lies the explanation of the title of this collection, *New Days of Dust*, an allusion to an after-death situation in which survivors wander through the debris of an almost burnt-out world. Bernasconi offers us the courage to proclaim that, after the apocalypse, we await a new starting point, one from which we can only go forward.

TITLE Nuovi giorni di polvere

PUBLISHER Casagrande, Bellinzona

PUBLICATION DATE April 2015

PAGES 96

ISBN 978-88-7713-698-5

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Barbora Jurickova,
segretariato@casagrande-online.ch

YARI BERNASCONI was born in 1982 in Lugano, in the canton of Ticino. He studied Italian Language and Literature and wrote his thesis on Giorgio Orelli. He was editor in chief of *Viceversa Letteratura*. Other publications of poetry include *Lettera da Dejevo* (2009), *Da un luogo vacillante* (2013) and *Non è vero che saremo perdonati*, published in *Undicesimo quaderno italiano di poesia contemporanea* (2012).



PHOTO © Yvonne Böhler

NUOVI GIORNI DI POLVERE YARI BERNASCONI**Italian original (p. 25-26)**

Una poesia per la galleria ferroviaria del San Gottardo

(La roccia gli ha spaccato il petto, rotolando.
Né parole, né gesti: solo uno sbuffo secco,
terribile. Inutile l'affanno dei compagni,
accorsi con scarponi unti, le grida attenuate
dalla routine. La terra e le pietre, nel buio,
non hanno regole da rispettare. Nessun padrone.)

Qui sotto, tra le rocce, i sassi e questo fango rappreso,
l'oscurità sembra assorbire le nostre facce.
Per questo, forse, non guardiamo: gli occhi bassi,
ridicoli, paurosi delle ombre dei corpi. Eppure
il rumore è severo: lo sentiamo vibrare
con costanza.

Manca la luce e ne soffriamo. Non tanto sotto,
in questo esofago di terra, ma sopra, all'aria,
quando si esce dal buco e il grigiore del cielo
si accascia sul profilo delle montagne, il sole
si rabbuia nel ricordo ostentato di qualcosa di più,
qualcosa di diverso. Una speranza, sì: la speranza
rifiutata, respinta giorno dopo giorno.

Non è lontana, l'Italia, ma noi siamo bloccati
in questi gorgi di pietraie, incollati a questi attrezzi
logori e scuri, sporchi di detriti e di sangue, le mani
e le braccia incrostate da piccole ferite,
polvere ovunque. Siamo forse più svizzeri, adesso,
in questa nostra galleria.

All'interno il calore è quasi insopportabile,
però si avanza: il sudore diventa una seconda pelle,
viscida e scivolosa ma pur sempre tua. Fuori, invece,
Göschenen è fredda, è gelata, e ci respinge
come un germe pestifero.

(Vengono lenti. Sulla barella il morto si confonde
con i vuoti dello straccio, le pieghe improvvise.
Ci guardiamo distratti e ingenerosi,
sfiorati in superficie dalle cime indifferenti,
dalle gravi catene montagnose: quelle rocce impossibili
che forse già sappiamo e conosciamo.)

NEW DAYS OF DUST YARI BERNASCONI**Excerpt translated by Moira Egan with Damiano Abeni**

A Poem for the Gotthard Railway Tunnel

(The stone, rolling, has crushed his chest.
No words, nor gestures: only a dry gust,
terrible. The useless gasping of his comrades,
who rushed to him with greasy boots, shouts muffled
by habit. The earth and the stones, in the dark,
have no rules to follow. No master.)

Here below, among the rocks, the stones, and this
congealed mud,
the darkness seems to absorb our faces.
Perhaps this is why we do not look: eyes cast down,
ridiculous, fearful of the bodies' shadows. And yet
the noise is severe: we feel it vibrate
constantly.

We suffer the lack of light. Not so much below,
in this oesophagus of earth, but above, in the air.
When you come out of that hole and the grey of the sky
collapses on the profile of the mountains, the sun
darkens in the ostentatious memory of something more,
something different. A hope, yes: hope
refused, rejected, day after day.

It's not too far, Italy, but we are stuck
in these eddies of rocks, glued to these tools,
worn and dark, dirty with detritus and blood, our hands
and arms encrusted with small wounds,
dust everywhere. Perhaps we are more Swiss, now,
here in our tunnel.

Inside, the heat is almost unbearable,
yet we progress: the sweat becomes a second skin,
slimy and slippery but still all yours. Outside, however,
Göschenen is cold, is frozen, and repels us
like a pestilential germ.

(They come slowly. On the stretcher the dead man is meshed
in with the hollows in the rags, the sudden folds.
Distracted and ungenerous, we look at one another,
grazed on the surface by the indifferent peaks,
by the grave mountain ranges: those impossible rocks
that we might already know. We know them.)

**"His precise language derives from his precise observation. A glimpse
of the unknown immerses the scenes he describes in an atmosphere of
fluctuating borders." POESIA**

GOTTHARD

GOTTHARD

GENRE Novella, LANGUAGE German



"Atmospheric and stylistically accomplished." BERNER ZEITUNG



ZORA DEL BUONO was born in Zürich in 1962 and studied architecture at the Federal Institute of Technology in her home city. She is an author, arts editor and a founder member of the journal *mare*. She now lives in Berlin and is a guest lecturer at several colleges there. Her novels *Canitz' Verlangen* (2008) and *Big Sue* (2010) were both published by mare Verlag.

PHOTO © Lisa Nalven

Zora del Buono's novella takes place over just a few hours - hours in a day that begins innocuously enough but comes to a dramatic conclusion. The action plays out on a building site at the southern portal of the Gotthard Tunnel. Del Buono takes us into the damp, sweltering darkness of the longest railway tunnel in the world, and into the minds of some of the characters, for whom this gigantic hole in the mountain is the focal point of their existence. There's the 50-year old bachelor train-spotter from Berlin, whose ambition is to take stunning photos of the railway engines; then there's a former canteen manager, who used to cook for the tunnel workmen, and her husband, who harbours a dreadful secret. There's the prostitute, who works in a nearby brothel, the lesbian truck-driver and the guest-worker, who isn't at all sure if he wants to go back home to his wife. Gotthard is what has brought them together... it's their workplace, the place they long to be, their terminus station. Del Buono weaves together these differing viewpoints with precision and without unnecessary flourishes. She creates an atmospheric storyline, in which the technical details of tunnel boring machines fascinate just as much as the love stories. You don't have to be interested in how tunnels are dug to be entertained by this book: as Richard Kämmerlings wrote in his review in *Die Welt*, *Gotthard* is the stage-set for the "perfect novella".

TITLE Gotthard

PUBLISHER C.H. Beck, Munich

PUBLICATION DATE September 2015

PAGES 144

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Jennifer Royston,
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GOTTHARD ZORA DEL BUONO**German original (p. 40-42)**

Dora Polli-Müller, 08:20

Da war er ja wieder. Sie hatte schon viele dieser Verrückten hier herumstehen sehen, aber der da war ein ganz besonders Hartnäckiger. Nicht unsympathisch, er winkte ihr immer zu, wenn er an ihr vorbeifuhr, einmal hatte er sogar Hallo gerufen, wahrscheinlich ein Deutscher und sicher ein Städter, der eleganten Kleidung nach. Sie beobachtete, wie der Mann seine Tasche vom Beifahrersitz hob, nachdem er den Wagen geparkt hatte, ganz vorsichtig an den Rand war er gerollt, als ob nicht genügend Platz wäre oder er weiß Gott was für einen Ferrari fahren würde, dabei war es der ausrangierte Pick-up von dem jungen Rossi in Biasca unten, der neuerdings auf Geschäftsmann machte, nur weil er ein paar Autos verlieh. Dora Müller braucht jetzt eine Pause, dachte Dora Polli-Müller, die immer dann auf das Polli verzichtete, wenn Aldo ihr besonders auf die Nerven ging. Heute war so ein Tag, eigentlich hatte er sie schon die ganze letzte Woche geärgert, jedes Jahr im Mai war Aldo unansprechbar, kein Mensch wusste, warum. Sie legte den Pinsel in den Eimer zurück, noch zwei Tage, dann wäre sie fertig mit dem Streichen, heute war die Innenseite des Zaunes dran. Sie hatte einmal gelesen, dass die Griechen ihre Häuser jährlich weißelten, eine schöne Tradition, allerdings wäre das griechische Weiß hier gar nicht geeignet, der Abgasdreck der Autos, die dicht um ihr Haus herumfahren, und der Staub der Bahn würden die Arbeit in kürzester Zeit wieder zunichtemachen, zudem war Weiß ein Fremdkörper im Tal. Ihr Haus hätte sie auch gar nicht streichen können, das Erdgeschoss war aus groben Steinblöcken gebaut, uralte, sicher dreihundert Jahre, den oberen Stock hatten Aldos Großeltern draufgesetzt, ein dunkler Holzaufbau, der im Laufe der Zeit schief geworden war, ein wenig verrutscht sah er aus, als ob er fliehen wollte, von der steinernen Basis aber festgehalten würde, manchmal erinnerte er sie an ein Barett, das schräg auf einem Männerschädel saß, vorwitzig und keck.

Sie setzte sich auf den Schemel neben der Eingangstür und zündete sich eine Zigarette an. Die hat sich Dora Müller jetzt aber verdient, dachte Dora Polli-Müller und zupfte an ihrem Bikinioberteil, es klemmte oft. Wann sie damit angefangen hatte, über sich in der dritten Person zu denken, wusste sie nicht mehr, vielleicht hatte sie das schon immer getan. Beim Abschlussball der Bezirksschule 1962 auf alle Fälle hatte sie es zum ersten Mal gewagt, mit ihrem Namen laut für sich einzustehen.

GOTTHARD ZORA DEL BUONO**Excerpt translated by Eleanor Collins**

Dora Polli-Müller, 08:20

There he was again. She had seen a lot of lunatics standing around here in her time, but the one up there now seemed particularly stubborn. And not unpleasant either, he always waved to her as he drove past, once he had even shouted *Hello*. Probably a German, and no doubt a city-dweller from his elegant clothes. She watched the man pick up his bag from the passenger seat after parking his car, he had pulled in very carefully to the kerb, as if there might not be enough room, or heaven knows he thought he was driving a Ferrari, though it was just that battered old pick-up belonging to young Rossi down in Biasca, who thought himself quite the businessman of late because he was hiring out a few cars. Dora Müller could do with a break now, thought Dora Polli-Müller, who always did away with the Polli part when Aldo was particularly getting on her nerves. Today was one of those days, in fact he had been annoying her for a whole week now, every year in May Aldo was totally unapproachable, no-one knew why. She put the brush back in the bucket, just two more days and then she'd be finished with painting, today she was attacking the inner side of the fence. She had once read that the Greeks whitewashed their houses every year, a lovely tradition, mind you Greek White wouldn't be at all suitable here, the filthy exhaust fumes from the heavy traffic driving round her house and the dust from the railway would ruin her hard work in an instant, and anyway white would look out of place in the valley. She couldn't paint her house at all, the ground floor was built from rough-cut blocks of stone, ancient, three hundred years old at least, Aldo's grandparents had placed a second storey on top of it, a dark wooden construction that had become crooked over time, it looked a little off-centre, as if it wanted to fly away but was being held back by the stone base beneath it. Sometimes it reminded her of a beret perched askant on a man's head, cheeky, jaunty.

She sat down on the stool by the front door and lit a cigarette. You've earned that Dora Müller, Dora Polli-Müller thought and tugged at her bikini top, it was often getting caught. She could no longer remember when she had started referring to herself in the third person, perhaps she had always done it. In any case it was on prom night at the local grammar school in 1962 that she dared, for the first time, to vouch for herself using her own name.

"This slim volume hits you with the full force of its thrilling narrative technique." NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG

YESTERDAY'S LIES, TODAY'S LIES

LÜGEN VON GESTERN UND HEUTE

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"In this novel, Ursula Fricker succeeds with an insightful plea for greater sophistication, for a less black-and-white approach to facing up to life's contradictions and to how we break through its seemingly fixed divisions."
BERNER ZEITUNG



URSULA FRICKER was born in 1965 in the Swiss town of Schaffhausen. She trained as a social worker and taught theatre studies. Her first novel was *Fliehende Wasser* (2004), which was awarded the prize for single best work by the Swiss Schiller Foundation, and a year's writer-residency by the City of Zürich. In 2009 she published *Das letzte Bild* and in 2012 *Ausser sich*, which was nominated for the Swiss Book Prize in the same year.

PHOTO © Susanne Schleyer

Three people – Otten the politician, Isa the activist and Beba the refugee – all want something different out of life.

Joachim Otten is the Minister for Internal Affairs in a major German city and is often, unwillingly, forced to take a hard-line stance on refugee policy. He is drawn into a violent debate about the occupation of a factory site by refugees and activists, and finds himself out on his own.

Isa is the bored child of a well-to-do family, who drops out of education because she wants to make an impact; she gets involved with the refugees and becomes ever more radicalised.

Beba, who has fled the poverty and despair of her war-torn homeland, wants to learn to play the piano. She dreams of giving concerts, but has to earn her keep as a prostitute.

Painstakingly and with sophistication, Ursula Fricker weaves together the disparate threads of these very different people's lives. No one voice drowns out the others: each is equally moving and convincing. All three have to wrestle with the repercussions of their upbringing, with the hopes, dreams and desires they once had... and with what remains of them. This is a novel about politics and love and the burden of trying to do the right thing in the world today.

TITLE *Lügen von gestern und heute*

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LÜGEN VON GESTERN UND HEUTE URSULA FRICKER

German original (p. 19-20)

Erst kam es für Isa gar nicht infrage dort hinzugehen. Dann aber, abends, stand sie doch genau dort, am toten Ende der Bogenstraße vor einer aufgelassenen Fabrik. Kr.tschmar & Sö.ne .chuhw.rk war über dem Eingang zu lesen, wie eine mächtige Villa kam Isa der marode Bau vor, Backstein, Giebeldach, Gauben. Moderne Dachfenster und ein klotziger Anbau linker Hand, verschandelten den eleganten Anschein. Hoch bis zum zweiten Stockwerk zogen sich Graffiti, die Farben auf dem gelben Klinker wirkten matt, Türen und Fenster waren verwehrt mit riesigen Spanplatten. Sie wartete. Zwei Frauen kamen. Sie musterten Isa von oben bis unten. Isa traute sich nicht zu fragen. Was hätte sie fragen sollen? Ist hier das Momo? Wo gehts denn rein? Wer hier herkam, der gehörte dazu, dem war alles klar, der hatte keine Fragen zu stellen.

Durch eine Stahltür in den Resten der angrenzenden Mauer traten die Frauen ein. Isa folgte ihnen. Während sie quer über einen weiten Hof gingen und dann eine steile Treppe hinunter in einen Keller stiegen, drehte sich eine der Frauen immer wieder um. Isa tat so, als wüsste sie, wo es langgeht.

Der Raum war niedrig, groß und noch ziemlich leer. Laute Musik, Fünzigerjahre-Sofas, Sessel und Nierentischchen standen zwischen Bar und Bühne. Kerzen brannten, sie machten den Raum nicht gemütlicher. Über der Bühne hing ein Transparent: SOLIDARITÄT MIT TESSA. Tessa, das hatte Isa inzwischen recherchiert, war in Italien verhaftet und vor einer Woche an die Bundesrepublik ausgeliefert worden. Vor über dreißig Jahren, wurde ihr vorgeworfen, soll sie bei einem Überfall einen Bankbeamten erschossen haben. TESSA, DEIN KAMPF IST UNSER KAMPF stand auf einem anderen Transparent, Faust, schwarz-roter Stern. Das alles klang kriegerisch und ernst, und Isa fühlte sich angestarrt, gemustert, taxiert. Sie sah an sich herunter. Statt Lederjacke, Jeans und Stiefeln, trug sie Stoffhose, Bluse, Blazer und viel zu feine Schuhe. An der Kleidung, dachte Isa, sieht man, wer was ist – am liebsten hätte sie sich das Zeug vom Leib gerissen. Sie stellte sich an die Bar und bestellte ein Bier, sie versuchte mit ihrer Haltung wettzumachen, was die Kleidung versaut.

Allmählich füllte sich das Lokal. Je mehr Menschen um sie standen, desto weniger preisgegeben fühlte sich Isa. Sie suchte den Raum nach Hans ab, nach Linda. Am anderen Ende der Bar stand Hans, sie ging zu ihm.

Wie siehst du denn aus?, fragte er.

Uni, sagte sie, ist das wichtig?

YESTERDAY'S LIES, TODAY'S LIES URSULA FRICKER

Excerpt translated by Michael Hofmann

Isa had no intention of going. Come the evening, though, there she was, in front of a derelict factory at the foot of Bogenstrasse. Kr.tschmar & S.n.s .ootwear it said over the entrance, the ancient building was some sort of villa, bricks, gables, eaves. New windows and a clumsy extension on the left wrecked the elegance. Graffiti tags went all the way up two floors, the colours looked muddy against the yellow bricks, the doors and windows were boarded up. She stood around for a while. Two women turned up, gave her the once-over. Isa didn't dare ask them. What would she have asked anyway? Is this the Momo? Where's the entrance? Whoever showed up here knew what they were doing, and wouldn't be asking any questions.

The women walked in through a steel door in what was left of the side wall. Isa went in after them. As they crossed a large yard and then down a steep flight of steps into a basement, one of the women kept turning round to look at her. Isa pretended she knew where she was going.

The space was low, large and still fairly empty. Loud music, 50s sofas, low chairs and kidney-shaped coffee-tables stood around between the bar and the stage. Candles were burning, though they didn't make the place any cosier. Over the stage was a banner SOLIDARITY WITH TESSA. Tessa, as Isa had managed to find out in the course of the day, had been picked up in Italy and handed over to the German authorities a week before. Thirty years ago, the charge went, she was supposed to have shot a bank teller during a hold-up. TESSA, YOUR STRUGGLE IS OUR STRUGGLE it said on another banner, with a design of a clenched fist and a purple star. It all looked terribly serious and menacing, and Isa felt she was being stared at, taken in, studied. She looked down at herself. No biker jacket, jeans and boots, but tailored suit and blouse, and much too fancy shoes. The clothes are a dead giveaway, thought Isa – she wished she could have torn them off. She strode up to the bar and ordered a beer, posturing as best she could to compensate for her clothes.

By and by the place filled up. The more people there were milling around her, the less exposed Isa felt. She scanned the room for Hans, or Linda. Then she saw Hans standing at the other end of the bar, and she went up to him.

What on earth are you wearing? he asked.

Uni, she said, does it matter?

"Ursula Fricker has succeeded in giving the topical issue of the refugee crisis a literary twist, so that her readers can see it from different points of view. She has achieved this without being over-emotional or over-descriptive but objectively and with fine literary skill. This is a magnificent book." DENKZEITEN

A NOBODY

EIN NIEMAND

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"This is Max Frisch's novel *I'm Not Stiller* reloaded and turned inside out."
TAGES ANZEIGER



DANIEL GOETSCH was born in 1968 in Zürich, where he studied jurisprudence. He now lives and writes in Berlin. He has several novels to his name, including *Ben Kader* (2006) and *Herz aus Sand* (2009), and has also written stage and radio plays.

PHOTO © Annette Hauschild

"My name's Tom Kulisch. I'm German," claims the man arrested by the airport police. But the duty psychologist at Tegel Airport, Berlin, has every reason not to believe him. "You'll gather that, right now, we have our doubts... your passport says you're a Romanian and you're called Ion Rebreanu." From this absurdist end-of-story opening, we flash back to the beginning, and to a case of mistaken identity...

Things aren't going too well for Tom Kulisch: His girlfriend has just left him, his job translating instruction manuals is driving him crazy and keeping him up at night, and one morning he witnesses a fatal accident. Because of his striking resemblance to the victim, the emergency doctor mistakes Tom for the dead man's brother and hands him his bag. It contains a ticket to Prague, the key to a flat there, a passport and a number of mysterious postcards. A brand new passport, he thinks, to a brand new existence; so he seizes the chance of slipping into a new identity and sets off on the road to his new life. Had he known, however, what lay in store for him, he might have steered clear of the whole venture. He sinks ever deeper into the life of Ion Rebreanu. He soon finds himself in a fix, which is difficult to escape from. He wants to be Tom Kulisch again: "I'm not Ion. I'm someone else. But who is Ion, if I'm someone else?" The novel has a certain similarity to Max Frisch's *I'm Not Stiller*; only that this protagonist wants to turn it on its head, to be Stiller: that is, to be Tom Kulisch, again.

Daniel Goetsch tackles issues that go above and beyond just that of identity - and in a most entertaining way. A German, travelling with a Romanian passport in Prague - he develops this into an exciting tale about the ties that bind Europe.

TITLE Ein Niemand

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Caroline Grafe,
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EIN NIEMAND DANIEL GOETSCH**German original (p. 47-48)**

Der erste Eindruck täuschte. Eine Reihe von Klinkerbauten, Fabriken, Lagerhallen, dazwischen eine halb versteppte Brache hinter Drahtzaun und im Vordergrund eine ausgemusterte Tankstelle. Das war die Kulisse, die sich ihm bot, als er aus dem Bahnhof trat. Er wusste, in welcher Stadt er sich befand, aber er hatte keine Ahnung, wo er war. Er blickte den Leuten hinterher, die mit ihren Reisetaschen und Rollkoffern ausschwärmten. Bei einer zufälligen Frau erkundigte er sich nach der Straßenbahn in die Innenstadt. Vermutlich deutete er mit der Hand in die falsche Richtung. Dort drüben sei Troja, erklärte die Frau in einem Konsonanten betonten Englisch, bevor sie ihren Weg fortsetzte. Zumindest dieses Englisch kam ihm bekannt vor.

Vor fünf Jahren, als Julia und er noch in einer Liebesgeschichte steckten, hatten sie eine Eingebung gehabt. Sie beschlossen, aus ihrem Alltag auszubrechen, ihren Pflichten und Schulden zu entfliehen, den Vorfrühling außerhalb von Berlin zu verbringen, nur sie beide, einfach so. Amsterdam, Venedig oder Barcelona. Sie machten ihre Wahl von den Angeboten im Internet abhängig. Prag war das günstigste gewesen. Sie schöpften ihren Dispokredit aus und stürzten sich in den Pauschalurlaub, fünf Tage mit allem Drum und Dran und der Aussicht, sich einmal nicht als Freischaffende bewähren zu müssen, sondern nur Urlauber sein zu dürfen. Womöglich hatten sie sich sogar frei gefühlt. In Prag wurden sie von einer sibirischen Kälte überrascht, von Regengüssen, miserablem Essen und ihren Launen. Sie hatten sich die Stadt größer vorgestellt und sich eingebildet, dass sie außerhalb ihres Alltags so verliebt sein könnten wie in ihren Anfängen. Der erste Streit entbrannte, als sie sich über den Stadtplan beugten. Nichts mehr hatte Bestand, alles befand sich im Umbau, die Altstadt wurde auffrisiert und zurechtgeputzt, daneben harrten Gebäude der Sanierung, und die berühmten Kaffeehäuser hatten dichtgemacht. Julia und er eilten mit hochgezogenen Schultern durch die verregneten Gassen auf der Suche nach ihrer Eingebung. Die Nächte verbrachten sie weder in Jazzkellern noch auf Untergrundpartys, von denen der Reiseführer schwärmte, sondern im Hotelzimmer vor dem Fernseher. Einmal wurden sie von einem Sturzregen überrascht und mussten sich in eine Lottohalle retten, einen neonbeleuchteten Kantinenraum mit vereinzelt Gestalten, die auf die Zahlen auf den Bildschirmen stierten; dort tranken sie lauwarmes Bier aus der Flasche und harrten bis vier Uhr morgens aus. Es war das Gegenteil einer Rettung gewesen.

A NOBODY DANIEL GOETSCH**Excerpt translated by Damion Searls**

The first impression was deceptive. A row of brick buildings, factories, warehouses, an empty plot of land behind a wire fence, half waste-land, half returned to the steppe it once was, and what used to be a petrol station in the foreground. That was the scene that presented itself when he walked out of the train station. He knew which city he was in but had no idea where he was. He looked at the people streaming out with their overnight bags and wheelie-cases. He stopped a woman at random and asked her where to catch the tram to the city centre. Apparently he had gestured in the wrong direction. "That way's Troja," the woman explained, in an English stressing the consonants, before continuing on her way. At least this variety of English seemed familiar.

Five years ago, when he and Julia were still a couple, they had had a sudden inspiration. They decided to break out of their everyday routine, run away from their debts and obligations, and enjoy the early spring somewhere other than Berlin, just the two of them, just because. Amsterdam, Venice, Barcelona maybe? They let the offers on the internet decide for them, and the best deal was Prague. They went right to the limit of their overdraft and splashed out on an Easter vacation, five days with all the extras and the prospect of not having to do anything to justify being freelances, they could just simply be holidaymakers. It's possible that they even felt free. Once in Prague, an unexpected spell of Siberian-cold weather took them by surprise: torrential downpours, miserable food, and their own bad moods. They had pictured the city as bigger, had imagined that once they were free of their everyday lives they could be as much in love with each other as they'd been at the beginning. The first fight flared up as they pored over the map of the city. Nothing seemed permanent, everything was being rebuilt, the old town had been prettified and retouched, nearby buildings were awaiting renovation, the famous coffee houses had closed. He and Julia hurried with hunched shoulders through rain-drenched alleys in search of inspiration. They spent their nights neither in jazz cellars nor at the underground parties that the guidebooks praised so highly but in their hotel room, watching TV. Once, they were caught in a sudden downpour and had to take refuge in a bingo hall, a neon-lit cafeteria with a few people here and there staring at the numbers that appeared on screens; they drank luke-warm beer from the bottle and stuck it out until four o'clock in the morning. It was anything but the salvation of their relationship.

**"A Nobody is a finely structured story of chaos and confusion,
in which reality remains out of reach." VICEVERSA**

THE STAKE

DER STACHEL

GENRE Short Stories, LANGUAGE German



"Dense, tense and entertaining stories."
SOLOTHURNER ZEITUNG

Seventeen lives take an unexpected turn, each one different, in these seventeen short stories. And each time the ending is startling. The situations Markus Kirchhofer depicts are conventional and what they all have in common is that they involve conventional people – but they are told in an unconventional way.

For example, three people are aboard a small boat, preparing to cast the ashes of a dead colleague into the river. But their leave-taking itself turns into a drama, from which they only just manage to escape. A little less luck and things might have ended very badly. For luck is not enough; happiness is always in jeopardy – that's the message in these stories. They remind us that the unimaginable lurks dangerously round every corner: on the ski slopes, in the swimming baths or at the cheese-maker's. Kirchhofer's story-telling is spare and matter-of-fact: he goes straight to the heart of each misfortune and describes only the necessary. "That morning, there was nothing to suggest that by mid-day I would have turned into another species." Sentences like this make reading any Kirchhofer story an event – an event you won't quickly forget.

TITLE Der Stachel

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MARKUS KIRCHHOFFER was born in 1963 and lives and works as a writer in the canton of Aargau. He worked previously in arts promotion, as a teacher and adult educator. He writes poetry, short stories, comics, newspaper columns and stage plays. He has received many awards for his work. Other publications in addition to *Der Stachel* are *eisfischen* (2014) and *Meyer&Meyer* (2015).

PHOTO © Markus Kirchhofer

DER STACHEL MARKUS KIRCHHOFFER

German original (p. 89-90)

Es war Rolands erklärter Wille, dass Fabienne seine Asche auf der Aare verstreut. Ich versuchte, meinen Beitrag zu einem perfekten Übersetzmanöver zu leisten. Zu Ehren meines Pontonier-Kameraden. Es gelang mir nicht, wegen des Stachels.

Ich kannte Roland viel länger als er seine Frau Fabienne kannte. Schon bei den Jungpontonieren bildeten wir eine Besatzung: Er war der Steuermann, ich der Vorderfahrer. Im ruhigen Wasser des Schwimmbades lernten wir die Ruderführung. Im Weidling. Jungpontoniere fahren Weidlinge, erst Pontoniere fahren Übersetzboote. Beim Wenden mit Handhoch-kehrt ruderte Roland Wasser unter das Boot wie ein Irrer. Er schaufelte mit seinem Ruderblatt wie ein Wal mit seinem Flipper. So ausdauernd, dass sich der Weidling x-mal um die eigene Achse drehte. Im Bug vorne wurde mir schlecht. Ich reiherte in den Weidling. Erst nach Mitternacht waren das Boot, das Fahrgeschirr und die Seile wieder sauber geschrubbt. Als Roland den Weidling zum ersten Mal auf dem Fluss steuerte, war ich sein Vordermann.

Während des Trauergottesdienstes stand neben dem Tontopf mit Rolands Asche eine Fotografie: eine Frontalansicht von ihm, mit einem Ruderblatt vor der Brust. Seine Frau nahm das hellbraune Tongefäss an sich. Ich fuhr sie zum Pontonierhaus. An der Rampe zum Fluss stand der Pontonier-Fahrverein, fast in corpore, in unserem Vereins-Tenü: schwarze Jeanshose und grün-schwarze Regenjacke. Fabienne nickte der Gruppe zu, Rolands Urne fest an sich gedrückt.

Das Übersetzboot war rundum mit Blumen geschmückt. Fahrchef Charly übernahm die Position des Steuermanns. Es war unsere erste gemeinsame Fahrt. Mit geradem Rücken betrat ich das Boot. Ich hielt Ruder und Stachel unter dem Arm, mit den Griffen nach vorne. Durch die Löcher in den Bootswänden befestigte ich die zwei Ruderstricke am Schiff, mit losen Weberknoten. Vorne rechts zog ich mein Ruder in den Knoten. Charly nahm Fabienne an der Hand und führte sie in die Mitte des Bootes. Sie setzte sich auf die Holzbank und stellte die Urne neben den Kelch mit den Rosenblättern, den meine Frau dort platziert hatte. Charly zog das Ruder hinten links in den Ruderstrick, den dicksten Teil der Ruderstange genau in den Weberknoten. So, wie es auch Steuermann Roland immer gemacht hatte. Auf Charlys Kommando löste ich das Spanntau. Ich stiess uns vom Ufer ab, wir begannen zu rudern. Über der Aare lag dichter Nebel. Die Bäume am Nordufer waren Schemen, der Uferweg unsichtbar.

THE STAKE MARKUS KIRCHHOFFER

Excerpt translated by Vincent Kling

Roland had expressly stated his wish that Fabienne should scatter his ashes on the Aare. I tried to support her in this by doing everything I could to ferry her perfectly up the river. Out of respect for my puntsman comrade. But it didn't work out – because of the stake.

I had known Roland much longer than he'd known his wife Fabienne. We'd formed a crew as far back as the days of the Young Puntsman Squad; he was the helmsman and I was his mate. We'd learned the basics of rowing in the calm water of the swimming pool. In a training punt. Trainee puntsmen work training punts; only fully-fledged puntsmen do the ferrying. When he practised the manoeuvre of going about, Roland raised his arms high and thrust water under the boat like a madman. He scooped with his oar blade like a whale with its flipper. So persistently that the punt spun umpteen times on its own axis. Up in the bows I felt sick. I threw up right into the bottom of the punt. It took until after midnight to scrub boat, tackle and ropes clean. When Roland was helmsman in a punt on the river for the first time, I was his mate.

During the funeral service, a photograph of Roland stood next to the ceramic urn that held his ashes: it had been taken from the front, an oar blade across his chest. His wife took up the light brown urn. I drove her to the punt-house. The punt club members, practically in formation and in our standard club outfit – black jeans and a green-and-black rain jacket – were lined up on the slipway leading to the river. Fabienne nodded to the group, holding Roland's urn tight to her body.

Our ferry-boat was decorated from stem to stern with flowers. Senior mate Charly took over as helmsman. It was our first trip together. I boarded the boat with my back straight. I held my oar and stake under my arm with the handles facing front. 'Stake' is our local name for a short metal punt-pole. Through the holes in the boat's sides I fastened the two oar lines with loose reef knots. Starboard fore, I drew my oar into the knot. Charly took Fabienne by the hand and led her amidships. She sat down on the wooden bench and placed the urn down beside a chalice filled with rose petals, put there by my wife. Port aft, Charly pulled his oar through the line, the thickest part of the pole exactly into the reef knot, just the way helmsman Roland always used to do it. On Charly's command I cast off the mooring rope. I pushed us away from the bank; we started rowing. Thick fog lay over the Aare. The trees on the north bank were outlines, the path along the bank invisible.

"All of us are standing on thin ice, which can crack at any moment. Death shows its sting, but we live on, shaken into wakefulness by Markus Kirchhofer's stories. Gently but insistently, they reveal to us the fragility of our existence." BETTINA SPOERRI

A WORLD OF LANGUAGES: SHAKESPEARE AT 400

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK SPOTTISWOODE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AT SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE



2016 is the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare – Britain's greatest poet and playwright. Nowhere is he celebrated more than at the reconstructed Globe theatre in London. Patrick Spottiswoode is the director of Globe Education and one of the theatre's founder members. He talks to Max Easterman about Shakespeare, language and translation.

MAX EASTERMAN: Why is the Globe such a special theatre?

PATRICK SPOTTISWOODE: This theatre brings actors and audience together in a way no other theatre does. We have here the three "As" – architecture, actors and audience. It's the place where Shakespeare sings best, where Shakespeare connects with his audience best. Shakespeare wrote for the Globe like an original instrument and the plays sound and play differently in this architecture. So that is why the Globe is important.

ME: Is there some special significance for you in this 400th anniversary year?

PS: Well, something that Shakespeare could never ever have imagined was that his plays would be translated into over a hundred languages – he could also never ever have imagined that English as a language would have such a universal appeal. England in the 16th century was an island cut off from the rest of the world. No-one needed to speak English. The contemporary linguist John Florio said, "What think you of this English tongue?" ... "Oh well, it will do you well in England, but past Dover, it is worth nothing." So this idea that he could have thought that 400 years hence there would be Shakespeare in every language, a company of actors taking *Hamlet* in English to every country in the world and even Shakespeare spoken from outer space! He couldn't have imagined that his plays would have that appeal, nor that the English language would have such an influence on world culture.

ME: What is it though about Shakespeare and his language that has created this great appeal? English has become a global language but there's no reason why Shakespeare should become a global playwright.

PS: No, but I suppose it's because he's so beloved by actors, and actors have kept him alive. And I think why he appealed so much to German writers in the 18th century, for example, is that the language is not stone, he hasn't left us stone, he's left us clay. So we can constantly remould that clay and each generation can shape it to their own ends and to their own needs. Each art form can do the same. That's a key thing about Shakespeare: he doesn't sermonize, he explores. Two of his fellow actors said that he was a happy imitator of nature, a great depicter of nature, of human kind and the most gentle expresser of it. It was both the depiction, but also the way he depicted it.



GLOBE LONDON © JOHN WILDGOOSE

ME: So Shakespeare's language, thought and philosophy are malleable. Does that carry over with translation from English into other languages?

PS: I think each person will have their own bias as to which language it works best in. I personally like to hear Shakespeare in German even though I can only understand a little German. It marries well with the German language because of similar roots. To me it doesn't work quite so well in French. But what happens when you translate Shakespeare? We English are hearing it in early modern – that's late 16th century English. If I'm in Japan, I'm hearing Shakespeare in *modern* Japanese. That's a great advantage over us. So it becomes alive in a different way, it's immediately connected with our time. My dear friend Norbert Kentrup, the great German actor said, "Oh, Patrick, you are so lucky that you were born in the land of Shakespeare's language. But I am lucky as an actor that I am not trapped by it. We are free in a way". So translation frees it and makes it more resonant again for a particular time.

But there are other things about translation: Poles, for instance, don't do alliteration, but alliteration is very characteristic of Shakespeare, so how do you translate that? I was a text advisor at a translation workshop, where 30 Poles, Romanians and Germans gathered together and had to translate extracts from *Romeo and Juliet*: they had to do 'consensus' translations and I was fascinated by the way they mined the text for meaning and debated the status of words.

I watched how they breathed in English and then breathed out their own language. This workshop showed me how you read a language much more closely when you're translating and you can't skip over words which you don't fully understand, as you would if you were just reading for pleasure.

ME: Why do you think Shakespeare is so important, almost a theatrical obsession, for German speakers?

PS: Shakespeare helped to develop the German language from the 18th century onwards, because German translators needed to invent new words in order to accommodate Shakespeare's own words. So there's a branch of translation, which is literal – as well as literary – and then there's another branch, which is translating for the stage, where you are translating for a theatre audience and an actor, not for a reader.

Plays are always different on the stage from on the page. Any production in England on a stage is a form of translation, an adaptation. No one ever stages the complete play that Shakespeare's left us. There are always cuts, edits, sometimes changes of language, even today. So, the text isn't sacrosanct. But if you are a translator aiming for a literary translation, you may be keener to find the match of the metaphor or the analogy, the simile or the pun. Puns are incredibly difficult to do in translation! The very great contemporary German translator Frank Günther – who may have been the first German translator to complete the canon of Shakespeare after Johann Eschenburg published it in Zürich in 1782 – I heard Günther speak for forty minutes on the translator's nightmare, on "How do I get the goat and Goth pun in *As You Like It*? How, as a translator, can I match that?" That's his passion as a translator, can he somehow find the equivalent in German? That's a labour of intense love and admiration. While a theatre translator will say, "Forget it, I'm going to cut that line, because the audience won't get it" or "That doesn't suit the vision of the play or the world the director wants".

ME: Is that perhaps why nobody's really attempted to translate the Shakespeare canon into modern English?

PS: Well, there's a great debate about that now. And indeed there is a major Shakespeare festival in Oregon in the USA, which is doing just that, getting important, established North American authors to find new translations of Shakespeare into modern American. Of course, that sets the cat among the old pigeons for those of us who believe that the meaning is bound up in the language. But then again, as soon as you translate, you are creating a new meaning. Because how are you making Shakespeare relevant and contemporary if you keep it in that old early modern English that doesn't resonate to the modern era?

ME: So when, for example, a German-language theatre director decides to do a production of *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, he or she has a choice of translations?

PS: Yes, this is where German, and plays and translations into German, triumph. Because both the theatrical tradition

and the tradition of translation of Shakespeare in German is, of course, much older than, say, the tradition of Shakespeare in Japanese or Shakespeare in Russian. And because of this Germanic tradition of the director as author ("Regisseur als Autor"), texts are subservient, they don't worship the text of Shakespeare, it's just part of the theatrical event, but it doesn't dominate the theatrical event. What dominates the theatrical event is the vision of the director.

ME: Is there any evidence that British audiences will be prepared to take that kind of leap of faith with Shakespeare, to hear the text altered and, some would say, *distorted*?

PS: The way English audiences are being introduced to this idea is by hearing and seeing Shakespeare in foreign languages. Here at Shakespeare's Globe in 2012, as part of the UK's Cultural Olympiad celebrations, we invited 37 companies to England to present 37 Shakespeare plays in 37 different languages. Immediately audiences knew they weren't going to get Shakespeare's pentameters. So I think because English audiences are becoming more accustomed to seeing Shakespeare in translation, they're getting more used to the idea that plays can be cut, changed, copy-cut-and-pasted and, in some modern interpretations, the order of scenes changed. And I think this is going to happen more in this country, in English; modern English directors are now following suit.

ME: In 2011 you held a bold and very successful series of lectures and performances here at the Globe, called "Shakespeare is German". As head of Globe Education you were a key player in this: what was the thinking behind it?

PS: In Globe Education we work a lot with young German-speaking students and I've become aware how German culture kind of appropriated Shakespeare. Schlegel said that Shakespeare is "ganz unser", he's "entirely ours". Now, my reaction was to say: "What do you mean he's entirely yours? He's ours! Come on, he's ours like the Queen!" So, when I first presented the idea of doing a series called "Shakespeare is German", friends at the German Embassy said "A very good idea, but don't you mean Shakespeare *in* German." I said "no", what we really wanted to explore was *why* and *what was it* that made Shakespeare so popular for German readers and German theatre goers of the past and present? There are more Shakespeare productions in Germany in one year than in England. That's remarkable! That's partly because of the position of English as a global language. One 19th century American critic said, rather ideologically, that "one touch of Shakespeare makes the whole world kin". So Shakespeare is an umbrella under which we can all meet, Shakespeare provides us, if you like, with common stories that we now share. Go anywhere in the world and *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* are iconic.

I did a TV interview with a Moroccan television crew and they asked me 'live' on air, "Mr Spottiswoode, can you confirm to our viewers that Shakespeare was an Arab? Shaykh Zubayr?"

"Yes, I can" I replied, "But he was also Australian, Japanese and Chinese." Likewise an Iraqi film crew interviewed me and said: "We believe that Shakespeare was born in Basra." I said: "Yes, he was and he was also born in Adelaide..." It's interesting that countries want a bit of ownership of Shakespeare, that they appropriate him. In the 19th century translating Shakespeare into your own language became a sign of cultural arrival; it gives a language a cultural significance, a power. So partly it's because English is a global language and also, in the days of the British Empire, teaching English to 'the colonials' the question was, who are you going to teach? Shakespeare! So Shakespeare gets into the literary bloodstream around the world.

ME: If you take Switzerland, where German isn't the only language, there's French and Italian too, not to mention Rhaeto-Romanic: to what extent is Shakespeare appreciated by speakers of Romance languages, like French and Italian?

PS: Well, the French and Italians first 'met him' through English performers travelling over there, that's what shook them up. Berlioz, for example, saw a company doing *Romeo and Juliet*, fell in love with Juliet and started being inspired to write his own musical works. Then in Italy it's opera in the 19th century where Shakespeare really takes hold of the Italian imagination. What's interesting, though, is whether those artists first met Shakespeare in English? Or did the French meet him through the German language or the Germans meet him through the Italian? So, they may not actually have met Shakespeare through the medium of English but through another language. And that is what makes it more complex.

ME: Here at the Globe you also commission plays which are in no way Shakespearean, although some of them may be set in that period. I wonder whether there aren't German playwrights who, in translation, would sit very well on the Globe stage? I'm thinking specifically of two great Swiss writers, Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt. *The Fire Raisers*, *Romulus the Great* are plays which, it seems to me, because of this closeness of the audience and the player, would function beautifully on that stage.

PS: The remit for the first three artistic directors here at the Globe since it opened in 1997 has been either to stage Shakespeare, or other plays of the period, or to commission new plays for the space. What we want to do more now is to explore plays written specifically and especially for this space. When you build a theatre like the Globe, you are of course going to focus on Shakespeare, you're going to focus on Shakespeare's contemporaries and on what we call "original practices" – and one of the original practices of the Globe was "all plays were new"! So if we want to be truthful to the Globe, we have to do new work. We've had some wonderful new plays, by Howard Brenton for one, written specifically for the Globe. In 2017, we're 20 years old, so we are very young to branch out into Frisch or Dürrenmatt, modern plays in translation, but maybe in future years we will.

ME: It just seems that theatre in Britain is a bit of a one-way street, not just at the Globe. There are certain foreign plays, European plays, like *The Seagull*, like *Hedda Gabler*, which keep getting revived, and yet other plays in other languages get ignored.

PS: It's true, it's a question of whatever is available in translation. It's why translations are important and that means publishers have to take a punt and commission translations and be prepared to sell translations. And remember that we don't have a tradition in this country of 'dramaturgs'. You have to have really good dramaturgs who act rather like football scouts: people who go off and look for those plays, these new exciting plays and maybe then theatres will commission those translations. The National Theatre here in London is good for that and the Royal Court, but that's a huge investment, so, inevitably, there is a kind of canon developed of European plays that are going to be put on over and over again, rather like Shakespeare. If you are a commercial theatre, you are living from the box office, so when we put on a play in translation it's a risk: we might get 55 per cent attendance. If we put on Shakespeare in English we get 99 per cent. As the Globe doesn't get any government subsidy, if we want to put on a play, whether it's a new play or a visiting theatre company – at 50 per cent – we've got to be able to balance the books by putting on a *Romeo and Juliet* or *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Because the government is not going to bail us out, as in many German or Swiss theatres where they have subsidies. We at the Globe do not have any public subsidy. That might be hard to appreciate but it's true.

ME: So money is always going to be one of the governing factors?

PS: Of course. As it was for Shakespeare in his own theatre. Shakespeare had to make money, he had to make sure the boxes were full of coins, that people came to the theatre and paid admission. I sometimes feel in theatres on the continent that are subsidized, sometimes I feel that it doesn't matter whether only six people attend because they got that subsidy. Now I know that's changing on the continent too and subsidy is dropping. Subsidy empowers you but also can make you forget your audience sometimes. Here, we are lean and mean, but that means also entrepreneurial.

ME: There is something very Shakespearean about that!

PS: I think so! One of the people we are celebrating this year is Philip Henslowe. Just like Shakespeare, he died 400 years ago this year. Henslowe ran a playhouse called *The Rose*. He was a theatre owner and manager and has had a very bad press at times, along the lines of: "...he actually wanted to make money! He was a capitalist working in the theatre while Shakespeare was a pure poet". Well, forget it. Henslowe was a man of the theatre and he knew how to make theatre work. Shakespeare was no different!

The Gaps in the Arab Mosaic



A PLEA FOR MORE TRANSLATIONS OF BOOKS FROM ARABIC, BY HARTMUT FÄHNDRICH, AUTHOR AND TRANSLATOR

It's long been a truism to claim that reading a novel about a particular society will tell you more about its origins than any amount of scholarly research. And so, how much more could we learn from reading three or even five novels, which would give us three or five views of – or *from* – that society?

So we're not doing literature an injustice, if we seek to gain from it information about other lands, worlds, peoples. Not as a documentary source, that's quite another genre, but rather as a written, a writerly, introduction to another world, which is also a part of all our worlds.

Literature, and especially prose fiction, recounts different forms of human experience and social intercourse, it interprets the behaviour of individuals and groups, offers examples for understanding history, describes different expressions of joy and sorrow, hope and despair, enjoyment and abhorrence, love and hate...

Every novel, every story, offers one tile in a mosaic, which, when placed next to all the others, creates a full picture. For, just as – to quote the Arabic saying – one hand alone cannot clap, equally one piece of the mosaic alone cannot create a picture.

Thus, to perceive, perhaps even to understand, a different society, we need to read many stories both *from* and *about* that society. Journalists' reports and items in the daily news aren't enough. They're too narrowly focused, too short-lived, and by and large don't give us the inside story.

The Arab world and its literature offer us an impressive body of support material – but *ex negativo*: there's a drawback.

The Arab world is broad and diverse. In order to create a reasonable picture of this world, to acquire even a hint of an understanding of it, we need – have always needed – a huge number of mosaic tiles. But glance through what's on offer in any Western bookshop, especially in the German language, and it's an alarming and sobering experience: the scant quantity of Arabic literature in translation only masks the danger, that the few will be taken as representative of the whole.

But our expectations of literary works must also be appropriate: literature is just not reportage of what is currently happening, it is not to be equated with the countless numbers of diaries and blogs, which have been written about the events, famous now all over the world, in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Literature interprets, and that takes time. Literature

elaborates concepts, other worlds, and that requires a sense of distance. So when a publisher asks for *the* revolutionary novel about the Egyptian demonstrations a mere three months after they began, this is just as absurd as asking for *the* novel about the refugee crisis of September – October 2015 two months after *it* started.

But by now there are countless novels and stories about what led up to these and many other events in the Arab world, but so much that might deepen our understanding of them remains untranslated and therefore out of reach to Western readers. Publishers' interest here, if it exists at all, is much too short-term.

A few examples from many... several of these are available in English, a few in French, but none in German.

There's the story of the Syrian civil servant, who, in order to satisfy a lifetime's desire to sit next to his Minister just once, throws his morality overboard (**Dîma Wannûs: KURSÎY (A Chair), Beirut 2009**); or the village schoolteacher from Tunisia, who, quite out of the blue and with no personal involvement, is promoted to Minister and somehow has to cope with his new role (**Hussain al-Wâd: SA'ÂDATUHU ... AS-SAYYID AL-WAZÎR (His Excellency, the Minister), Tunis 2011**). There's the story of Moroccan parents, who imagine their son is studying in France, only to receive his death notice from Afghanistan (**Muhammad al-Asch'ari: AL-QAWS WAL-FARÂSHA (The Arch and the Butterfly), Casablanca 2011**); or the young Iraqi, who instead of studying Art, decides to follow in his father's footsteps and prepare corpses for burial – and gets more and more work to do (**Sinân Antûn: WAHDAHÂ SHAJARAT AR-RUMMÂN (The Pomegranate alone / The Corpse Washer), Beirut 2010**). There's also the story of a Saudi family, told by one of their sons, who has emigrated to the USA (**Muhammad Hasan Alwân: AL-QUNDUS (The Beaver), Beirut 2011**); and several tales of east Asian or African girls working as servants in well-to-do houses in Lebanon or the Gulf (**Sa'ûd al-San'ûsi: SÂQ AL-BAMBÔ (The Bamboo Stalk), Beirut 2012** or **Rashîd al-Daîf: HIRRAṬ SÎKÎRÎDÂ (Sikireeda's Pussy), Beirut 2014**). There are also countless historical novels and novels about history, which provide us with information about the region, or its historical perspectives: the whole epic history of Palestine before the founding of the Israeli state, written from the perspective of a Jordanian Palestinian (**Ibrahîm Nasrallah: ZAMAN AL-KHUYÔL AL-BAYDÂ' (Time of White Horses), Beirut / Algier 2007**); or a novel about Aleppo, the city laid horribly to waste over the past few years, written by a Syrian (**Nihad Sirîs: HÂLAT SHAGHAF (A Case of Passion), Beirut 1998**). And there are many other novels that combine the historical with the fantastic, or even the macabre: the man from Bagdad, who constructs a new human being out of other people's body parts (**Ahmad Sa'dâwî: FRÂNKINSHTAYN FÎ BAGHDÂD (Frankenstein in Bagdad), Beirut, 2013**); or another, in Cairo, who gets himself declared dead in order to enable his family to live off his life insurance (**Muhammad Rabî: 'ÂM AT-TINNÎN (The Year of the Dragon), Kairo, 2012**).

These are many, too many missing pieces in the mosaic, so leaving the whole picture incomplete.

See page 34 for a short CV of Hartmut Fähndrich

WIDOW WITH CHILD

LA VEUVE À L'ENFANT

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"Daniel Maggetti's prose is broad and swift; he deploys sinuous sentences across long paragraphs, perfectly sculpted blocks of words whose rhythm and clarity evoke a mountain stream, as if he had stolen the very voice of the valley." LE COURRIER



DANIEL MAGGETTI was born in 1961 in the Swiss canton of Ticino. He is the author of a ground-breaking essay on French-language literature in Switzerland, *L'invention de la littérature romande 1830-1910* (1995), but also writes novels. *Les Créatures du Bon Dieu* (2007) was awarded the 21st Prix Lipp Suisse. *La Veuve à l'enfant* is his fifth novel.

PHOTO © Yvonne Böhler

In the mid-19th century, in a valley in the Ticino, a woman in her 70^s, Anna Maria, is the butt of finger-pointing and name-calling: she's the "vile woman", the "black widow". She is indeed a widow, unbending and focused only on her grandson, whom she shields from the hatred of the villagers. But her life is soon changed by the arrival in the village of don Tommaso Barbisio, a sophisticated but disgraced priest from Piedmont. The old lady is taken on as his housekeeper and she sees in this a glimmer of hope for a solution for her grandson, an escape from the burden of the sins of his forefathers. Don Tommaso's curiosity is aroused by the way the widow is ostracised by the village and eventually gets her to tell him her story. It's a tale of theft, smuggling and murder, which gradually lifts the veil on her past, a past that goes back several generations and implicates numerous families in the village. It brings to light the relentlessness of fate and the unrelenting nature of ancestral hatred.

If don Tommaso is a fictional character, Anna Maria really existed, along with her husband, whose crimes were the origin of a legend that has rung down across the generations. *Widow with Child* is a story that lies somewhere between historical narrative and romantic invention, told amid the buzz and chatter of several languages; on stage are two enigmatic but intensely human people, whose lives will be defined by the very fact of their meeting.

TITLE *La Veuve à l'enfant*

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Laure Pécher, Agency Astier-Pécher, lpacher@pierreastier.com

LA VEUVE À L'ENFANT DANIEL MAGGETTI

French original (p. 26-28)

Anna Maria avait eu de la peine à distinguer la silhouette de l'enfant ; dans la pièce, dotée d'une seule fenêtre, régnait une dense pénombre, et ses yeux n'avaient plus la belle acuité de leur jeunesse. Accroupi au bas de l'escalier qui conduisait à l'étage, Pierino avait aligné sur une des marches des coquilles d'escargot vides, blanchies par la pluie et ramassées dans les creux des murs. Comme souvent, il s'amusait avec son seul jouet, une toupie en bois liliputienne, tout en murmurant des propos inintelligibles ; le scapulaire qu'elle lui avait mis au cou pendait hors de sa camisole et, à chaque mouvement, lui frôlait les pieds nus. Plus de tisons dans la cheminée, mais dans l'air flottait encore le parfum des châtaignes grillées le soir avant, dont une poignée, sur la table, était destinée au petit-déjeuner ; il fallait auparavant que l'enfant aille traire la chèvre, une *stallina* blanche qui était sa compagne de prédilection. Anna Maria ne l'envoyait pas régulièrement à l'école, découragée par le récit récurrent des misères que lui faisaient les petits-enfants de la Vittoria, dressés depuis le berceau par leur grand-mère à ne laisser aucun répit aux descendants de celui qu'elle nommait *l'infame*. Dans le local carré de la maison décrépite surplombant l'église où s'engouffraient les *tusui* des trois villages du haut, de toute façon, le pauvre *maestro* Giulietti passait le plus clair de son temps à essayer de garder le contrôle d'une troupe aussi turbulente que protéiforme, et il ne réussissait à apprendre aux élèves que le strict minimum en italien et en arithmétique, ils quittaient l'école en sachant écrire leur nom, est-ce que ce n'était pas assez ? Aux récréations, dépit, le maître cherchait un peu de réconfort auprès de l'institutrice préposée aux filles, *la signorina* Venzi, une demoiselle sèche et basanée montée en graine dans un bourg de la plaine, elle était en pension dans le village du bas et se faisait une joie d'humilier son collègue en lui détaillant ses méthodes coercitives et la série subséquente de ses succès, puis en insistant sur la gêne occasionnée par le tapage des éléments mâles de l'école, dans la salle située au-dessus de celle qu'elle occupait. Que Pierino, ou n'importe qui d'autre, soit présent ou pas, le maître le remarquait à peine, il savait qu'il ne servait à rien d'enregistrer les absences, dès ses débuts, les membres de la municipalité lui avaient notifié que l'école n'avait pas à rivaliser avec les *vrais* travaux pour lesquels les garçons et les filles d'un village étaient utiles, le bétail, les foin, les récoltes de pommes de terre et de châtaignes dépendaient d'eux, alors les livres et les cahiers, soit, mais à condition de les cantonner aux mois d'hiver, une fois les réserves de bois faites, et au moins la classe était chauffée, les petits n'y claquaient pas des dents comme chez eux.

WIDOW WITH CHILD DANIEL MAGGETTI

Excerpt translated by Tess Lewis

Anna Maria had trouble making out the child's silhouette. A dense twilight reigned in the room with its single window and her eyes had lost the keen-sightedness of their youth. Crouching at the foot of the stairs to the upper floor, Pierino had lined up on one of the steps a row of empty snail shells, bleached by the rain, he'd gathered from holes in the walls. As so often, he kept himself entertained with his only toy, a Lilliputian wooden top, muttering unintelligible phrases all the while. The scapulary she had hung around his neck dangled outside his camisole and brushed his bare feet with every movement. There were no more embers in the fireplace, but the scent of grilled chestnuts from the night before still hung in the air. A handful of the chestnuts were on the table, saved for breakfast; but first the child had to milk the goat, a white *stallina* that was his favourite companion. Anna Maria didn't send the boy to school regularly, discouraged as she was by his accounts of the miseries inflicted on him by Vittoria's grandchildren, who had been raised by their grandmother not to allow a moment of peace to any descendants of the woman she called *l'infame*. In any case, poor *maestro* Giulietti spent most of his time trying to keep control of his herd, as unruly as it was protean, in the square room of the dilapidated house overhanging the church, where all the *tusui* of the three villages higher up the mountain gathered. He never managed to teach them more than the very minimum of Italian and arithmetic. They left school knowing how to write their names, wasn't that enough? At playtime, the aggrieved teacher sought consolation with the instructor appointed to the girls, *la signorina* Venzi, a desiccated, weather-beaten spinster who had gone to seed in a small town in the lowlands. She was boarding in one of the villages below and took pleasure in humiliating her colleague by enumerating her coercive methods and the success they had brought her, before stressing the racket made by the male element in the school, who occupied the room above hers. The teacher barely noticed whether Pierino, or any one else for that matter, was present. He knew there was no point in recording absences. From the very beginning, members of the community had made it clear to him that school should not compete with the *real* work for which the boys and girls in a village were needed; the livestock, the hay, potato and chestnut harvests were dependent on them, whereas books and notebooks, fine, but on condition they were confined to the winter months once the firewood stores were complete, and at least the schoolroom was heated so the little ones' teeth wouldn't chatter as much as at home.

"This story could take place anywhere and in any age. It's universal: a narrow-minded peasantry, fighting for survival on an impoverished land; the people they bond with and those they reject – and the robberies they commit along the way." VICEVERSA

TWO COUPLES, NO SEX, IN THE SPOOKY WOODS

ZWEI PAARE OHNE SEX IM WALDVIERTEL

GENRE Short Stories, LANGUAGE German



"A book that draws you in. Four stories of love and death, each one more powerful than the one before." ORF

The characters in Andres Müry's four stories are in no way classic heroes: a fashion photographer, a TV executive, a lifestyle reporter and a diplomat. They may seem glamorous, but are in fact four men of a certain age, gradually realising that life as they once knew it is slipping away from them. Things they should have dealt with years ago reappear unexpectedly. The past is no longer the past: at most, it's just been suppressed.

Chance encounters transport Volker back to his mis-spent youth and make Harry's visit to a brothel a most unpleasant experience. The tragic death of one of Felix's female readers and Max's belated discovery that he's a father chip away at the egos of these aging narcissists. What they've learnt from life no longer serves them well: the world has changed. Müry records this realisation with dry humour, switching back and forth between comedy and tragedy.

As Anton Thuswaldner says of Müry in the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, "he has a light and sure touch; he elegantly introduces us to people, who have cut themselves off by suppressing their past, who live a care-free existence and are then brought sharply down to earth when the past catches up with them and they realise how contemptible they are."

TITLE Zwei Paare ohne Sex im Waldviertel

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Rainer Weiss,
weiss@weissbooks.com

ANDRES MÜRY was born in Basel in 1948 and read Sociology and Theatre Studies at university. For many years he worked in the theatre as an artistic director; he was also an arts journalist, theatre critic and translator. He has published two collections of essays: *Minetti ist Eisbein. Lob der Hinterbühne* (1992) and *Jedermann darf nicht sterben. Geschichte eines Salzburger Kults* (2001). *Two Couples, No Sex, in the Spooky Woods* is his first book of short stories. Andres Müry lives in Austria.

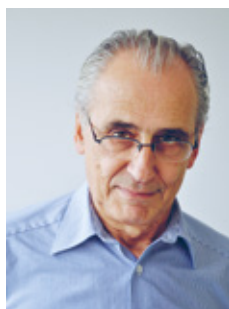


PHOTO © Michael Utz

ZWEI PAARE OHNE SEX IM WALDVIERTEL ANDRES MÜRY**German original (p. 65-66)****Alte Liebe**

»Alles klar, Herr Kommissar?«

Der bärenhafte Securitymann bei der Kontrolle am Berliner Flughafen sprach absichtlich laut und grinste dabei breit. Dass ihm der Schauspieler, den er am Abend zuvor im *Tatort* gesehen hatte, in die Hände fiel, nahm er offenbar als Freibrief. Sichtlich genoss er es, den Prominenten vor dem mäßig interessierten Morgenpublikum in die Position des Gekreuzigten zu zwingen und ihm dann mit seinen Pranken durch die Cordhose hindurch die Innenseiten der Oberschenkel bis hinauf in den Schritt abzutasten. Schließlich reichte es ihm nicht, die Stiefeletten am Fuß zu durchleuchten, Harry Freitag musste vor ihm auf die Knie und sie ausziehen. Er zitterte immer noch vor Ärger, als er seine Siebensachen vom Transportband wieder an sich nahm.

Die restliche Warteprozedur verlief gnädig. Die Geschäftsleute und Vorweihnachtstouristen, die sich mit ihm am Gate der 10-Uhr-30-Maschine nach Wien versammelten, waren zumeist mit ihren Handys beschäftigt. Das Einsteigen ging reibungslos, Blickkontakte beschränkte Freitag aufs Unvermeidliche. Die Stewardess, die direkt bei seiner Reihe stand, erkannte ihn wohl, beließ es aber bei einem diskreten Lächeln. Er nahm seinen Fensterplatz ein und tauchte hinter der österreichischen Tageszeitung ab, die er beim Einstieg mitgenommen hatte.

Er konnte sich ausbreiten, der Platz neben ihm war freigeblieben. Er blätterte nach der Seite mit den Wiener Kulturveranstaltungen und erblickte, womit er gerechnet hatte: sein eigenes Gesicht. Die Kraterlandschaft mit den scharfen Schwarz-Weiß-Kontrasten. Die hellen Augen, die aus sich zu leuchten schienen. Die Wuschelperücke, die im Gegenlicht wie ein Strahlenkranz auf seinem Kopf saß. Der Mund mit den rissigen Lippen, leicht vorgestülpt, um die Banane aufzunehmen, die nicht mit im Bild war.

Freitag mochte das Foto, das ihn als Krapp zeigte, den alten Einsiedler aus Becketts Stück *Das letzte Band*. Gerade weil er sich darauf so fremd war, so fremd wie ein bemalter Krieger eines urzeitlichen Stamms. So hatte er wochenlang an Berliner Plakatwänden gehangen und Lou, seine Lebensgefährtin, hatte es nur das Affenfoto genannt. Nun kündigte man damit sein dreitägiges Wiener Gastspiel an.

TWO COUPLES, NO SEX, IN THE SPOOKY WOODS ANDRES MÜRY**Excerpt translated by Stephen Morris****An old love**

"Morning inspector!"

The bear of a security man at the Berlin airport deliberately raised his voice, grinning throughout. The actor he had seen last night in the nation's favourite crime drama, *Crime Scene*, was here at his mercy. He took visible pleasure in forcing Harry Freitag into a crucifixion posture for a mildly interested audience, then pawing his way up the celebrity's corduroy-clad inner legs to his crotch. Not satisfied simply to scan Freitag's ankle boots with the feet inside, he forced him to kneel before him and remove them. Freitag was still quivering with rage as he retrieved his belongings from the conveyor belt.

He had no further trouble during the rest of the waiting period. At the gate, the business people and pre-Christmas tourists assembled for the 10.30 to Vienna were largely busy with their phones. Boarding went smoothly, Freitag kept eye-contact to a minimum. The stewardess standing by his row clearly recognised him but was content with a discreet smile. He claimed his window seat and hid behind the Vienna daily he had picked up on boarding. The next seat was free and he could spread out. He leafed through to the page previewing cultural events and saw what he had expected, his face – the moonscape in sharp black-and-white, bright eyes, as if illuminated from within, the tousled wig against the light looked like a halo perched on his head, the mouth, with cracked lips, protruding slightly, ready to eat the banana not visible in this shot.

Freitag liked the photo, which showed him as the aging recluse in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, precisely because it was so removed from himself, as far removed as the painted face of a warrior from some primeval tribe. Posters showing him just like this had been on Berlin's streets for weeks, and Lou, his partner, had called it the monkey photo. Now it was being used to promote the three-day run in Vienna.

"Entertaining stories told with intelligence and drama. Even with the most delicate or potentially tawdry subjects, Müry maintains a balance between pathos and irony. There's nothing 'tacky' here: he strikes an almost English-style 'dry' note." DER TAGESSPIEGEL

ORGANISING THE VOID

L'ORDONNANCE RESPECTUEUSE DU VIDE

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"Marie-Jeanne Urech has here succeeded in creating something precious, in an era when the literary obsession with realism too often overpowers works of the imagination." LE COURRIER

MARIE-JEANNE URECH was born in 1976. She writes novels and short stories. *Des Accessoires pour le paradis* (2009) won the Prix Bibliomédia 2010, and *Les Valets de nuit* (2010) was awarded the Prix Rambert 2013.

PHOTO © Charly Rappo



Organising the Void is a fantasy tale, which depicts the world of tax havens as a kind of lunatic allegory. Literally using the concept of the 'post-box', Marie-Jeanne Urech throws the reader straight into the setting of Z, a ghostly town located at an indefinable point in time, whose existence is threatened by a melting glacier. Z's inhabitants are exploited and the town is ruled by an androgynous lady mayor. Bizarre though it may seem, the storyline is clear: it follows the fortunes of Modeste, an outsider who has just arrived in Z and is struck by the strange emptiness of the place. Modeste is a cabinet-maker, who is determined to make his fortune building furniture to fill the huge spaces being created in apartment buildings, which are going up everywhere. But he rapidly has to come to terms with reality: the only visible activity in Z is the filling and emptying of the town's post-boxes by invisible hands.

Otherwise, life in the city is defined by the pulse of its processions and festivals, the sole purpose of which is to maintain the docility of its few inhabitants. Luckily for Modeste, he by chance meets the outwardly fragile but beautiful Elytre, who brings pleasure back into his daily life and enables him to resist the oppressive order of Z.

The financial crisis, the trade in raw materials, political instability: Urech's novels borrow the world of fable to attack the social disorders of our times. Her latest novel opposes the denigration of human values by the empire of high finance with the full force of language and poetic imagination.

TITLE L'Ordonnance respectueuse du vide

PUBLISHER Editions de l'Aire, Vevey

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L'ORDONNANCE RESPECTUEUSE DU VIDE MARIE-JEANNE URECH**French original (p. 87-89)**

*Merci pour l'appartement.
Anonyme, chapelle du glacier*

La première semaine de juillet, les températures grimèrent et l'été se retrouva prisonnier de l'appartement. Dès le matin, la chaleur s'engouffrait dans l'amas de meubles et ne semblait plus en trouver la sortie. Respirer dans un espace si confiné devenait difficile, aussi Modeste n'était-il pas mécontent de travailler au couvent, à l'ombre de murs que l'on avait construits épais, moins pour l'isoler de la chaleur que pour tenir les sœurs éloignées du monde extérieur. Souvent Elytre l'accompagnait, tout heureuse de se soustraire à la fournaise de leur logement. Tandis qu'il travaillait, la Mère supérieure fixait la petite. Il voyait alors se dessiner sur le visage fripé de la sœur un sourire qui ne lui plaisait guère. En quittant le couvent, il s'assurait toujours qu'Elytre fût avec lui. La nuit, elle déplaçait discrètement son lit de quelques centimètres en direction de la fenêtre, se rapprochant ainsi de Modeste qui feignait de ne rien remarquer. Il avait calculé qu'à la fin de l'été, le lit d'Elytre serait voisin du sien et qu'il pourrait alors la demander en mariage.

En se rendant à la répétition de la fanfare ce mardi-là, Modeste trouva la porte close. Comme il frappait avec insistance, le concierge de l'église voisine sortit sur le parvis.

« C'est le temps des récoltes ! cria-t-il.

– Et alors ?

– Il n'y a pas de fête ce mois et donc pas de fanfare. À moins qu'on n'enterre !

– On ne célèbre pas les récoltes ici ?

– Où voyez-vous des récoltes ? »

Elytre regarda alentour, au-delà des murs de la vieille ville, là où s'étalaient d'immenses parcelles construites. N'avait-on pas semé des briques sur ces champs ? Des immeubles luxueux n'étaient-ils pas sortis de terre ? N'y avait-il pas à en attendre plus que du blé ? La ville de Z tutoyait le miracle : elle était capable d'une belle moisson sans récolte.

Une sœur décéda dans le courant du mois. La nuit même où un incendie se déclara à la Cour de déposition des ordures, ajoutant aux cendres des déchets, celles de son directeur, surpris par le feu et mort en brave capitaine. Modeste délaissa aussitôt son travail de restauration pour la confection d'un cercueil en tous points semblable au premier, chaque sœur souffrant d'une déformation dorsale identique.

ORGANISING THE VOID MARIE-JEANNE URECH**Excerpt translated by Tess Lewis**

*Thank you for the apartment.
Anonymous, glacier chapel*

In the first week of July, temperatures soared and summer was locked into the apartment. Early in the morning, the heat surged into the mass of furniture and could not seem to find its way out. Breathing in such a confined space became difficult, and in any case Modeste wasn't unhappy to be working in the convent, in the shade of walls that had been built very thick, less to keep the heat out than to keep the sisters cut off from the outside world. Elytre often accompanied him, happy to get out of the furnace that was their lodgings. While Modeste worked, the mother superior kept her eye on the young woman. He would then see a smile that was far from pleasant spread across her wrinkled face. Whenever he left the convent, he always made sure Elytre was with him. At night she would discreetly shift her bed several centimetres closer to the window and thus closer to Modeste, who pretended not to notice. He had calculated that by the end of the summer, Elytre's bed would be touching his and then he'd be able to ask for her hand in marriage.

When Modeste showed up for brass band rehearsal that Tuesday, he found the door closed. Because he knocked so insistently, the caretaker of the neighbouring church came out onto the square.

–It's harvest time!, he shouted.

–So?

–There's no festival this month, so there's no performance. Not unless there's a burial!

–So there's no harvest festival?

–Do you see any harvest?

Elytre looked around, past the walls of the old city, to where vast plots of land had been developed. Hadn't bricks been sown on those fields? Hadn't luxurious buildings sprung from the ground? Couldn't they expect more than wheat? The city of Z was on a first name basis with miracles: it was able to produce a large crop without a harvest.

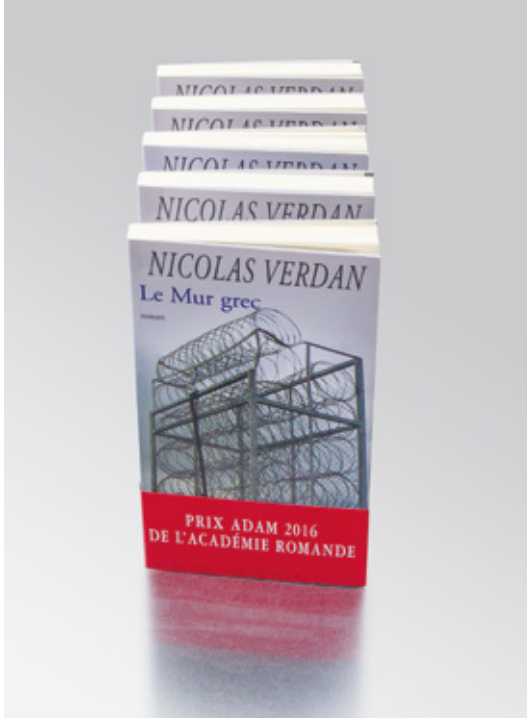
A nun passed away in the course of that month. The same night that a fire broke out at the refuse collection centre, adding to the ashes of the rubbish those of the manager, who was caught unawares and died in the line of duty. Modeste interrupted his restoration work to build a coffin similar in every aspect to the first, since all the sisters suffered from the same spinal deformation.

"Marie-Jeanne Urech creates a naive picture-book world, employing modern words in their literal sense. Once transposed into a fairy-tale, they translate our everyday world into something quite strange and un-literal." LE TEMPS

THE GREEK WALL

LE MUR GREC

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"What is so beguiling about this novel, is its ability to reflect back to the reader the air, the colour of the sky, the smells, the appearance and the mood of people and things, the fear of some, the bluster of others, the nobility of a few." LE TEMPS



NICOLAS VERDAN, born in 1971 in Vevey, divides his time between the canton of Vaud, where he lives, and Greece, where he frequently travels. He's a journalist and writer and his novel *Le Mur Grec* is poignant and topical, winning him the Prix Adam in 2016, awarded by the Académie romande.

PHOTO © Ph. Pache

A few kilometres along the Greek-Turkish border, there's a gap where refugees can still slip through, but not for long, because soon the 'Greek Wall' will close off the route for these unhappy people, and perhaps banish this much coveted human trade. But until the wall is built, the international Frontex troops will continue their patrols, the shady trafficking will prosper and the smugglers will cash in. Likewise, the grotty Eros brothel, where the escort girls from the east end up, driven from their towns by the same crisis. Not far from the brothel, the police are agonizing over a severed head they've found on the river bank. Officer Evangelos is pursuing the case, which others would prefer to hush up. Evangelos is approaching retirement, and he's tired. He can remember the German occupation, the civil war, the dictatorship: but he also remembers Greece's distant past, its mythology, the mother of Europe. He would prefer to be a carefree grandfather, but how can he be, in this current chaos?

As a journalist Nicolas Verdan is totally in command of the social and political situation in Greece. The machinations of the police are a pretext for discussing the precariousness of daily life in a country oppressed by the monetary policy of the European Union. But Nicolas Verdan is also a writer who knows how to describe the murmur of the river, the poetry of the borderlands, and the wild cavortings of Bacchanalian women.

TITLE *Le Mur grec*

PUBLISHER Bernard Campiche Editeur, Orbe

PUBLICATION DATE August 2015

PAGES 252

ISBN 978-2-88241-397-0

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Bernard Campiche, info@campiche.ch

LE MUR GREC NICOLAS VERDAN

French original (p. 71-73)

Il vient, de ce côté du monde, une souffrance. Chaque nuit, elle s'insinue en silence dans le cours de l'Evros, avant d'épandre dans les champs, à l'aube, ses graines transparentes à la lumière de l'autre rive.

Vers midi, quand le brouillard s'est enfin dissipé, elle a atteint la limite sud d'Orestiada, là où la ville tombe en arrêt dans la plaine fluviale, à la limite exacte du passage du train tagué qui relie, au nord, la ville bulgare de Svilengrad, ignorant l'ancienne voie qui passait par Edirne, en Turquie. Agent Evangelos se trouvait devant le poste de police quand il a vu le cortège traverser la gare, avant de remonter l'avenue Vasileos Konstandinou, inexistant aux yeux accoutumés des habitants d'Orestiada. Porteurs de la rumeur de l'Evros au cours toujours invisible, charriant les humeurs du fleuve, transportant à leur corps défendant un fardeau de limon, ils avancent, les gens des hauts plateaux du Pamir, les gens des alluvions du Gange et du Brahmapoutre, les gens du Rif, suiveurs d'une seule et même piste qui, aujourd'hui, fait gondoler le plan tiré au cordeau d'Orestiada, dessiné en 1922 pour accueillir d'autres réfugiés, les Grecs d'Asie Mineure.

Hommes, femmes, enfants, vieillards, ils font plus que traverser pays et frontières. Ils franchissent les eaux, une fois pour toutes, poussés à l'ouest par la misère, peu importe son origine, pourvu qu'on l'oublie, toute la misère du monde qu'on voudrait derrière soi aussitôt passé le fleuve.

« C'était sans compter de nouvelles couches de malheur, songe à l'instant Agent Evangelos, sans compter, en plus des six cents euros lâchés aux passeurs, le prix à payer pour se dégager de cette poisse qui encrasse le seuil de l'Union européenne, où des Grecs, en 2010, comme en 1945, fouillent les poubelles pour trouver de quoi bouffer ce soir. »

Les premiers migrants parviennent devant le poste de police. Eux, ce sont les plus jeunes, à peine sortis de l'enfance, quinze ou seize ans, tout au plus.

« On les dirait peints en noir. »

Agent Evangelos les voit comme ça, oui, peints en noirs, avec aussi des yeux comme des billes : « Je connais ces yeux dessinés par la peur, celle qui fait regarder de côté, celle qui donne à voir tout le blanc dedans quand fuit le regard du mec que tu cuisines dans une pièce sans fenêtres. »

Chaque année, ce sont des dizaines de milliers de personnes en situation irrégulière et de demandeurs d'asile qui arrivent en Grèce. La grande majorité des demandeurs d'asile, fuyant des pays déchirés par la guerre, sont des Afghans, des Érythréens, des Irakiens, des Palestiniens et des Somaliens.

THE GREEK WALL NICOLAS VERDAN

Excerpt translated by W. Donald Wilson

From that side of the world comes distress. Silently each night it invades the course of the river Evros; then, at dawn, it spreads across the fields, its seeds transparent in the light from the other bank.

Towards midday, when the fog has finally lifted, it has reached the southern edge of Orestiada, where the town stops dead on the floodplain, at the precise point where the graffiti-covered train runs, connecting north to the Bulgarian town of Svilengrad and ignoring the older route that went through Edirne, in Turkey.

Officer Evangelos was standing in front of the police station when he saw the column cross the railway station and then come up Vasileos Konstandinou Avenue, unremarked by Orestiada's inhabitants, inured as they were to this scene. Bringing with them the murmur of the still invisible river, conveying the river's humours, reluctantly transporting a burden of silt, they come, the people from the high plateaus of the Pamirs, from the floodplains of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, from the Rif, following the only route they can - which today makes a mockery of the meticulous plans for Orestiada, drawn up in 1922, to receive other refugees: the Greeks of Asia Minor.

Men, women, children, the elderly, they cross not only countries and borders. They also traverse the seas, never to return, driven westward by poverty, no matter its origin, provided it is forgotten - all the world's misery that they hope to have left behind once they are over the river.

"But that doesn't take into account the next lot of hardships they'll face," reflects Evangelos at that very moment, "in addition to the six hundred euros they hand over to the people smugglers, the price they pay to get out of this rotten mess on the doorstep of the European Union; in 2010, just like in 1945, Greeks have to rummage in dustbins looking for something to eat tonight."

The first migrants reach the front of the police station. These are the youngest, barely more than children, aged fifteen or sixteen at most.

"You'd think they were painted black."

That is how Officer Evangelos sees them: painted black, and with eyes like marbles. "I know those eyes traced in fear, the fear that makes a man look away when you're grilling him in a windowless room, showing the whites of his eyes because he daren't look into yours."

Every year, tens of thousands of asylum-seekers and people with no papers arrive in Greece. The great majority of the former are Afghans, Eritreans, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Somalis fleeing their war-torn countries.

"This detective story totally resonates with our lives today, providing the key to understanding how Europe controls its borders. But above all it's a 'roman noir' of rare and dense metaphysical thought." VICEVERSA

A SUMMER'S TALE

KREUZFAHRT

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"A love story, rich in clarity and atmospheric detail, in the rhythm and colours of daydreams." TAGES ANZEIGER

Meret and Jan hit it off the first time they meet. They're both in their forties and married, with young children. They're on Summer holiday with their families on the Ligurian coast – and on the same beach. They soon find themselves neighbours back home in Zürich, where Meret and Jan become lovers. Jan's wife Romy looks the other way, and Meret's husband Dres seems broad-minded about the affair. The lovers meet up in Paris and Milan or in a Zürich hotel.

Their happiness might have lasted and, as Meret says, might have become "their second life". But was it anything other than pure fantasy? Did everything really happen the way Meret describes it in her long letter to Jan? Or did they just imagine it all? Mireille Zindel's novel doesn't just deal with the power of love; it shows the boredom that threatens love. And more than anything else, it demonstrates in gripping fashion how important storytelling is to love. Maybe letter-writing is the only way Meret can get close to her loved one – the lyrical 'You'. "Stories", says Meret at one point, "bring people together and are for that very reason a necessity of life."

TITLE Kreuzfahrt

PUBLISHER Kein & Aber, Zürich

PUBLICATION DATE March 2016

PAGES 286

ISBN 978-3-0369-5737-1

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Lisa Mühlemann,
l.muehlemann@keinundaber.ch



MIREILLE ZINDEL was born in 1973. She studied Germanic and Romance languages and literature; she lives and writes in Zürich. *A Summer's Tale* is her third novel, following on from *Laura Theiler* (2010) and *Irrgast* (2008).

PHOTO © Dominique Meienberg

KREUZFAHRT MIREILLE ZINDEL**German original (p. 5-6)**

Eine gute Schule ...

Es ist Sommer. Sie erkennt es schon am unendlich warmen Wind beim Verlassen des Hotels. Dann der Strand mit den bunten Schirmen und die Bar nahe am Wasser. Die Kinder wollen Zitronenlimonade. »Wenn es heiß ist, trinken wir Zitrone«, sagt der Kleinere. »Warum ist heiß?«, fragt der Größere. Die Mutter antwortet nicht. Sie denkt an einen fernen Abend, an dem sie hierher zurückkehren und kalten Wein bestellen wird. Sie wird aufs Meer blicken, während Dres, ihr Mann, nach den Kindern sieht. So wird es sein, denkt sie, und sucht nach einem Tisch mit freiem Blick aufs Wasser. Sie setzt zuerst die Kinder, dann sich selbst hin. Jetzt sitzen sie und die Jungen verstummen. Sie schweigen alle drei. In diesem Punkt schlagen die Söhne bereits der Mutter nach: Sie beobachten gern, was um sie herum geschieht. Wenn es etwas zu beobachten gibt, werden sie ruhig. Ruhig wie die Mutter, denkt sie, dabei sind sie erst drei und vier Jahre alt. Die Kinder gleichen plötzlich Erwachsenen, ist das nicht seltsam? Warum eigentlich seltsam, fragt sie sich, warum sollten sie nicht alles sein können in ihrem Alter, auch wie Erwachsene? Sie blickt aufs Wasser.

Die Kinder trinken Zitronenlimonade, die Mutter trinkt Fruchtsaft, um ein gutes Vorbild zu sein. Sie trinken und beobachten schweigend den Strand.

Der Mutter fällt ein weiterer Strand mit Sonnenschirmen hinter der Landzunge auf. Viele bunte Schirme unter einer gelben Sonne, auch daran erkennt sie, dass es Sommer ist. Obwohl sie jeden Tag hinausgeht, nimmt sie nicht mehr viel wahr von dem, was um sie herum geschieht, derart wird sie von den Kindern in Anspruch genommen. Sie ist aus sich herausgetreten, mit der Geburt des zweiten Kindes hat es begonnen. Sie ist aus sich herausgetreten, um ihren Pflichten als Mutter nachzukommen. Man muss seine Bedürfnisse zurückstellen, heißt es, aber auf sie trifft diese Redewendung nicht zu, denn sie hat gar keine Bedürfnisse mehr, die sie zurückstellen könnte, sie erstickt sie im Keim, sie ist nur noch Mutter, so sehr hat sie sich Kinder gewünscht, so sehr.

Wenn sie sich nicht gerade den Schweiß von der Stirn wischen oder den Nacken von den Haaren befreien muss, die Augen vom Wind nicht tränen, die Kleidung nicht auf der Haut klebt, nimmt sie ihren Körper nicht wahr. Er hat nichts mehr mit ihr zu tun, er ist ihr fremd geworden.

A SUMMER'S TALE MIREILLE ZINDEL**Excerpt translated by Jenny Piening @ Transfiction**

Learning a lesson ...

It is summer. She can tell from the relentlessly warm wind as she steps out of the hotel. Then the beach with its brightly coloured sun umbrellas and the bar near the water's edge. The children want lemonade. "When it's hot we like to drink lemon," says the younger of the two. "Why's it hot?" asks the older child. The mother doesn't answer. She is thinking about a far off evening, when she will return here and order a glass of cold white wine. She will look out to sea while Dres, her husband, looks after the children. That's how it will be, she thinks, and searches for a table with an unobstructed view of the water. She seats her children before sitting down herself. Now here they are, and the boys fall silent. All three of them are silent. In this respect the boys already take after their mother: they like to watch what's going on around them. If there's something to look at it, they are quiet. Quiet like their mother, she thinks, although they are only three and four years old. The children suddenly resemble adults, isn't that strange? Actually, why is it strange, she wonders; surely they can be anything at their age, like adults? Then she looks at the sea.

The children drink lemonade, she drinks fruit juice, to set a good example. They drink and watch the beach in silence.

The mother notices another beach with sun umbrellas on the other side of the headland. Lots of colourful umbrellas beneath a yellow sun – another sign that it's summer. Although she goes out every day with the children, she doesn't notice much of what's going on around her, she is so preoccupied with the children. She has stepped outside of herself. It started with the birth of her second child. She stepped outside of herself to fulfil her duties as a mother. With children you have to set aside your own needs, so people say. But this doesn't really apply to her, because she no longer has any needs that she could set aside, she always nips them in the bud, she is now only a mother. She had longed so much for children, so much.

When she doesn't have to wipe the sweat from her brow or brush away strands of hair from her neck, when her eyes aren't watering from the wind and her clothes aren't sticking to her skin, she isn't even aware of her body. It has nothing to do with her anymore, it has become a stranger to her.

"Mireille Zindel describes exactly that very state we may never again experience, falling head over heels in love. Her writing is dense, atmospheric, poetic, riveting and full of empathy: this is a whirlpool of a book." MAX KÜNG

THE CLOUDS WERE FLUFFY AND WHITE AND DRIFTED ACROSS THE SKY

**DIE WOLKEN WAREN GROSS UND WEISS UND
ZOGEN DA OBEN HIN**

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"Zschokke has a magical sense of control: he creates something from nothing, and in describing life in all its bizarre detail, he gives it value and weight, grace and lustre." DEUTSCHLANDRADIO



MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE, who was born in 1954 in Bern, has lived and worked as a writer and filmmaker in Berlin since 1980. He wrote his first novel, *Max*, in 1982, for which he won the Robert Walser Prize. He is the first German-speaking author ever to win the Prix Femina Étranger for his novel *Maurice mit Huhn* (2006). He also received one of the Swiss Literature Awards for *Der Mann mit den zwei Augen* (2012).

PHOTO © Dirk Opitz

Roman is the name of the hero of Matthias Zschokke's novel: he lives in Berlin with his mistress and writes occasional short stories and plays. He's even said to have made a few films. But first and foremost he's a meticulous and indefatigable observer. Every morning, as he walks to the kiosk where he regularly buys his newspaper, he is watching everything – the two pensioners out for a jog; the family of ducks on the canal, as they try to get through the lock-gates; his gruff neighbour from across the road; the dogs rushing about. "Unlike the two old joggers, the sight of a large black dog that is often out at this time delights him whenever he sees it."

Occasionally Roman writes e-mails: to his elderly mother, who doesn't want to live much longer, and to his friend B, who would also rather die. Or to his cranky aunt in America, who always sends him the same postcard with a picture of Abraham Lincoln. Zschokke's hero isn't just curious about other people's lives, he's also unfailingly good-natured – but in no way the innocent. Watching everything as he does in such a detached way means he often discovers strange, even terrible things behind the facades of everyday life. And he surprises himself with how he is able to slip and slide between habit and compulsion: "This is an art that we have to practise; we have to endure it, not become bitter or angry with ourselves."

TITLE *Die Wolken waren gross und weiss und zogen da oben hin*

PUBLISHER Wallstein, Göttingen

PUBLICATION DATE August 2016

PAGES 218

ISBN 978-3-8353-1875-5

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Florian Grundeis, fgrundeis@wallstein-verlag.de

DIE WOLKEN WAREN GROSS UND WEISS UND ZOGEN DA OBEN HIN
MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE

German original (p. 31-33)

Jeden Morgen circa um acht tritt er unten auf die Straße und geht zu einem kleinen Laden, um dort die überregionale Tageszeitung zu holen. Vor dem Haus muss er dafür nach rechts gehen, am Nachbarhaus vorbei, dann wieder rechts um die Ecke und etwa nach fünf Häusern noch einmal rechts um die Ecke. Der Laden befindet sich auf der gleichen Höhe wie das Haus, in dem er wohnt, jedoch in dessen Rücken, in der Parallelstraße. Da Roman seine Zeit einteilen kann, wie er will – er steht in keinem festen Arbeitsverhältnis –, hält er sich besonders streng an seinen sich selbst auferlegten Stundenplan.

Auf dem Weg kommen ihm oft zwei Jogger entgegen. Ein älteres Ehepaar in kurzen Turnhosen, das sich jeden Tag offenbar genau zur selben Zeit wie er auf den Weg macht. Sie sind Rentner und könnten ihre Tage nach Belieben einteilen. Er verachtet ihr automatenartiges Abspulen des Morgenprogramms. Dann fällt ihm ein, dass auch er jeden Tag genau zur selben Zeit unterwegs ist, ohne dazu von irgendwem oder irgendetwas gezwungen zu werden, und er errötet.

Der Rentner hat sich angewöhnt, die Atemluft bei jedem dritten Schritt laut und heftig durch die Nase auszustoßen. Er scheint davon überzeugt zu sein, das gehöre zum Joggen dazu. Wahrscheinlich hat er es im Fernsehen, wo seit einiger Zeit jeden Abend joggende Kriminalkommissarinnen und Börsenmakler gezeigt werden, mehrmals so vorgeführt bekommen. Dort, wie auch in Filmen und in der Literatur, erscheinen uns die Menschen bunter, prächtiger, unbegreiflicher, weniger leicht durchschaubar als wir selbst, weswegen wir uns bemühen, ihre Gesten und Sprechweisen zu imitieren, um ebenfalls ein wenig bunter, prächtiger, überraschender zu werden, wodurch wir aber zu Fälschern unserer selbst werden und normiert wirken, austauschbar. Wir imitieren den Blick, den wir in einem Film gesehen haben, die Haltung, die wir in einer Erzählung gelesen haben, und werden dadurch zu Klonen von etwas, das es im sogenannt wahren Leben, bevor wir selbst es dort implantiert haben, vielleicht gar nie gegeben hatte. Wir übernehmen Posen, die von einem Schauspieler, einem Regisseur oder einem Autor ausgeheckt worden sind und die uns irgendwie gefallen, denn dafür sind sie schließlich ausgeheckt worden: um uns zu gefallen und zu beeindrucken. Doch bleiben es Erfindungen. Mit solch aufgepfropften Ticks, die vielleicht gar nicht zu uns passen, gehen wir durch unser weiteres Leben.

THE CLOUDS WERE FLUFFY AND WHITE AND DRIFTED ACROSS
THE SKY MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE

Excerpt translated by Michael Hofmann

Every morning at about eight o'clock he goes down onto the street and walks to a small stand to buy a national newspaper. This involves turning right at the front door, past the next building, then right at the corner, and after another five or so buildings, right again. The stand is almost directly behind the building he lives in, but in the parallel street. Since Roman's time is his own – he has no work to go to – he likes to keep rigidly to his own voluntary timetable.

On his way he often sees a pair of joggers. An elderly couple in shorts that obviously go out at the same time as him each morning. They are pensioners and, like his, their time is their own. He despises this robotic approach to their morning. Then it dawns on him that he too goes out at the same time each day, without being forced to by anyone or anything, and he has the decency to blush.

The old man has the habit of snorting loudly and violently at every third step. He seems convinced that this is an essential part of jogging. Probably the idea came to him from television, where detectives and stockbrokers are shown jogging every evening. On TV, as in films and books, people seem brighter, more colourful, more mysterious, more inscrutable than we do ourselves, and so we try to copy their gestures and speech, so that we too might become a little more colourful, splendid and surprising. The actual effect is to turn us into standardized and interchangeable counterfeits of ourselves. We imitate the expression we saw in a film, the attitude we read about in a story, and that turns us into clones of something that may never have existed in so-called 'real' life, until we took it into our heads to plant it there. We take on poses that were devised by an actor, a director, an author, and which please us for some reason, perhaps because that's what they were devised to do: to please and impress. But they are still inventions. With borrowed tricks like that, which may not even suit us, we go through our lives.

"Next to Wilhelm Genazino, Matthias Zschokke is our slyest and wickedest observer today. Both of them see the apparently banal details of our daily lives as deceptive riddles and tackle them with a mixture of outrage, sadness, graphic wit and language that is at once evocative and laconic."
FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

6 MORE UNMISSABLE SWISS BOOKS



DER MANN, DER DAS GLÜCK BRINGT
(THE MAN WHO BRINGS HAPPINESS)
CATALIN DORIAN FLORESCU

GENRE Novel
PAGES 327
PUBLISHER C.H. Beck, Munich 2016
ISBN 978-3-406-69112-6
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Liepman Agency,
marianne.fritsch@liepmanagency.com

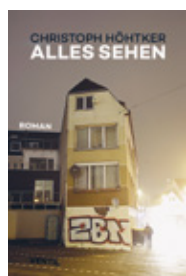
A story that takes the reader back to the New York of a hundred years ago and across the sea to the magical world of the Danube Delta. A novel of tragedy and comedy, but at the same time a literary bow to the ability of men to seek happiness, to survive and to love by overcoming adversity.



MÄDCHEN FÜR MORRIS
(A GIRL FOR MORRIS)
ROMAN GRAF

GENRE Novel
PAGES 304
PUBLISHER Knaus, Munich 2016
ISBN 978-3-8135-0571-9
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Gesche Wendebourg,
gesche.wendebourg@randomhouse.de

Albert Keller, retired literature lecturer, can hardly bear the fact that his son Morris, who died at the age of 14, had never been able to experience love. A subtle interplay between fiction and reality with hints of Nabokov, Lewis Carroll and Thomas Mann.



ALLES SEHEN
(TO SEE IT ALL)
CHRISTOPH HÖHTKER

GENRE Novel
PAGES 661
PUBLISHER Ventil Verlag, Mainz 2015
ISBN 978-3-95575-045-9
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Ingo Rüdiger,
mail@ventil-verlag.de

To See It All is the story of one day and one night, a merry-go-round of fate, love and sexuality, violence and social sciences – the quintessence of a city distilled from the key elements of human existence.



BERGSTEIGEN IM FLACHLAND
(MOUNTAINEERING IN THE LOWLANDS)
URS MANNHART

GENRE Novel
PAGES 661
PUBLISHER Secession, Zürich 2014
ISBN 978-3-905951-32-5
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Christian Ruzicska,
ruzicska@secession-verlag.com

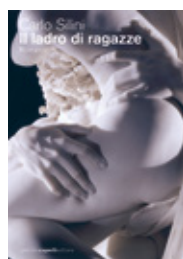
Available again after having been temporarily withdrawn from sale: Urs Mannhart's novel about reporter Thomas Steinhövel's travels through Europe with all its wonders and wounds, from Scandinavia, through the Carpathians and war-torn Former Yugoslavia.



ALLEGRA
(ALLEGRA)
PHILIPPE RAHMY

GENRE Novel
PAGES 188
PUBLISHER Éditions de la Table ronde, Paris 2016
ISBN 978-88-97308-35-5
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Anna Vateva,
a.vateva@editionslatable ronde.fr

London, Summer 2012. Abel, a young city trader with a great future and a caring father, falls into a distressing decline. Tempted by the possibilities of violence, pitched between denial and reality, he searches for a sense of direction.



IL LADRO DI RAGAZZE
(THE GIRL THIEF)
CARLO SILINI

GENRE Novel
PAGES 446
PUBLISHER Gabriele Capelli Editore, Mendrisio 2015
ISBN 978-88-97308-35-5
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Gabriele Capelli,
gabrielecapellieditore@gmail.com

History and legend blend together in the events surrounding the magician of Cantone, bringing to life the social, religious and personal environment in the Swiss fiefdoms south of the Alps and in the Duchy of Milan, in the first half of the 17th century.

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF GIORGIO ORELLI

The collected poems of Giorgio Orelli are now available in a single volume that includes an introduction by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo as well as the posthumous collection *The Edge of Life*. The first poems date back to the 1940s, and the last, to 2013, the year of his death. Orelli had a long life, but he was a poet of relatively scant output and he was, above all, very selective. His books show a continuous formal evolution and, at the same time, a tenacious loyalty to his themes and locations. The consistency and overall quality of his work are impressive. Even among the texts he wrote at the age of 90, there are some masterpieces that seem to reach a new level of simplicity and transparency. Orelli's work is notable for the way in which it discerns and reveals the details of everyday life, giving them an enhanced meaning.

Orelli was also a poet who tackled social issues (a fact well known to politicians, opportunists and other reprobates, against whom his pen "scratched") and a good storyteller, both in verse and in the short prose pieces that he included in his poetry books. Themes of transience and death are always present in his work, but they appear as shadows and outlines that, however threatening, render the colours of life even brighter. Or they appear as the opposite: like the frenzy of azaleas that concludes his famous poem about the blackbird killed and crushed in the darkness of a tunnel. Orelli is fundamentally a realist poet; he loved day-to-day reality too much to distance himself from it completely, but that did not stop him from writing poems that have aspects of fantasy and fable to them, sometimes even the dreamlike and the metaphysical, because these dimensions are part of our lives as well.

Among his best-known poems, there are encounters on the streets of Bellinzona; adventures that are slight, but still adventures; dialogues composed of a few memorable lines. Orelli's driving force, that which takes him on his journeys, whether walking or cycling, is language. For him, each encounter is also a linguistic event into which he can introduce the Italian poetic tradition (that of Dante, first and foremost), puns and Freudian slips, the wonderful inventions of children, the sometimes alienating snippets of a foreign language or the telling witticisms of a dialect. All of this coexists in the poetry of Orelli - just as it was embodied in the poet himself - with extraordinary vivacity and naturalness.



TITLE Giorgio Orelli. *Tutte le poesie*
PUBLISHER Mondadori, Milano
PUBLICATION DATE October 2015
PAGES 480
ISBN 978-88-04-65816-0
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Emanuela Canali,
canali@mondadori.it



Giorgio Orelli (b. Airolo 1921-d. Bellinzona 2013) is unanimously considered one of the greatest Italian language poets of the late twentieth century. He also wrote short stories and essays of literary criticism. Anthologies devoted to his poetry have been published in English, German, French and Serbian. Orelli's example and work have been decisive for the literature of Ticino for the last forty years.

PHOTO © AyseYavas/Keystone

CURRENTLY IN TRANSLATION

Eins im Andern by Monique Schwitter is currently being translated into several languages. Here five of her translators give us their personal insight into translating her novel.

HELEN MOSTER (FINLAND)

"The writing seems deceptively simple, but Monique Schwitter's style is accomplished, her sense of humour sharp and shrewd, her dialogue precise."

OLGA KOZONKOVA (RUSSIA)

"The hypertext comes with difficulties, such as puns and ambiguities. Fundamentally, though, it's fun to translate such shrewd prose."

TESS LEWIS (USA)

"An amusingly deceptive and deceptively amusing book. The early passages promise conventional memories of past loves, but soon dark abysses open up. '*What is it, this love thing?*' asks the narrator. Over twelve chapters, love reveals itself, at once offbeat, absurd, desperate, ecstatic, faithful, dependable, ephemeral – and so much more."

SEVGİ TUNCAY (TURKEY)

"It's difficult to adapt the style of this book to suit the tastes of the Turkish reader, which made translating it an exciting challenge!"

HELEN SINKOVIC (CROATIA)

"Monique Schwitter's writing in *Eins im Andern* immediately enthralled me: its enigmatic humour, self-irony, profound but humorous portrayal of people's love affairs made me curious as a reader and eager to set to work as a translator. The text seems easy to read on the surface, but only when you start to translate it, do you realise that Monique Schwitter has set herself high literary standards, which both reader and translator must heed."



MONIQUE SCHWITTER was born in 1972 in Zürich and has lived in Hamburg since 2005. She studied acting and directing in Salzburg and has had theatrical engagements in Zürich, Frankfurt, Graz and Hamburg, amongst others. She writes novels, short stories and plays. Her novel *Eins im Andern* was awarded one of the 2016 Swiss Literature Awards.

PHOTO © Matthias Oertel

SWISS LITERATURE AWARDS 2016

presented by the Federal Office of Culture

Every year, the Federal Office of Culture awards the Swiss Grand Award for Literature, plus from five to seven Swiss Literature Awards. The latter are awarded for literary works that have been published in the previous year, in one of the Swiss national languages or dialects. The Swiss Grand Award for Literature honours a personality who stands out through their exceptional dedication to Swiss literature. In addition, every other year there's a Special Award for Translation, awarded to an outstanding translator.

For more information, visit www.literaturpreise.ch

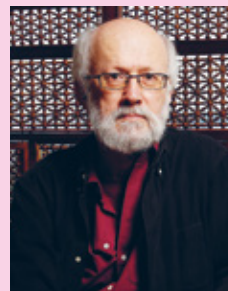
Sample translations of the 2016 laureates' texts can be provided upon request.

SWISS GRAND AWARD FOR LITERATURE



ALBERTO NESSI is a Swiss Italian writer, born in Mendrisio in the canton of Ticino in 1940. He occupies an important place in Swiss Italian literature and is one of the most respected and most frequently translated authors into the other languages of Switzerland. His writings include poetry, prose and essays. His latest book *Miló*, a volume of narratives, was published in 2014 at Edizioni Casagrande.

SPECIAL AWARD FOR TRANSLATION



HARTMUT FÄHNDRICH was born in Tübingen, Germany, in 1944. From 1978 to 2014, he taught Arabic and Islamic Cultural History at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich. He has also been a lecturer and held guest professorships at universities in Germany, France and Italy. He has been awarded several important prizes for his many translations of Arabic authors.

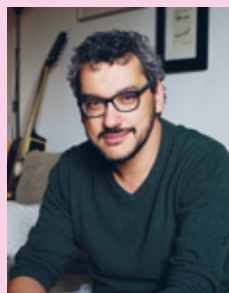
Read Hartmut Fähndrich's column on "Gaps in the Arab Mosaic" on page 19.



GIOVANNI FONTANA

BREVE PAZIENZA DI RITROVARTI
(A LITTLE PATIENCE TILL WE MEET AGAIN)

GENRE Short stories
PUBLISHER Interlinea, Novara
ISBN 978-88-6857-029-3
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Ilaria Finotti,
edizioni@interlinea.com



MASSIMO GEZZI

IL NUMERO DEI VIVI
(THE LIVING)

GENRE Poetry
PUBLISHER Donzelli Editore, Rome
ISBN 978-88-6843-186-0
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Elena Munafò,
e.munafò@donzelli.it



YVES LAPLACE

PLAINE DES HÉROS
(FIELD OF HEROES)

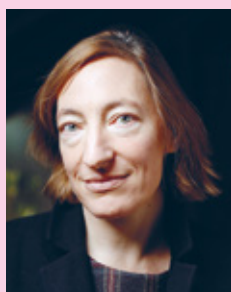
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(THE PRIZE)

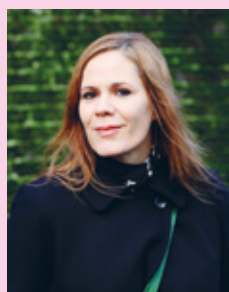
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Bonnard Legrand,
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RUTH SCHWEIKERT

WIE WIR ÄLTER WERDEN
(HOW WE GROW OLD)

GENRE Novel
PUBLISHER S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main
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MONIQUE SCHWITTER

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(ONE ANOTHER)

GENRE Novel
PUBLISHER Droschl, Graz
ISBN 978-3-85420-969-0
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Annette Knoch,
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LETA SEMADENI

TAMANGUR
(TAMANGUR)

GENRE Novel
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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Daniela Koch,
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The Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia awards grants for translations of contemporary literary works from Switzerland, with an eye to promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and helping Swiss authors reach larger audiences, both within the country and around the world.

Pro Helvetia supports the translation of:

- literary works by Swiss authors (fiction and poetry)
- books for children and young adults
- non-fiction books by Swiss authors on cultural and artistic topics relating to Switzerland
- plays by Swiss dramatists (including theatre surtitles)
- samples of up to 15 pages upon request
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Please contact us if you have any further questions. We look forward to receiving your application.

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TRANSLATION HOUSE LOOREN

Translation House Looren in the Swiss canton of Zürich offers professional literary translators from all over the world a place to work and study. At Translation House Looren 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 to support its practitioners. Through readings, workshops, and conferences, translators are offered a forum for continuing professional development and for enhancing the public's awareness of their activities.



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