

Liquid

Anna Felder
Short stories
Italian



Title

Liquida

Publisher

Edizioni Opera Nuova,
Lugano

Publication date

February 2017

Pages

105

ISBN

978-88-96992-18-0

Translation rights

Luca Cignetti
info@operanuova.com

Author

Anna Felder was born in 1937 in Lugano. She studied at the Faculty of Arts at Zürich University, where she specialised in Romance languages. After spending some time in Paris, she gained her doctorate from Zürich. She taught French and Italian and now works as a writer. One of her major successes is *La disdetta* (1974), a novel which Italo Calvino himself found fascinating.

Photo: Yvonne Böhler

Translator

Shaun Whiteside is a literary translator from German, French, Dutch and Italian. His latest translations include *Blitzed* by Norman Ohler and *Lea* by the Swiss author Pascal Mercier.

This collection of snapshots of Swiss life comprises shape shifting fragments of ambiguous narrative and tiny epiphanies. It's boldly experimental, linguistically playful and often elusive, while also succeeding in conjuring up an ironic and sometimes surreal sense of wonder. These stories, almost prose poems, have the sharpness and vigour of a writer highly confident in her art.

"There's a thread which runs through her stories, a kind of Chekovian melancholy, as if passed through the hands of Katherine Mansfield, perhaps. Almost nothing of moment happens in these stories: what sustains her prose is a consuming tension concerning the 'other', the gestures, the words and the tiniest distinguishing marks that make up a person." Giovanni Orelli

Liquida

Anna Felder

Italian original (p. 16-17)

Buona continuazione

È andato regolarmente in pensione l'agente della società assicuratrice nella città della Svizzera tedesca dove da decenni mi sono trasferita. Mi capita d'incontrarlo in marcia con il cane al fiume, in tuta e passamontagne o berrettino, e mi domando se nell'impegno della corsa mi riconosca oppure no.

Un abbozzo di saluto lo sento far scattare ogni volta nel fiato grosso, un obbligato inizio concluso forse oltre i miei passi, e scommetto che quell'attacco uscito puntuale ad ogni incontro non significhi l'antico *Folgendes* del suo saluto in carriera attiva.

Folgendes - "quanto segue" - dichiarava perentorio al telefono, *Folgendes* a mo' di nome cognome e di buon-giorno, *Folgendes* - "quanto segue, facciamo il punto" - per subito riassumere punto per punto i capisaldi dell'assicurazione.

In casa lo si chiamava il *Folgendes*: ha telefonato il signor *Folgendes*, mi dicevano quando rientravo, e la giornata un attimo s'arrestava, s'irrigidiva rabbrivita nell'esame di coscienza che il *Folgendes* esigeva, nei paragrafi, nelle cifre dei rischi e dei sinistri cui presto o tardi si andava tutti incontro, io ieri al fiume, tu oggi in piazza.

Sapesse il signor *Folgendes* che nell'altra città al lago dove sono nata, nella città della Svizzera italiana dove ritorno a intermittenze più o meno lunghe a riconoscermi di casa già per strada, già nel ciao captato in aria, sapebbe il mio *Folgendes* in gara con il cane, che un suo sosia, un suo complice o collega continua anche laggiù a rifare il punto, a ripeterlo e moltiplicarlo per le vie del centro, cammina cammina sui passi nostri per conto di ognuno: senza cane quest'altro, in paltò e sciarpa o in completo scuro, instancabile padrone anche del lago, del lungolago e di Paradiso; mai di fretta ma nemmeno sfaccendato, con la cartella piatta sotto il braccio o con il giornale o magari con il bastoncino di pane. Alto, petto e pancia prominenti, la testa sempre eretta a tener fissi gli occhiali: si direbbe veda solo a gran distanza,

Liquid

Anna Felder

Excerpt translated by Shaun Whiteside (p. 16-17)

Enjoy the rest of your trip

The insurance broker in the town in German-speaking Switzerland that I moved to decades ago, retired when he reached that age. I sometimes meet him walking his dog by the river, wearing overalls and a balaclava or a little beret, and I wonder whether he might be too engrossed in his walk to recognize me.

I always hear the hint of a greeting through his panting breaths, an obligatory beginning perhaps concluded beyond my footsteps, and I bet that that regular opening each time we meet does not mean the old *Folgendes* of the greetings he delivered in his working life.

Folgendes - 'what follows' - is what he would peremptorily announce on the telephone, *Folgendes* standing in for surname and hello, *Folgendes* - 'what follows, let's get to the point' - immediately itemising, point by point, the particulars of the insurance policy.

At home he was known as *Folgendes*: Mr *Folgendes* rang, they would tell me when I got home, and the day paused for a moment, it stiffened, shivering, in the examination of conscience that *Folgendes* demanded, in the paragraphs, the risk assessments and the disasters which befall everyone sooner or later, me yesterday by the river, you today in the street.

If Mr *Folgendes* knew that in the other town by the lake where I was born, in that town in Italian-speaking Switzerland, to which I return at varying intervals to realise that I am at home as soon as I step into the street, in that greeting caught in mid-air, if my dog-walking *Folgendes* knew that a double of his, an accomplice or a colleague is also getting to the point down there, repeating and multiplying it in the byways of the town centre, walking, walking in our footsteps on behalf of everyone: this other one without a dog, in an overcoat and scarf or in a dark suit, he too a tireless master of the lake, of the lakeside walk and of Paradiso; never in a hurry, but not idling either, with a flat briefcase under his arm or a newspaper or even a baguette. Tall, chest and belly carried prominently, the head

solo molto lontano all'orizzonte, sventure e sciagure a perdita d'occhio, folgendes folgendes al di là dei semafori, al di là di Campione e del confine.

E invece non appena gli passo accanto arrivata fresca da oltre Gottardo, ecco che già previene il mio saluto, già mi congeda in due parole guardando alla mia assenza, niente sorpreso della presenza. "Buona continuazione" mi augura bell'e subito senza fermarsi, senza salve né preamboli, "buona continuazione" come l'augurava a mio padre, a mia madre quando erano in vita.

"Buona continuazione" mi ripete pronto incrociandomi due ore dopo o tranquillo due anni dopo, già scontando per me all'infinito, ogni volta poi per sempre, il prossimo mio ritorno, la prossima mia partenza, per definitiva che mai possa un giorno o l'altro avverarsi.

always held high to keep the glasses in place, it looks as if he can only see a great distance away, very far off on the horizon, misfortunes and catastrophes as far as the eye can see, folgendes, folgendes beyond the traffic lights, beyond Campione and the border.

And in fact as soon as I pass him, having freshly arrived from the other side of the Gotthard, he is already anticipating my greeting, he is already dismissing me in a few words, looking at my absence, not at all surprised by my presence. 'Enjoy the rest of your trip', he says all of a sudden without stopping, without a hello or any kind of preamble, 'enjoy the rest of your trip', as he used to say to my father and mother when they were still alive.

'Enjoy the rest of your trip', he says again when he bumps into me two hours later or even two years later, thus discounting the possibility, for ever each time, that my next return or my next departure will ever occur.