



EUROPEAN UNION
PRIZE FOR LITERATURE



European Stories

EUPL winners write Europe

Organised by



Creative
Europe

2018
EUROPEAN YEAR
OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE
[#EuropeForCulture](#)

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Table of Content

4	Foreword
7	Jean Back
15	Lidija Dimkovska
31	Gast Groeber
51	Jelena Lengold
67	Ioana Pârvulescu
83	The European Union Prize for Literature

Foreword

Literature has an important role in bringing us together and enabling us to build the Europe of the future. It allows us to write and share our stories, helping us to imagine and see the world from different perspectives – and learning more about ourselves in the process.

The European Union Prize for Literature has been supporting this for a decade now. To highlight the important role of literature in the European project, a special contest was organised for the 10th anniversary of this prize, asking all previous laureates to share their European story. The 36 short works of fiction that were submitted enabled us to travel from Reykjavik to Nicosia, from Budapest to Madrid, all across Europe, to share the writers' joys, pains, hopes and dreams.

Readers were invited to select their favourite story, as were the Members of the Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament and a professional jury.

We celebrated the winners late in 2018 in Vienna at an event co-organised with the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. I am pleased to see that, to offer a wider audience the opportunity to discover these stories, the organisers of the European Union Prize for Literature have now gathered them in this collection.

In it you will find "Jasmine and the death" by Jelena Lengold from Serbia, the winner of the public prize, as well as two works by Luxembourgish authors chosen by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education: "European Clouds" by Jean Back and "Current weather warning: predominantly heavy fog" by Gast Groeber.

The book also includes the work of short fiction "A Voice" by Ioana Pârvulescu from Romania, which was selected by the professional jury led by Liana Sakelliou. This story is dedicated to the former Radio-Free-Europe-broadcaster Monica Lovinescu who became the voice of

freedom for young Romanians during the Cold War.

Since 2018 was the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the professional jury awarded a special mention for cultural heritage. It went to Lidija Dimkovska from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for her work of short fiction "When I left Karl Liebnecht" – a story which the jury praised as expertly revealing "various aspects of the European consciousness shared by its citizens".

You can also find all of these works on the website of the European Union Prize for Literature.

I am delighted that the Prize organisers have decided to publish these five winning texts both in their respective original languages and in an English translation. This is fully in line with our objective to raise the profiles of gifted writers across Europe and help them break through internationally. Because only by sharing our stories can we understand our roots, accept our differences and shape the future together.

Tibor Navracics,
*European Commissioner
for Education, Culture,
Youth and Sport*



Luxembourg

Jean Back

Europäesch Wolleken

European Clouds

EUPL laureate 2010: *Amateur* (Ultimomondo Editions)

BIOGRAPHY

Jean Back was born in Dudelange, Luxembourg, in 1953. After finishing his secondary education in Esch-sur-Alzette, he became a civil servant, first at the Ministry of Family, then at the Ministry of Culture. Between 1989 and 2016 he was in charge of the Centre national de l'audiovisuel (CNA) in Dudelange. In 2003 he turned to literature with *Wollekestol*, a tribute to his hometown and its steel industry. This was followed in 2007 by *Mon amour schwein*. *Amateur* was published in 2009, won the EUPL Prize in 2010 and has since been translated in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Albania, Macedonia, Hungary and Serbia. Back published *Wéi Dag an Nuecht* in 2012 and the novel *Karamell* in 2014, followed in 2015 by *Zalto Mortale* (Kremart Edition). *Zalto Mortale* was shortlisted for the Luxembourg book prize. In 2017 he published *Trakl Blues*, a novel in German about the amateur film *Die junge Magd* (*The Young Maiden*), based on the poem by Georg Trakl, and *Iesel* (Editions Binsfeld), a Luxembourgish novel about the relationship between a banker and a donkey.

Europäesch Wolleken

Jean Back



Match, Matsch, Mätsch: den Diddelenger Supermarché. Märginn an de Mätsch, mer brauche Wuere fir ze grillen, matsch, mitsch, haut ass schéi Wieder, keng Wollek um Himmel. Fir ze laachen, esou schéin!

„Bréng e puer marinéiert Kotelette mat, eng Fläsch Wäin, keen ze deieren, héiers de?“

Ich höre. Ech fueren. Lauschtere Musek. Parken *ënnert de Beem*.

De Matsch, e grot Zillegebai, e banalen Zweckbau mat Knätschtëppele virum Agank a Kaddieën un der Staang. Mat Dauwen um Daach: „*guru guck, guru guck*“. Mam Auto op zwou Minutte vun doheim. Banal, awer praktesch, dee super Maart. Gutt. Et ass e kloeren Hierschtdag. Esou een, wéi den 11.9. zu Manhattan, mueres um aacht Auer. Virdrun hat d’Sonn geschéngt. Wéi elo, hell, ouni ze wiermen. Ech trëppele laanscht d’Regaler, sichen, fannen, dixé meng Wueren duerch d’elektronesch Kees. Et piiipst, de Wäin, d’Koteletten, piiips, d’Oliven, piips, eng Drëpp, piiips, de Jus, piiips, e Pak Youghurtsdëppercher, 0% Fett, piiips, piiips, d’Keessiäre sinn ofgeschaf, nëmmen eng Oppasserin huet iwwerlieft, waart, dass ech net eens gi mam piiipsen. Ech ginn eens, et piiipst eng leschte Kéier, d’chroméiert Staang gött no, ech rulle mam volle Käddi op de Parking. En eelere Mann steet um Dauwendreck. Spillt Akkordeon. Ech klaken d’Mall zou. De Schlëssel läit bannendran! Nieft de Wueren. Esouguer d’Blieder un de Platane schéngen ze laachen. Ech sti wéi en Dabo virum zouenen Auto a muss waarden. Bis eise Jéngste mer

den Ersatzschlüssel bréngt. Dat kann daueren. Ech kinnt bis heem trëppelen. Zréck kommen. Fënnef Minutten héichstens, géing ech brauchen. Ech loosse laang schellen. E schléift nach. Oder en huet den Handy aus. Dat kann net sinn! Awer ech hunn Zäit. Aus purer Lidderegkeet bleiwen ech nieft dem Luuchtepotto stoen a kucken a waarden a lauschteren dem Mann mam Akkordeon no, well ech Akkordeonsmusek gär hunn, well déi Zort Musek mech un de René de Bernardi erënnert, am fréieren Dancing *beim Heuertz*: Baler, Thé dansant, knutsch *slow* an Trëppelwalz. Och un den Astor Piazzolla erënnert. Elo Kitsch spillt de Mann, Herz und Schmerz: *Junge komm bald wieder, Caprisonne, Lili Marleen*, duerno d'*Donauwellen*. Am Schiet vun der Zillemauer vum Matsch sëtzt eng Fra um Buedem an hält d'Hand op.

„Et ass eng Rumänin, kuck dach emol.“

„Knaschteg Rumänen. Voller Lais a Fléi! Klauen eis Autoen! Houer Drecksäck!“

„Si sinn an der EU.“

„D'EU mécht faillitte. Sollen doheem bleiwen. Lauter Zigeiner!“

E Gespréich a mengem Réck.

„Deslescht, si haten *open air* kino, an deem Kulturzentrum do. Owes. D'Musek war esou haart, mäi léift Kand, dass ech deem Direkter vun deem Knascht ugeruff hunn. Ech hunn de Fernseh net méi héieren, esou haart wär den *open air*, sot ech zu him. An ob en nees Filmer fir d'Portugise géing spillen? Du sot en zu mer, den Direkter, haut géinge s'en italesesche Film spillen. Aarschlach, sot ech zu em, an hunn agehaang.“

„Waat?“

„Ma, et ass dach wouer!“

D'*open air* Madame ass Mëtt fofzeg. Roude Brëll, gringe Präb-beli. Hir Frëndin ass héichgewuess. Ugangs siechzeg. Platt Schung. Mofe Schal. D'Heeschefra spillt elo mat hire Kanner. Ech geheien dem Mann zwee Euro an den Hutt. D'Fale vum Akkordeon zéien sech zesummen, doen sech auserneen. *Marina, Marina, Marina*. E puer Wolleke segelen am héije Bloen. Wat fir eng Nationalitéit hunn d'Wolleken? Si se franséisch, wa s'iwwert dem Elysee schwiewen? Spuenesch, wa s'iwwert Sevilla hänken? Wéi gesäit eng Schwäizer Wollek aus? Eng Belsch? Sinn d'Wolleke portugiesesch wa s'iwwert Didde-leng schwammen? Lëtzebuergesch, wa se zu Porto ukommen? D'*open air* Madame hat sech als rengrasseg Rassistin z'erkenne ginn. Ongewollt. Hat sécher gemengt, ech géing d'Lëtzebu-erger Sprooch net verstoen, well ech eng Kap vum F91¹ um Kapp hat. Mam Stuerz a mat der Schrëft no hannen. D'Beem sti riicht ronderëm d'Plaz. De Wand mellt sech net. Eise Jéngsten ass nach ganz verschlof, wéi en endlech ophieft.

D'Heeschefra verléisst hir Plaz. D'Kanner lafen hannendrun. Schloen d'Rad. Zéien sech um Plover, kicken, rolsen iwwert dem Virugoen. Den Akkordeonsmann spillt *When the wind whispers over the plains*. Den Ersatzschlüssel segelt aus der Fënster vu menger Fra hirem Auto: „*So long, daddy.*“

An zwou Woche si Walen. Praktesch, quadratesch, demokra-tesch Gemengewalen. D'*open air* Madame an hir Frëndin sinn am groen Zillegebai verschwonnen.

Haut de mëtteg, mat um Grillmenu: dräi Fläsche Chianti, zwee Päck Oliven aus Portugal, eng rumänesch Drëpp an um fënnef Auer spillt Barça géint Red Bull Salzburg. Olé!



¹ Diddelenger Fussballclub. Déi éischt Equipp ass meeschtens besat mat internationale Spiller

European Clouds

Jean Back

translated from Luxembourgish by Sandra Schmit

Match, Much, Match: the supermarket in Dudelange. We are going to Match, we need goods for a barbecue, mitch match, today the weather is beautiful, not a cloud in the sky. Makes me want to laugh, so beautiful!

“Get me some marinated pork chops, a bottle of wine, but not the expensive one, you hear?”

I hear. I drive. Listen to music. Park under the trees.

Match, a grey brick building, an ordinary functional construction with chewing-gum dots near the entrance and shopping carts on a bar. And pigeons on the roof: “*coo rook, coo rook*”. Two minutes from home with the car. Ordinary, but practical, that supermarket. Good. It is a clear autumn day. Just like on 9/11 in Manhattan, at eight o'clock in the morning. The sun had been shining just before. Like now, bright, but not warm. I walk along the aisles, searching, finding, flipping my wares through the self-checkout. A beep, the wine, beep, the pork chops, beep, the olives, beep, the brandy, beep, the juice, beep, a package of yoghurt tubs, 0% fat, beep, beep, the cashiers have been abolished, only one overseer has survived, waiting for me not to manage the beeping. I do manage, there is a final beep, the chromed rod gives way, I push the full cart into the parking lot. An elderly man is standing in pigeon droppings. Playing accordion. I slam the boot shut. The key is inside! Next to the purchases. Even the leaves on the plane tree appear to laugh. I am standing like an idiot next to my locked car and have to wait. For our youngest to bring me the spare key. That will take a long time. I could walk home. Come back.

I wouldn't need more than five minutes, tops. I keep the phone ringing. He is still asleep. Or his cell phone is switched off. That can't be! But I have time. Out of sheer laziness I stay next to the lamppost, looking and waiting and listening to the man playing the accordion, because I like accordion music, because that kind of music reminds me of René de Bernardi, at the erst-while dancing club Beim Heuertz: dance parties, *thé dansant*, smooch slow and English Waltz. And also reminds me of Astor Piazzolla. Now the man plays kitsch, love and heartache: a Freddie Quinn song, *Capri*, *Lili Marleen*, after that *Waves of the Danube*. In the shade of Match's brick wall, a woman is sitting on the ground, holding out her open hand.

"It's a Romanian, just look."

"Dirty Romanians. Full of lice and fleas. Stealing our cars. Fucking bastards."

"They're in the EU."

"The EU is going bankrupt. Should stay home. Gypsies, the lot of them."

A conversation behind my back.

"Recently, they had an open-air movie in that culture centre. In the evening. The music was so loud, I'm telling you, I called the director of that shithole. I couldn't hear the telly anymore, that's how loud your open air is, I told him. And whether they were playing these movies again for the Portuguese? And there he told me, the director, that this time it was an Italian film. Asshole, I said, and I hung up."

"What?"

"What's right is right."

The open-air lady is in her fifties. Red glasses, green umbrella. Her friend is tall in stature. Early sixties. Flat shoes. Violet scarf. The beggarwoman is now playing with her children. I throw two euros into the man's hat. The accordion's bellows contract and expand. *Marina, Marina, Marina*. A couple of clouds are sailing high up in the blue. What nationality are the clouds? Are they French, when they're hovering over the Elysée? Spanish, when they're hanging over Seville? What does a Swiss cloud look like? A Belgian one? Are the clouds Portuguese when they drift over Dudelange? Luxembourgish, when they arrive in Porto? The open-air lady outed herself as a purebred racist. Inadvertently. She probably thought that I didn't understand Luxembourgish, because I was wearing an F91¹ cap on my head. With the visor and the logo to the back. The trees are standing still around the square. The wind is keeping quiet. Our youngest is still half-asleep when he finally picks up the phone.

The beggarwoman is leaving her spot. The children are running after her. Turning cartwheels. Yanking each other's pull-overs, giggling, larking about as they pass by me. The accordionist is playing *When the wind whispers over the plains*. The spare key is gliding out of the window of my wife's car: "So long, daddy."

In two weeks, we'll have elections. Practical, square, democratic local elections. The open-air lady and her friend have disappeared into the grey brick building.

Also on today's barbecue menu: three bottles of Chianti, two packs of olives from Portugal, one Romanian brandy and at five o'clock there's Barça playing against Red Bull Salzburg. Olé!

¹ Football club from Dudelange. Their first team is most often composed of international players.



The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Lidija Dimkovska

Кога заминав од „Карл Либкнехт“

When I left “Karl Liebknecht”

EUPL laureate 2013: *Резервен Живот* (ILI-ILI)

BIOGRAPHY

Lidija Dimkovska, born in 1971 in Skopje, Macedonia, is a poet, novelist and translator from Romanian and Slovenian into Macedonian. She has published six books of poetry and three novels, translated into more than 20 languages. For her poetry she has received the Macedonian debut award for poetry, the German Hubert Burda prize, the Romanian Poesis and Tudor Arghezi prizes and the European Petru Krdu prize. Her two novels *Hidden Camera* (2004) and *A Spare Life* (2012) each received the Writers' Association of Macedonia award for the best prose book of the year. *A Spare Life* also received the European Union Prize for Literature in 2013 and was long-listed for the Best Translated Book Award 2017 in the USA. In 2016 she published her third novel *Non-Our*, which was shortlisted for the Writers' Association of Macedonia award for the best prose book of the year, and for the Balkanika international literary award.

Кога заминав од „Карл Либкнехт“

Lidija Dimkovska



Во спомен-домот на Карл Либкнехт во Лајпциг, Германија, шестмина луѓе од разни националности седат околу канцелариската маса, со преведувачи зад нив, и навидум се како на состанок, а всушност се на несекојдневна средба. Имено, учествуваат во пилот-проектот на Здружението на почитувачи на Карл Либкнехт од Лајпциг коешто на 19 јануари 2018 година, по повод 99-годишнината од смртта на големиот германски левичар и соработник на Роза Луксембург, Карл Либкнехт, ги покани како емигранти кои пред да се преселат живееле на адреси што го носат неговото име. Повикот беше јавен, а интересот огромен, но најпосле беа избрани само неколкумина. Пред обиколката на спомен-домот, ги замолија да раскажат кусо за тоа како ги обележала адресата „Карл Либкнехт“.

*Виталие, 32, Тираспол, Приднестровие, Молдавија –
Букурешт, Романија*

До мојата 20-та година живеев на ул. „Карл Либкнехт“ во Тираспол, главниот град на Приднестровие. На 13 август 2006 год. околу два попладне се враќав со тролејбус од заболечар. Горната усна ми беше отечена од анестезијата што заболечарот ми ја стави за да ми го извади забот, само затоа што му беше пријател од детството на татко ми. Наеднаш тролејбусот буквално експлодира и како

да полетавме во воздух. Потоа не се сеќавам на ништо. Се разбудив во болница, со повеќе новинари околу постелите, одошто медицински персонал. Дознав дека сум еден од десеттемина повредени патници. Добро што не бе веден од двајцата загинати. Тоа не беше единствената експлозија во Тираспол. По несреќата од која ми остана лузнава на чело, роднините ми помогнаа да купам билет за Букурешт.

Татко ми ми рече да го заборавам зборот Приднестровие, како никогаш да не постоел, и да се претставувам од Молдавија. Во Букурешт добив стипендија за „Романци вон границите на Романија“ и одново почнав да студирам медицина. Сега сум најмладиот општ лекар во амбулантата за студенти. Татко ми почина пред две години и затоа ја доведов мајка ми во Букурешт. Нормално дека пишувам на романски јазик со латинично писмо, но на мајка ми ѝ е тешко да чита романски весници и субтитлови на романската телевизија. Вели дека буквите во нејзината глава се само кирилични. И јас кога одам во продавница сфаќам дека списокот сум го напишал на кирилица. Тоа е сè што ми остана од Тираспол. Понекогаш ми недостига Днестар, на само дваесетина минути од зградата кај што живеевме. Сфатив дека животот во странство, иако Романија поради јазикот и не е сосема странство, е планирање и сеќавање, иднина и минато, ама не сегашност. Пред некој ден на излегување од метрото, истураше дожд и едно Ромче потрча по мене со чадори во раката. „Купи еден, купи еден!“ – викаше. „Блиску сум до дома“ – викнав заштитивајќи ја главата со актовката, а Ромчето неколкупати зад мене извика „Далеку си, далеку!“. Влегов дома накиснат до коски, до душа. Мајка ми во кујната ги препишуваше на латиница кириличните букви на нашиот јазик.

Ања, 43, мостот „Либкнехт“, Берлин, Германија -
Чикаго, САД

Беше ноември 2015 година, истураше студен дожд, но таксистот кон аеродромот Тегел ги отвори прозорците. „Извинете“ – рековме и јас и тој во речиси ист глас, тој затоа што дозволи студот да шибне во внатрешноста на таксито, а јас затоа што бев причината за тоа – имено, смрдев од глава до пети, корнев и однатре и однадвор, небањата со седмици, со себе ја носев реата на мостот „Либкнехт“ врз чиишто коцки и под чиишто аркади ми поминаа последните три години. Како стигнав до таму? Од нормален живот, во брак со директорот на терариумот во Берлин, со огромен стан зад трговскиот „Берлин Каре“ на „Карл Либкнехт“ бр. 13, бевме имотни и маж ми очекуваше само да готвам, а да немаме деца, зашто и онака, велеше, се немало мир од нив во зоолошката. Хоби ми беше делкањето дрворези. Кога маж ми почна сè повеќе да се здебелува, лекарот ми рече дека еден ден нема веќе да може да станува поради тежината, па ќе морам да се грижам за него и така се запишав на курс за негувателки. Еднаш донесе од работа змиска кожа и ја стави во нашиот фрижидер. Рече: „Сонував дека во кожата е душата на мајка ми. Биди среќна што не ја донесов змијата, па ќе имаше и свекрва“ – аи јас повеќе не можев да го отворам фрижидерот. Поради тоа настанаа многу проблеми во нашиот брак, од навреди и солзи до тепања и молби, ама ниту тој не ја отстрани змиската кожа од фрижидерот, ниту јас го отворав, па затоа и не готвев. Се разведовме, јас се пријавив за негувателка во еден хоспис, бидејќи нудеше и сместување. И еден ден, кревајќи една старица в раце за да ја префрлам во фотелјата и за да можам да ѝ ја сменам постелнината, ми падна на подот и издивна. И ме отпуштија. Небаре старицата немаше и онака да умре. И ми напишаа „препорака“ никогаш и никој повеќе да не ме прими на работа како негувателка. Така завршив

на мостот „Либкнехт“, каква иронија на судбината. Три години под него спиев, а на него просев, мрзнев, плачев, потоа почнав да собирам штитчки и да ги делкам во дрворези, им ги продавав на туристите на мостот, така собрав пари за билет, во авионот патниците околу мене си ги пикаа носовите во ќебињата за покривање, стигнав во Чикаго, влегов во првиот хоспис кај што ми дозволија да се избањам, и еве, таму работам веќе три години. Во близина е Уметничкиот институт, и кога ми недостасува Берлин - чекам да дојде четврток навечер и влезот да биде бесплатен, влегувам внатре и некоја непозната сила ме влече кон дрворезот на Кате Колвиц „Спомен-лист на Карл Либкнехт“. Судбина.

Дона, 47, Скопје, Македонија – Љубљана, Словенија

Кога се преселив во Љубљана пред 17 години, од автобусот видов како на еден балкон некоја жена простира алишта. Си помислив – којзнае каков живот води, што ѝ се случува, што ја мачи, што ја усреќува. А денес, можеби некој друг преселник се прашува истото за мене. Презимето на маж ми не го зедев, ги зедев само него и адресата. Затоа во мојот пасош ја нема повеќе „Карл Либкнехт“ 67/1-11, 1000 Скопје, Македонија. Сега нашата двојазична ќерка ја пишува на честитките за Нова година до баба ѝ и дедо ѝ. Маж ми е воодушевен што на периферијата на Скопје постои улица на таков слободомисленик. Веројатно мојот космополитизам потекнува токму од Карл Либкнехт. А како и уште стотина писатели-имигранти во Словенија, и јас живеам во дом-дводом-без дом. Сè што само по себе беше разбирливо во присуството, стана прашање за идентитетот во отсуството. Како што бебињата лазат назадечки, така и ние, писателите-имигранти ползиме назадечки, со нозе што сè повеќе забраздуваат во она што било, иако погледот ни е свртен напред. Без минатото во сегашноста и во иднината не знаеме да одиме, нема

за што да се фатиме, неуки сме и беспомошни. А како што телото го одбива туѓото телце од својот устрој, како моето леќите, така и секоја национална книжевност го одбива писателот кој не пишува на нејзиниот јазик. И словенечката. Знам повеќе јазици, ама само на еден знам да раѓам литература. Секоја судбина е и политичка одлука. Всушност, отсекогаш верував во светската книжевност. Можеби европската е нашиот спас? Повеќе јазици – една книжевност? Ама, добро, да не филозофирам премногу.

Олег, 25, Минск, Белорусија – Виена, Австрија

Ах, јас немам живеено на „Карл Либкнехт“, ама таму ми го спасија животот, тоа го наведов и во пријавата. Знаете, во Минск на „Карл Либкнехт“ бр. 68 е седиштето на Хелсиншкиот комитет каде што најдов спас по четвртото тепање во влезот на мојата зграда, истата 2011 год кога како матурант учествував на протестите против владата на Лукашенко. Ги познавам оние што ме тепаа, врсници ми се, близнаци, живеевме во иста зграда, целото семејство е про-Лукашенко. По последното тепање не гледам добро на левото око. Татко ми од болница ме однесе во Хелсиншкиот комитет за којшто имаше чуено од некого. Таму свртеа неколку меѓународни броја и на крајот рекоа дека заминувам уште истиот ден за Виена. Со мајка ми не стигнав ни да се поздравам. Во Виена добив меѓународна заштита, стипендија за студии по социологија, потоа и за мастер, а сега сум на докторат. Ама што потоа? Во Белорусија нема повеќе враќање. А имам и девојка, Австријко-Хрватка. Се родила во Виена, мајка ѝ починала, татко ѝ, Хрват, се прежил со друга, а неа ја однел кај роднините во Задар. На 18-годишна возраст се закалуѓерила, ама по пет години си заминала од манастирот поради лоши односи меѓу калуѓерките, без дозвола од бискупот, бидејќи

никогаш не ѝ одговорил на молбата да ја расчини. „Во манастир е полесно да се сака човештвото, одошто човекот“ – вели. А и во светот. Почнала да работи во бутик во Задар, ама ја влечело назад и лани во февруари се вратила и сега работи во болница како чистачка. Се запознавме кога лежев таму поради компликација со оково, ме привлече нејзиниот словенски акцент. Не е образована, но ја сака уметноста повеќе од сè. Пред некое време бевме на изложба во Кунстхале и занемевме пред една уметничка фотографија на која човек седи и пуши во автомобил, чекајќи да се испече свињата закачена на ченгел за тркалото. Со Лана живееме во гарсоньера што гледа на поранешната железничка станица од каде што нацистите ги депортирале Евреите во Аушвиц. Наоколу талкаат бездомници и бегалци од Сирија, но населбата е во завет на молк, ни мува не се слуша.

*Тарас, 68, и Цамила, 66, село Либкхнетовка, Крим –
Прага, Чешка*

Извинете ако нашата пријава звучеше како уцена – дека ќе дојдеме или заедно или никако, ама од 2016 кога заминавме со синот за Прага однашето село Либкхнетовка на Крим, ние со мажот се немаме одвоено. Заради Исмаил и заминавме на стари години. Тој одамна се беше преселил во Симферопол, велеше дека петте улици во нашето село не му стигаат за живот, а таму беше заангажиран во „Меџлис“, претставништвото на нас, Татарите на Крим. Чекај, Цамила, јас да кажам: Кога Русија го присвои Крим, го забранија Меџлис. Какви сè набедувања не бевме чуле, наеднаш, за сè на Крим виновни станавме ние, Татарите. Исмаил рече дека главниот на Меџлис Русите го затвориле во лудница, откако на ТВ изјави дека Крим треба да ѝ се врати на Украина. Го пуштија пет дена пред Курбан Бајрам. Исмаил дента пред празникот си дојде

дома, ни рече да се подготвиме, и на 12 септември 2016 год. со возило на брза помош, заминавме од Либкхнетовка. „Подобро во странство, рече, одошто во лудница“. Да, Тарас, нели до аеродромот нè возеше болничарот што го бевме потплатиле, а јас го бодрев: „Алах да те чува, синко, на секое тркало да ти стои по еден ангел и да те варди од зло“. Сега живееме во едно станче на периферијата на Прага, добиваме социјална помош, ама барем Исмаил пак се бори за татарската кауза, зашто во Прага е седиштето на меѓународната организација што ги поддржува Татарите. Сè уште чекаме да се ожени и да имаме внуци, инаку животот ни остана во Либкхнетовка. Ама кај се пушта единец сам во светот. Само што по цел ден го нема дома, чмаеме сами. Спроти нас живее една стара вдовица, Полјачка, само таа знае руски од зградата, а татарски никој. Ама чудна жена, Исмаил вели дека е подобро да не ја викам на кафе. „Гледаш дека е националистка?“ – вели. Па, да, Џамила, има право. Замислете, се родила во Гдањск и кога имала осум години низ градот марширале војници во црни униформи со кукасти крстови, а потоа го урнисале градот и помни дека нацистите го однеле кубето од базиликата во Хамбург, а сега ја поддржува власта во Полска и ги колне бегалците од Сирија. А живее во Чешка 60 години! Исмаил вели дека ништо не научила од историјата. Не знам ни дали ние нешто ќе научиме.

Би било интересно да се слушнат што повеќе приказни и од поранешните и од сегашните жители на „Карл Либкнехт“ низ светот. Но, оваа средба е само проба за многу помасовната што ќе се одржи на 19 јануари 2019 год. по повод 100-годишнината од смртта на Карл Либкнехт во вид на протест по улицата со негово име, овде во Лајпциг, за правата на работниците-мигранти во Европа. Со векови човекот не престанува да се бори за своите права. Историјата барем во нешто е добра учителка.

Сите ликови се измислени.

When I left “Karl Liebkecht”

Lidija Dimkovska

Translated from Macedonian by Christina E. Kramer

In the Karl Liebkecht House in Leipzig, Germany, six people of different nationalities are seated around an office table, interpreters behind them, and although it looks as if they're at a meeting, it's not, in fact, an ordinary meeting. They're taking part in a pilot project organised by the Society of Admirers of Karl Liebkecht of Leipzig, which on 19 January 2018, in recognition of the 99th anniversary of the death of Karl Liebkecht – the great German leftist and colleague of Rosa Luxemburg – invited them, all migrants who had lived at an address bearing his name prior to their emigration. The initiative was publicly announced, and it generated a great deal of interest, but in the end, only a few were selected. Before touring the House Museum, they were asked to speak briefly about the impact their Karl Liebkecht address had had on them.

Vitalie, 32, Tiraspol, Transnistria, Moldova – Bucharest, Romania

I lived on Karl Liebkecht Street in Tiraspol, the main city in Transnistria, until I was twenty years old. On 13 August 2006, at around two in the afternoon, I was on a trolleybus heading home from the dentist. My upper lip was swollen from the anaesthesia the dentist had given me for my tooth extraction, and that only because he was a childhood friend of my father's. Suddenly the trolleybus exploded, literally, and it felt like we were flying through the air. I don't remember anything after that. I woke up in a hospital, where around our beds there were

more journalists than medical personal. I learned that I was one of dozens of wounded passengers. Fortunately, I wasn't one of the two who died. This wasn't the only explosion in Tiraspol. After that incident, which left me with a scar on my forehead, my relatives helped me buy a ticket for Bucharest. My father told me to forget the word Transnistria, as though it had never existed, and to present myself as from Moldova. I was given a stipend in Bucharest for "Romanians from outside the borders of Romania," and I began once again to study medicine. Now I'm the youngest general practitioner in the student clinic. My father died two years ago, so I brought my mother to Bucharest. I, of course, write Romanian with Latin letters, but it's hard for my mother to read Romanian newspapers and subtitles on Romanian television. She says the letters in her head are all in Cyrillic. When I go to a store, I realise I've jotted down my list in Cyrillic. That's all I have left from Tiraspol. Sometimes I miss the Dniester, which flowed twenty minutes from the building where we lived. I understand that life in a foreign country – although Romania, because of the language, is not completely foreign – is about making plans and remembering, a future and a past, but not a present. A few days ago when I was leaving the subway, it was raining, and a Rom kid ran up to me carrying umbrellas. "Buy one, buy one!" he shouted. "I'm almost home," I said, covering my head with my briefcase, but the kid shouted after me several times, "You're far, far away!" I went into my house soaked to the bone, drenched in my soul. My mother was in the kitchen transcribing the Cyrillic letters of our language into Latin letters.

Anya, 43, Liebknecht Bridge, Berlin, Germany – Chicago, USA

It was November 2015, there was a cold rain falling, but the taxi driver taking me to Tegel Airport had opened the windows. "Excuse me," we both said in almost the same voice, he, because he was letting the cold inside the taxi; I, because

I was the reason for it; I stank from head to foot, I was torn apart inside and out, had not had a bath for weeks, and carried with me the smell of Liebknecht Bridge, on whose pavement and under whose arcades I had spent the past three years. How had I gotten to that point? Starting from a normal life, married to the director of the terrarium at the Berlin Zoo, with a huge apartment behind the Berlin Carré shopping centre at 13 Karl Liebknecht Street; we were rich, and my husband's only expectations were for me to cook and for us not to have children, because, he said, he had enough of them at the zoo. My hobby was woodcarving. My husband, a man with gourmet tastes, began getting fatter and fatter, and the doctor told me that the day would come when he wouldn't be able to stand up any longer because of his weight, and I would need to take care of him, so I enrolled in a nursing course. One day he brought a snakeskin home from work and put it in our refrigerator. He said: "I dreamt that my mother's soul was in the skin. Count yourself lucky I didn't bring home the snake, because then you would've had a mother-in-law as well." After that, I would not open the refrigerator, which led to many problems in our marriage, from accusations and tears to beatings and entreaties, but he wouldn't take the snakeskin out of the refrigerator, so I wouldn't open it, and I stopped cooking. We got divorced, and I applied to be a caregiver in a nursing home, since they also offered housing. But one day, while I was lifting an old woman to shift her to an armchair so I could change her bedding, she fell on the floor and died. They fired me. Even though the old woman couldn't have died just because of that. They wrote me a "recommendation" that no one should ever hire me again as a caregiver. So I ended up at the Liebknecht Bridge. What an irony of fate. I slept under it for three years, and on it, I begged, froze, cried, and then began to collect wooden rulers and turn them into woodcarvings, which I sold to the tourists on the bridge; I made enough money for a plane ticket. On the plane, the passengers around me tucked their noses into their blankets. I arrived in Chicago, and went into the first hospice I saw,

where they let me shower, and I've now been working there for three years. The Art Institute is nearby, and when I miss Berlin, I wait for the fourth Thursday of the month, when entry is free. I go inside and some unknown force pulls me toward the woodcut *In Memoriam Karl Liebknecht* by Käthe Kollwitz. Fate.

Dona 47, Skopje, Macedonia – Ljubljana, Slovenia

When I was moving to Ljubljana seventeen years ago, I caught sight of a woman from the bus window spreading out some clothes on a balcony. I thought to myself, I wonder what kind of life she leads, what has happened to her, what torments her, what gives her happiness? And today, maybe some other migrant is asking the same thing about me. I didn't take my husband's name, I just took him and his address. My passport no longer has written in it Karl Liebknecht 67/1-11, 1000 Skopje, Macedonia. Now our bilingual daughter writes it on the New Year's greetings she sends to her grandma and grandpa. My husband is enchanted with the idea that on the periphery of Skopje there is a street named for such a freethinker. My cosmopolitanism probably flows directly from Karl Liebknecht. And just like hundreds of other writer-immigrants in Slovenia, I have a home – double-home – no-home. Everything that was only understandable in its presence has become a question about identity in its absence. Just as babies crawl backward, we writer-immigrants creep backward, our legs furrowing more and more into what was, while our gaze is turned forward. Without our past in the present and the future, we don't know how to move, there's nothing for us to take hold of, we are incompetent and helpless. And just as the body rejects a foreign body from its organism, my contact lenses, for example, so every national literature rejects the writer who does not write in its language. Including Slovenian. I know a number of languages, but it is only in one of them that I know how to give birth to literature. Every destiny is also a political decision. I

have, in fact, always believed in a world literature. Perhaps a European one is our salvation? Multiple languages – one literature? OK, I shouldn't philosophise too much.

Oleg, 25, Minsk, Belarus – Vienna, Austria

Well, I haven't lived on "Karl Liebknecht," but my life was saved there, that's what I put in my application. You know, at "Karl Liebknecht" number 68 in Minsk is the headquarters of the Helsinki Committee where I was rescued after the fourth beating I received at the entry to my building, the same year, 2011, when as a high school student I took part in protests against Lukashenko's government. I knew who beat me, they're the same age, twins; we lived in the same building, their whole family is pro-Lukashenko. Since that last beating I can't see very well out of my left eye. My father took me from the hospital straight to the Helsinki Committee, which he had heard about from someone. They made some international calls, then told me that I was leaving for Vienna that same day. I didn't even manage to say goodbye to my mother. In Vienna, I was given asylum, a stipend to study sociology, then one for my master's degree as well, and now I'm completing my doctorate. But then what? There is no returning to Belarus. I also have a girlfriend, she's Austro-Croatian. She was born in Vienna, her mother died and her father, a Croat, got remarried, and took her to some relatives in Zadar. At eighteen she joined a convent, but five years later, because of the bad relations among the nuns, she left the convent without the bishop's consent, since he never responded to her request to be released from her vows. "In a convent, it is easier to like humanity than a particular human," she said. Out in the world, too. She began working in a boutique in Zadar, but she was drawn to Vienna, and so she returned last February and now works as a cleaner in a hospital. We met when I was in the hospital because of complications with my eye. I was

attracted by her Slavic accent. She's uneducated, but she loves art more than anything. A while ago we were at an exhibit in the Kunsthalle and we fell silent in front of an art photograph in which a person is sitting and smoking in a car, waiting for the pig hanging on a hook by the wheel to finish roasting. Lana and I live in a studio apartment that looks out on the former railroad station where the Nazis deported the Jews to Auschwitz. There are homeless people and Syrian migrants hanging around everywhere, but the neighbourhood has taken a vow of silence, you don't even hear a fly.

Taras, 68 and Jamila, 66, village of Libknehtivka, Crimea – Prague, Czech Republic

Forgive me if our application sounded like a threat – we'll either come together or we won't come at all – but ever since 2016, when we came to Prague together with our son from our village, Libknehtivka, in Crimea, my husband and I haven't been apart. It was because of Ismael that we left in our old age. He had been living a long time in Simferopol; he told us that the five streets in our village didn't provide enough life for him, and he was hired there by Mejlis, the organisation representing us, the Crimean Tatars. Wait, Jamila, let me tell: when Russia seized Crimea, they banned Mejlis. What lies and slander we heard; all of a sudden, we Tatars were guilty of everything in Crimea. Ismael told us that the Russians had the head of Mejlis locked up in an psychiatric hospital after he announced on TV that Crimea must be returned to Ukraine. They let him out five days before Eid al-Adha, the Feast of the Sacrifice. Ismail came home the day before the holiday and told us to get ready, and on the twelfth of September 2015 we left Libknehtivka in an ambulance. "Better a foreign country than an insane asylum," he said. That's right, Taras, and remember how I said to the paramedic that we bribed to take us to the airport, "May Allah protect you, son, and may he set an

angel on each of the wheels to protect you from evil.” Now we live in a small apartment on the outskirts of Prague, we get social assistance, but at least Ismail is fighting again for the Tatar cause, because Prague is where the international organisation that supports Tatars has its headquarters. We’re still waiting for him to marry and give us grandchildren; still, our life remains in Libknehtivka. But how can you let your only child go off alone in the world? Even so, he’s not home all day, and we putter around the apartment by ourselves. There’s an old widow living across from us. A Polish woman, the only person in the building who knows Russian; no one knows Tatar. But Ismail says she’s a strange woman, and it would be better if I didn’t invite her for coffee. “Can’t you see that she’s a nationalist?” he says. Well, yes, Jamila, he’s right. Just think, she was born in Gdańsk, and when she was eight years old, soldiers in black uniforms and swastikas marched through the city; they destroyed the city. And she remembers that the Nazis then took the bells from the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Hamburg, but this woman now supports the government in Poland and curses Syrian refugees even though she’s been living in the Czech Republic for sixty years! Ismail says she hasn’t learned anything from history. I don’t know whether we will learn anything.

It would be interesting to hear more stories from former and current residents of places named for Karl Liebknecht throughout the world. But this meeting is merely a pilot project for a much bigger meeting that will be held on the nineteenth of January 2019, the hundred-year anniversary of Karl Liebknecht’s death, when there will a protest on the street bearing his name here in Leipzig for the rights of migrant workers in Europe. For centuries, people have not stopped struggling for their rights. History is a good teacher for something, at least.

All characters are fictional.



Luxembourg

Gast Groeber

**Aktuelle Wetterwarnung:
überwiegend dichter Nebel**

Current weather warning: predominantly heavy fog

EUPL laureate 2016: *All Dag verstoppt en aneren* (Op der Lay)

BIOGRAPHY

Gast Groeber grew up in Hollerich, Luxembourg, where he went to primary school. After graduating from high school in 1980, he studied primary education at the Institut Supérieur d'Études et de Recherches Pédagogiques in Walferdange, Luxembourg. From 1982, he taught at a number of primary schools in Luxembourg City. Since 2007, he has been head of the Centre Technolink in Luxembourg City, a division of school administration, which is in charge of equipping schools with computers, internet and new technologies. Gast Groeber won the European Union Prize for Literature in 2016 for his novel *All Dag verstoppt en aneren* (*One Day Hides Another*).

Aktuelle Wetterwarnung: überwiegend dichter Nebel

Gast Groeber



Der Fahrtenschreiber leuchtet auf, schluckt die Karte.

Erki wartet das Surren ab, tippt die nötigen Informationen ein, lehnt sich in seinem Sitz zurück, drückt den elektronischen Starter. Er genießt das leise Klicken, das Schnurren des Zünders und dann das sanfte Rütteln der Kabine, das kraftvolle Raunen des Motors.

Schwarzer Qualm wird aus den blanken Auspuffrohren quellen, in den Nebelschwaden zerstäuben, die reglos den Parkplatz der Tankanlage belagern.

Wischerblätter fegen die dichte Morgentauhaut von der Scheibe, Seitenfenster summen runter. Kalte, schwefelige Morgenluft dringt in die Kabine ein, von überall schallt das Wachbrummen der Maschinen herüber.

Er atmet einmal tief durch, schließt sich wieder ein – rundum klare Scheiben. 5.30 Uhr.

Lichter einschalten, Automatik regeln, Feststellbremse lösen, Blick nach links, Gas geben. Er hört ein Horn, sieht Scheinwerfer im Rückspiegel aufleuchten.

Das wird wohl der Ivano gewesen sein, zum Abschied sozusagen.

Gestern Abend noch hatten sie zusammen bei einem Teller Gulasch im Raststättenrestaurant gegessen, dabei Erinnerun-

gen an ihre Fahrten, ihre sporadischen Begegnungen an Europas Straßenadern ausgetauscht. Ivano hatte ihn nach seinen Plänen befragt, wenn diese letzten Fahrten denn nun zu Ende sein würden. Er hatte vom Lesen geschwärmt und vom Reisen mit seiner lieben Frau, an all jene Orte, die er bislang nur aus Büchern oder von Straßenschildern kannte.

Erki wirft einen Blick auf das Foto seiner Jana. Ja, bald würde es soweit sein!

Er schaltet das Radio ein. Ganztags trübe Wetteraussichten! Der Sprecher vertröstet seine Zuhörer mit Musik: *Good day, sunshine.*

Die Nebelscheinwerfer beleuchten vorsichtig die Auffahrt, auf der Autobahn tasten sich im Moment noch recht wenige Fahrzeuge durch die dichte, schwer durchdringliche Brühe. Der Sattelzug beschleunigt auf die freie, rechte Spur.

Erki schreckt auf, als sein CB-Funk plötzlich pfeift. Ivanos Stimme scheppert aus dem Kasten und bittet ihn zu kommen.

Was will der denn nun?

Erki dreht an den Knöpfen seiner Station. Sein Kollege gibt ihm nur knapp seine Nachricht durch.

„Hallo, vielleicht nicht richtig gesehen – Nebel, du weißt! Aufpassen – womöglich illegale Fracht bei deiner Abfahrt zugezogen, auf dem Sattelzug. 55. Over!“

Wie bitte? Illegale Fracht! Ein blinder Passagier? Ganz und gar unmöglich!

Bei der Abfahrtskontrolle hatte er doch noch alles genauestens überprüft, auch die Umgebung abgecheckt!

Aus dem Radio plärrt *Sunny*.

Wenns und Abers stülpen sich über sein Hirn.

Soll da tatsächlich einer hinter der Kabine hocken? Einer oder eine? Und überhaupt – bei dieser Kälte! Knapp drei Grad, liest er von der Anzeige unterm Tacho.

Wenn der da runterkippte! Oder die? Dann hätte er ein Menschenleben auf dem Gewissen! Dabei war er bis heute diese paar Millionen Kilometer quer durch Europa unfallfrei geblieben! Oder aber, wenn die Kojaks ihn mit dieser „Fracht“ erwischten! Ausgerechnet vier Tage vor Schluss noch verdammte Schwierigkeiten!

Er muss am nächsten Rastplatz raus, überprüfen, was los ist. Das kostet dann natürlich wieder Zeit! Mist! Wo es heute doch sowieso schon langsamer vorangeht!

Die Tachonadel steht bei 70 km/h, mehr geht nicht bei diesem Wetter. Vor sich erahnt er die Schussleuchten eines anderen Lasters. Aus sicherer Distanz taucht er ihnen hinterher, an undeutlichen Wäldern und Wiesen vorbei.

Der Radiosprecher warnt vor niedriger Sichtweite auf allen Straßen, informiert tröstend, dass aktuell noch keine Staumeldungen vorliegen, und legt, lustig und Sonnen beschwörend, den *Sunshine Reggae* auf.

Erki wiegt den Kopf nervös im Rhythmus, summt den Refrain. Ein Hinweisschild: Rastplatz!

Sein Gefährt rollt von der Autobahn. Ein einziger Lastzug steht neben dem Bordstein, die Gardinen in der Kabine sind noch dicht zugezogen. Der Laster rollt aus.

Erki zieht die Bremse, schaut in die beiden Rückspiegel. Den Motor lässt er drehen, greift nach seiner Stablampe, öffnet die Seitentür, springt hinaus und hastet zum Spalt zwischen Zugmaschine und Anhänger. Der Lichtkegel seiner Lampe sucht die Kabinenhinterwand ab. Da! Eine Gestalt, zwischen den Versorgungsleitungen hockend, in dunkler Kleidung, mit dunklem Haar, die Hände hinterm Rücken, das Gesicht zwi-

schen den Knien versteckt, fast übersehbar! Er schreit sich den Schreck aus den Gliedern:

„He, du! Nun aber mal! Komm runter! Los, mach schon!“

Zögerlich heben sich dunkle Augen über die Knie, starren Erki an, und dann, auf seine Handbewegungen hin, richtet sich die Gestalt vorsichtig auf.

„Ach du meine Güte, Junge, du bist ja noch ein Kind!“

Mit einer unmissverständlichen Geste gebietet Erki dem Kleinen, an der Stelle zu bleiben. Er erklimmt den Sattel, versichert sich, dass noch alle Leitungsverbindungen festsitzen, reicht dem Jungen die Hand und hilft ihm dann auf den Boden. Die kleine Hand fühlt sich eiskalt an.

Das Zittern am schwächtigen Körper, rührt es von der Kälte oder von der Angst her?

Mit seinen Händen reibt sich Erki die Arme, grunzt „Brrr“ und schaut dem Jungen in die Augen. Der nickt und lächelt verlegen. Er nimmt ihn wieder an der Hand, öffnet die Beifahrertür und hebt das Kind in den Sitz. Dann schlägt er die Tür zu, geht zur Fahrerseite, versichert sich, dass ihn niemand beobachtet hat und steigt ein.

„So, hier sitzt du erst einmal warm! Ich muss überlegen, was ich jetzt mit dir anfang.“

Natürlich versteht sein kleiner Beifahrer kein Wort, starrt ihn nur ängstlich an.

Irgend etwas möchte Erki aber erfahren. Er richtet den Zeigefinger auf seinen Brustkorb und spricht deutlich *E-r-k-i*. Der Kleine schaut ihn an, nickt mit dem Kopf, zeigt auf sich

und antwortet heiser *Krieg, War*. Erki schüttelt den Kopf. Dann fällt ihm sein Notizblock ein, den er oben unter der Schlafliede festgeklemmt hat. Er nimmt ihn samt einem Kugelschreiber hervor, zeichnet mit ein paar ungeschickten Strichen und Kringeln einen Lastwagen, daneben ein rundes Männchen. Nun tippt er mit dem Finger auf die Figur, danach abermals auf seine Brust und wiederholt seinen Namen. Der Junge nickt und wiederholt *Erki*. Dann klopft er sich gegen seinen Körper und artikuliert vorsichtig *Burhan*. Erki nickt zufrieden.

„Na also, Burhan! Verständigen können wir uns ja schon!“

Er zeichnet nun ein kleines Strichmännchen aufs Papier, zeigt es dem Kleinen und wiederholt dessen Namen. Daneben kommen zwei größere Strichfiguren, eine davon mit langem Haar. Er zeigt Burhan nun auch dieses Bild, deutet auf die Figuren – Burhan, Mama, Papa. Der Kleine schüttelt den Kopf, fährt mit zwei Fingern unter seiner Kehle vorbei. *Krieg*, wiederholt er. Erki seufzt, nimmt den Kugelschreiber, zeichnet weitere, kleinere Figuren, fragt nach Brüdern oder Schwestern. Burhan zeigt auf eine weibliche Strichfigur, nennt sie *Layal*, dann ergreift er den Schreiber, zeichnet ein Auto, mit einem Blaulicht auf dem Dach und einen Pfeil, der von Layal zum Auto führt.

Erki schnaubt.

Ein kleiner Flüchtling also!

Den muss er doch bei der Polizei abliefern!

Bilder aus Fernsehberichten fallen ihm ein: Flüchtlingslager – notdürftige Planen, in glitschigen Schlamm hineingepflanzt.

Sowas ist doch kein Ort für einen so kleinen Kerl!

Er sieht zu Burhan hinüber, der erwidert den Blick nur zögernd.

Erki atmet einmal tief durch. Ihm wird erst jetzt dieser stechende, unangenehme Geruch bewusst. Er betrachtet den Jungen genauer.

Wie lange der wohl diese alten Klamotten trägt? Und wann soll der zuletzt ordentlich gefuttert haben?

Hinter dem Rücksitz kramt er zwei Bananen hervor und reicht sie seinem Beifahrer.

„Du, Kleiner, jetzt iss erst mal! Und, naja, wie soll ich's sagen?“

Er schaut zum Kleinen, drückt sich seine Nasenflügel mit Zeigefinger und Daumen zusammen und zieht eine Grimasse. Dann nimmt er nochmals den Notizblock und zeichnet eine Dusche, einen Pulli und eine Hose.

„An der nächsten Raststätte!“

Burhan nickt gehorsam mit dem Kopf, pellt die erste Banane aus der Schale und beißt gierig hinein. Erki räumt den Notizblock zur Seite, schaltet die Automatik ein, löst die Feststellbremse und gibt Gas. Eigentlich sollte er nun die Polizei verständigen!

Aus dem Radio erklingt gerade *Sunrise*. Der dichte Nebel belagert den Asphalt noch immer.

Langsam beschleunigt der Lastwagen wieder auf die Autobahn. Der Motor brummt gemütlich, die Lichtkegel scheinen trüb in den Morgen hinein. Leichter Nieselregen weckt die Scheibenwischer, Straßenmarkierungen werden erst im letzten Moment sichtbar.

Irgendwann fängt Erki an, drauflos zu reden, erzählt von seiner Heimatstadt in Russland, nur einen Steinwurf von der estnischen Grenze entfernt, und davon, wie er sie, nach dem

postsowjetischen Schisma, verlassen und nie wiedergesehen hatte. Tallinn war sein Ziel gewesen, weil dort diese Gerüchte umliefen, man gehöre bald zu Europa. So viel hatte er bis dahin schon von diesem Europa gehört! Sicher, das war ein Wirtschaftsprjekt, – aber doch auch eine grandiose Friedensidee! Europa denke sogar daran, Grenzen aufzulösen, diese in älteren und neueren Verträgen, auf Papier gezeichneten Linien, die mitten in einem warmen Pinienwald oder in einer vom Wind durchwehten Wiese, doch ganz und gar sinn- und gehaltlos sind! Deren Existenz, neuerdings, verschiedene scharf gespitze Stifte wieder stramm einritzen möchten!

Als er zu seinem jungen Gast hinüberblickt, merkt er, dass der schläft.

Naja, der soll sich ruhig mal ausruhen! Bis zur nächsten Raststätte bleiben noch gut anderthalb Stunden. Er will gegen das Lenkrad schlagen, lässt es aber sein.

Verdammt! Dieser aufgegabelte Flüchtlingswinzling, der sollte doch eine Schule besuchen, Lesen und Schreiben lernen, nicht an irgendeiner Raststätte herumlungern, um auf einen Lastwagen aufzuspringen! Gänsehaut – diese Geste an der Kehle!

Grenzen sind überschritten, jedwedem Augenmaß für Menschlichkeit ist auf der Strecke geblieben! Wenn er den Kleinen hier ausliefert, dann kommt der in eins dieser Lager!

Erki starrt auf die Fahrbahn.

Die Menge der roten Schlussleuchten nimmt zu, an jeder Auffahrt drängen nun immer zahlreicher Fahrzeuge auf die Autobahn.

In all diesen Blechkonserven sitzen in Hetze eingelagerte Menschen. Manche ignorieren ihn, manche nicken ihm freundlich zu, andere geben Lichthupe oder zeigen ihm den Stinkefinger, weil sein Laster eben nun gerade nicht auf diesem wichtigsten Weg ihres Lebens passt, jenem zur befreienden Arbeit. Und

dabei ist er doch nur ein grenzüberschreitender Bote, der jene Waren an ihre Bestimmung bringen wird, die sie mit ihrem hart verdienten Geld kaufen wollen werden.

Der Radiosprecher meldet einen ersten Unfall auf der A8. Hilfe sei unterwegs, versichert er, und legt weiter unbeirrt auf: *Let the Sunshine in.*

In Erkis Kopf dreht schwindelerregend eine Frage Schleife: Was soll er nur tun? Schließlich kann er diesen Kleinen ja nicht ewig durch die Landschaft kutschieren! Er möchte ihm irgendwie helfen.

Aber wie?

Halt! Da gab es doch in einem Bericht dieses Anwaltshepaar zwei Grenzen weiter, das Flüchtlingskindern hilft!

Aber Schnapsidee! Er erinnert sich ja nicht mal an deren Namen!

Vielleicht sollte er das Ganze mit Jana besprechen?

Er wirft einen Blick auf den Beifahrersitz, der kleine Stinker schläft noch immer fest.

Eine halbe Stunde zögert er, dann wählt er die Nummer, lässt seinen Anruf in der Tallinner Wohnung klingeln. Dort ist es nun Viertel vor neun.

Jana freut sich über den Anruf. Erki berichtet von seinem aufregenden Tagesbeginn, beschreibt Burhan, dessen Zeichnungen, teilt ihr seinen Plan mit.

Sie klingt besorgt, als sie ihm verspricht, ihr Möglichstes zu tun.

An der Raststätte angekommen, und eingeparkt, bittet er Burhan, sich auf dem Kabinenboden vor dem Sitz zu verstecken. Der Junge schaut ihn zitternd an. Erki nimmt den Straßenatlas aus dem Handschuhfach und zeigt ihm, wo sie sich gerade befinden, dann fährt er mit dem Finger an der Route entlang, die er in den nächsten vier Tagen noch zurücklegen soll.

„Europa?“, fragt der Knirps.

Erki tippt auf sein Reiseziel.

„Ja, Europa.“

Burhan beruhigt sich und während er vor dem Sitz in die Hocke geht, krepelt Erki seinen Pulli schnell einmal um, merkt sich die Größe und verlässt seine Kabine.

Im Laden findet er Kleider, die passen müssten, kauft auch noch Seife und holt Burhan dann ab.

Im Duschaum zickt der Kleine rum, will seine Unterhose nicht ausziehen. Erki kann sich hier keinen Aufstand leisten, also entleert er die Duschseife über dem Winzling, schiebt ihn unter die Brause, legt ihm Tuch und Kleider bereit und wartet draußen.

Auf seinem Smartphone entdeckt er Janas Nachricht.

Sie habe Informationen gefunden und versuche, Kontakt aufzunehmen. Aber, bitte, er solle vorsichtig sein, und an sie beide denken, an all das, was sie noch vorhaben!

Erki tippt seine Antwort auf den Schirm: *Victor Hugo: Vous voulez la paix: créez l'amour!*

Zwei Tagesfahrten Entfernung! Er muss es versuchen!

Erki lacht, nimmt Buhran an der Schulter. Sie steigen wieder ein. Der Junge grinst:

„Europa?“

In der Kabine duftet es nun angenehm nach Duschgel.

Current weather warning: predominantly heavy fog

Gast Groeber

Translated from German by Carla McGinty

The odometer lights up, swallows the card.

Erki awaits the buzzing, types in the necessary information, leans back in his seat and presses the electronic starter switch. He enjoys the muted clicking and purring of the ignition, followed by the gentle shaking of the cabin, the powerful hum of the engine.

Black smoke will be welling out of the bare exhaust pipes, dispersing in the plumes of fog that motionlessly besiege the petrol station's parking lot.

Windscreen wipers sweep the dense film of morning dew off the screen, side windows buzz downward. Cold, sulfuric morning air invades the cabin, the droning of

machines awakening reverberates over from all around.

He takes a deep breath, shuts himself back in again – surrounded by clear screens.

5.30 a.m.

Switch on the lights, sort out the automatic transmission, release the hand brake, glance left, accelerate.

He hears a horn, sees headlights flash up in the rear-view mirror.

That must be Ivano, a sort of goodbye.

Just last night they had sat together in the service station restaurant over a plate of goulash, exchanged memories of

their trips and of their sporadic encounters on Europe's major connecting roads. Ivano had quizzed him about his plans and when these last trips would be finished. He had enthused about reading and traveling with his beloved wife – to all those places that he had so far only known from books or road signs.

Erki glances at the photo of his Jana. Not long now!

He turns on the radio. All-day dreary weather conditions forecast! The presenter appeases his listeners with music: *Good day, sunshine.*

The fog lights carefully light up the slip road; at the moment there are relatively few vehicles on the motorway, feeling their way through the dense, nearly impermeable, murkiness.

The articulated lorry accelerates onto the empty right lane.

Erki startles as his CB radio suddenly whistles. Ivano's voice rattles out of the box and asks him to come in.

Now what does he want?

Erki twists at the knobs of his station. His colleague only transmits a brief message.

“Hi, maybe I didn't see properly – the fog, you know! Careful – it's possible that illegal cargo got on during your departure, on the lorry. 55. Over!”

What? Illegal cargo? A stowaway? That's impossible!

He had inspected everything so thoroughly during the departure checks, had even surveyed the surroundings!

From the radio blares *Sunny*.

If and buts are swirling in his mind.

Is there actually someone cowering behind the cabin? A he or a she? Really – in this chilliness? Barely three degrees, he reads the display under the tachometer.

What if he fell off! Or she? Then he'd have a human life on his conscience. And to think that until today he had managed to stay accident-free over a couple of million kilometres all across Europe! Or what if the Kojaks nab him with this "cargo"! Of all times, now, just four days before the end, some damned trouble!

He must get off at the next service station, check what's going on. That will, of course, cost time again! Crap! Especially as things today are already moving slower!

The tachometer needle stands at 70 km/h; in this weather it's not possible to go higher. He surmises the tail lights of another lorry in front of him. From a safe distance he dives after them, passing indistinct forests and fields.

The radio presenter warns about low visibility on all roads, consolingly informs that, as yet, there are no reports of traffic congestion and then, conjuring the sun, he cheerily plays *Sunshine Reggae*.

Erki nervously sways his head to the rhythm, hums the chorus.

A sign for services!

His vehicle rolls off the motorway. A sole tractor-trailer stands next to the curb, the curtains in the cabin are still pulled closed. The lorry rolls to a stop.

Erki pulls the brake, looks into the two rear-view mirrors. He leaves the engine running, grabs his torch, opens the side door, jumps out and hurries to the gap between cab and trailer. The light beam of his torch scans the back wall of the cabin. There! A figure is hunkered down between the supply lines in dark clothes, with dark hair, hands behind their back,

face hidden between their knees, easily overlooked! Shocked to the core, he screams:

“Hey! You! Come on now! Get down! Go on!”

Dark eyes hesitatingly appear over the knees, stare at Erki and then, obliging Erki’s motioning hands, the figure slowly straightens up.

“Oh my gosh, lad, you’re still a child!”

With an unmistakable gesture Erki motions the kid to stay put. He scales the saddle, ensures all supply lines are still intact, reaches his hand out to the boy and helps him onto the ground. The small hand feels freezing cold.

The slim body is trembling. Is that out of fear or from the cold?

Erki rubs his hands over his arms, mutters “brrr” and looks the boy in the eyes. The boy nods and smiles shyly. Erki takes his hand again, opens the passenger door and lifts the child into the seat. Then he slams the door shut, walks to the driver’s side, makes certain that no one had watched them and climbs in.

“Ok, you’ll be warm here for now! I have to think about what to do with you.”

Of course, his little passenger doesn’t understand a word, just stares at him with frightened eyes.

However, Erki wants to find out at least something. He points his index fingers at his chest and clearly states *E-r-k-i*. The kid looks at him, nods his head, points to himself and whispers hoarsely *war*. Erki shakes his head. Then he remembers the notebook he keeps stuck under his sleeping berth. He fetches it together with a pen, inexpertly draws a lorry out of a few

lines and doodles, a plump figure next to it. He taps on the figure with his finger, then again to his chest and repeats his name. The boy nods and repeats *Erki*. Then he pats his body and carefully articulates *Burhan*. Erki nods happily.

“Alright Burhan! We can communicate!”

He then sketches a small stick figure onto the paper, shows it to the kid and repeats his name. Next to the figure he adds two larger stick figures, one of them with long hair. He shows Burhan this picture, points at the figures – Burhan, Mom, Dad. The kid shakes his head, slides two fingers across his neck. *War*, he repeats. Erki sighs, takes the pen, draws several more smaller figures, asks about brothers and sisters. Burhan points to a female figure, calls her *Layal*, then grabs the pen, draws a car with a blue light on the roof and an arrow that leads from Layal to the car.

Erki snorts.

A little refugee!

He should turn him in to the police!

He remembers images from news reports on TV: refugee camps – makeshift tarp, planted into slick mud.

That’s no place for such a little guy!

He looks over at Burhan who only reluctantly meets his gaze.

Erki takes a deep breath. Only now he becomes aware of a piercing, unpleasant smell. He looks at the boy more closely.

How long has he been wearing those clothes?

And when was his last decent meal?

He digs out two bananas from behind the back rest and hands them to his passenger.

“Ok, kid, now eat something! And, well, how shall I say it?”

He looks at the kid, presses his nostrils together with index finger and thumb and pulls a face. Then he grabs the notebook again and sketches a shower, a jumper and some trousers.

“At the next services!”

Burhan obediently nods his head, peels the first banana and takes a greedy bite.

Erki puts away the notebook, switches on the automatic transmission, releases the hand brake and accelerates.

Really, he should be notifying the police!

The radio is currently playing *Sunrise*. The tarmac is still under siege from thick fog.

Slowly, the lorry accelerates back onto the motorway. The engine is humming comfortably, the light beams shine dimly into the morning. Light drizzle awakens the windscreen wipers, road markings become visible only at the last moment.

At some point, Erki starts to talk. He recounts his hometown in Russia, just a stone’s throw away from the Estonian border, how he left after the post-Soviet schism and never returned. Tallinn had been his destination because rumours abounded that it would soon be part of Europe. He had already heard so much about Europe by that point! Sure, it was an economic project – but it was also a terrific idea for peace! Europe even contemplated dissolving borders, those lines drawn up on paper, in older and newer contracts, meaningless and groundless when they cut through a warm pine forest or a windswept meadow. Recently, various sharpened pencils have been wanting to carve them in tightly again.

When Erki looks over to his young guest, he notices that he's sleeping.

Ok then, he should go ahead and rest! It's a good one and a half hours until the next services.

He wants to bang the steering wheel but stops himself.

Damnit! This picked-up refugee pipsqueak, he should be going to school, learning how to read and write, not lolling about at some services, waiting to hop onto a lorry!

Goosebumps – that gesture with his throat!

Borders have been crossed; any measure of humanity has been left by the wayside.

If he hands in the kid here, he will go straight to one of those camps!

Erki stares at the road.

The number of red taillights increases; at every junction more and more vehicles crowd onto the motorway. In all these tin cans people sit, embedded in agitation. Some ignore him, some give him a friendly nod, others flash their headlights at him or show him the middle finger because his lorry is not convenient for this most important path of their life, the path to liberating work. And all this despite him being only a border-crossing messenger who brings products to their destination so that these people can buy them with their hard-earned cash.

The radio presenter announces the first accident on the A8 motorway. Help is on its way, he assures his listeners and unperturbed puts on: *Let the Sunshine In*.

Erki's mind revolves around one dizzying question: What should he do?

After all, he can't ferry this kid indefinitely through the countryside!

He wants to help him somehow.

But how?

Wait! Wasn't there that report about a lawyer couple two borders away who helps refugee children!

But that's a crazy idea! He can't even remember their names!

Maybe he should talk the whole thing through with Jana?

He throws a glance at the passenger seat; the little stinker is still sleeping soundly.

He hesitates for half an hour, then he dials the number, lets his call ring in the flat in Tallinn. It's quarter to nine there.

Jana is pleased about his call. Erki tells her about his eventful start to the day, describes Burhan, his sketches, shares his plan with her.

She sounds worried as she promises him to do her utmost.

Once they're parked at the services, he asks Burhan to hide on the cabin floor in front of the seat. The boy looks at him, trembling. Erki takes the street atlas from the glove compartment and shows him where they are, then runs his finger along the route they plan to cover over the next four days.

"Europe?" asks the kid.

Erki taps at the destination.

"Yes, Europe."

Burhan calms down and while he squats down in front of the seat, Erki quickly turns over his jumper collar, notes the size and leaves the cabin.

He finds clothes in the store that should fit, also buys soap, and then collects Burhan.

In the shower room the kid fusses, he doesn't want to take off his underwear. Erki can't afford to make a scene here, so he empties the shower gel over the pipsqueak, nudges him under the shower, lays out towel and clothes for him and waits outside.

He sees Jana's message on his smartphone.

She's found details and is trying to establish contact. But, please, he should be careful and think about them both, about their plans for the future!

Erki types his answer onto the screen: *Victor Hugo: Vous voulez la paix: creez l'amour!** (*You want peace: create love!)

Two days' worth of driving! He has to try!

Erki laughs, grabs Burhan by the shoulder. They climb back into the lorry.

The boy grins:

“Europe?”

In the cabin, there's now a pleasant scent of shower gel.



Serbia

Jelena Lengold

Jasmin i smrt

Jasmine and death

EUPL laureate 2011: *Vašarski Mađioničar* (Arhipelag)

BIOGRAPHY

Born on 15 July 1959 in Serbia, **Jelena Lengold** has published fourteen books: seven books of poetry, six books of short stories and a novel. Her books have been published in the UK, the USA, Italy, Bulgaria, Denmark, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Albania, Slovenia and Poland. She worked as a journalist and an editor on the culture desk at Radio Belgrade, and later worked as a project coordinator at Nansenskolen Humanistic Academy in Lillehammer, Norway. Since September 2011 she has been a freelance artist, dedicated to writing as her only profession. She lives in Belgrade, and has received many awards in Serbia. She received the European Union Prize for Literature in 2011 for the short-story collection *The Fairground Magician*. Her new novel *Giving Up* will be published in 2018.

Jasmin i smrt

Jelena Lengold



Kao san koji odbija da me napusti čak i onda kad sam već odavno budna, takva je ta misao o njemu. Lagani doručak, kakav uvek spremam pred let avionom, zvuk koji ispušta toster dok poletno izbacuje krišku hleba uvis, miris čaja koji ispunjava malu kuhinju, u kojoj još vlada polumrak, jer svanulo je tek sa druge strane zgrade, pogled u frižider, hoću li bilo šta da stavim na tost, ne, ipak ništa, suviše nestrpljiva čak i da bih sažvakala zalogaj, samo progutati taj hleb, samo ga zaliti čajem, tek toliko da mi ne bude muka. Pa ipak, sve vreme dok to radim, i dalje sam u snu. Nisam se probudila i neću se probuditi.

Prošlo je skoro mesec dana otkad smo ležali u njegovom krevetu, tamo na četvrtom spratu, u sobi sa malim krovnim prozorima, zbog kojih izgleda kao da spoljni svet i ne postoji. Samo nebo, kiša, zvezde. Vetar koji ponekad noću prelazi preko stakla i daje nam opravdanje da se stisnemo još više jedno uz drugo. Negde dole, daleko ispod nas, u svetu koji ne vidimo, grad živi svoj život, koji i liči i ne liči na ostatak Osla. Uvek obećavam da ću jednom sići i kupiti velike plave patlidžane, strukove celera i peršuna, i napraviti neko neobično jelo koje Karsten nikad nije probao. Ali za to ne bude vremena. Vodimo ljubav, jedemo pahuljice u mleku, i onda opet vodimo ljubav. To je taj san iz kog se ne budim. Ruka koja ređa zrna suvog grožđa po meni, kao dugmad na Deda Mrazu. Zatim ih pojede, jedno po jedno, odozgo na dole. Dok se

zvezde u prozoru rastapaju i objavljuju dan. Uvek suviše brzo. Ponekad, ipak, odlučimo da pogledamo kako izgleda svet, pa siđemo zavojitim stepenicama, izađemo na ulicu, utopimo se u masu, hodamo između turista, biciklista, šetača pasa, žena u burkama koje vode decu za ruke, obilazimo trotoare prepune tezgi sa voćem i povrćem. Ovaj grad mi uvek izgleda drugačije kad hodam pored tebe, kaže Karsten. Iako sam u njemu proveo čitav život. Smejem se. Šta je drugačije? Boje, kaže on, boje! Nekako, uopšte nisam svestan svih ovih boja kad idem sam. I zaista, iznad prenatrpane piljarnice okačena je zelena reklama za pivo, odmah kraj nje, na prvom spratu, dve žardinjere pune crvenog cveća, mnogo šarenih suncobrana ispred svake radnje, prugaste tende iznad robe, čistač ulice u jarko narandžastim pantalonama, hrpe banana i dinja u svim nijansama žute, starica divne srebrne kose koja bira jagode. Ovaj kvart ima svoje boje, mirise koji su drugačiji na svakom uglu, svoj zvuk koji je mešavina dečije cike, kombija koji uvek nešto čekaju upaljenog motora, pulsiranja semafora, zvonca bicikala, kolica koja se kotrljaju po pločniku natovarena svim i svačim, ljudi koji pričaju u slušalice okačene na ušima, obično na jezicima koji su mi nerazumljivi. Držim ruku u džepu Karstenove jakne, čas prepletemo prste, pa onda opet celu moju šaku obuhvati svojom. I tako do kafea. Tamo naručimo espreso i grickamo plastične kašičice. Onaj svet je i dalje na ulici i mi se pretvaramo da mu pripadamo. A nešto dalje, u zgradi, na četvrtom spratu, čeka nas jastuk koji čuva oblike naših lobanja, čak i kad mi nismo u sobi. I čaršavi koji mirišu na dve prethodne noći. To je taj san.

Srećan put, kaže vozač taksija iznoseći moj mali kofer na pločnik, i to je prvi i poslednji put da čujem njegov glas. Mahnem mu kao starom znancu i on se nasmeje kao da zna gde idem. Žene koje žure i koje su u rano jutro već tako razdragane. Taksisti uvek znaju. Vidim ga levim okom kako

stoji kraj automobila i gleda za mnom. Ispravljam leđa i ulazim u aerodromsku zgradu. Moje potpetice odzvanjaju sve dok me kružna vrata ne ubace unutra, u sveopšti žamor.

Jedan tamnoputi čovek je stajao u redu, tačno iza mene. Visok, u običnoj beloj košulji. Opkoljeni konopcima išli smo ka čekiranju i napredovali sporo, korak po korak. Svi osim njega nešto su proveravali po svojim torbicama, dovikivali se međusobno, nestrpljivo gledali na sat, samo je on stajao mirno, kao da nigde nije žurio. Kad god bi se red pomerio, on bi mirno napravio još jedan korak. I tako sve do žute linije, koju sam prešla pre njega i predala svoj kofer. Zatim sam ga zaboravila, onako kako zaboravimo lice prodavca novina u nepoznatom gradu. Probijala sam se kroz masu ljudi, nisam ni morala da pratim slova i strelice, znala sam ovaj put napamet. Već šesti put idem kod Karstena. Uvek istim letom, uvek sa istog gejta.

Kraj mene je prošlo nekoliko kosookih stjuardesa koje su za sobom kotrljale svoje ručne prtljage. Bile su nestvarno lepe i istovetne. Njihove crvene marame bile su vezane na isti način. Čvrsto stegnute punde ispod malih sivih kapa stajale su isto. Bezbroj očiju na aerodromu za trenutak je pogledalo za njima, a zatim je ta ledeno elegantna lepota nestala niz hodnike.

Bilo je još vremena do polaska. Ušla sam u radnju s parfemima i njuškala bočice. Prinela sam jednu od njih svom vratu i nameravala da prsnem. I tada sam ga ponovo ugledala kraj sebe, onog tamnopusnog muškarca sa čekiranja. Mora biti da je imao veoma nečujan hod, jer nisam shvatila da je došao do mene, dok nije progovorio. Obratio mi se kao da se već odavno znamo. Ne taj parfem, rekao je. Ako ćeš već sedeti do mene, voleo bih da mirišeš na jasmin. Kako je mogao znati da ću sedeti do njega? Nisam to ni stigla da ga

pitam, jer mi je dotakao lakat, odveo me do sledeće gondole i pokazao jednu bočicu. Zaista bih voleo da tako mirišeš. Ja sam Ahmed, kazao je, i pružio mi ruku. Sada ćemo ti i ja proći kroz baštu jasmína, rekao je.

Malena prodavačica, sa drugog kraja prostorije, pomalo zabrinuto je gledala u nas dvoje. U mene, koja ćutke radim ono što Ahmed želi, i u njega koji uzima bočicu, rasprsné polukrug po vazduhu i kaže, evo, sad ćemo proći kroz ovo i miris će ostati na nama. Ukoračili smo u jasmín. Udahni duboko, rekao je Ahmed. To je miris koji sam, kao dete, osećao pod prozorom svako jutro kad bih se probudio, a danas bih želeo da taj miris stalno bude oko mene.

Komadić straha skliznuo je iz mog mozga negde u grudí i tu je zastao, zbunjen. Želela sam da se okrenem i pobegnem, da se vratim putem kojim sam i došla, nazad do carinika, pa u taksí, pa u bezbednost svog stana. I istovremeno, želela sam da pogledam ravno u najtamnije oči koje sam ikada videla i da upitam Ahmeda ono što mi se tog časa činilo sasvim izvesnim: znači li to da ćemo danas umreti? Zašto baš sa mnom? Zašto na ovom letu? Zar ne shvata da Karsten verovatno baš sad zateže čiste čaršave na krevetu i nestrpljivo provlači prste kroz kosu?

Čulo se kako iz zvučnika pozivaju putnike za naš let. Hodali smo jedno kraj drugog, Ahmed i ja, i službenici koji su pregledali naš ručni prtljag i propustili nas kroz metalnu kapiju najverovatnije su mislili da smo par, neobičan, ali par. Čekala sam dok je Ahmed vraćao svoj kaiš na pantalone i vezivao pertle. Carinik je gledao u mene, pomno i prazno, istovremeno. Uzvratila sam mu pogled, ravno u oči, a zatim nekoliko puta brzo pogledala u pravcu Ahmeda. Ništa. Carinik nije ni trepnuo. Uzalud očekujem neku pomoć od njega. Zbogom dakle, ni tebe više nikad neću videti, baš

kao ni taksistu, baš kao ni prodavačicu parfema, zbogom svima vama koji ne umete da razumete moj pogled. Na ovom svetu je previše ljudi koji olako prelaze preko tuđih pogleda, pomislila sam. Pa kad je već tako, onda zbogom. Ništa nisam rekla, ušla sam za Ahmedom u avion. Bledi oblak jasmína išao je za nama, kao nečujni korak neizbežnog. Motori Boinga su zaurrali, točkovi su dobili ubrzanje, zemljina teža nas je na tren prikovala za sedišta i to je bilo to. Leteli smo. Niko oko mene nije ni slutio koliko visoko smo poleteli.

Šta se desilo sa žbunovima jasmína iz tvog detinjstva, pitala sam Ahmeda, kad je avion konačno dostigao željenu visinu. Tamo nema više ničega, odvratio je, ne gledajući u mene. Samo smrt. Tamo se sada oseća samo miris trulih ljudska tela i bolesnih životinja. A kuće, šta je s njima? Nema ni kuća. Ni dvorišta. Tamo gde su bile cvetne leje, sada leže limeni krovovi, doleteli sa srušenih kuća. Tenkovi su prešli preko ograda i povrtnjaka. Samo suva zemlja i kosti. Rupe u zidovima, kao rane koje ne zarastaju. I mršavi psi koji lutaju, to je sve.

Leteli smo gotovo bešumno iznad belih, savršenih, oblaka po kojima je sunce crtalo najlepše prizore, kao iz dečijih snova. Pogledaj, rekoh, vidiš li labuda! I dva polarna medveda! Eno ih, eno ih, upravo smo prošli kraj njih! Ahmed je za trenutak držao ruku u vazduhu, kao da se dvoumi, a onda me je pomilovao po obrazu. Osetila sam kako mi naviru suze, mada nisam znala odakle tačno. Bilo je besmisleno da ga zamolim da odustane, znala sam to. Ahmed je imao najcrnije oči koje je iko ikada video.

Ćutao je nekoliko minuta, sa ramenom sasvim pribijenim uz moje. Učinilo mi se da negde iz dubine njegovog tela osećam neko tiho, ugušeno drhtanje. Ili je to dolazilo iz mog tela, ko bi ga znao. Onda je naglo ustao i rekao da će otići do

toaleta. Dakle, to je to, pomislih. Sad će se desiti. I sve ovo će nestati, ovi oblaci, ovaj miris, lampica koja svetluca iznad naših glava, i ona će nestati. Nisam se plašila, čudnovato. Bila sam pomirena i tužna, zbog njega, podjednako kao i zbog sebe. Negde dole, duboko ispod nas, život je možda mogao nešto da nam pruži, samo da su ljudi umeli da razumeju tuđe poglede. Provukao se kraj mene i pošao, ali sam ga povukla za rukav. Čekaj, rekoh, moram nešto da ti kažem. Ahmed je stao. Jedan čovek me čeka u Oslu. Zbog mene je naučio da pravi kolač od šljiva i napunio je stan cvećem. Mislim da je došlo vreme da ga zaboraviš, kazao je Ahmed tiho i nasmešio se, više očima nego usnama. Čekaj, rekoh opet, priđi, moram još nešto da ti kažem. Ahmed je spustio uho do mojih usana. Večeras želim da vodim ljubav, čuješ li? Gledao me je kao da razume. Gledao me je kao što me niko nikada nije gledao. Kakva šteta, kakva nepovratna šteta, pomislih. A onda je otišao niz redove sedišta i zauvek nestao iza zavese. Oblak jasmína raspolutio se na dva dela.

Sedela sam i čekala. Začuđujuće mirna. Setila sam se jedne svoje tetke koja je nedeljama umirala u bolnici. Setila sam se njenog tela koje je kopnilo i lica koje je iz dana u dan bivalo sve više žuto, dok napokon nije dobilo boju zemlje. Sve je bolje od toga, pomislih. Nije valjda ovo poslednje na šta ću misliti? Ne, moram misliti na nešto lepše, brzo, brzo, ona jutra sa udaljenom bukom sa ulice i suncem koje se probija ispod roletni, Karsten se budi i kosa mu je na očima, koža mu je vruća ispod pokrivača, moram misliti na to, ili možda ipak na zvuk petlova koji nisam čula toliko godina, zaista bih volela da mogu da ih čujem barem još jednom, neću valjda misliti na petlove u poslednjem trenutku svog života, ipak zašto da ne, gle, jedan oblak izgleda upravo kao veliki beli petao...

Odjednom shvatih da se Ahmed vratio i da stoji kraj mene, čekajući da ga pustim da prođe. Videlo se da je mokrom rukom prošao kroz kosu. Živi smo, rekoah, kad je ponovo sedeo kraj mene. Jesmo, klimnu on glavom. Ponekad i meni izgleda nestvarno, ali eto, još uvek sam živ.

Iz zvučnika su javljali da se vežemo, za trenutak se sve zatreslo, avion je izbacio točkove i onda se pod nama ukazao šareni grad. Mirisalo je na jasmin. Nisam znala kuda idemo dalje, kad jednom dotaknemo zemlju, Ahmed i ja.

Jasmine and death

Jelena Lengold

Translated from Serbian by Zoran Paunović

The thought of him is like a dream that refuses to leave me on my own even when I have been awake for a long time. A light breakfast, of the sort I always prepare before a flight, the sound of toaster when it energetically pops a slice of bread up, the smell of tea that fills the small kitchen, in which semi-darkness still reigns, because the dawn is still on the other side of the building, a look at the fridge, should I put anything on the toast, no, nothing, I'm too impatient even take a single bite; just swallow the bread, just pour some tea after it, only to avoid being sick. Nevertheless, while doing all that, I am still asleep. I have not woken up and I will not wake up.

Almost a month has passed since the last time we were lying in his bed, there on the fourth floor, in that room with small roof windows, which make the outside world seem non-existent. Only the sky, the rain, the stars. And the wind that sometimes blows across the windowpanes at night, giving us an excuse to cuddle into each other more tightly. Somewhere down there, way down below us, in the world that is out of our sight, the city lives its life, which is at the same time similar to and dissimilar from the life of the rest of Oslo. I keep on promising that one day I will go down and buy big aubergines, clusters of celery and parsley, and then prepare some extraordinary dish that Carsten has never tasted. But there is never enough time for that. We make love, we eat cereals with milk, and then we make love again. That is the dream I never wake up from. The hand that puts raisins upon my body, like buttons on Santa Claus. Then he eats them, one by one, from top to bottom. While the stars are melting on the windowpane, announcing the day. Always too soon. Sometimes, nevertheless, we decide to take a

look at the world, and then we descend the winding stairs, go out in the street, merge into the crowd, walk among tourists, cyclists, dog-walkers, women in burkhas taking their children by the hand, we stroll along the pavements full of stands with fruit and vegetables. This city always looks different when I walk with you, says Carsten. Although I've spent my whole life in it. I laugh at that. What is different? Colours, he says, colours! For some reason, I am completely unaware of all these colours when I walk alone. And indeed, above the crammed grocery store there hangs a green beer ad; right beside it, on the first floor, two jardinières full of red flowers, a number of multicoloured parasols in front of every shop, striped awnings above merchandise, the street sweeper in his bright orange trousers, heaps of bananas and melons in all nuances of yellow, an old lady with beautiful grey hair, picking strawberries. This quarter has its colours, its smells that are different at every corner, its sound that is a mixture of children's yelling, of vans that always wait for something with their engines on, of pulsing traffic lights, of bicycle chimes, of the wheels that roll over the pavements loaded with all sorts of things, of people who talk with headphones on their ears, usually in languages that I can't understand. I keep my hand in the pocket of Carsten's jacket: one moment our fingers are entangled, the next his hand enfolds mine completely. And so we get to the café. We order espresso there and nibble plastic spoons. The world is still in the street and we pretend to belong to it. Not far from there, in a building, on the fourth floor, a pillow is waiting for us, keeping the shapes of our skulls, even when we are not in the room. And the sheets that smell of two previous nights. Such is that dream.

Have a nice trip, says the cab driver, putting my little suitcase on the pavement, and I hear his voice for the first and last time. I wave to him as to an old acquaintance and he smiles as if he knew where I am going. The women hurrying along, so delighted so early in the morning. Cab drivers always know. I see him with my left eye, standing by the car and looking at

me walking away from him. Straightening my back, I enter the airport building. My heels echo until the revolving doors eject me inside, into overall clamour.

A dark-skinned man stood in the line, right behind me. Tall, in a plain white shirt. Surrounded by ropes we were going towards check-in counters, advancing slowly, step by step. Everybody except him was checking something in their bags, shouting to each other, impatiently looking at their watches, but he just stood calmly, as if he was not hurrying anywhere. With each move of the line, he would make another step. And so we went right to the yellow line, which I passed before him, and handed my luggage in. Then I forgot him, just like we forget the face of the man at the newspaper stand in a strange city. I pushed my way through the crowd, without having to follow letters and arrows, because I know that path by heart. It was the sixth time that I had gone to visit Carsten. Always on the same flight, always from the same gate.

Several slant-eyed stewardesses passed by me, rolling their hand luggage behind them. They were uncannily beautiful and identical. Their red scarves were tied in the same way. Their tight buns under small grey caps all stood in the same way. Innumerable pairs of eyes looked at them for a moment, and then that icily elegant beauty disappeared down the hallways.

I still had some time to wait before the departure. So I entered the perfume shop and started sniffing the bottles. I raised one of them towards my neck, intending to spray the perfume. Then I saw him beside me again, the man from the checking line. He must have had a very silent gait, for I had not realised that he had approached me until he spoke. He addressed me as if we had known each other for long. Not that perfume, he said. If you are going to sit beside me, I would like you to smell of jasmine. How could he know that I would be sitting next to him? I didn't have time to ask him, for he touched my elbow, led me to the next stall, and offered me his hand. You and I will now pass through a jasmine garden, he said.

A small saleswoman, from the other side of the room, was looking at us somewhat worriedly. At me, doing silently what Ahmed wanted, and at him, taking the bottle, spraying a semicircle in the air and saying, you see, now we will pass through this and the odour will stay upon us. Inhale deeply, said Ahmed. That is the odour that as a child I smelt under my window every morning when I woke up, and today I would like that odour to be around me constantly.

A tiny bit of fear slid down from my brain to somewhere in the chest and stopped there, perplexed. I wanted to turn and run away, to go back along the path that led me there, back to the customs officers, and then to the safety of my apartment. And at the same time, I wanted to look straight into the darkest eyes I had ever seen and ask Ahmed about something that seemed quite inevitable for me at that moment: does that mean that today we are going to die? Why with me? Why on this particular flight? Doesn't he know that probably at this very moment Carsten is spreading clean sheets upon the bed and impatiently running his fingers through his hair?

An invitation to the passengers for our flight was heard from the loudspeaker. We were walking by each other, Ahmed and me, and the officers who checked our hand luggage and let us pass through the iron gate probably thought us to be a pair; an unusual one, but a pair. I was waiting while Ahmed was putting his belt back on his trousers and tying his shoelaces. The customs officer was looking at me, intently and vacantly at the same time. I looked back at him, straight into his eyes, and then I cast several quick glances at Ahmed. Nothing happened. The officer didn't even raise an eyebrow. I could not expect any help from him. Goodbye then, I will never see you again, just like I will never see the cab driver again, nor the saleswoman, goodbye to all of you who cannot understand my glance. There are too many people in this world who neglect other people's glances, I thought. Well then, goodbye to all. I didn't say anything, I just boarded the plane after Ahmed.

A white cloud of jasmine was following us, like an inaudible footstep of the inevitable. The engines of the Boeing roared, the wheels gained speed, the force of gravity nailed us down to our seats for a moment, and that was that. We were in the air. Nobody around me could not even have a vague idea about how high we were to go.

Whatever happened to the jasmine bushes from your childhood, I asked Ahmed, when the plane finally reached the scheduled height. There is nothing there any more, he replied, not looking at me. Just death. There is only the smell of rotting human bodies and sick animals. And the houses, what happened to them? There are no houses. No yards. Where the flowerbeds used to be, there are tin roofs now, fallen down from the ruined houses. The tanks rolled over the fences and orchards. Only dry land and bones are there now. Holes in the walls, like wounds that cannot heal. And lanky dogs wandering around, that is all.

We were flying almost without a sound above white, perfect clouds, on which the sun was drawing most beautiful scenes, like those from childhood dreams. Look, I said, do you see the swan! And two polar bears! There, there they are, we have just passed by them! Ahmed held his hand in the air for a moment, as if in hesitation, and then he caressed my cheek. I felt an upsurge of tears, although I did not know where they were coming from. It was pointless to ask him to change his mind, I knew that. Ahmed had the darkest eyes that anyone had ever seen.

He kept silent for several minutes, with his shoulder tightly pressed to mine. I had an impression that somewhere from the depth of his body I felt some quiet, suppressed trembling. Or perhaps it was coming from my body, who could know? Then he slowly got up and said that he was going to the toilet. So this is it, I thought. It is going to happen now. And this will all disappear, these clouds, this odour, and the little lamp that blinks over our heads, it will also disappear. Strangely enough, I was

not afraid. I was resigned and sad, because of him, as much as because of me. Somewhere down there, deep down under us, life may perhaps have given us something, if people only had been able to understand other people's glances. He slid by me and wanted to go, but I tugged at his sleeve. Wait, I said, I have to tell you something. Ahmed stopped. A man is waiting for me at Oslo. He learned to make plum cake because of me and filled the apartment with flowers. I think that it's time for you to forget him, said Ahmed silently, and smiled, more with his eyes than with his mouth. Wait, I said, come over here, I have something more to tell you. Ahmed lowered his ear to my lips. I want to make love tonight, do you understand? He was looking at me as if he had understood. He was looking at me as no one had ever looked at me. What a pity, what an irrevocable pity, I thought. And then he went down the rows of seats and disappeared behind the curtain forever. The cloud of jasmine was split in two.

I was sitting and waiting. Astonishingly serene. I remembered an aunt of mine, who had been dying in a hospital for weeks. I remembered her declining body and her face becoming more and more yellow from one day to another, until finally it acquired the colour of the earth. Anything is better than that, I thought. Is it possible that this is my last thought? No, I have to think of something more beautiful, quickly, quickly, of those mornings with distant noise from the street and the sun peeking through the blinds. Carsten wakes up and his hair falls over his eyes, his skin is warm under the bed sheet, I have to think of that, or maybe the crowing of roosters that I have not heard for years, I would really like to hear it again, no, I don't want to think of roosters at the very last moment of my life, then again why not, look, one of these clouds looks exactly like a big white rooster...

All of a sudden I realised that Ahmed had come back and that he was standing beside me, waiting for me to let him pass. It was obvious that he had run his wet hand through his hair. We

are alive, I said, when he sat beside me again. Yes we are, he nodded. Sometimes it looks fantastic to me too, but nevertheless, I am still alive.

Through the loudspeaker, they were telling us to fasten our seatbelts, everything trembled for a moment, the plane put out its wheels and the multicoloured city appeared below us. It smelt of jasmine. I did not know where we would go next, when we touch the earth, Ahmed and me.



Romania

Ioana Pârvulescu

O voce

A voice

EUPL laureate 2013: *Viața începe vineri* (Humanitas Publishing House)

BIOGRAPHY

Ioana Pârvulescu was born in Brașov in 1960. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest, establishing herself as a distinct voice within literary circles. She is currently a professor teaching modern literature at the same faculty. She has coordinated the series *Cartea de pe noptieră* (*Bedside Book*) at Humanitas Publishing House, worked as an editor at the literary journal *România literară* and has also translated from French and German (Maurice Nadeau, Angelus Silesius, Rainer Maria Rilke, Milan Kundera, Saint-Exupéry and Asterix the Gaul by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo). She has published several bestselling books about everyday life in the 19th century, between the two world wars and during communism. She has written three novels, all very well received. Her latest, *The Innocents* (2016), will be published in German by Zsolnay Verlag.

O voce

Ioana Pârvulescu



Pentru Monica L.

Întoarcerea

Avionul de la Paris a aterizat de câteva minute și primii călători se apropie deja de ghișeu. Un fel de șopot ca de apă curgătoare a umplut deodată sala până atunci liniștită. De când s-au deschis granițele, după Revoluția din decembrie 1989, la care am participat și eu, avioanele din vestul Europei sunt pline-ochi, iar noi – la controlul pașapoartelor lucrăm doar doi pe tură – facem față cu greu. Mă ascund sub breton și-n documente, și abia dacă-mi ridic privirea să verific chipul care, pentru mine, e doar accesoriul unui nume și al unei fotografii. Încerc să fiu rapidă, corectă, civilizată. Am îndărătul meu 32 de ani de viață și nici măcar 3 luni de libertate.

O mână frumoasă, tremurând ușor, îmi întinde un pașaport francez. Aparține unei doamne al cărei cap ajunge exact până la deschizătura ghișeului. Atunci se întâmplă două lucruri: văd, în pașaport, anul nașterii – femeia are 67 de ani – și aud o voce care mă electrocutează, pentru că o recunosc: „Bună seara, domnișoară!”

Umerii mi s-au îndreptat brusc. Era să mă înec. Era să strig. Era imposibil. M-am uitat bine de tot la femeia asta, pe care n-o văzusem în viața mea. Mă privea și ea dindărătul ochelarelor cu rame rotunde. Ochii îi erau negri, blânzi și inteligenți. Știam că e strict interzis, dar am sărit de pe scaun, m-am năpustit afară și am îmbrățișat-o cât am putut de tare.

— O, Doamne, pentru asta chiar au meritat toate, a spus hotărât, cu vocea ei ușor răgușită, pe care o știam atât de bine.

Am izbucnit în plâns.



Plecarea

Trenul staționează la granița austriacă, la punctul de trecere aflat între zonele controlate de sovietici și de americani. Soldatul își sughe pe-ndelete măselele. O fixează pe tânăra care i-a dat pașaportul. Scrie acolo că are 23 de ani. E un fir de om și abia îi ajunge până la piept. Are un guler alb, de fată cumințe, răsfrânt peste puloverul vișiniu, cu mâneci scurte. Foarte bronzată, ten de creolă, ochi negri ca mătăniile, sprâncene puțin prea dese și buze pline, dintre cele care par să promită tot timpul un sărut, în ciuda expresiei serioase a chipului. Vrea să meargă la Paris. În lumina blândă a după-amiezii, grănicerul studiază îndelung ștampilele, rotind pașaportul în toate direcțiile. Sunt multe și par în bună regulă. Tocmai asta nu-i place: așa ceva nu se obține, cu una, cu două, în 1947. Dacă o să-i ceară cineva socoteală, poate spune că a crezut-o spioană. Coperta bleumarin are coroană regală. Grănicerul urăște regatele, lumea liberă și fetele scunde, cu guleraș alb. Îl interesează poveștile cu violuri, deși el, unul, nu și-a făcut păcate. Se enervează brusc și-i spune răstit, în rusă, că-i lipsește o viză, lucru pe care fata nu pare să-l înțeleagă, își scutură părul negru, buclat, și ridică umerii. Bărbatul îi face semn să-și dea jos bagajul. Se va duce îndărăt în țara ei, asupra căreia veghează armata lui. Îi întoarce spatele și o lăasă în plata Domnului. Trenul a și pornit, pufăind tot mai sacadat, ca un alergător.

Monique, cum îi spun prietenii franțuzindu-i numele, n-are timp să se sperie, deși până atunci viața a răsfățat-o. Trebu-

ie să ajungă la Paris cu orice preț, pentru că a dat toți banii mamei pe bilet: e inflație și a costat-o milioane. Ca toți cei din preajmă (mai ales scriitori, pentru că tatăl ei, Dumnezeu să-l odihnească, a fost un critic respectat, cu vederi liberale, și a ținut timp de 25 de ani un cenaclu), Monique știe că asta e „ultimul tren” spre libertate, țara avea să fie complet bolșevizată. E destul de tânără ca să creadă că lucrurile se vor schimba curând în bine și că se va putea întorce la mama ei, lăsată zălog acasă. Nu bănuiește că n-o s-o mai vadă niciodată.

Încearcă să fie practică. Se îndreaptă, cu o valiză în care are câteva rochii, un pui fript și zece pachete de țigări, către un impieगत mustăcios, bătrân, întinzându-i mâna camaradereste. Un om amărât, vai de capul lui. El a arătat cu un deget noduros spre burta proprie și a spus: Dima. Din cărțile tatălui ei știe că rușii pot fi cumpărați. A deschis valiza și i-a întins o rochie cu buline și un pachet de țigări. I-a spus: *Viena!* și a indicat direcția în care plecase trenul. Dima a făcut semn cu degetul noduros spre puiul fript. Ea a înghițit în sec, el i-a zis *Bolșoe spasibo!* și sub mustața căruntă părea să fie un zâmbet. Au fumat împreună câte o țigară din rezerva ei, iar bătrânul i-a promis, mai mult prin semne, s-o treacă granița clandestin.

A telefonat la halta dinainte și a cerut ca trenul următor să oprească 45 de secunde la halta lui. Era un marfar cu cărbuni. Dima, cu țigara încă neterminată, atât de repede mersese totul, a ajutat-o pe fata cu guler alb să urce și, cu lopata, a acoperit-o rapid cu cărbuni. Monique nu știa că, puțin mai încolo, trenul va opri pentru un nou control rusesc. Soldații treceau de la un vagon la altul și-și înfingeau baioneta unde se nimerea. A auzit sunetul aspru, hârșăit, tot mai aproape. Fierul a ocolit-o și sunetul s-a îndepărtat. Între timp, primele umbre ale înserării s-au așezat peste cărbunii negri.

La postul de control american a înțeles pentru prima oară că filmele hollywoodiene văzute cu prietenii ei pe Bulevardul cinematografelor sunt o păcăleală. Aștepta ca americanii s-o

admire pentru proba de curaj, s-o sărute pe obrajii murdari de cărbune, să-i zâmbească ca Gary Cooper sau Humphrey Bogart și s-o trimită cu părere de rău către Paris. Ei însă au trimis-o fără părere de rău îndărăt la ruși. Și n-au zâmbit. Totuși, au recunoscut că pașaportul e în perfectă ordine. *Why?* a întreat ea. *What part of illegal don't you understand?* a ironizat-o unul. I-au însoțit drumul cu un jet de raze dintr-un proiector, ca să fie siguri că nu poate fugi. Lumina aia pusă pe spatele ei a jignit-o mai rău decât puștile. Monique uitase pur și simplu că americanii se simțeau, în 1947, aliații sovieticilor.

Iată însă că sovieticii nu erau tocmai aliații americanilor și, se vede că doar pentru a-i scoate din sărite pe „imperialiști”, Monique, care putea nimeri direct într-un lagăr de concentrare, a fost întoarsă aproape cu gingășie la halta lui Dima. Bătrânul a primit-o ca o gazdă pe un musafir drag. A lăsat-o să se spele și să se schimbe cu o rochie curată din valijoară. Puiul ei fript era un morman de oase, dar a tratat-o cu un măr. Și-a dus două degete la buze, inspirând cu ochii închiși. A primit un pachet de țigări. A telefonat iar la halta de dinainte, pentru ca trenul – de data asta unul de călători, verificat deja de grăniceri – să oprească 20 de secunde. Monique abia a apucat să urce în vagonul cel mai apropiat, împinsă de jos de Dima, că trenul a și pornit pufăind spre Viena.

A nimerit într-un compartiment cu un cuplu de tineri care studiau o partitură de Mozart și fredonau frânturi din *Don Giovanni*, cerându-i mereu scuze. Lângă ei, tot ce-a trăit cu o oră înainte pare ireal. Înțelege că e real atunci când bărbatul, care o privea stăruitor, îi spune sfios *Darf ich?* și, cu o batistă de olandă, îi șterge o pată neagră de sub bărbie. Monique simte că roșește și îi vine să-i sărute pe cei doi. Firește că n-o face: a fost crescută foarte strict.

Pe 15 septembrie, la miezul nopții, coboară în Gare de l'Est, cu valijoara în care mai avea un singur pachet de țigări. N-o

așteaptă nimeni. Rămâne în gară, neștiind încotro s-o apuce și neavând nici un franc. Doi polițiști, care o găsesc ghemuită ca un copil orfan, pe o bancă, se îndură de ea și îi dau voie să doarmă într-un compartiment de tren care staționează acolo. O acoperă cu pelerinele lor. Monique știe că li se spune *hironnelles*, pentru că zboară noaptea pe bicicletă, cu pelerina neagră fluturând în vânt, despăcată ca o coadă de rândunică. De atunci, de câte ori vede rândunele, Monique zâmbeste.



Întoarcerea

Avionul a decolat de pe aeroportul Orly. Un copilăș de pe un scaun din apropiere întreabă: „*Maman, elles aiment les avions, les hi'ondelles?*” Zâmbesc fără să vreau.

Îmi potrivesc ceasul de la mână cu o oră înainte, dar timpul meu îl dau înapoi. Refuz categoric să intru în închisoarea asta numită bătrânețe și alunec iute pe apele timpului care curge invers, până când sunt plină de viitor, cu toate vârstele mele nesacrificate. Îmi amintesc de sfatul mamei, la plecare: „Când n-o să-ți fiu alături, scumpa mea, poartă-te cu tine ca și cum ai fi fetița ta”. Mă reîntâlnesc cu toți oamenii prin intermediul cărora Dumnezeu m-a iubit și-i ocolesc pe toți cei prin care m-a pedepsit. Regândesc cuvintele în care am crezut, pentru care aș fi putut să mor (era cât pe ce s-o și fac). De mii de ori, așteptând în studio să-mi încep emisiunea, am auzit semnalul: *Aici e Radio Europa liberă!* De mii de ori am rostit: *Teze și antiteze la Paris. La microfon, Monica ...*

Aveam 5 ani când părinții mei au ascultat, pentru prima dată, în 1928, o voce la radio. Era un miracol, pe-atunci, să auzi deodată, de pe canapeaua ta și în sufrageria ta, un reportaj sau un concert dat chiar în clipa aia la Viena, Londra sau Paris. Părea o vrajă sau o scamatorie. Primul nostru radio era cât un frigider. La Paris, ca să-i ajut efectiv pe cei de-acasă, m-am trans-

format într-o voce. Am vrut, cu vocea mea, să distrug zilnic o bucătică din granița invizibilă care a despărțit în toți anii ăștia Europa liberă, în care eram eu, de Europa neliberă, în care era țara mea. Am transformat estetica despre care-mi vorbea tata, în Est-etica despre care el nu m-a învățat, din păcate, nimic. Seară de seară, la radio, am scos cătușele de pe cuvinte, am apărat ceva sau pe cineva.

Poliția politică a reacționat destul de rapid și mi-a transmis că, dacă nu mă potolesc și dacă nu tac, îmi vor omorî mama. Mama mi-a transmis să nu mă potolesc și să nu tac. Am ascultat-o, au omorât-o. Apoi, cum nu mă mai puteau șantaja cu mama, de ziua mea mi-au făcut un cadou: doi bărbați m-au bătut pe stradă. În dimineața următoare eram la radio, și pe vocea mea nu se vedeau vânătăile.

Din țară, unde *Europa liberă*, postul nostru, se prindea clandestin, îmi soseau încurajări: „Tata a murit ascultându-vă glasul”. „Când e emisiunea dumneavoastră, radiourile merg la toate etajele blocului”. „Trăim într-un secol desfigurat de spaimă. Ne dați curaj”. „Sunteți vocea adevărului”. „Azi am operat un copil. Când l-am deschis, din abdomenul lui mic au ieșit aburi, atât de frig era în sala de operație. Spuneți asta!” „Vă scriu dintr-o țară cândva senină. Aflați despre noi că, aici, ne-am pierdut vorbele”.

Timpul care a curs îndărăt curge iar înainte, mă duce acasă, iar avionul aterizează. Bărbatul meu a tăcut și el, tot drumul, pierdut printre gândurile lui. Coborâm pe pista inundată de razele apusului și ne uităm cu lăcomie la cerul de sub care am plecat acum 44 de ani.

Fetișcana de la ghișeu are un breton blond, care-i intră mereu în ochi. Fără să mă privească, îmi face semn să mă apropiu. Credeam că mi-am consumat, în viață, toate emoțiile, dar îmi tremură mâna când întind pașaportul și zic: „Bună seara, domnișoară!” Tresare ca lovită când îmi aude vocea și apoi,

nu știu cum, mă trezesc îmbrățișată atât de tare, că mă doare coșul pieptului. Când mi-a dat drumul, plângea. Soțul meu mă privește de la coada alăturată puțin îngrijorat. 40 de ani de radio mă ajută să-mi stăpânesc vocea când îi spun:

— O, Doamne, pentru asta chiar au meritat toate!

— Plâng ca proasta pentru că abia acum am înțeles că suntem liberi, o aud zicând și mi se strânge inima de grijă.

A voice

Ioana Pârvulescu

Translated from Romanian by Mihnea Gafița

Dedicated to Monica L.

Homecoming

The flight from Paris landed a few minutes and the first passengers are already coming towards the Passport-control booths. A gurgling of a sort, like that of a stream, has all of a sudden filled the previously quiet hall. Ever since the borders opened up, after the December 1989 Revolution in which I myself took part, every plane from western Europe is packed to full capacity, and we can hardly cope with it – at passport control there are only two of us working every shift. I hide beneath my fringed hairline and stay buried in the documents – I hardly raise my eyes to check the faces that are no more, to me, than accessories to a name and a photograph. I try to be fast, just, and civilised. I have thirty-two years of life to my account, and not even three months of freedom.

A beautiful, slightly shaking hand holds out a French passport. It belongs to a lady whose head reaches only as high as the opening of the check-booth. Two things happen then: I see the woman's birth year in the passport – she is sixty-seven – and I hear a voice that electrocutes me, because I recognise it: "Good evening, Miss!"

My shoulders straighten up abruptly. I almost choke. I almost shout. It can't be. I look as best I can at this woman I've never seen in my entire life. She looks back at me from behind round-rimmed glasses. Her eyes are black, gentle, and clever. I know it is strictly forbidden, and yet I jump up from my chair,

rush out of the booth, and hug her with as much strength as I'm capable of.

“O, God – she says firmly, with her somehow raucous voice, that I know only so well –, everything was really worth such a welcome.”

I burst out crying.



Going away

The train stations at the Austrian border, at the checkpoint between the Soviet- and American-controlled zones. The soldier draws pensively from between his molars. He stares at the young woman who has handed him her passport. It says there that she's twenty-three. A little wisp of a woman, who barely rises up to his chest. She has a white, good-girl's collar, a turn-down over her sour-cherry, short-sleeved sweater. Very tanned, with a Creole's complexion, eyes black as rosary beads, brows maybe too bushy, and full lips, the kind that seem to always foretell a kiss, notwithstanding the stern demeanour of the face. She wants to go to Paris. In the gentle light of the afternoon, the border guard studies the stamps at length, rotating the passport in all directions. There are many of them, and they all seem to be in good order. This, in fact, he doesn't like: you cannot obtain something like this at the drop of a hat – not in 1947. If anyone calls him to account, he can always say he thought she was a spy. The navy-blue cover has a royal coat-of-arms printed on it. The border guard hates kingdoms, the free world, and white-collared short girls. He is interested in rape stories, although he has not sinned himself. He throws a sudden temper and snaps at her, in Russian, that she is one visa short, which the girl seems unable to comprehend, because she shakes her curly black hair and shrugs her shoulders. The soldier waves at her that she should take her luggage down. She's going to return to her own country, which

is now being watched upon by his army. He turns his back and leaves her to her fate. The train has already pulled away and puffs ever more jerkily, like an exhausted racer.

Monique, as her friends call her, Frenchifying her name, has no time to get frightened, even though life has spoiled her so far. She must get to Paris at all costs, because she has spent all her mother's money on the train ticket – inflation is running high and it has cost her millions. Like everybody around her (mostly writers, because her father, may he rest in peace, was a respected critic, with liberal views, and kept a literary circle for over twenty-five years), Monique knows that this is her very “last train” to freedom, that the country is about to be Bolshevised entirely. She is young enough to believe that things are going to soon change for the better and that she will be able to return to her mother, who has stayed behind under gage. She has no idea that she's never going to see her mother again.

She tries to act matter-of-factly. With a suitcase in which she has a few dresses, a fried chicken, and ten packs of cigarettes, she heads towards an old, moustached dispatcher and extends her hand to him in a comradely fashion. He's a sorry, wretched man. He turns a knobby finger towards his own belly and says: “Dima”. She knows from her father's books that Russians can be bought off. She opens her suitcase, takes out and hands him a spotted dress and a pack of cigarettes, then says: “Vienna!” and points in the direction in which the train is already speeding away. Dima points his knobby finger to the fried chicken. She makes a long face, he says *Bolshoy spasibo!* – “Thank you very much!” –, and a smile seems to flourish beneath his greying moustache. They smoke a cigarette each from her supply, then the old man promises, mostly through signs, to smuggle her across the border.

He makes a phone call to the previous stop and asks that the following train halt at his own halt for a mere forty-five seconds. It's a coal-laden freight train. With his cigarette yet unfinished,

so quickly do things work, he helps the white-collared girl get on and covers her with a few shovels of coal. Monique doesn't know, however, that the train is bound to stop again only a bit further on, for another check-out by the Russians. The soldiers go from one car to the next and stick their bayonets wherever they choose to. She hears the rough, scratchy sound closing in on her. But the steel misses her and the sound moves along. In the meantime, the first shadows of dusk have settled over the black coal.

At the American check-point, she understands for the first time that the Hollywood films she has seen with her friends on the cinemas' boulevard are only humbug. She expects the Americans to admire her proof of boldness, kiss her on both coal-sullied cheeks, give her a Gary Cooper or Humphrey Bogart smile, and regretfully send her to Paris. But they send her back to the Russians, without any regrets and without as little as a smile. However, they admit that her passport is in perfect order. "Then why?", she asks. "What part of *illegal* don't you understand?", one of them scoffs her. They also help her down the track with a bunch of beams from a projector, so they make sure she doesn't go off that track. The light stuck in her back mortifies her more than the rifles pointed at her. Monique has simply forgotten: in 1947, the Americans feel like they are the Soviets' allies.

And yet, the Soviets aren't exactly allied to the Americans, so, presumably just to aggravate the "imperialists", Monique, who may otherwise end up in a concentration camp, is simply and almost tenderly returned to Dima's halt. The old man receives her back as a host might a beloved guest. He lets her wash up and change into a clean dress from the suitcase. Her former fried chicken is but a heap of bones now, but he treats her to an apple instead. He raises two fingers to his lips and breathes in with his eyes closed. She gives him a pack of her cigarettes. He telephones the previous stop once again and asks that the following train – a passenger one this time, that has already

been checked by the border guards – halt for a mere twenty seconds. Monique has barely managed to get on the nearest carriage, pushed from below by Dima, before the train puffingly sets off towards Vienna.

She finds a seat in a compartment where two young people are studying a Mozart score and humming bits and pieces of *Don Giovanni*, apologising all the time for doing it. Sitting there beside them, everything she has lived through over the past hour seems unreal. She finally grasps its reality when the man, while giving her a suspicious look, tells her coyly: *Darf ich?* – “May I?” – and uses a linen handkerchief to wipe out a black stain that has remained under her chin. Monique feels herself blushing and would even kiss her two fellow passengers. She doesn’t, of course, because she’s been brought up very strictly.

On the 15th of September, at midnight, she gets off at the *Gare de l’Est*, with her small suitcase in which a single pack of cigarettes is left. Nobody awaits her. She stays there, inside the station, having no idea where to go and not even one franc in her pocket. Two policemen find her curled up on a bench, like an orphaned child, feel sorry for her, and allow her to sleep in a train compartment, in a carriage stationed there. They even cover her with their cloaks. Monique knows they are called *hirondelles* – swallows – because they almost fly at night on their bicycles, with their black cloaks flapping in the wind, cleft in two, like swallows’ tails. Monique will always smile from now on, every time she catches sight of swallows.



Homecoming

The plane has taken off from the Orly airport. A toddler from a nearby seat asks: *Maman, elles aiment les avions, les hi’ondelles?* – “Mummy, do swallows like planes?” I smile, unwillingly.

I reset my wristwatch one hour forward, but my own inner time I set back. I downright refuse to enter that prison, old age, and let myself glide swiftly on the backward-flowing waters of time, until I'm again all-future, with my ages-to-be yet unsacrificed. I remember my mother's advice, when I went away: "Whenever I'm not beside you, my beloved, treat yourself as if you were your little girl." I revisit all the people by whom God has shown me his love and bypass those by which he punished me. I rethink the words in which I believed, the ones I could have died for (I almost did, for some). Thousands of times, while waiting in the studio for my show to begin, I listened to the introduction: "This is Radio Free Europe!" Thousands of times, too, I spilled out: "Theses and antitheses in Paris. This is Monica..."

I was five years old when my parents first listened to a voice on the radio, in 1928. It was a miracle, back then, to hear a coverage all of a sudden, while sitting on your couch in your own living room, or a concert given that very moment in Vienna, London, or Paris. It seemed like sheer magic, like a trick. Our first radio set was the size of a refrigerator. In Paris, so I could indeed help the ones at home, I turned into a voice. What I wanted to do with my voice was to shatter, piece by piece, day after day, the invisible border that has been dividing, all these years, the free Europe, where I was, from the un-free Europe, where my country was. I turned the aesthetics my father had spoken to me about into the East-ethics about which, unfortunately, he hadn't taught me anything. Evening after evening, on the radio, I uncuffed the words, I defended something or someone.

The political police reacted briskly enough and let me know that, unless I contained myself and shut up, they would kill my mother. Mother called on me not to contain myself and not to shut up. I listened to her, and she was killed indeed. Then, since they couldn't use my mother to gain leverage on me any longer, they made me a birthday present: I was beaten in the

street by two men. The following morning, I was back in the studio, and my voice wouldn't show the bruises.

From back home, where our radio, Free Europe, could be heard only surreptitiously, I got incentives: "My father died listening to your voice"; "When your show is being broadcast, all radios are on, at all block levels"; "We live in a century defaced by fears. You give us courage"; "You are the voice of truth"; "I operated on a child today. When I opened him up, vapours came out of his tiny belly – it was that cold in the operation room. Say that, too!"; "I'm writing to you from a country that was once serene. You should know that we, here, have lost our words."

The time that has been flowing backwards resumes its forward direction, and the plane lands, bringing me home. My husband has been quiet all along, too, lost in his own thoughts. We touch down on the runway bathing in the setting sun's rays and we avidly watch the sky that saw our departure, forty-four years ago.

The missy from the Passport-control booth has a blond fringed hairline that keeps covering her eyes. Without looking at me, she beckons me to approach. I thought that all my emotions in life were exhausted, and yet my hand shakes when I hold out my passport to her and say: "Good evening, Miss!" She winces like smitten, when she hears my voice, and then, before I realise how and why, I find myself embraced with such strength that I even feel pain in my chest. When she lets go of me, I can see she's crying. My husband watches the entire scene, slightly worried, from the adjoining queue. My forty years of radio broadcasting help me rein in my voice, when I tell her:

"O, God, everything was really worth such a welcome."

"I am crying like a fool because only now do I realise that we're actually free," I hear her say, and my heart leaps with concern.

The European Union Prize for Literature

Since its creation in 2009, the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL) aims to put the spotlight on the creativity and diverse wealth of Europe's contemporary literature in the field of fiction, to promote the circulation of literature within Europe and to encourage greater interest in non-national literary works.

In the course of the past nine editions, the works of the 108 selected winners have been able to reach a wider and international audience and touched readers beyond both national and linguistic borders.

The Prize, which is co-financed by the *Creative Europe* programme of the European Commission, aims to achieve three main goals: to promote cross-border mobility of those working in the cultural sector; to encourage the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic output; and to foster intercultural dialogue.

The EUPL is organised by a Consortium comprised of the European Writers' Council (EWC), the Federation of European Publishers (FEP) and the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) with support of the European Commission.

Selection Process between 2009 and 2017

In the past nine editions, the winning authors were selected by qualified juries set up in each of the countries participating in the award. Jury members were appointed by national members of EWC, FEP and EIBF and were composed of a minimum of 3 and a maximum 5 members.

The emerging authors were chosen on the basis of criteria stipulated by the European Commission. Details on these criteria are available on the EUPL website.

10th anniversary edition

In 2018 the European Union Prize for Literature celebrated its 10th anniversary. To mark this special occasion a virtual and physical journey through the literary Europe and a writing contest, exclusively open to all previous EUPL winners, were organised.

The EUPL Writing Contest "A European Story: EUPL Winners Write Europe" was a unique short fiction competition that celebrates Europe, literature and – above all – 10 years of the European Union Prize for Literature.

36 EUPL winning authors from a total of 26 different countries have submitted fascinating European stories with a unique perspective. These stories, written in 23 different

languages, were compiled in a publication along with translations into English.

The EUPL Writing Contest was judged by both a professional jury and the public, who each chose a winner.

There was also a special MEPs Prize, awarded by Members of the European Parliament, as well as a special mention for Cultural Heritage.

The winners of the four different categories were announced at the Awards Ceremony taking place in Vienna in November 2018 under the Austrian Presidency, at the Belvedere.

Professional Jury

A professional jury, made up of distinguished experts from the field of literature, including literary critics, journalists, authors as well as booksellers, judged these submissions and chose a winner in November 2018.

The members of the professional jury were Maria-João Costa (Portugal), Nina George (Germany), Juancho Pons (Spain), Cathy Rentzenbrink (United Kingdom), Liana Sakelliou (Greece) and Marnix Verplancke (Belgium).

The detailed profiles of the jury members are available on the EUPL website.

Public Jury

The public was also invited to have their say. All submissions received for the EUPL Writing Contest were published in an online publication, accessible also to print disabled persons, on the EUPL website, which contained both original texts and English translations. People were able to cast a vote for their favourite short fiction directly on the EUPL website.

MEPs Jury

A jury consisting of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) awarded a special prize to their favourite short fiction. This initiative was spearheaded by Ms Petra Kammerevert, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

Special Mention for Cultural Heritage

As 2018 was the year of European Year of Cultural Heritage, the professional jury was invited to give a special mention to the best short fiction in which European heritage plays a significant role.

You can find more information on the European Year of Cultural Heritage on the following website: <https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/>

Winners

Professional Jury Prize: - Ioana Pârvulescu (Romania)

Public Prize: Jelena Lengold (Serbia)

Special mention for cultural heritage: Lidija Dimkovska (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

MEP's Prize: Jean Back (Luxembourg) and Gast Groeber (Luxembourg)

Professional Jury Report

According to the jury statement, Ioana Pârvulescu succeeded in creating a very powerful narrative on the topic of freedom with two perspectives: The true-fictional part of the young refugee Monica L., who became the voice of freedom for the young Romanians during the Cold War, and a fictional part of a nameless passport-control employee, just a short time after all frontiers had been opened up to embrace a new Europe.

This exceptional story is dedicated to the former Radio-Free-Europe-broadcaster Monica Lovinescu who became the voice of freedom for young Romanians during the Cold War. The jury concludes: "A Voice is very successful in making the reader feel emotions and in presenting a theme with important moral purpose about

Europe before and after the Cold War."

In addition to Ioana Pârvulescu's "A Voice", the jury's complete shortlist featured "The Saviour of the World" by Adam Foulds (United Kingdom), "A European Story" by Meelis Friedenthal (Estonia), "Jasmine and death" by Jelena Lengold (Serbia), "Greatness Will Have its Due" by Andrej Nikolaidis (Montenegro) and "This is my body" by Isabelle Wéry (Belgium).

Moreover, the professional jury was also in charge of awarding the special mention for cultural heritage.

Lidija Dimkovska from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia received this special mention for her work of short fiction "When I left Karl Liebknecht". This work of short fiction, consisting of various testimonials, shows how citizens of various European countries are linked by shared knowledge, such as names of streets, geographical references, protests and comments about national languages and literatures. According to the professional jury, this story expertly reveals "various aspects of the European consciousness shared by its citizens."