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THE Swiss RIVETER

RIVETING SWISS WRITING

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Literally Swiss

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INTRODUCTION
BY WEST CAMEL, EDITOR

Swiss literature is rich — in variety, in quality and, of course, in the diversity of the languages it is written in.

It is this richness that we want to represent and celebrate in this edition of *The Riveter*, giving space to literature written in all of Switzerland's official languages. In pursuit of this aim, we have enlisted the views of experts in Swiss writing. Translator Jamie Bulloch ponders literature written in the country's biggest language, Swiss German, while crime writer Nicolas Verdan discusses the current state of Swiss-French writing. We also have Professor Alan Robinson examining the relationships between Swiss-French and Swiss-German literature and that written in France and Germany. In terms of the smaller languages, poet Vanni Biaconi offers a view on the state of Swiss-Italian writing, and Professor in Romansh, Rico Franc Valär, offers an overview of writing in the various forms of that language.

We're honoured to have extracts from work published in English by eminent Swiss writers from all backgrounds: Monique Schwitter, Michelle Steinbeck, Nicolas Verdan, Pedro Lenz and Arno Camenisch. More treats are in store in the form of extracts from writing yet to find an English publisher, among them work by Michael Fehr, Elisa Shua Dusapin, Aude Seigne and Jens Nielsen.

We have poetry too, from the great Nora Gomringer, Leta Semadeni, Pierre Voélin and Fabio Pusterla.

Yet more writers provide interesting views on aspects of Swiss culture: Melinda Nadj Abonji writes about the immigrant experience in Switzerland; Xiaolu Guo shares her thoughts on the Swiss book everyone knows – *Heidi* – and the quintessential British-Swiss writer Alain de Botton discusses Zurich.

And, as always in *The Riveter*, we offer you some Riveting Reviews – views from talented critics on Swiss

books in English that you can find in bookstores now.

This feast of Swiss literature is headed up by a world exclusive: an extract from the new novel – not published in English until autumn 2019 – by Peter Stamm. Our thanks to the author, his translator and publisher for allowing us to give you this very special piece.

Thanks indeed to all our contributors – the authors, translators and publishers, the reviewers and writers, the cover designer, Amélie Keller, and to both the Swiss and English Arts Councils, whose support has made this magazine possible.

West Camel is a writer, editor and reviewer. He is the Editor of The Riveter magazine. His debut novel, Attend *is published in December 2018.*



EDITORIAL

BY **ROSIE GOLDSMITH,** RIVETER-IN-CHIEF, DIRECTOR EUROPEAN LITERATURE NETWORK & *LITERALLY SWISS* PROJECT LEADER

How would you describe Swiss literature?

Since I started working with the Swiss Arts Council, Pro Helvetia in 2012, first on their annual book trade magazine *12 Swiss Books* and then on our new *Literally Swiss* project, I've been asked this question many times – and I still don't know the answer. The question is tough even for Swiss writers and book trade professionals. Ask ten people and you get ten different answers. Our *Swiss Riveter* magazine will surely help: there are thoughtful essays on this very topic and an impressive range of writing as well as excerpts in all genres and from all languages.

So, how would you describe Swiss literature? When you ask, you are immediately drawn into a discussion about Switzerland itself and issues of Swiss identity, mentality, geography and language. Is it writing about lakes, mountains and skiing? About cuckoo clocks, fondue and chocolate? Is Swiss literature simply embodied by those who write it, such as Jacques Chessex, Giorgio Orelli, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Robert Walser, Johanna Spyri or Max Frisch? Max Frisch himself said that a Swiss writer was a 'citizen of the world', cosmopolitan, multicultural and multilingual. These are indeed precious attributes, but equally the Swiss can be seen as insular and private, dependent on the vitality of incomers. It's clear that geography is destiny when you live in a landlocked, hybrid nation, an island in the centre of Europe, and one of the most breathtakingly beautiful countries in Europe. Surely natural beauty inspires great writing? Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, lived in Switzerland for many years, was a keen mountain climber and wrote several of his great works here. Content is king in Swiss writing. Its writers are

informed. They know their villages, mountains, lakes and alps. They know about banking and corruption; about their architecture, design and environment; their unique political system, neutrality and referendums. A Swiss writer may not always live in Switzerland (cf. Alain de Botton) but they know their country and will often be drawn back home.

Swiss writers often maintain that they have more in common with their German, French or Italian neighbours, and may feel they have succeeded only if they are published outside Switzerland. One of my favourite Swiss writers, Peter Stamm, who writes in German, was snapped up by a leading publisher in Germany. This November, Peter won the Swiss Book Prize, which is, however, only awarded to Swiss writers in German. So, does that make him the best Swiss writer or simply the best Swiss-German writer? Decide for yourselves, as we are honoured to publish an exclusive English excerpt from his prizewinning novel, *The Gentle Indifference of the World*, translated by Michael Hoffman. I've read it in German and it's another Stamm-stunner: a crime novel, love story and psychodrama about the mystery of life.

I'm lucky enough to speak three of the Swiss languages, German, French and Italian, and, like the majority of Swiss, I enjoy hopping about linguistically, enjoying the different cities, regions and cultures of Switzerland. Each region has its own literature prizes and festivals, its own linguistic quirks and literary genres. Meeting Arno Camenisch and Pedro Lenz this year has been an education in the joys of Swiss dialect. You can read their work in this magazine. Live performances by Swiss poets and storytellers Nora Gomringer and Michael Fehr have also blown me away. I can't wait for you to meet them in the UK. Because that is another, sadder, aspect of Swiss literature: it is not well known outside Switzerland.

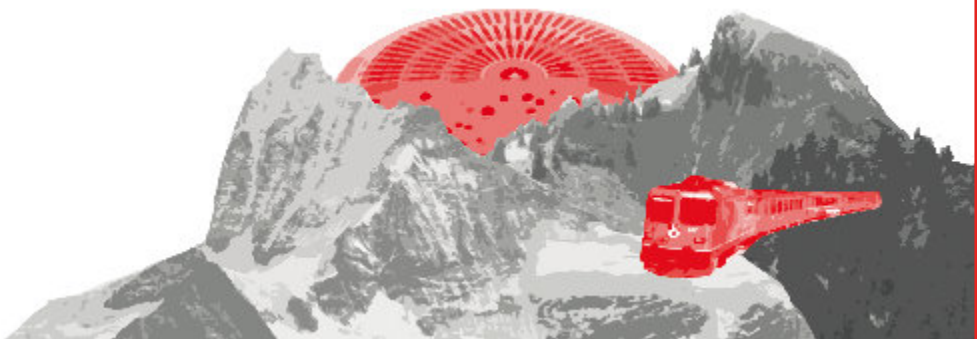
Now I'm going to stick my neck out: of all the European literatures I am reading these days, Swiss literature is the most original, varied and exciting. There's a lively performance and spoken-word culture – especially among dialect writers. Villages, cities and mountains are alive with the sound of literature. In June I attended a Swiss book festival in the mountain resort of Leukerbad where events took place in a spa!

Swiss literature is an exciting mix of youthful innovation and celebrated classics. Being at ease with different languages makes it more inventive. As you'll read in our magazine, its diversity has been boosted enormously by immigration. Today Swiss writers are not writing only in the four official languages but also in the languages of immigration. Nicolas Verdan is originally Greek; Melinda Nadj Abonji from Yugoslavia. There are not enough translators and definitely not enough being translated into English.

We're here to help. That's what *Literally Swiss* does.

When I was a child, I adored Heidi, the fictional girl who lived in the Swiss Alps. I became aware of Switzerland for the first time, although a night spent on a Swiss mountain in our family car, surrounded by cows with loud bells, is also unforgettable, as was my first taste of Swiss chocolate. This year I made a very rash promise, that there would always be chocolate at my *Literally Swiss* events. Heidi and chocolate are, of course, things any country could be proud of, but if you're appalled by my liberal use of clichés so far, fear not, as my mission with *Literally Swiss* is to smash the stereotypes and introduce you to the Best of Swissness. A year ago, I was asked by Pro Helvetia in Zurich to help them promote Swiss literature and translation in the UK and increase its visibility. *Literally Swiss* was born at The Tabernacle arts centre in London with a host of outstanding Swiss authors: Alain de Botton, Monique Schwitter, Nicolas Verdan, Pedro Lenz and Peter Stamm. Along with my *Literally Swiss* colleagues, Amber Massie-Blomfield, Anna Blasiak, Nikki Mander and West Camel, we're here to help writers, publishers, agents, translators, cultural institutes, arts organisations, media, festival directors and event programmers interested in developing Swiss projects for 2018 and beyond. *The Swiss Riveter* is a labour of great love for Switzerland. When you've read it, do tell me how *you* would describe Swiss literature!

Rosie Goldsmith (aka Rosie the Riveter) is Director of the European Literature Network and Riveter-in-Chief. She was a BBC journalist for twenty years.



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FROM *THE GENTLE INDIFFERENCE OF THE WORLD*
BY PETER STAMM (OTHER PRESS, 2019)
TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL HOFFMAN



Peter Stamm © Gaby Gerster

The professor's seminar seemed to enjoy considerable popularity, it was held in a large lecture hall. When I stepped in, there were already at least forty students sitting on the benches; just like in my day, more women than men. While the professor gave a brief introduction, I looked around and suddenly saw him, the night-porter, the younger version of myself. He was sitting by the aisle most of the way back and was holding a plastic cup that he sipped out of from time to time. The sight of him so utterly disoriented me that I no longer heard what the professor was saying. Only when there was an expectant silence did I realise he must have finished and given me the floor. I got a grip on myself and started on my talk, in which I compared writing to the search for a path in an unfamiliar landscape, and posited the difference between the private and the autobiographical. There were questions afterwards. The young man from my village seemed to have been paying close attention, each time I looked up at him our eyes would meet, and I quickly looked away, as though he might otherwise recognise me and give me away. He didn't ask a question, just made occasional notes in a small notebook that he tucked away in his pocket each time. After the bell rang,

the professor said a few words by way of conclusion and reminded those present of the author who was due the following week. I wasn't surprised that my double was one of the first to leave the lecture theatre, with hurried steps, as though he had another class to go to. I had half a mind to follow him, but a few students ringed me with books to sign, one young woman asked me for a piece for the student magazine, and another wanted advice in finding a publisher. By the time everyone went away satisfied, the young man was long gone. I asked the professor if he knew him. Brown hair like mine, a plastic coffee cup in his hand, sixth or seventh row, far left. He couldn't place him. Probably a freshman, he said, they come and go, I can't possibly know them all.

The following week, I visited the German department again, waiting in the hallway for the seminar to finish. No sooner had the bell gone this time than there was my double running down the steps. I followed him out of the building and along the street. He only had a sweater on top, even though it was cool and rainy. He headed in the direction of the lake, turned off at the theatre, and zigzagged through the lanes of the old town to an old-fashioned café I had often patronised myself in my time as a student.

The place was almost empty. I sat down at a table behind him. The waitress took his order, a toasted sandwich and a small beer. I'll have the same, I said, when she approached. She looked at me in bewilderment, and I repeated his order. He didn't seem to hear, because he had taken down a newspaper from a rack by the door and was leafing through it. I went and helped myself to one as well, but I couldn't concentrate on any of the articles because I kept squinting across to him.

Peter Stamm

Translated by Michael Hoffman

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Peter Stamm was born in Scherzingen, Switzerland. He is the author of several novels, such as *Agnes*, *On A Day Like This* and *Unformed Landscape*, and short story collections, such as *In Strange Gardens and Other Stories*, as well as radio plays. He lives in Winterthur.

Michael Hofmann is Peter Stamm's dedicated transltor. He has also translated the work of Gottfried Benn, Hans Fallada, Franz Kafka, Joseph Roth. In 2012, he was awarded the Thornton Wilder Prize for Translation by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

THE YIN AND YANG OF HEIDI

BY XIAOLU GUO

Growing up in a Communist house in 1970s and 1980s China, I never encountered any children's books. Fairy tales were not encouraged in China at that time. Instead we were fed heroic stories about Communist revolutionaries. A seven-year-old child would be taught at school to defend his country against the American imperialists.

I was already sixteen when I first read a children's story – it was Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Mermaid*. At that time I was still living in southern China with my Communist parents. I was terribly affected by this beautiful story. I loved it intensely. My heart was broken when I read that the little mermaid had to cut off her tail in order to become a woman and gain the love of the prince. It presented me with a very different world – the one the Chinese government wasn't interested in showing. It showed me that the human world is a seductive but cruel and painful place. Not only did the little mermaid have to dance for the prince on her bleeding feet, he also abandoned her and married another girl – a supposed princess. When I read the ending, in which the little mermaid dies and her body dissolves into foam, I was in tears. I remember walking alongside the fields of blooming rapeseed on my way from home to school. I was soaked in a deep sense of melancholy. Love and adulthood are brutal, I thought. No wonder my parents and my school kept telling us not to fall in love yet, certainly not when we were still young; if we did, our future would be totally ruined.

Obviously I was under the influence of Communist ideology then: personal love was not a great thing to pursue when there was a greater love – the love for your country and for your people.

Years passed. I left my small Chinese village for Beijing to study art. Then I left China for the West. After I left steamy southern China, I lived in many countries, working on novels and making films. Still, I didn't have any interest in children's books – I thought that I had long passed that age and it belonged to a past that never was. Then all of sudden, I found myself turning forty, an age that presages great

changes for a woman. I realised that I was no longer that young Communist punk. And then, not long after I was forty, I gave birth, in London, to my first child. How incredible! I thought to myself: I've been a militant feminist for so many years and now I have become the mother of a girl! As I carried the little child in my sling, I entered a bookshop and bought a few picture books, including a copy of *Heidi*, which I had never read before. This event was followed by another coincidence. A day after I bought the beautifully illustrated *Heidi*, I received a letter from the Literature House in Zurich, inviting me to be their writer in residence for six months.

I was happy to accept this invitation. I looked at the brand-new copy of the book about Heidi I had just bought and I thought: this is perfect. Now I would be able to learn what Heidi's world was like – Switzerland and the Alps, childhood and motherhood! I would start to learn new things, like a little baby; like my own daughter, Moon.

So I left London for Zurich with my little one and my partner, and with *Heidi* in my suitcase. We were stunned by the peace and beauty of the city. Our house was very close to Zuriberg, a hill covered in pine forest – a very un-urban environment compared to Beijing or London. In the evening, in our apartment on Hegibachstrasse, I began to read *Heidi* to my child:

> 'The little old town of Mayenfeld is charmingly situated. From it a footpath leads through green, well-wooded stretches to the foot of the heights which look down imposingly upon the valley...'

Chinese people, when we think about Switzerland, think of something opposite to Chinese society. Switzerland is apolitical, democratic and multilingual, with pristine mountains and clean rivers, and the highest standard of living. China is everything but these things. After we arrived here, we travelled around the country, from the German part to the French part. And it seemed to me obvious that, besides its wealth, Switzerland is one of the most beautiful countries on Earth. Here money hasn't ruined nature. On the contrary, money has protected nature – something China is not able to achieve at the moment. I also found the system of four-languages-in-one-country fascinating, given that I have come from a monolingual culture. Yes, the grass on the other side is always greener.

So far, I hadn't encountered much of the negative side of Swiss culture, which the cliché says is inward, conservative and sometimes dull. But even if there were some truth in those clichés, I asked myself, what mountain people in this world would be fast and modern? People living on the Himalayas or the Andes? The Swiss I have met (playwrights, scientists, psychologists and architects) are bright and self-critical people. They seem to be very aware of their blessed living conditions. Perhaps that's why they are a bit

apologetic when they are with foreigners. I didn't meet a banker in Switzerland; perhaps most of the bankers had gone to London or New York to do business? During my residency, we visited Bern, Basel, Luzern, Lausanne and Geneva. In one of those hotel rooms in the mountains, I contemplated the grand vista of nature around me and wondered about the time of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse. I thought that their philosophical life must have been shaped and influenced by those snow-capped mountains and fast-flowing rivers; as the Chinese would say: 'kind men love mountains and wise men prefer water'. Men search for their own type of harmony.

After I finished reading *Heidi* to my child, I watched two film versions of the book. I imagined myself as an orphan growing up in the Alps. But I couldn't picture myself being happy on those mountains – I would be afraid of the bad-tempered grandfather, and I would surely feel very lonely without people around. But maybe that's because I was never a Swiss girl. Perhaps a Swiss girl doesn't see peacefulness as loneliness, because she doesn't grow up in a populated, busy and ever-changing urban world. Then I thought about my adopted country – Britain. Britain is a country with working-class kids fighting on its mean streets, which are stained by rain and littered by rubbish. Being an English orphan is surely very different from being a Swiss one. Oliver Twist in urban, industrial England had to work as a child labourer and young thief to fill his stomach. There were no flowers or cute animals in that grey and polluted factoryland. There were only beggars, capitalists and policemen.

In Zurich, almost every day, we walked down to the lake and swam there. I was never inclined to sports. But perhaps because I knew that we would never be able to live in this expensive city if we were not invited by the Literature House, I decided to appreciate the place. On one of our walking tours, led by locals, I learned that Vladimir Lenin had been exiled in Zurich during WWI before he undertook the October Revolution. As I walked around the narrow, cobbled streets in the old town of Zurich, I imagined the famous Russian revolutionary writing his *April Thesis*, his future plan for the Bolshevik Party and a new government. I pictured him working in one of these brightly lit cafés, quiet, elegant, devoid of political atmosphere – an environment opposite to Russia then. And here I was, in a softly lit café in central Zurich. I was writing my memoir – a book about my poverty-ridden childhood in rural China under the yoke of Communist dogma.

We are no longer in Heidi's time. The modern-day Heidi would be sent to a school downtown (probably studying Chinese as her second language). It's incredible to think that only 150 years ago most people were still living in rural areas and undertaking real travel with their own feet or carts.

Since the invention of commercial air travel in the US in 1914, the world has changed radically. Now we are on a totally different planet: fast, urbanised, technical and global.

The day before we left Switzerland, I climbed the Alps with my Swiss friends. At one point, I found myself breathing heavily, standing in the deep snow on a 3,000-metre-high mountaintop. We were on Titlis, near Engelberg, with a panoramic, yet empty view beneath us. The scenery was almost too spiritual for a Chinese woman like me, who had grown up in hot, muddy rice paddies swamped by mosquitoes and human activity. I gazed down at the unspoiled slope under some cliffs, wondering if I could survive on a Swiss mountain – cutting off all connections to the culture I grew up in. Then I heard a string of clicking camera sounds. I turned around in the thin air, discovering that I was surrounded by armies of Chinese tourists. But none of them had climbed the mountain with their own feet. They had taken the ski lift. Some of them even wore flip-flops! They stood on the top for about eight to ten minutes, just enough time to take some photos. Then they collectively disappeared down the hill via the ski lift again. I presumed that their Chinese lunch was ready in the local Chinese restaurant in Engelberg – named 'Moon Rise' – which I had also visited. Seeing my fellow Chinese natives leave the mountain for their spicy pork noodle lunch, I lost my intention to have a spiritual conversation with solemn nature and silent snow. I was keen to get back to Earth. On the way down to the village, the sentences from *Heidi* began to ring in my ears:

> 'They started merrily up the Alp. A cloudless, deep-blue sky looked down on them, for the wind had driven away every little cloud in the night. The fresh green mountainside was bathed in brilliant sunlight, and many blue and yellow flowers had opened. Heidi was wild with joy...'

As we descended, I wondered: do we spend enough time looking at what lies around us on our planet? Don't we owe a big debt to nature? It seemed to me that our modern life has driven us further and further away from the source of everything. We consumers only consume nature, and nature doesn't want us and doesn't really need us. There will be no more Heidis in this world, there to appreciate the contours of nature with wild joy.

Xiaolu Guo

Xiaolu Guo was born in south China. She studied film at the Beijing Film Academy and published six books in China before she moved to London in 2002. She has lived and worked all over Europe, including Switzerland, where she also teaches. In 2013 she was named as one of Granta's *Best of Young British Novelists. Xiaolu has also directed several award-winning films.*

SWISS GERMAN

SWISS-GERMAN LITERATURE - A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

BY JAMIE BULLOCH

I have a long-standing affection for Swiss literature. Like many A-level students over the years, my first taste of literature in German was through the dramas of Frisch and Dürrenmatt. I revisited Swiss drama as an undergraduate, met my future wife acting in a Dürrenmatt play, then wound up teaching *Die Physiker* ('The Physicists') to A-level students during my brief spell as a schoolmaster.

What is the enduring appeal of these two giants of Swiss letters that ensures their place on the school/university syllabus? One answer lies in the accessibility of their language. By its very nature, dialogue is easier to grapple with in a foreign language than the complex syntax of dense prose. But I have always suspected that something else is at play here too; something that has its roots in the linguistic idiosyncrasies of German-speaking Switzerland. Many a visitor to that part of the world, native German speakers included, has scratched their head at a vernacular that appears to bear no relation to the language spoken in Hamburg, Berlin or even Munich. The unintelligibility is exacerbated by the fact that dialects differ from region to region, and even valley to valley.

By contrast, the literary Swiss-German language is for the most part standardised and is indistinguishable from High German; even dialogue is washed of its dialectal colour. I may be overstating a point here, but it seems to me that when Swiss Germans write they use a language that, strictly speaking, is not their mother tongue. I believe this affords their writing a particular clarity, which enhances their accessibility to foreign readers, A hypothesis certainly borne out by my experience of translating Richard Weihe, Martin Suter and Peter Beck.

Another feature of Swiss-German literature I have encountered – and one its writers share with their Austrian counterparts – also relates to accessibility. According to population statistics there are around 4.5 million Swiss Germans, just under nine million Austrians, but more than eighty million Germans. It is natural, therefore (and makes financial sense), for Swiss-German writers to aim

beyond their domestic audience in an attempt to appeal to the wider German-language readership. To achieve this it helps if the content is outward-looking rather than parochial; and there can be no doubt that the two major writers I began this article with are masters at tackling issues – political, philosophical and psychological – with universal resonance.

In a similar vein, many Swiss-German writers lend their work a distinctly international flavour. An obvious example here is Pascale Mercier's *Nachtzug Nach Lissabon* ('Night Train to Lisbon'), made famous by the 2013 film adaptation; but more recently I have read Jonas Lüscher's *Kraft* ('Kraft', set chiefly in California) and Urs Mannheim's *Bergsteigen im Flachland* ('Mountaineering in the Lowlands') which jumps all around Europe. Not to mention Lukas Bärfuss's *Koala* ('Koala'), which looks at the Aboriginals of Australia, or his *Hundert Tage* ('One Hundred Days' – reviewed in this magazine), about the genocide in Rwanda. Is this a conscious effort by such writers, or does it proceed naturally from a country with a global outlook and outreach, home to countless international organisations?

All three of the Swiss writers I have translated fit this pattern too. Richard Weihe's micro-epic, *Sea of Ink*, considers the life and art of the seventeenth-century Chinese painter, Bada Shanren. Peter Beck's thriller *Damnation* (also reviewed in this magazine) has a James Bond-type hero as its protagonist, who, in true 007 style, travels to Egypt, New England and Norway to solve the crime. Two of the Martin Suter novels I've worked on have strong connections to Asia, in particular Sri Lanka, while the third has a brief cameo in Thailand, and otherwise centres on a Swiss banking conspiracy, but one with a worldwide dimension.

The stylistic and thematic accessibility of Swiss-German literature undoubtedly gives it a broad appeal. Which makes it particularly ripe for translation.

Jamie Bulloch

Jamie Bulloch is an historian and has worked as a professional translator from German since 2001. His translations include books by Martin Suter, Paulus Hochgatterer, Alissa Walser, Timur Vermes, Friedrich Christian Delius and Linda Stift. Jamie won the 2014 Schlegel-Tieck Prize for Best German Translation for Birgit Vanderbeke's The Mussel Feast.

FROM *ONE ANOTHER*
BY MONIQUE SCHWITTER (PERSEA BOOKS, 2019)
TRANSLATED BY TESS LEWIS

As fast as a person walks

When you suddenly google your first love, it's in response to the sound of knocking you hear just before you fall asleep and hear even louder the moment you look in the mirror in the morning and catch sight of the deep vertical crease between your eyebrows. You've tried, in vain, to locate the source of the knocking; it seemed to come now from inside, now from outside – up in the attic / inside your skull – but you could never pin it down. The knocking comes more and more frequently, ever more inexplicably, and here it is again, this late Friday evening in January. As always, after a week in nursery school, the children were exhausted and overwrought; through the entire early evening they'd either been arguing or crying and later, when it was time for bed, they screamed like lunatics. They're finally asleep and for a moment it's completely quiet; even the dog is lying motionless on her blanket under my desk. I stare at her black fur until I can see her ribcage rise and fall. I breathe a sigh of relief and the knocking sets in, loud. Short, sharp hammer blows at first, which then alternate with longer blows. I draw dots and dashes in my notebook. Not that I know much about Morse code, but I study the chart until I can make out something halfway sensible. Halfway. SMOKE. TIME. KID. Well. (The alternatives were EUMOR. NATE. TEDD or IAOGN. TITN. NDNE. I don't know of any language in which those would make the slightest sense, and so I settle for smoke, time, kid.) Silence. My husband, I assume, is busy in his room working his way through the week's emails,



Monique Schwitter © Matthias Oertel

something he does every Friday evening before calling out *weekend*! just before midnight. For a long time now, we've been planning on doing something together again. *Anything*. Sometimes he has no time, sometimes I don't. Smoketimekid! flits through my mind. I snap my notebook shut, and on the computer, open a new window. In the search box I type Petrus, the name of my first love.

I'm prepared not to find a single thing and to give up, resigned. I'm also ready for references to a wife and kids. Why shouldn't he have started a family by now? I am even prepared for photographs. But not for this. Not this. Still, Petrus had alluded to it on the first night we met. He had talked of flying, something humans can't do and how profoundly sad that made him. He started talking about falling and then quite suddenly changed the subject to walking; and because I asked: Walking? he added: Just one step, one single step into the void and it's all good. He spread his arms as if he wanted to fly, looked at me and smiled.

My husband walks into the room. Without knocking or saying my name. This rarely happens, only when we're fighting, when he's really angry, in a rage or completely beside himself. Are you busy? he asks. No, I say and swallow the rest: I just learned about Petrus's death.

You're out of breath, he says.

Yes, I – I have no idea why, I'm just sitting here.

Maybe that's the reason.

He hesitates. He looks like he wants to say something. He takes a breath, looks away quickly and listens for something, for what, I have no idea. He starts to pull the door shut behind him.

Did you want something? I ask, but he answers, nothing that can't wait. He closes the door.

Monique Schwitter

Translated by Tess Lewis

Excerpt from One Another *by Monique Schwitter, translation copyright (c) 2018 by Tess Lewis. Reprinted by permission of Persea Books, New York.*

Monique Schwiter was born in Zurich, studied in Salzburg, performed in theatres all over the German-speaking world and today lives in Hamburg. Her debut volume of short stories, *Wenn's schneit beim Krokodil* ('If it snows, let's meet at the crocodile'), was awarded the Robert Walser Prize and in 2015 her highly successful novel *Eins im Andern* ('One Another'), was shortlisted for the German Book Prize and won the Swiss Book Prize.

Tess Lewis is a translator from French and German. She has translated many Swiss writers including three winners of the Swiss Book Prize: Jonas Lüscher, Monique Schwitter and Melinda Nadj Abonji.

FROM *MY FATHER WAS A MAN ON LAND AND A WHALE IN WATER*
BY MICHELLE STEINBECK (DARF PUBLICATIONS, 2018)
TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY JEN CALLEJA

When I first read Michelle Steinbeck's novella I was thrilled and energised by its strangeness. I didn't question the weird logic of the book for a second, in fact I welcomed it and gobbled it up like a toxic-coloured medicine. It's rare to find a book that disorientates you so successively and totally, where surprises and shocks are around every corner, and where corners suddenly become portals, or doorways, or tombs. You know from the outset that this book will be taking you on a journey like none you've ever experienced before, and that the usual rules of plot, narrative and even reality don't apply. At the base of the book, and what I suppose drew me to it, is arguably a kind of disturbing fairy tale, with its strange beasts, fathers, old crones, instances of animorphism and mistreated children. But it also reminded me of the films and stories of my childhood, such as Labyrinth, The Never-Ending Story, Alice in Wonderland and The Wizard of Oz; stories where heroines and heroes must take an odd and perplexing journey in order to ultimately find themselves and come to conclusions that were there all along but hidden in their dreams and unconscious. The extract I've chosen is the opening to Chapter 3, where Loribeth, carrying a suitcase containing a (possibly) dead child, meets her object of lust, The Fair Man...

The Fair Man

The road is lined with chestnut trees and never seems to end. I sit on the curb and wheeze. Maybe I could eat a bit of the kid, just a little finger, to stave off the hunger. I open the suitcase and immediately close it again. Then I yank up a tuft of grass from the edge of the street and gnaw on it. I lie on my back and look up at the sky. It's completely yellow.

Three grey Great Danes, big as calves, come walking down the street. They're nipping at each other's tails and snapping at motes and mites floating on the air. I duck down in the dusty grass, but the thinnest dog has already found me. It leaps straight at me. I want to get up and flee, but it's already pinning me down so I can't move. It rubs its rump around on my stomach and legs and pants at me from above. The dogs flap their flews and let the threads of drool swing like hammocks from the limp folds of skin. The largest dog dances around the suitcase, pauses for a moment, sniffs. Then it pushes

up the lid with its nose. It looks inside and shakes itself so that its ears slap against its throat and skull. It eyes the kid in delight, noses and rummages around in the suitcase, and bites off one of the kid's ears.

Hey, I shout, hey –

Shut your face, snaps the dog on my stomach and bats at my face with its paws. The ear falls out of the leader's mouth, it gives a barking laugh. Then it snaps it back up and gulps it down in one. It burps, the dog on my stomach howls, and all three of them laugh so much that their coats quiver over their bones. They can't pull themselves together, until they finally let me go and, still chuckling, and with their ears flying behind them, run off.

I sit up. A stream of people is coming up the road. I snap the suitcase shut, pat down my clothes, and watch them. More and more people step out from between the trees and into the road. They're wearing white robes with lace collars; the girls have wreaths of flowers in their hair and sandals with frilly socks on their feet. I join them. Snippets from a brass band float through the air, along with the scent of freshly mowed meadow and meatloaf.

The procession ends in front of a farmhouse. Clucking hens stalk around the yard, a calf with bulging eyes drinks from a trough. Red geraniums beckon from the window boxes. A girl is talking with a small, black pig.

The people gather in the front yard and whisper to each other. Standing in the doorway is a hulking woman with thick plaits looped around her ears. She's swinging a cowbell with both hands, and her plaits bounce plumply like smoked sausages. You have to get past her if you want to go in. She looks very strict, and the bell is very loud. The people are scraping their feet and plucking at each other's white collars. Some muster up enough courage to step forward and scream something in her ear. She drives away most of them with the bell, she lets in a few. That's when I catch a glimpse into the hall: there they are, at a great table, all eating cake. Flowers float in water glasses on the table. The children are crumbling up the cake and dunking pieces in the flower water, the elders fish them back out again. Some wolf down their cake in three big bites. They guzzle it down with cider. It runs out of their mouths straight onto their plates and when they laugh it sprays into the yellow faces of the flowers.

I sit on the suitcase and run my finger over the cracks in the leather, then suddenly there's a bang against the suitcase wall from the inside! I jump up and see the suitcase bulging out on one side. There's a terrible rasping sound, as if the kid is trying to roll over. I knock the suitcase over onto the ground and give both sides a firm kick.

Need some help?

A young man is blocking out the sun. I don't react, and stare stiffly and silently past him, so he shrugs his shoulders and turns towards the entrance, where the woman has just stopped ringing the bell. I subtly eye up his back, it is a nice back, you can see his muscles. A path of light blonde hair grows up the nape of his neck out of his shirt and leads up to curly locks that twine together like young serpents.

The young man abruptly turns and says: Looks like a good time. Bright blonde hair sticks out of his chin. Does it hurt when the stiff hair grows? I used to wonder the same thing about my father. The young man makes use of two large, pale fish eyes. And there is a kink in his chin, I don't like that at all. He leans in towards me.



Michelle Steinbeck © Affolter/Savolainen

Are you hungry?

Yes, bloody starving, I say.

He looks astonished and laughs. His grin looks stupid and sugar sweet, as if cut right across his face with a knife. And he has chewing gum teeth, like a clay figurine.

Liver cake, trout cake, sweet cake?

Trout cake, I say, I want trout cake.

The young man nods and trots off to get the cake, I root around in my coat pockets. I find the cigarettes, light one up – almost very elegantly – and sit on the suitcase. I smile into the sun and think about the veins in the hand he had placed on my arm.

You smoke?

The young man is proffering a trout cake. You smoke! he says. I don't like that at all.

Yes, I say, leering at his biceps, it's a way of life, smoking.

Michelle Steinbeck

Translated by Jen Calleja

Michelle Steinbeck has already made a big name for herself in Switzerland as a writer of prose, poetry and drama. She is a scintillating performer and widely published. Her first stunning, surreal novel, short-listed for the Swiss Book Prize, has just been translated into English by Jen Calleja: *My Father was a Man on Land and a Whale in Water*.

Jen Calleja is a writer and literary translator from German. She has translated works by Wim Wenders, Gregor Hens, Kerstin Hensel, Michelle Steinbeck and Marion Poschmann. She writes a column on literary translation for the *Brixton Review of Books* and she was the inaugural Translator-in-Residence at the British Library 2017-2018.

RIVETING REVIEWS

MY FATHER WAS A MAN ON LAND AND A WHALE IN WATER

BY MICHELLE STEINBECK

TRANSLATED BY JEN CALLEJA (DARF PUBLICATIONS, 2018)

REVIEWED BY ROSIE GOLDSMITH

The cover describes Michelle Steinbeck's debut novel as a Freudian fairy tale in 'absurdist prose fluctuating between panic and the comical'. Thank goodness for helpful cover quotes, otherwise I might not have got past the first page of this strange book. I'm glad I did. It's fresh, funny and disturbing, a terrifying coming-of-age novel and a picture of hell, channelling Hieronymous Bosch and the magical, shiny brilliance of Angela Carter.

Our first-person narrator, Loribeth (Lori), is wading through nightmares on a journey across land and water, with a heavy suitcase. Inside the suitcase is a dead child. Lori meets an old soothsayer in a cemetery stroking a furry lizard, who tells her she must find her estranged father, 'a man of letters, who writes books', who is the owner of the suitcase. 'The father stands in your way, he's blocking the lucky cards. The highest Fortune card is there, and the Triumph card too! Give the father back his suitcase and you shall be showered with love, fame and gold.'

Poor Lori carting around her suitcase, her head full of horrors. But this is clearly a journey she has to undertake. There are paths and goals, arrivals and departures, decisions and meetings with significant people. As readers we suspect that there is meaning to all this, that struggle is good, battles must be won, obstacles overcome, dragons slayed. It is a highly moralistic tale, psychologically profound and youthfully idealistic.

Such a slim volume and so densely packed with crows, old men with stumps, burning houses, Lori's constant hunger, markets selling ears and mountains of teeth. And a sense of wonder at Michelle Steinbeck's ideas and writing, all in the pacey present tense. She loves language and invention but roots her story in enough reality for us to

recognise ourselves. *Brava* Jen Calleja for her sharp translation of complex ideas and juxtapositions. Rendering these and the inside of Lori's disturbed mind can't have been easy.

There's hope as Lori flirts on board ship with a man with spindly legs and red shorts. They discuss the child they might have in the future, although she loathes children. But no, it's not meant to be; he's not the one she is searching for. She shuts the suitcase with the rotting child inside and moves on. The ship is caught in a storm and we are soothed with maritime quotes.

Lori meets her father on 'the island of fleeting fathers', and the prose changes, becoming more expansive and sedate, calmly exploring the father-daughter relationship. As characters become older and settle down, the prose settles too. But settles into what? All her life Lori has tried to escape dullness and dreariness: 'I always want to be somewhere else, never the place where I am. But what good is going somewhere else? I always take myself with me.'

Lori is a restless, demanding narrator in her quest for the meaning of her life. She wants sunshine and happiness, without responsibility or attachments, but at a cost.

This is one of the most audacious, exuberant and thrilling novels I've read for a long time, even if it is disturbing and bizarre. It is a modernist, magical mash-up about families, home, identity and, ultimately, happiness.

Rosie Goldsmith



THE DEAD BY CHRISTIAN KRACHT

TRANSLATED BY DANIEL BOWLES (FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2018)

REVIEWED BY WEST CAMEL

Every moment, every encounter, every piece of dialogue in this short, intense book is packed with meaning. Ostensibly *The Dead* relates how the paths of its two protagonists – a Swiss film director and a Japanese government official – cross in 1930s Tokyo. But through allusion, through apparently minor detail that turns out to have major symbolic power, and through an almost Woolfian narrative technique, this short novel manages to discuss universal ideas about existence and our relationships with both our past and our future.

The moment Emil Nägeli (the director) and Masahiko Amakasu (the official) first meet is the perfect example of Kracht's densely packed prose (expertly rendered by translator, Daniel Bowles):

> 'Amakasu and Nägeli have sniffed each other out in a dream anamnestically … and assured themselves of the other's true being … The dead are profoundly lonesome creatures … they are born alone, die and are reborn alone as well.'

In some ways, these two could be seen to represent the encounter between Germany and Japan in the run-up to WWII. Nägeli has been commissioned by the German government to make a film in Japan – a piece of propaganda that will establish Nazi supremacy on the world stage. Amakasu – who, on one level is almost a caricature of the nationalistic, single-minded, brutal Japanese – is committed to the expansion of the Empire, and is keen to manipulate the Swiss stooge the Germans have sent him.

But Kracht offers something far more complex than a simple personification of a political situation. 'Anamnestically' (I had to look it up) refers to the immune system's response to a previously encountered antigen. When Nägeli and Amakasu meet, each instantly recognises himself in the other and raises his defences. Yes, this moment does refer to the encounter between Nazism and



Christian Kracht © Frauke Finsterwalder

Japanese nationalism, but it also represents how we as individuals acknowledge and are threatened by each other's mortality because it reminds us of our own. This moment goes even further than that, however. It explores our immortality too: how, through our very act of being – of having existed – we are eternal. As Amakasu thinks, when it seems his life is over, 'The whole matter has something tremendously clear about it, and ridiculous, too; he doesn't want to die, nor is he *not* dead.'

This complex idea is referred to throughout *The Dead*: walking in Tokyo, Nägeli 'pauses before an almost bare cherry tree … A cherry blossom falls in death, dies in falling. It is perfect like this.' In its mortality the blossom attains immortal perfection.

In a dream, Ida, Nägeli's fiancée, 'somewhat timidly enters the realm of the dead … that world-in-between where dream, film, and memory haunt one another'.

This could be a perfect description of this novel. Both Nägeli and Amakasu are haunted by memories of their past – their childhoods have shaped them, as all our childhoods have. Kracht seems to intimate something more sophisticated though: that we all continually move between our external existence – our everyday activities, thoughts and opinions – and the dream of our interior lives, which is shaped by memory, visions of the past and future, and something ineffable: maybe God; maybe 'the primal sound of this planet' that Amakasu hears on the point of his demise.

Certainly, this is a novel about fascism – the political, social and historical conditions in which it arose, and in which it might be 'reborn' – but it is also a brave and profound engagement with the nature of being.

West Camel

Christian Kracht is a Swiss novelist whose books have been translated into thirty languages. His latest novel, *The Dead*, was the recipient of the Hermann Hesse Literature Prize and the Swiss Book Prize.

DAMNATION BY PETER BECK
TRANSLATED BY JAMIE BULLOCH (POINTBLANK, 2018)
REVIEWED BY MAX EASTERMAN

'In the past, right-wing extremists used to rob banks; these days they speculate and manipulate stock market prices. It's more profitable.'

When Peter Beck originally wrote *Damnation* – in 2013 – he was a newcomer on the thriller scene and, to a point, this shows: Tom Winter is a bank security chief, but otherwise something of a sprig off the James Bond genome, a man trained to use violence, who does so with gusto, and who's also capable of superhuman feats. Hanging off the runner of a helicopter while being shot at by a very nasty thug (but then they all are, aren't they?) is just one of the many exploits that come his way, along with the regulation dishy female sidekick: they're thrown together by circumstance, of course, not choice. The sex thankfully takes place off the page and leads to regret rather than a rosy sunset – Winter is at least more interested in love than pure libido.

Here the similarities end. This is an original, very Swiss, white-knuckle ride of a story, as high-powered as the bankers and investors who pepper its pages; the core of the plot is the worldwide race to invest in infrastructure, in this case electricity, for Egypt's burgeoning economy. Nuclear power, Arab oil money, organised cybercrime and outright terrorism make for an explosive mix – literally (and a major problem for the reader trying to find time for that restorative cuppa). Unputdownable!

Bankers don't like anything that disturbs their image of stability, of a secure pair of hands, with just the right amount of added hypocrisy:

> 'Although he found it distasteful, he operated according to the principle of "what I don't know can't hurt me". Also known as "discretion".

That image, that discretion, comes under increasing pressure as Winter pursues his suspicion that the death in a helicopter crash of one of the bank's best clients, Muhammed Al-Bader, along with Winter's beautiful deputy, Anne, who's also the object of his (undeclared) affections, isn't as accidental as it seems. Enter Fatima, equally beautiful (are there no plain, even overweight ladies in banking and investment?), fluent in English and Arabic, but not German, which makes her and Winter a perfect fit as both heroes and hunters. But it soon becomes clear that there are other hunters out there and out to get *them*.



Peter Beck: © From the Author's Archive

' … The woman smiled: "Mr Kaddour … would be delighted if you would accept his dinner invitation … he will pick you up from the Shepheard at 8:30pm." Winter smiled … and wondered who'd announced his arrival. He hadn't told anyone which hotel he was staying in. Clearly he was being followed.'

He is followed and attacked, several times over, as the action moves from the Bernese Oberland to Cairo to the Hardangerfjord and to Boston. At every turn, the story grips and keeps you guessing: who, or what, is under attack, and why? Not so long ago, I might have hinted at the improbability of the dénouement; but, after what happened in Salisbury – a mere half-hour from where I live – I reckon 'incredible' has lost its 'in': staid, financially strong and stable Swiss banking may claim to be, but there is – according to Peter Beck – pure evil lurking there. And Beck, an economics and business school graduate, clearly knows all about it.

Damnation is the first outing for Tom Winter. The second German title – *Korrosion* – awaits Jamie Bulloch's (I hope) superb translation skills. Meanwhile, the tyro Peter Beck is now hailed as 'Europe's answer to John Grisham'. Film rights, please?

Max Easterman

Max Easterman is a journalist – he spent twenty-five years as a senior broadcaster with the BBC – university lecturer, translator, media trainer with Sounds Right, jazz musician and writer.

Peter Beck studied psychology, philosophy and economics in Bern, Switzerland, where he also gained a doctorate in psychology. He was a cyclist in the Swiss Army, has a black belt in judo and an MBA from Manchester, UK. Today he divides his time between writing thrillers and helping businesses to shape their corporate culture. *Damnation* is his debut.

LIFE IS GOOD BY ALEX CAPUS

TRANSLATED BY JOHN BROWNJOHN (HAUS PUBLISHING, 2018)

REVIEWED BY FIONA GRAHAM

'I believe we should read only books that bite and sting us. If the book we are reading doesn't wake us with a blow to the skull, why read it? So it can make us happy, as you write?' Those who share Kafka's literary views as expressed here may fail to appreciate Alex Capus' gentle musings on the good life. If, on the other hand, you enjoy a narrative that meanders like the path on the novel's cover, embracing the eccentric, the humorous and the lackadaisical, then curl up in front of a crackling log fire and prepare to be entertained.

Max and Tina have been married for twenty-five years. When Tina is offered a one-year visiting professorship at the Sorbonne, Max has mixed feelings; although he's pleased for her, he knows he's going to miss her during the week and wishes she could just stay put in their quiet Swiss town. He describes himself as 'an Odysseus in reverse', with his Penelope going out into the world while he stays at home.

The way this novel is framed suggests that Max is about to face new challenges with Tina's temporary departure.

But this is not the direction the narrative takes. Rather, Max reflects on the life and love they share, and the very many 'little' things that make it good. Like Capus, he is a writer and runs a bar. Unlike Capus, he has always lived in the same place, and almost every street in town holds memories. However, new buildings have shot up all around Max's 'Sevilla Bar' and he is frequently approached by developers keen to replace it with something shinier and more lucrative. Max is having none of it:

> 'But it isn't making way … I like that. I like things that last.'

In a different setting, this sense of rootedness might reflect provincial conservatism. But Max's Swiss town is actually rather cosmopolitan. The regulars at his bar have names like Vincenzo, Sergio, Ferdinand, Ismail, Toni, Stefan, Suzette and Miguel. It is Miguel, a scion of the Spanish community that founded the 'Sevilla



Alex Capus © Wikipedia/Ubeweiler

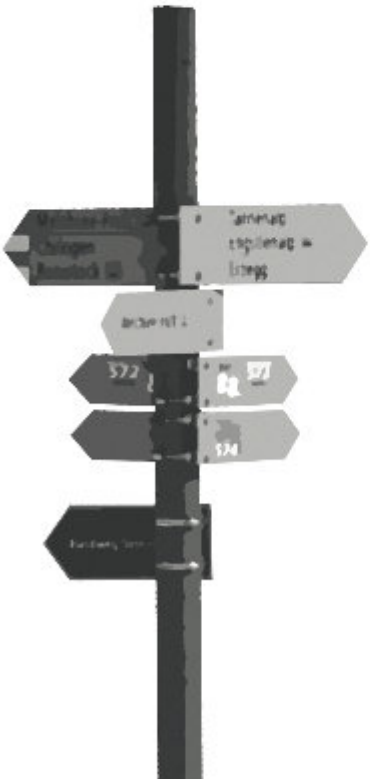
Bar', who sets off one of the main strands of the narrative. Short of cash, he asks Max to return 'Cubanito', the stuffed bull's head that has hitherto been on permanent loan. But what is a 'Sevilla Bar' without a fighting bull as its mascot? Max's search for a replacement, 'Malagueño' – or should that be 'Sieglinde Kunz-Gerstenhofer' from Schleswig-Holstein? – leads to some comical interludes that made me snort. Not like Cubanito or Malagueño, but with laughter.

Life is Good, as digressive and whimsical as *Three Men in a Boat*, will delight anyone who appreciates gentle irony and an exquisitely well-turned sentence. Alex Capus' prose, in John Brownjohn's translation, is a joy to read. This is a book that lends itself to reading out loud, and it would translate very well to radio.

Fiona Graham

Fiona Graham, reviews editor at the Swedish Book Review, *is the translator of Elisabeth Åsbrink's* 1947: When Now Begins *(Scribe UK). She is a graduate of New Books in German's 2018 Emerging Translators scheme.*

Alex Capus is a French-Swiss novelist who writes in German. Other works that have appeared in English are: *Léon and Louise*, longlisted for the 2011 German Book Prize, *A Matter of Time*, *Almost Like Spring* , *A Price to Pay*, *Sailing by Starlight: In Search of Treasure Island and Robert Louis Stevenson* and *Skidoo: A Journey Through the Ghost Towns of the American West*. Alex Capus is married with five sons and runs a bar called 'Galicia'.



ONE HUNDRED DAYS BY LUKAS BÄRFUSS

TRANSLATED BY TESS LEWIS (GRANTA, 2012)

REVIEWED BY LUCY POPESCU

'Is this what a broken man looks like?' asks the first narrator in One Hundred Days, Lukas Bärfuss's novel about the Rwandan genocide, seamlessly translated by Tess Lewis. He is referring to his school friend, David Hohl, who is about to tell him how he ended up 'in the middle of a crime of the century'. Like Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, Bärfuss employs a double narrator. When Hohl, the principal storyteller, takes over the reader inhabits the role of sympathetic friend.



Lukas Bärfuss © From the Author's Archive

Hohl (his name means 'hollow'), is on his first posting to Rwanda as an administrator with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. He becomes obsessed with a beautiful Rwandan woman, Agathe, who he first encounters in Brussels airport. When he finally finds her again in Kigali they begin a dissolute sexual relationship, indulging in reckless debauchery, 'like two hungry animals, breathless and out of our minds'.

He recognises, but ignores, the hypocrisy of his aid work. After the Rwandan president's plane is shot down, mayhem descends and the aid organisations move out. David decides to stay and, after hiding from his colleagues, hunkers down in his agency accommodation. He hopes to rescue Agathe and escape with her to Europe, but she does not want to be saved and David finds himself in the midst of a ferocious slaughter.

The 1994 massacre of Tutsi by members of the Hutu majority government and local militias lasted one hundred days and shocked the world. With a nod to Conrad, Bärfuss suggests that the heart of Rwanda's darkness actually lies with the European powers who sowed the seeds of, and enabled, the violence. Rwanda was lauded as the 'Switzerland of Africa'. The Swiss favoured the Hutus over the Tutsi and, together with other international aid agencies, provided development money to a corrupt government, despite being aware of its human rights abuses.

Bärfuss conveys horror in an often oblique fashion. David rescues a buzzard with a broken wing and feeds

it dead dogs: 'I was chopping up strong, healthy dogs that had been killed so I could feed a crippled bird.' Although David acknowledges the paradox, he does not stop. Only when he discovers that the bird is getting fat and sleek on the flesh of corpses outside the garden wall does he react – and does so with unexpected savagery, chopping its head off with a machete.

David is also naïve about the corruption of those nearest to him. Agathe becomes increasingly combative. When David discovers that she is a Hutu militia leader it does little to dispel his ardour. His gardener loots and then slaughters the house-keeper for her bicycle. Inevitably, violence brutalises those living in its midst, and David is infected by the horror all around him; but his response is cowardly and grisly. Bärfuss paints an unflinching portrait of Western influence in Africa and his sympathies are clear. David's weakness and his failure to act honourably come to represent his nation's inability to admit mistakes and the irreparable damage of turning a blind eye.

Lucy Popescu

Lucy Popescu reviews books for various publications including the FT, TLS *and* New Humanist. *Her anthology,* A Country to Call Home, *focusing on the experiences of young refugees was published in June 2018. She is chair of the Authors' Club Best First Novel Award.*

Lukas Bärfuss, born in Thun, Switzerland, is one of the most successful dramatists to emerge in recent years, and his plays are staged all over the world. For his first novel *One Hundred Days* ('Hundert Tage'), which was published in Germany in 2008, Bärfuss was awarded the Mara Cassens Prize, the Schiller Prize and the Erich-Maria-Remarque Peace Prize. He was also nominated for the German and Swiss Book Prizes.

RIVETING EXTRACTS

FROM *SCHILDKRÖTENSOLDAT* ('Shellshock') BY MELINDA NADJ ABONJI (SUHRKAMP, 2017) TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY ALYSON COOMBES

Set in the 1990s, against the backdrop of the Yugoslav Wars, this clever and intriguing novel explores the impact of war and celebrates the beauty of language. The protagonist, a young boy named Zoli, adores wordplay and crossword puzzles, and spends most of his time in the garden tending his flowers. When his parents enlist him in the army to toughen him up, Zoli is forced into a brutal new life for which he is wholly unprepared. Melinda Nadj Abonji's second novel is utterly compelling and unique, her masterful use of language and vivid imagery a treat for any reader.

P-L-U-M-D-U-M-P-L-I-N-G-D-A-Y

They say I fell off the motorbike that day just like a sack of potatoes, my father rode on without me, took him ages to notice there was no one behind him, I was lying in the road, fresh bread in my satchel

vrrrrrrrrm

my father came riding back, I heard him clearly even though I was unconscious, as they all said later, my father came back into my world, which was orange, red, turquoise and purple, there were flowers in every corner and along every border of my world, and these flowers smelled like bread, like the white bread that lay next to me in the dust, and I heard my father calling my name, I heard his voice, it sputtered over the flowers, shook me by the shoulder, Zoli, Zoli! and I sent my papa a plague of locusts, whistling mice that would make his knees knock, I called the neighbour's dog to come and lick his calves – he hates that so much – there's nothing I didn't wish on him to make him leave me in peace

why would he do that? well I'll tell you, if you're patient, and of course you are, papa tugged on my earlobes, son, get up, it's plum dumpling day today, remember? and there was another voice as well as papa's, and this

voice hissed, sent my flowers spinning, your boy is bleeding, look, here, his head! quick, we need to call a doctor!

I must say I knew then where my flowers came from, when the whispering voice said I was bleeding I knew straight away that my flowers were growing out of the blood, yes, out of the bleeding hole in my head, and I swear on my life I've never seen such beautiful flowers, they weren't carnations or roses, nor irises or gerberas, tulips or even begonias, they weren't flowers at all, they were birds' heads, oh no, I'm not making this up, I'd have to say they were bunting heads, shaped like flowers, but they weren't brown, weren't bland or banal like buntings are, instead, behind my eyelids the buntings gleamed a colour red that exists only in our imaginations, in the shape of flowers

but they dragged me from my paradise garden, a garlic-doctor pumped me up with his air, patted me, took my wrist, he lifted my eyelids as though he could see something there in my eyeballs, yes, yes, the warped world, and then they heaved me onto a vehicle, he's heavier than he looks, they said, all these hands around me, all this sweating from the exertion, just let me lie down, why can no one hear me? so much fuss, they all kept talking at me, leave me alone, I screamed, but no one, no one heard me, and my flower-birds grew smaller and smaller, thinner, and once the red was all washed out again they flew away, because of the raised, crazed voices, they left me behind, and that, that is the reason I cried as I opened my eyes, look, he's crying, said the doctor, the nurse, and my father's face appeared above me, son, you're bawling like a baby, and us? we're sick with worry, and my father smacked a kiss on my skin, where's my bread?

they all gawped at me, he's asking for his bread, listen to him, he wants to know where his bread is

and at that moment, that's when I jumped up, grabbed the doctor by his coat collar, puked my words on his white righteousness, disturbed his perfectly parted hair with my rage, and I screamed, told them why I'd cried, that because of them, my flowers … the birds … and my colours … and I was lying in the gold dust …and the doctor's help,



Melinda Nadj Abonji © Wikipedia /Julian Nitzsche

which stinks of money, which he spirits away in his coat pocket …
and my papa gapes at me, Zoli, is that you, it can't be you, you've never talked like that before, Zoli, what is this devil inside you …

the Zoli-devil!

the dust-devil!

the gypsy-devil!

-P-L-U-M-D-U-M-P-L-I-N-G-D-A-Y- oh yes, the day we get to eat plum dumplings, usually on a Friday, I love to free the plums from their doughy potato coats, to take the plums, still hot, almost too hot, and make them vanish into my mouth, and I can easily eat seven to ten dumplings,
every time.

Melina Nadj Abonji

Translated by Alyson Coombes

Melinda Nadj Abonji was born in Becsej, Serbia. She and her family moved to Switzerland at the beginning of the 1970s. She lives in Zürich, where she works as a writer and musician. In 2010, her novel *Tauben fliegen auf* ('Fly Away, Pigeon') won both the German and Swiss Book Prizes.

Alyson Coombes holds a BA in French and German and an MA in Literary Translation. In 2015, she took part in the Emerging Translators Programme run by *New Books in German*, and was translator-in-residence at the Crossing Border Festival in The Hague. Her co-translation of *Nagars Nacht* by Astrid Dehe and Achim Engstler was published as *Eichmann's Executioner* in July 2017 by The New Press.



FROM *HIER IST NOCH ALLES MÖGLICH* ('Anything Could Happen Here') BY GIANNA MOLINARI (AUFBAU VERLAG, 2018) TRANSLATED BY JONATHAN BLOWER

I know Clemens is sitting in the surveillance room right beneath me, looking at the monitors. A thick wall between us. An above and a below.

I take the photofit out of my trouser pocket and look at it again.

Maybe Clemens still thinks I robbed the bank. Maybe I'm the most obvious suspect. Maybe I was behaving the way people behave when they're planning a bank robbery. Maybe the holiday came at just the right time for me. Maybe I'll never be able to speak to Clemens like this again because he'll only ever remember the photofit and he'll only ever be thinking about the size of my nose, the distance between my eyes.



Gianna Molinaro © Wikipedia / Anne-Marie

I don't know whether Clemens has understood me. Should I have told him that I took my furniture to a secondhand shop in a town just south of here, that I closed my bank account, cancelled all contracts, made the final rent payment, put the landlady's key in the letterbox and left? The world is bigger than we think; it's far looser and more flexible than people usually think. I'd like to tell him that I've decided not to stay in one place, not to settle down, not to stick to one career path, not to be part of a single story but to be part of many stories at the same time, if at all.

People fall to earth, wolves are hunted, pits cave in; it's possible that factories like this could explode, that a hall like mine could be ripped apart, that ships could sink; a poison could make swathes of land uninhabitable, whole villages might have to be moved, islands could sink, towns could be flooded, frontiers erected, fissures could grow. Nothing is certain; not the ground we're standing on, not the aircraft we board, not the other side of a border.

I'd like to tell him all this but then I think I shouldn't confuse things by trying to explain myself, that this is just another place to be left be behind at some point.

The man in the lighthouse is self-sufficient; he has his telescope and the sky. The people on the poisoned island are self-sufficient; they have their card games, their waiting and their stories. Most self-sufficient of all are the sciapods; when the sun shines too brightly they make their own shade, and for this they need nothing more than their own foot. I'm going to leave the factory. Sooner or later. I'll pack my Universal General Lexicon and my camera and I'll find somewhere new.

I use my fingers to measure the distance between the eyes in the photofit. The same distance on my own face is also two fingers.

Perhaps the wolf has already crept through the holes in the fence many times. The traps are set for him. None of the leg-hold traps have snapped shut yet.

Gianna Molinari

Translated by Jonathan Blower

Gianna Molinari was born in Basel and now lives in Zurich, where she co-founded the art action group Literature for World Events together with Julia Weber, with the aim of helping refugees. In 2012, she received the first prize at the MDR literature contest, in 2017 she was awarded the 3sat Prize at the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize, and in 2018 she received the Robert Walser Prize. *Anything Could Happen Here* is her first novel.

Jonathan Blower is a translator of German texts on the visual arts. His first major translation, Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History*, was published by the Getty in 2015. He recently co-translated the Selected Writings of Harald Szeemann and is currently working on the writings of Caspar David Friedrich.

Nightmare of the Embryos

But that was always it. The search for a lost land. Love. Our fucked-up youth, always exploited, betrayed, bribed, lost. Lies, sadism, the malicious laughter of the ones who were stronger than us. Love, a useless pastime, bad enough having to feed the kids in the home. We were tough by day, our last shreds of humanity torn apart by our boundless anger.

Night then, in sheets that weren't ours, curled up like embryos, was another world. Dormitories, embryos in beds, craving a womb. A blue night-light (the eye of justice, judging), every breath a meagre measure of affection for the stranger's embryo beside you. Night: it was hands groping in the dark, moth-like thoughts, dreams cast out into an inhuman emptiness, screaming children's prayers, ice-cream, icebergs, unconsciousness. Night: it was the children's great no-man's-land. We too were lovable. But we didn't want to live. Night, and it was the matron's metallic voice. Trembling, we waited for her call, and all the embryos crept back to their own strange beds. Each child was an only child – we weren't a family!

The nights in these rooms, those cursed nights of unwanted children.

Lucerne 1950. A children's home at the edge of the woods. Its own large garden, chickens in the backyard, nuns from the Seraphic Love charity. The front steps, a children's Matterhorn, enormous in my memory, unclimbable. Don't go down into the street with the people, where children played with balls, where there were parents and strong boys. Don't go down, danger lurked on the bottom landing. And there it was, a woman who wanted a pretty child, shouting and waving at me in my invisible cage, waving with red fingers, my mother, who wanted a pretty child and stank of alcohol. Her laugh seemed to have slipped to the corners of her mouth and clung on there, just a cold grin. She wanted a doll child, a child to play with. I was ugly and squinted. A nun's hand gripped my arm, lifted it up. So I waved too, with broken-winged fingers, waved to my mother, who always celebrated Christmas without me, who stood there on the bottom landing, lacking all tenderness.


Mariella Mehr © Ayse Yavas

December 1951. St Nicholas, you good man, they sang, because he loved the well-behaved children. They hung on his red, padded coat and touched his beard. They all laughed. I was a bed-wetter, I was ugly and squinted. I broke the other children's toys, dive-bombed their sand-castles and tormented chickens in the yard. I stole. And so I spent Christmas Eve in a well-sewn jute sack 'out in the cold'. The saint's love was reserved for the others, the 'dry' children, the 'honest' ones. I could hear the muffled shouts of two hundred joyful children in the decorated hall. I dreamed of mandarins and was filled with hate. Adult footsteps. They stopped by the sack, this lumpy brown sack with the child tied up inside, hesitated, then resolutely moved away. In the hall, at the party, they were eating vanilla pudding and syrup. I was a bed-wetter and I squinted, and they called my mother a drunken slut. She never came again. They called it alcoholic psychosis now and put her away in a sanatorium. It sounded less disreputable, alcoholic psychosis. I had a sick mother now.

Mariella Mehr

Translated by Ruth Martin

Mariella Mehr was born into the nomadic Yenish people and was the victim of a notorious programme run by the Swiss charity Pro Juventute, which systematically removed Yenish children from their parents. Mehr's major literary work is the *Trilogy of Violence*. She has received numerous prizes for her works. *Words of Resistance* is a collection of texts that range from poetry to essays and short stories.

Ruth Martin translates fiction and non-fiction from German, and teaches translation at the University of Kent. Her recent translations include Bettina Stangneth's *Eichmann Before Jerusalem*; Hubert Wolf's *The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio*; and selected essays by Hannah Arendt. She helps to run the Emerging Translators Network.

FROM *ICH UND MEIN PLURAL* ('Me and Myselves')
BY JENS NIELSEN (DER GESUNDE MENSCHENVENSAND, 2018)
TRANSLATED BY ALAN ROBINSON

My Brain

Since my birth
More precisely when I was already some years old
My mother had the impression more and more that
Something was not right with me
What's not right then I asked
You're sometimes a bit odd
I am odd
Just look at yourself
But she didn't want to get into that
Until a doctor had examined me
First up a child psychologist
Fine
We drove there
He greeted us
He said
Who've we got here then?
I said
We've got me here
He found that funny
In short
It promised to be a relaxed appointment
With little jokes between tests
That I had to take
In the course of which it would emerge
That my mother's worries were unfounded
But things weren't so simple it transpired
The psychologist wanted even more investigations
For those we had to see a neurologist
Who peered all the way into my skull
At first he too made little jokes
Then increasingly he wrinkled his forehead



Jens Nielsen © From the Author's Archive

At last he said
That something really was amiss
With my halves of brain
I'd only one
The right
No the left
No
I never knew which half of brain was missing
The neurologist said
That in itself was a symptom of this disorder

Meanwhile it appeared
That strictly speaking I had indeed two halves
But one had just remained as tiny as a millet seed
And functionally insignificant
While the second half had expansively encroached
Upon the empty side
Because there was ample room
And over time had overrun everything there
Had founded a kind of cerebral colony
A small world power had arisen in my brain
In the stillness of my early early childhood

My mother had a gift
In no time she could assimilate bad news
As something given
Which it was best to handle without complaint
So she emphasised
That on the whole I was all right
Just my behaviour was a little odd
Then she asked the neurologist
What all this might mean for my future development
Development
He said
And paused
He didn't want to cause alarm
He had never had a result of this kind before
Never yet heard of such a case
He therefore couldn't say at all

What it meant for my possible development
But he had outlined my case to a specialist
Who now wanted to examine me
Fine
We got the appointment with another doctor
Then we drove home

In the back seat I looked out of the window
Took turns in covering one eye with my hand then
The other
To establish whether a difference
For the neurologist had explained to me
Each eye was separately linked to the brain hemispheres
Crosswise
And indeed
Through one eye I saw animals in the landscape
That weren't there through the other
On a mown field stood a tapir
Which wasn't there however
When I looked through the eye
Belonging to the millet seed
So in that eye I was partially blind
Somewhat later a monitor lizard crawled along the roadside
Large birds wheeled above us
And among a few fir trees
That had stood for ages at the edge of the village
An elk was hiding
Do you notice any difference
Asked my mother
Who was watching me in the rear-view mirror
I said No
And to this day I have never told a soul

Jens Nielsen

Translated by Alan Robinson

Jens Nielsen worked as a writer for theatre and as a radio drama producer. He is now a full-time playwright, actor, speaker, performer and author. For his short stories *Flusspferd im Frauenbad* ('Hippo in the Women's Pool') he was awarded the Swiss Literature Prize in 2017. His novel *Me and Myselves* is also a performance for the stage.

Alan Robinson was a John Doncaster Scholar in German at Magdalen College, Oxford and a Junior Heath Harrison Scholar in German. He has taught at the universities of Oxford, Lancaster, Cologne and at all the German Swiss universities. Since 1990 he has been Professor of English at the University of St Gallen.

TWO STORIES FROM *GLANZ UND SCHATTEN* ('Light and Shadow')
BY MICHAEL FEHR (DER GESUNDE MENSCHENVENSAND, 2017)
TRANSLATED BY SHAUN WHITESIDE

The Queen in the Forest

An old man has gathered berries and nuts in the forest
in a basket he carries them home through the forest

When he arrives at the clearing
where his house stands
he sees a snake lying in the grass outside the door
'What are you doing outside my door
snake'
he asks it
the snake replies
'I am the queen in the forest and I am waiting for you
old man
if you try to go into the house
I will bite you to death and then eat you
if you try to escape
then too I will bite you to death and then eat you
if you try to stay
where you are standing
then I will wait
until you have starved
you will die all by yourself and then I will eat you'
meanwhile the man has recognised
that the snake belongs to a species
which is known in the whole region for its deadly and particularly painful
bite
'I fear your poisonous bite
snake
therefore I prefer to sit down
where I am
on the ground and wait
until I have starved
but look
I still have these berries and nuts in my basket

what am I supposed to do with them'
'Just you eat them'
the snake replies
'they might make you nice and fat'
'I don't think so
I've never looked different to the way I look now
at my age I will hardly grow fat
but I am still happy to eat the berries and nuts'
the old man takes a handful out of the basket and pushes some of them
singly into his mouth with thumb and index finger
chewing he turns to the snake
'If this proves to be my last meal
then I would at least like to converse a little
tell me
snake
what makes you
want to eat me
you have seen
I am old and thin and certainly no treat
the snake raises its head
'Don't you see
how big I am
to sustain such a body
I must take
what I can get
if I meet an animal in the forest
I will eat it
if I pass a house in a clearing
I just eat its inhabitants
that's quite simple'
'Oh
I understand'
The old man says
'that's how you do it
yes
I see that now
you're big
huge even



Michael Fehr © Franco Tettamanti

and you're beautiful at that
your scales gleam like precious metals
but not as hard
on the contrary
they gleam smoothly
it looks to me
as if each one were a single dew-drop
reflecting the morning light in colours of green and brown'
the snake twists and turns
it sticks out its tongue
'Yes
you've noticed
I'm not just big
I'm also beautiful
have you looked at my eyes as well
they are as yellow as the inside of a bird's egg and in between
a narrow
deep crevice
so dark is the black of my eyes'
the old man opens his eyes wide
'No
that hadn't occurred to me yet
but you're right
your eyes are wondrously beautiful
and your tongue is beautiful too
fine and pointed and split precisely in the middle'
'I know
my tongue is beautiful too'
says the snake

'Recently when I wanted to dive into the lake in the forest for the first time
to catch a fish
I saw my reflection and in it I recognised my beauty
I swam to the middle of the lake and curled up there on a lily pad
until my tail was elegantly rolled up on it and my head stuck out like
a blossom
I called into the forest
'Look at me
I am the Queen in the forest'

then a bird cheekily twittered from a tall tree
'what a spectacle you're making of yourself
size and beauty by no means make a queen
prove first that you are strong as well'
I swam from the lily pad back to the shore and bit into a fallen tree
my teeth left two deep holes in the wood
the bird sailed down from its tree crown to the lowest branch
to make sure
how deep the holes were
and it admired
how sharply and smoothly the teeth had pierced the wood
it had recognised my strength and was willing to believe
that I was the queen in the forest
then a second bird of the same small
precocious species joined the first on the branch and cried
'Who knows
perhaps this time you just got lucky and the tree is rotten
then I slipped back into the clear water and bit into a big stone
immediately the stone turned blood red
crimson the blood ran down the stone
trickled away among the stones and dispersed in the water
this made the birds fall silent
startled to death they fell from the tree and splashed into the lake
they became my first meal as queen in the forest
now you can imagine my strength
imagine
how hard I can bite'

'That's a great story
that you tell there'
the old man interrupts the snake
'but for my meal I want to fetch some bread and cheese from the house
without bread and cheese it only tastes half as good to me'
the snake hisses
'Stop
what are you trying to do
have you forgotten already
if you go into the house
I will bite you to death

you are afraid of my bite after all'
'No
I haven't forgotten
that you threatened to do that
but I don't believe it any more'
'Why don't you believe it any more
I advise you not
to try'
'Still
I want to try
I am an old man and I have heard a lot in my life
if I have never heard something before at my age
I can't resist doubting it a little
a snake biting into a stone
is something I have never heard of in all my life
and it seems very fatuous to me
because a snake would break its teeth on a stone
or wouldn't it
still
I want to try'

What an Idea

No one in the family has imagination
not the mother
none the father
the daughter no imagination
the son no imagination
no one has potential
one lives the life of the family from dawn till dusk
and at night in the beds of the family one succumbs

But one night
the mother haunts the daughters dream
it occurs to her
that should create herself from strange
special lilac material a dratted helmet with an immeasurable point
she poses with her lilac helmet amidst

the family
who mesh their fingers
so that the mother may climb the mesh
intended as a firing mechanism
father
son and daughter
with the mother in the middle
bend their knees and arise
so that the mother may lower and lift
they bend their knees and arise
until it is enough and the mother is blasted from the bosom of the family
she dashes out and further out
gets through the moon
which she smashes with lilac helmet
leaving a clean hole for the return's sake
rushes further out
unto the dead point
where the light of the sun expires
in the dead point the mother manages to turn around
whereupon she gravitates back
she gets back into the light
shoots with lilac helmet through the hole in the moon and succumbs in the
bosom of the family
The daughter keeps the dream quiet
one lives the life of the family from dawn till dusk

But early one day, the mother wakes the husband
the son
the daughter
'It occurs to me
that I should create myself a lilac helmet with an immeasurable point'
the family numbly endures the mother's preparations
but then she poses with lilac helmet amidst the family
who according to her instructions mesh their fingers
so that the mother may climb the mesh
father
son and daughter
with the mother in the middle
bend their knees and arise

so that the mother may lower and lift
they bend their knees and arise
until it is enough and the mother is blasted from the bosom of the family
she dashes out and further out
gets through the moon
which she smashes with lilac helmet
rushes further out
unto the dead point
where the light of the sun expires
'Darn it
what an idea
what a rush'
she exclaims
although she cannot be heard
at home the family sings at the top of their voices and dances in a circle and
celebrates the immeasurable potency of its own kin
in the dead point the mother manages to turn around
whereupon she gravitates back
she gets back into the light
shoots with lilac helmet through the hole in the moon and finally truly
succumbs in the bosom of the family
who all welcome and congratulate her
with the utmost warmth

Michael Fehr

Translated by Shaun Whiteside

Michael Fehr was born in Bern. He studied at the Swiss Institute for Literature, Biel and at the Y Institute, Bern University of the Arts. He has published three books: *Kurz vor der Erlösung*, *Simeliberg* and *Glanz und Schatten*. On the studio album *Im Schwarm* his stories appear as songs, oscillating between narration and music.

Shaun Whiteside's latest translations from French, German and Italian. include *Black Water Lilies* and *Time is a Killer* by Michel Bussi, *The Temptation to be Happy* by Lorenzo Marone, *Malacqua* by Nicola Pugliese, *Blitzed* by Norman Ohler and *To Die in Spring* by Ralf Rothmann. He has previously translated works by Nietzsche, Freud, Schnitzler and Musil for Penguin Classics.

Hunter

You are bringing cake and wine, and meet the wolf.
He unzips his trousers and says:

Reach inside.
He is standing right up against your car window
and you pray that he will not guess
that a button pressed in your red Ford does not automatically mean
that the wolf cannot lead you away from the path.

Finally the key slips into the ignition,
you turn it and start.
But the wolf snarls that you must stay for Grandmother's sake.
His jaws are so big, he says, all the better to eat her with,
if he can't have any cake, any wine.
That's how this marriage begins, for you stay.

And he never quite eats all your cake, drinks all your wine,
always puts a bit aside in case of worse times ahead.

It is years before there is someone
who teaches you and Grandmother what is needed,
secretly of course, after work, at a shooting range
in the woods outside the town.

But when cake and wine are then demanded
once more and you absolutely don't want to serve and to pour,
don't want to lift your skirt and spread your
legs, shots are fired.

And if he hadn't died, he'd live happily ever after.

(Years pass before a well is found,
deep enough to let things pass and fade.)

From Hunter – Monster Poems (Voland & Quist, 2013)

Mutabor

The error in the gene
The error in the egne
The error in the eneg
The error in the gnee
The error in the neeg
The error in in the gene
The error in in egne in
The error in in eeng inn
The error in in eeng ginn
The error in in eeng gginnn
Mutavi

From Mutabor – Morbus (Voland & Quist, 2015)



Nora Gomringer © Judith Kinitz

Elfriede Gerstl

In the midst of despair – this is the place in the web where a stitch
is missing, where
a thread lies not like a blade of grass but like a blade – there in the middle of
the publisher's flat – this is the place where a swastika is scratched into
the doorframe
just beneath the mezuzah, 4th ring of the city of Vienna –
I met Elfriede Gerstl.

I was so young that my word was not of importance.
And she found my corpulence strange, she said so herself,
what a wee soul I seemed
to her, delicate, like a membrane between always seeing and
always blind – this from one
who was as slight as a leaf, no, as a very sharp blade on which
a hair
would split almost just from awe at the possibilities, almost just
from fear of torture
through the possibilities.

from Moden (Voland & Quist, 2017)

How did she get in? I do not know to tell.

Perhaps the window was ajar. And the moth
Elfriede Gerstl entered the kitchen like a dream from the
heydays of Escada.
What was spoken? Where women once wove. Something
about the Lost
Clothes, the book, the one in production. The publisher,
she spoke quickly and
Gerstl watched me as she did. We were both silent. Never
since her has someone
said to my eyes that all my life I would play the role of the doll.
That was the stitch of this poet.

Years later when she died, they found trailers of Chanel
and the dreams of Elfriede Gerstl sewn from something special.

Nora Gomringer

Translated by Annie Rutherford

Nora Gomringer, born to German and Swiss parents, is one of the best known poets of her generation in either country, acclaimed for her alternatively playful and piercing poetry as well as her lively performances. She has been awarded several prizes for her work, is a member of PEN and has taken up residencies all over the world. She is Director of the international artists' house, Villa Concordia.

Annie Rutherford makes things with words and champions poetry and translated literature in all its guises. She currently works as programme co-ordinator for StAnza, Scotland's international poetry festival, and as a freelance translator. Her translation of Nora Gomringer's work, *Hydra's Heads*, is now available from Burning Eye Books. She is also editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *Far Off Places*.

WRITING FROM THE MARGINS

BY ALAN ROBINSON

Across the border in France and Germany, Swiss literature often slips below the cultural radar. Although close geographically, Switzerland remains unfamiliar – linguistically and in its cultural tastes and traditions. How do Swiss writers deal with this situation?

One response has been to emphasise national or regional differences, by constructing a cultural identity in opposition to their larger neighbours. Since the late eighteenth century Swiss literature was held to epitomise rural authenticity rather than metropolitan sophistication. Declarations of Swiss distinctiveness culminated in the 'spiritual national defence' mandated by the government in December 1938 in order to counter Hitler's regime. Such isolationist resistance to foreign powers – whether the Habsburgs, the Burgundians, or, more recently, Brussels – has long been integral to Switzerland's self-concept. Switzerland's cultural identity is thus indivisible from geopolitical developments. Prior to 1989, there were four German-speaking literatures: Austrian, East German, German Swiss and West German. Subsequently, Germany's reunification has reinforced its cultural dominance, against which smaller countries must assert their autonomy. A resurgence of local identity, also in reaction to globalisation, is evident in the proliferation of Swiss dialect in broadcasting, music and social media and in the remarkable upsurge in dialect literature, often in spoken-word performances and poetry slams.

Paradoxically, however, the standard Swiss High German used by most Swiss authors has become less regionally marked than in earlier literary generations. This reflects another strategy of 'provincial' writers: adapting or even moving, to the cultural metropolis. Many Swiss authors live in Paris or Berlin and aspire to publication by the leading French and German houses. Acquiring prestige or cultural capital plays a role, as does heightened media visibility, better access to marketing and reviewing networks, and hence greater chances of winning literary prizes. Swiss authors published in

France or Germany increase their audience not only in those countries but also in Switzerland; those published in Switzerland have less exposure abroad. This tendency towards linguistic and cultural convergence has sometimes been accompanied by heated controversies about whether living in Switzerland constricts artistic creativity.

Underlying these literary inter-relations is a wider debate about the nature of Swissness. As in many European countries, nationalistic groups promulgate an ideology of cultural purity, yearning nostalgically for an agrarian, self-sufficient society rooted in an idealised *Heimat*. This ignores Switzerland's pivotal position at the heart of European transit routes and cultural flows, its openness to the world as an innovative export nation, and the fact that almost 37% of its inhabitants have a migrant background. To understand the dynamic changes Switzerland and its literatures are undergoing, one therefore needs to consider all the transnational and intercultural relations that characterise the country today. Many bilingual or trilingual inhabitants speak a language at home other than the nation's four official languages; some of the most interesting contemporary authors, such as Melinda Nadj Abonji or Dana Grigorcea, migrated to Switzerland. Thus, within what internationally is a minority literature, there is a vibrant interplay of minority voices, which Switzerland's decentralised society is well placed to foster.

Alan Robinson



SWISS FRENCH

AN INTRODUCTION TO SWISS-FRENCH WRITING

BY NICOLAS VERDAN

There is a lot of writing going on in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. More than ever before. Jacques Chessex – the only Swiss writer to be awarded a Prix Goncourt – would hardly believe his eyes. Almost ten years after his death an amazing literary landscape is emerging – it's almost another literary planet, with more and more women, new voices arising from immigration, authors getting rid of their hang-ups in the pursuit of success, and self-published authors donning full writer's gear in order to become artists.

One can also meet 'Easy Jet' writers, fantasising about being Nicolas Bouvier (the famous Swiss travel writer), and the 'forever-young' authors, still performing collective work.

In Biel/Bienne, on the border between the French- and German-speaking regions, a literature and creative writing institute hands out degrees, for better or for worse, depending on your point of view. And literary studies and traditional literary criticism have given way to new bloggers and to private book clubs.

In the French part of Switzerland, you can also observe what is now a global phenomenon: the explosion of social media that allows unknown writers to promote their own books, thus playing the roles which were once the province of publishers and literary agents.

Let's have a look under the surface of all this activity, beyond the publicity, and examine the books themselves, what they might tell us, what they say about the world.

Seek out French-speaking Swiss writers and I think you'll be surprised by the diversity of styles and subjects they adopt. They might be close to all-powerful France, and the attraction of Paris might be strong, but most of them follow their own paths.

While it is difficult to find a common thread, they do all live and write in a small, over-populated Swiss region, and echoes of dialects or regional expressions appear here and there in all of their work. Generally,

however, little distinguishes their writing from that of their fellows in France; and in this French province of Switzerland, which is not one, Paris remains a reference, even if Swiss-French writers won't admit it.

The challenge, though, is to be read by French readers. Being published in Switzerland doesn't help to achieve that goal – the Jura mountains represent more than just a physical barrier. To get their books into a French bookshop, a Swiss writer needs a French literary agent or publisher. In fact, the best way is to be a … Swiss-German writer. Then you'll be considered a real Swiss writer. A translation from German to French is an 'open sesame' to Parisian fame. I'm joking, sort of … but it's not so far from reality.

Another way to access the French market is to write in French in an exotic country, far away from France. Maybe Switzerland is too close?

All this said, I'm actually feeling rather relaxed. Because, thanks to festivals and cultural events, contacts are now easy between readers (and writers) in France, and Swiss-French writers, such as Marius Daniel Popescu, Jean-François Haas, Daniel de Roulet, Anne-Claire Decorvet, Michel Bühler, Amélie Plume, Antoinette Rychner … But this list is unfair, because it's not exhaustive. Suffice to say that all the writers – all of us – living in the cantons of Jura, Bern, Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Valais, Vaud and Geneva are witness to the fact that literature in French-speaking Switzerland is alive.

Nicolas Verdan

Nicolas Verdan was born in Vevey of Greek-Swiss parents. He was a prominent journalist before turning to writing fiction full-time. He divides his time between Switzerland and Greece. He has won a number of literary prizes for his previous novels. The Greek Wall *is his first work available in English.*

FROM *THE GREEK WALL*
BY NICOLAS VERDAN (BITTER LEMON PRESS, 2018)
TRANSLATED BY W. DONALD WILSON

The street rises and falls like a wave, surges again, swells, and falls again. These undulations give a sense of the neighbourhood, with its crests and hollows, its gentle slopes. It is a street leading into the city, when this story begins, once upon a time, at two in the morning, on a densely populated hill, on the night of 21 and 22 December 2010, on Irakleous Street, in Neos Kosmos, Athens, Greece.

'What does a severed head look like?' wonders Agent Evangelos.

He is standing in the street facing the Batman, a bar diminished by everything about itself: the green phosphorescence of its sign, the cheap alcohol it serves and its regulars, all participants in the death of a world, still devoted to the songs of yesteryear, and their youth pinned up on the wall – a photo of Theodorakis, a view of the Acropolis taken from the terrace of the Galaxy (another bar, on the twelfth floor of the Hilton), the faded colours of Greek summers on ads from the 1970s, and the round yellow sun on Olympic Airways posters. Every evening in Athens, the Batman's customers carry on as if nothing had changed, although so much is dead and gone and despite all the pitfalls that await, the menace outside, beyond the window of the bar, on this street where Agent Evangelos is standing, uncertain about what to do next.

If there hadn't been that phone call, that conversation with his colleague – with that severed head to blame for it all – this story would have been very different, it wouldn't have taken the same form, would have been impossible to relate, have had neither head nor tail – ouch! He'd have ordered another drink and sat with his eyes closed listening to Kazantzidis; and if he had waited a little longer he would have been joined by Irena, the owner of the only jazz club in the capital worthy of the name.

When she comes to the Batman, Irina makes her appearance around 1.30, accompanied by a few musicians, an employee and her barman, an entourage drawn along in the turbulent wake of a ferry to the islands. Not for anything in the world would she miss an 'after', as she calls it, rolling the 'r'.



Nicolas Verdan © Louise Anne Bouchard

Agent Evangelos likes Irina, her plump figure, her outrageous assertions, her inexhaustible affections, her generous love for the masculine gender – a generosity of being that turns her corpulence into a distinction. It would have been a different story, set here in the Batman, but very soon Agent Evangelos must be on his way. He goes back inside, for he has left his jacket on a hook under the bar. He pays what he owes, and leaves.

'What does a head severed from the body look like?' he wonders. A phone call has come; he must leave immediately.

Just a few more minutes and Agent Evangelos might have encountered Irina. That approaching sound of an engine is she; with one finger she manoeuvres the four-by-four, which has just stopped in front of the Batman. The passengers on the rear seat look out; all of them have seen the same things: glimpses of the city, the confused message of the streets, voiceless graffiti on the filmstrip of the walls, the weight of lowered shop blinds, the greenish glow from the forest of balconies, the squashed oranges on the asphalt, flattened candle flames. They have seen all of it go by, but driving along they passed no remark.

Nicolas Verdan

Translated by W. Donald Wilson

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W. Donald Wilson has taught at universities in the West Indies, the United Kingdom, and at the University of Waterloo. In 2013 he was a finalist for the French-American Foundation translation prize.

RIVETING REVIEWS

AUTOPSY OF A FATHER BY PASCALE KRAMER

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BONONNO (BELLEVUE LITERARY PRESS, 2017)

REVIEWED BY VALERIA VESCINA

What might drive a left-wing intellectual to espouse xenophobic views and defend the indefensible? How might the community around him react? How would you react if he were your father? In *Autopsy of a Father*, Pascale Kramer poses uncomfortable questions and tests your tolerance of disquiet. She weaves the political with the personal, the topical with the timeless, eschewing a narrative that might proffer facile answers. Her pages brim instead with the realistic contradictions, ambiguities, feelings and thoughts that characters often fail to acknowledge and understand in others and themselves.

The story was inspired by a real-life scandal. In Kramer's novel, a famous journalist, fifty-eight year old Gabriel, plunges from grace after defending the racially motivated murder of an East African immigrant by two young men. He is sacked, widely shunned, and threatened. When he subsequently commits suicide, his funeral becomes the focus for indignation and threats, and eventually for violence between extremist groups. His thirty-something daughter Ania, from whom he was estranged, visited him shortly before his suicide; after it, her quest for answers draws her deep into a tangle of memories, resentments and realisations.

The picture of a fragmented society, where intolerance and tensions simmer beneath the surface, is not only mirrored by, but experienced through long-lacerated family relationships. The perspective to which the third-person narration gives us most access is Ania's. The complexity of the society-wide issues at stake is revealed by her shifting views about the individuals in her past and her present.

When Ania was growing up her father was a redoubtable cultural figure and, in her eyes, harshly judgemental of his disappointing daughter. His housekeepers, who cared for her, seemed aloof. But could they and Gabriel have been hurt by her own harsh judgement of them all, made manifest by her demand to go to boarding school and



Pascale Kramer: © Dawid Ignaszewski / Koboy © Flammarion

by her subsequently staying away? Could her father have suffered more than she realised from the death of his wife, her Iranian mother? 'You let years go by without a word. You're the one who can't love,' his second wife, Clara, tells her. And what about Ania's own ex-partner, Novak, the father of her deaf six-year old son, Theo? Could all the contradictory images she now holds of these people be true? Certainly, every misunderstanding makes the process of understanding others and oneself more difficult; perspectives are distorted and trust is eroded by every misapprehension and hurt.

A poignant example of this is Gabriel's show of annoyance at Ania and Theo's long-awaited visit; they haven't given him any notice, but he's glad they've come: 'he had simply resigned himself, whatever she might think, to keeping his distance'. Ania dismisses his tenderness when he points to a photo of her four-year-old self and recalls the time they were still close; when he kisses her, saying 'finally, by your permission'. She thinks his is 'the seductive tone he had adopted with her ever since she ceased to be pretty'. Their moment together is wrecked by these dynamics.

Autopsy of a Father is a quiet novel with a powerful punch. In a world in which xenophobia, racism, nationalism and extremisms are seeing a frightening resurgence, Kramer's book points out the difficulties and dangers of ascribing these phenomena to a few clear-cut factors: a simple linear narrative would be seductive but would be more fictional than the complexity the novel hints at, and therefore unhelpful to any attempt to defuse such threats.

The story is moving, though unsentimentally told. Kramer's prose is sparse, the narrative voice held at just the right distance from the protagonist to convey her sense of isolation and bewilderment. And Robert Bononno's translation gives a faithful rendition of this writing style.

Valeria Vescina

Valeria Vescina is a writer, teacher and critic. Her first novel, That Summer in Puglia *(Eyewear Publishing) was launched this year.*

Pascale Kramer, recipient of the 2017 Swiss Grand Prize for Literature, is the author of fourteen books, including three novels published in English: *The Living*, *The Child*, and *Autopsy of a Father*. Born in Geneva, she has worked in Los Angeles, and now lives in Paris, where she directs a documentary film festival about children's rights.

TO EACH UNFOLDING LEAF BY PIERRE VOÉLIN

TRANSLATED BY JOHN TAYLOR (BITTER OLEANDER PRESS, 2017)

REVIEWED BY STEVEN J. FOWLER

When we encounter very poetic poetry, do we view it as it was read when it was written? Not just in terms of its era, and not just in terms of its original language (if it's translated), but in this sense: do we read it through the lens of knowing it isn't from *now*?

Even the most beautiful work can seem of the past, of a very specific moment, and it's very rare indeed that the opposite is true. We encounter classical poems through a lens so thick, it frankly stops many people at the door of poetry. So we might approach this massive, ambitious and admirable volume of Pierre Voélin's life's work, translated vividly by John Taylor, with a great appreciation that is perhaps qualified with a temporal footnote. This is often graceful, deeply felt poetry but it seems from a different time. This is a compliment in many ways: people like to read of the past more than they like to read about it. It is axiomatic, of course, that the work comes from another time, but I mean this modally, stylistically, too. Voélin's work and its like will never be able to be written again. This powerful wadge of poems from a lifetime writing, is maybe the last of its kind. The great twentieth-century poet and his remarkably consistent aesthetic is here in these pages. That is powerful, but the work is also littered with phraseology, vocabulary and gestures that feel perhaps a touch too rich. That said, post-war central European poetics, especially Francophone works, is a battleground on which lyric sensibility and language itself can be reclaimed.

There is perhaps nowhere that this tension is better exemplified than in the work of Pierre Voélin. Maybe it's because Voélin hasn't the harshness of some of his more noted contemporaries, or the vivid idiosyncrasy. He is instead controlled, elegant, insightful, cautious, concentrated. This extensive collection of his work in English is therefore, and without doubt, a considerable addition to the English reader's awareness of a poet who represents more than the aesthetic of the French-language Swiss poetic canon. He is a poet of



Pierre Voélin © Wikipedia / From the Author's Archive

elliptical gesture, of imagery and patience, and as such his body of work is decisively poetic, in no way formal but also quite consistently pleasing and melancholy. Voélin seems in conversation with poets such as Yves Bonnefoy, André Frénaud, Philippe Jaccottet, Gérard Macé (all French-language poets, all men) but perhaps without the bite or linguistic play that marks the work of Char, Celan or Michaux. Voélin's work is perhaps subtler, more involved with an active absence, maybe even, in stereotypical fashion, leaning towards Paul Claudel.

Perhaps this is his greatest achievement – to be clearly a poet who can be understood on two levels: one at the very surface, which will please many readers and become something of an inspiration. The other, those patient beyond my own reading, who will be rewarded with a depth that seems to be gestured towards throughout.

Inevitably the works, drawn from eleven collections published between 1976 and 2015, contain within them great multiplicities in terms of the content, Voélin's concerns evolving as he ages. And yet the book feels uniform. Stylistically, Voélin remains the same. Simple, clear, gestural, empathetic, compassionate, curiously personal, homely even. This, I hope, guarantees the book a readership, as it deserves one.

Steven J. Fowler

Steven J Fowler is a poet, writer and artist who works in poetry, fiction, theatre, video, photography, visual art, sound art and performance. He is the founder and curator of The Enemies Project, and director of Writers' Centre Kingston and the European Poetry Festival.

Pierre Voélin was born in Courgenay (Canton Jura), Switzerland. His most recent books include the poetry collection *L'été sans visage* (2010) and the essay collection *De l'air volé* (2011). Six poems from his sequence *Dans une prairie de fauche* were translated by John Taylor and published in *Modern and Contemporary Swiss Poetry: An Anthology* (Dalkey Archive, 2012). In 2016 he won the Priz Louise-Labé.



THREE POEMS BY PIERRE VOÉLIN
TRANSLATED BY JOHN TAYLOR

Light – it has its whips – heron squawks
falling and staining the day

and no one recognises his day in it

But may you come to hide in this voice
among the flowering trees – the bare boulders
and the trunks – the tongue of the lichens
the coal in its hideaway

Towards the alpine pasture – higher up – blind
the shot-off capercaillie's head
a billhook of blood flying veering over the trails

but may you come back – you – your hands
and water for my mouth

You more humble – who used to listen to the word

***

On this May morning the poem awakes early
among the flowers of the chestnut tree

very early – in the other season
the snow guides it into the mountains

where the wind trims our lips again
where our inspiration returns

and where I also see your shoulders beneath the frost
the crystals barely grazing you

forget that I am this man
that you are this woman

and watch at night Orion the Hunter
kneeling among the other stars

***

The lilacs – the hazels – the silver baskets
the maple's winged seeds raining down covering the paths

the imperfect ivy

and fear – the heart laid bare
in the secrecy of the lower branches

Your sisters' blood – the swan's whiteness

evening – at prayer
the father's arms – scratched by the blackberries

There is where the walls rose – and your house

Pierre Voélin

Translated by John Taylor

Published courtesy of Trafika Europe. For more contemporary Swiss literature in English translation, please see Trafika Europe 11 – Swiss Delights: https://cld.bz/5mld9jo

John Taylor has translated books by Jacques Dupin, Philippe Jaccottet, Pierre-Albert Jourdan, José-Flore Tappy, and Louis Calaferte. His latest personal collection is *If Night Is Falling*, published by The Bitter Oleander Press in 2012. He is also the author of the three-volume essay collection, *Paths to Contemporary French Literature* and *Into the Heart of European Poetry*.

THREE DROPS OF BLOOD AND A CLOUD OF COCAINE
BY QUENTIN MOURON
TRANSLATED BY W. DONALD WILSON (BITTER LEMON PRESS, 2017)
REVIEWED BY DOUG JOHNSTONE

Readers not familiar with crime fiction often wrongly assume that the only thing driving such stories forwards is answering the mystery of 'whodunit'. In reality, good crime fiction can compel the reader to keep turning the pages in a myriad of ways, and the solving of a murder is often tangential to the core of the novel.

Three Drops of Blood and a Cloud of Cocaine is just such a book. The fourth novel from the young Swiss-Canadian author and the first to be translated into English, it demonstrates a refreshing breadth of vision and a willingness to play with genre conventions. There are elements of satire, hefty doses of psychology and philosophy, and even a splash of metafiction in *Three Drops...*, all set within the framework of a terse, tight plot and combined with some startling characterisation.

The story takes place in Watertown, just outside Boston, and does, in fact, start with a murder. Old Jimmy Henderson is found killed in his pick-up truck, his eyes and cheeks mutilated and his tongue cut out. There appears to be no motivation for the attack, and local sheriff, Paul McCarthy, who knew Henderson, takes the case on with a world-weary shrug at the depravity that surrounds him.

Into the mix steps Franck (no surname is given), a private investigator from New York who happens to be in town on another case and who develops a keen interest in the new crime. Franck is a coke-snorting, blustering sociopath – the yin to the sheriff's yang. His lack of respect for society's mores is at the heart of Mouron's book.

The author uses Franck's outrageousness to poke satirical fun at Watertown's population generally, and at the hypocrisy of its chattering classes specifically. Through Franck's drug-fuelled proclamations about the nature of human existence Mouron raises questions about how society functions and examines the potentially broken links between morality and legality.

As the plot progresses, McCarthy arrests a prime suspect in the case – Alexander Marshall, a low-life drug dealer and violent thug who was living with the deceased's daughter. But Marshall's guilt seems too convenient to the sheriff, who seeks more meaning behind the crime. At the same time, Franck's behaviour becomes ever more erratic and dangerous, and it becomes clear that he and McCarthy are on a collision course.

Mouron has a lot of fun with this double-handed sense of fate. The relationship between McCarthy and Franck owes much to the wonderfully symbiotic relationship between Sheriff Ed Tom Bell and psychotic killer Anton Chigurh in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* – so much so that I suspect Mouron's Sheriff McCarthy is a sneaky acknowledgement of that debt.



Quentin Mouron © Wikipedia / Diocesen1

Towards the end of the novel, Franck's proclamations become both metaphysical and metafictional, as he ponders his own motivations and agency, and the startling climax is as cerebral as it is debauched. We do find out whodunit, but by this point it scarcely matters in what is a strange, original and impressive addition to the crime genre.

Doug Johnstone

Doug Johnstone is an author, journalist and musician. He's had eight novels published, most recently Fault Lines, Crash Land *and* The Jump, *which was a finalist for the McIlvanney Prize for Scottish Crime Novel of the Year.*

Quentin Mouron is a poet and a novelist. He was born in Lausanne and is Swiss and Canadian. In 2011 he won the Prix Alpes-Jura for his novel *Au point d'effusion des égouts*. He has written three other highly acclaimed novels before *Three Drops of Blood and a Cloud of Cocaine*.

IN PRAISE OF WEAKNESS BY ALEXANDRE JOLLIEN

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL ESKIN (UPPER WEST SIDE PHILOSOPHERS, INC., 2017)

REVIEWED BY JONATHAN LEVI

Writing a memoir is a challenge. It becomes even more challenging if you are unable to write or type easily, and dictation is hampered by unclear speech.

In late November 1975, Alexandre Jollien was delivered by a midwife in the small town of Sierre, Switzerland. 'Turning one too many somersaults' in his mother's womb, Jollien got his neck entangled in his umbilical cord. An emergency trip to the hospital, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and ten days in intensive care saved his life but left him with cerebral palsy. 'You are looking,' he writes, 'at the fallout.'

Unable to walk steadily, control his movements or speak intelligibly, he was sent to a nearby institution, where he spent the next seventeen years in the company of a hodgepodge of other boys with a vast spectrum of physical and cognitive challenges. 'Our motto,' he writes, 'was: *struggle with and against everything* … in spite of our caregivers' and teachers' rigidity! Struggle – against medical diagnostics, discouragement and the other kids' cruel and hurtful taunts!'



Alexandre Jollien © Raphael Bourgeois

Jollien's 'professional horizon' was 'rolling cigars'. And yet the camaraderie of struggle gave Jollien the determination, strength and humour to leave the institution. He entered a mainstream high school and eventually the Université de Fribourg, where he studied philosophy, and then Trinity College, Dublin, where he met his wife. A father of three children, he has received several awards from the Académie Française.

Jollien wrote his *In Praise of Weakness* in 1999 (it has only recently been translated into English by Michael Eskin) in the early flush of his enthusiasm for philosophy. *Know thyself*, the instruction written at the entrance the Temple at Delphi, became Jollien's mantra – it was the driving force for Socrates in Plato's *Dialogues*. And so, perhaps, it seemed reasonable for Jollien to write his book of self-knowledge in the form of a Platonic dialogue – a friendly chat between himself and Socrates.

It's a cute device. But Jollien's interlocutor is more Sigmund than

Socrates; an asker of leading questions rather than a questioner of unexamined assumptions. Jollien uses the device as a rhetorical crutch to help him write his story with grace, humour and hope. As a result, the book feels more like self-help than philosophy.

My own hope is that in the twenty years that have passed since the writing of *In Praise of Weakness*, Jollien has found the courage to throw away this final prop, trust his own thoughts and bracing optimism, and walk free of the shadows of the cave.

Jonathan Levi

US-born Jonathan Levi is the author of the novels Septimania *and* A Guide for the Perplexed. *A founding editor of* Granta, *he currently lives and teaches in Rome.*

Born with cerebral palsy, **Alexandre Jollien** grew up in a home for the severely disabled. He succeeded in completing secondary education and studied at the Université de Fribourg and later at Trinity College, Dublin. He published his first book – *In Praise of Weakness* – at the age of twenty-two, and has since established himself as a moral thinker and spiritual teacher.

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RIVETING EXTRACTS

FROM *HIVER À SOKCHO* ('Winter in Sokcho')
BY ELISA SHUA DUSAPIN (ÉDITIONS ZOÉ, 2016)
INTRODUCED AND TRANSLATED BY ANEESA ABBAS HIGGINS

In the depths of winter, a guest arrives at a small hotel in Sokcho, a provincial seaside town in South Korea, not far from the border with North Korea. Old Park's hotel has seen better days and attracts few guests, especially at this time of year. A young woman who works in the hotel wonders what has brought the latest guest to this remote spot. As she books the newcomer in and shows him round the premises, she finds herself drawn to him, perhaps because he comes from the land of the French father she's never met.

He arrived muffled up in a woollen coat.

He put his suitcase down at my feet and took off his knitted cap. Western face. Dark eyes. Hair combed to one side. He looked straight through me, without seeing me. With an air of lassitude, he asked me in English if he could stay for a few days while he looked around for something else. I gave him a registration form. He handed me his passport so I could fill in the form for him. Yan Kerrand, 1968, from Granville. A Frenchman. He seemed younger than in the photo, his cheeks less hollow. I held out my pencil for him to sign and he took a pen from his coat. While I was booking him in, he pulled off his gloves, placed them on the counter, scrutinised the dust, the cat figurine on the wall above the computer. I felt



Elisa Shua Dusapin © Romain Gaetat

compelled, for the first time, to make excuses for myself. I wasn't responsible for the run-down state of this place. I'd only been working there a month.

There were two buildings. The first housed the reception, kitchen, lounge, and guest rooms in a row, upstairs and down. Orange and green corridors, lit by blueish light bulbs. Old Park hadn't moved on from the days after the war, when guests were lured like squid to the nets, dazzled by strings of blinking lights. From the boiler room, on clear days, I could see the beach stretching all the way to the Ulsan mountains, ballooning towards the sky like a matronly bosom. The second building was down a few alleyways, a traditional house on stilts updated to make the best of the two rooms with their heated floors and paper dividing walls. An internal courtyard with a frozen fountain, a bare chestnut tree. There was no mention of Old Park's in the guide books. People washed up there by chance, when they'd had too much to drink or missed the last bus.

The computer froze. While it spluttered, I told the Frenchman what he needed to know about the day-to-day running of the hotel. Old Park usually did this. He wasn't there that day. Breakfast from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00, in the kitchen adjoining the reception, through the sliding glass door. No charge for toast, butter, jam, coffee, tea, orange juice and milk. Fruit and yogurt extra, put a thousand won in the basket on top of the toaster. Items to be washed should be left in the machine at the end of the corridor on the ground floor; I'd take care of the laundry. Wifi code: ilovesokcho, all one word, no capitals. Convenience store open twenty-four hours a day, fifty metres down the road. Bus stop on the left just past the shop. Seoraksan National Park, one hour away, open all day until sunset. A good pair of boots recommended, for the snow. Bear in mind that Sokcho was a seaside resort. There wasn't much to do in the winter.

Guests were few and far between at that time of year. A Japanese climber and a girl of about my age, fleeing from the capital to recover from plastic surgery to her face. She'd been there about two weeks, her boyfriend had just joined her for ten days. I'd put them all in the main house. Since Park's wife died last year, the hotel had been operating at half strength. Park had cleared out the rooms upstairs. What with my room and Park's, all the rooms were taken. The Frenchman could sleep in the annexe.

It was dark. We set off down a narrow alleyway past Mother Kim's stall. Her pork balls gave off an aroma of garlic and drains that lingered in the mouth all the way down the street. Ice cracked beneath our feet. Pallid neon lights. We crossed a second alleyway and came to the front porch.

Kerrand slid the door open. Pink paint, plastic faux baroque mirror, desk, purple bedspread. His head brushed the ceiling, from wall to bed was no more than two steps for him. I'd given him the smallest room, to save on cleaning. The communal bathroom was across the courtyard, but he wouldn't get wet, there was a covered walkway all around the house. It didn't bother him anyway. He peered at the blemishes in the wallpaper, put down his case, handed me five thousand won. I tried to refuse it but he insisted, wearily.

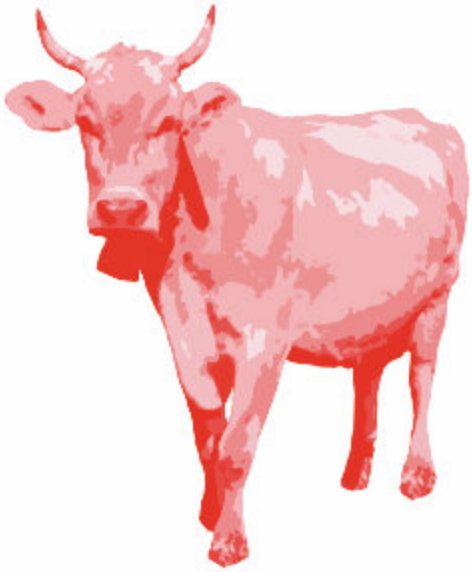
Elisa Shua Dusapin

Translated by Aneesa Abbas Higgins

This article was first published in the Autumn 2017 edition of Asymptote (www.asymptotejournal.com), a free award-winning online portal for world literature that has published work from a hundred languages and eighty countries.

Elisa Shua Dusapin was born in France and raised in Paris, Seoul, and Porrentruy, Switzerland. *Winter in Sokcho* ('Hiver à Sokcho') is her first novel. Published in 2016 to wide acclaim, it was awarded the Prix Robert Walser and the Prix Régine Desforges, and has been translated into Korean, Spanish, and German.

Aneesa Abbas Higgins is a London-based translator and writer. Her first published translation, W*hat Became of the White Savage* by François Garde (Dedalus, 2015), was the winner of a PEN Translates award.



FROM *UNE TOILE LARGE COMME LE MONDE* ('A Web as Wide as the World') BY AUDE SEIGNE (ÉDITIONS ZOÉ, 2016) TRANSLATED BY ALEXIS BERNAUT, INTRODUCED BY THE PUBLISHER

What if the World Wide Web were to disappear? This is the secret wish of a few people scattered around the world. The author, herself part of the generation she depicts, plays on her characters' contradictions. Without ever condemning the WWW or its users, she makes the virtual world real by describing the huge data centres and data flow. Playing with the idea of a world without the internet, she makes it very obvious that this new world will be nothing like the old one.

It lies at the bottom of the ocean. It is motionless, slender, and tubular; gray – or maybe black; it's hard to tell in the darkness. It looks like what we have in our living rooms, behind the baseboards, between a wall and a lamp, between the socket and the computer's input connection. It's just a wire, really.

Let's call it FLIN.

The bottom of the ocean looks like snow, just like when the screens of the old cathode ray-tube TV sets got scrambled. It's both poetic and organic: crumbled bodies of fish and pulverised detritus from the whole wide world fall from the surface.

In the pitch blackness of the ocean depths, it takes these graceful flakes six months to sink towards the wire; but the analogy with the snow breaks down here, because they neither cover it nor make up fluff.



Aude Seigne © Romain Guetat

It all began with a bathyscaph. This submarine, designed for great depths, was meant to cross the Atlantic Ocean and find the perfect path for FLIN's long body – 7,000 kilometres, no less – to reach the coasts of America from the beaches of Brittany, free of any obstacle, abyssal canyon, or submarine volcano. Still, the

mid-Atlantic ridge, like a backbone crossing the Atlantic from north to south, bonding both continental plates, had to be crossed. It was a mere logical need. FLIN would be discreet, ever so deep, slim, and peaceful, but it would reunite what had been separated: two continents which an ocean had set apart.

In the vicinity of FLIN dwell the kind of creatures one only sees in a documentary.

The marine snow feeds arthropods, which are wisps of repulsive legs and mix with metre-wide toad crabs and giant marine sea lice, busy feasting upon the body of a sperm whale. It's actually so challenging to conceive of the death of such an enormous animal that there is really almost no such thing as the body of a sperm whale. This one will take months to decompose, and will long be a part of this ecosystem of the shadows, forcing eels and monkfish to skirt it. Thanks to a vampire from hell – such a devilish red octopus that it looks like a baddie straight out of a Disney movie – the whole scene shines, lit by bioluminescent bacteria at the edge of the octopus's tentacles, a halo of white light in black waters – 3,000 metres deep.

For decades, sperm whales have been victims of FLIN's ancestors, the first transatlantic undersea cables to link Europe to America. Was it because cables were less solid then, more loosely tied up to the ocean floor? Did sperm whales mistake them with seaweed or toys? The fact remains that they choked on them, thus terminating their tremendous life expectancy. Which goes to show that the saying 'the small don't eat the big' is utter nonsense.

Aude Seigne

Translated by Alexis Bernaut

Aude Seigne is a French-speaking Swiss novelist. Her first novel, *Chroniques de l'occident nomade* won the 2011 Nicolas Bouvier Award in Saint-Malo (Festival Étonnants Voyageurs).

Poet and translator **Alexis Bernaut** was born in Paris. He has translated the poetry of US poet Sam Hamill and Trinidadian novelist Earl Lovelace. His own poetry has been translated into English, Hebrew, and Korean, and published in reviews in France and abroad.

FROM *MONSIEUR AND MADAME RIVAZ*
BY CATHERINE LOVEY (ÉDITIONS ZOÉ, 2017)
TRANSLATED BY ROMY FURSLAND, INTRODUCED BY THE PUBLISHER

A young woman, a tour guide on a cruise ship, befriends an elderly couple after they announce politely that they would 'prefer not to' go on the luxury cruise their son has booked for them. They'd rather go to see a film. This old-fashioned modesty creates a turning point in the young woman's life. The couple's kindness, generosity and appreciation of simple pleasures help her cling on to her own humanity in the face of the demands of modern life.

We're surrounded by beautiful things, but most of them have been ruined

The air was mild, the light almost tender: it was a beautiful May day. The winding road that led to Monsieur and Madame Rivaz's house had suffered from the winter cold, and new scars had been added to all the old ones that hadn't been repaired after the last frost. 'You will be careful, won't you?' Monsieur Rivaz had said on the phone. I'd had to insist that I should come and see them, rather than the other way around. When I'd asked if I could meet them to discuss the complaint their son had made ('A complaint? But why?' Monsieur Rivaz had asked. 'A complaint about what?') the couple had offered to come to L. themselves. 'We've got plenty of time on our hands, mademoiselle, at our age.' But I'd refused, saying Dream Water World would be very unhappy if they knew I'd caused customers to be inconvenienced.

'Well, in that case, you'll get to have a little look at the mountains,' Juste Rivaz had said, with amusement in his voice.

I had trouble locating the couple's house. The village where they lived didn't seem to have any street names. When we'd talked on the phone, Monsieur Rivaz had handed me over to his wife and she'd told me about various trees and flowers to look out for, to help me find my way: little did she know I couldn't tell a magnolia from a hydrangea. She mentioned an impressive mirabelle tree – you couldn't miss it, she said. I had to go online to look up what a mirabelle was and find a picture of one, and I rapidly concluded that I had never eaten a mirabelle, nor set eyes on a mirabelle tree, in my life.

Juste and Hermine were standing side by side waiting for me outside their front door. They weren't arm in arm this time, but they still seemed somehow to be holding each other up. Inside the house the table was already laid, with a cafetière taking pride of place in the middle. 'There's always coffee in this house, day or night,' Hermine Rivaz informed me, as though she were describing some law of fate. She also offered me a herbal tea, showing me the glass jars filled with dried leaves that I'd assumed were all from the same plant.

'We grow edelweiss too, but you can't make tea with that,' added Juste Rivaz, and I noted with surprise that edelweiss must actually be a real plant. On the table there was also a plaited brioche loaf, fresh and glistening from the oven, and an apple tart more beautiful than anything you might find in a fancy patisserie. I looked from the delicacies on the table to the couple and back again, several times, and I felt like a Mata Hari of the basest kind. I'd driven for almost two hours to get these kind, welcoming people to sign a declaration of liability, just to save Alexis Berg's skin – the same Alexis Berg who'd called them idiots when I'd spoken to him on the phone the day before. 'Don't leave until you've got signatures off those two idiots,' he'd insisted. By getting them to sign the declaration I would be aiding and abetting a travel company which had only seen fit to renew my temporary contract for three short weeks, and which – citing budget constraints – was about to lay off their dedicated employee of twelve years' standing, my friend Laetitia Lang, because she was suffering from a bad back.



Catherine Lovey © Giuseppe Pozzetti

'Of course it was our decision not to go on the cruise,' said Juste Rivaz firmly, a hint of indignation in his voice. 'I can't understand why they're giving you grief about it, mademoiselle – after all, it's up to us whether we want to go on holiday or not!'

'Our son Jonas is in a bit of a tizzy about it, you know what kids are like, but we've told him we're going to sort everything out,' added Madame Rivaz.

'Do tuck in,' said Monsieur Rivaz. 'You're so pale, anyone would think there'd been no sunshine in the Mediterranean.'

'Was it pretty, at least?' asked Hermine.

I said it wasn't.

They seemed disappointed.

Catherine Lovey

Translated by Romy Fursland

Catherine Lovey comes from the canton of Valais. She studied international relations and criminology before becoming a journalist, writing on economic and financial affairs. Her first novel was *L'Homme interdit* (2005), followed by *Cinq vivants pour un seul mort* (2008), *Un roman russe et drôle* (2010) and *Monsieur et Madame Rivaz* (2016).

Romy Fursland is a translator of drama, poetry and prose from German and French. After studying modern languages at Oxford University, she took her MA in Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia. Her translations include *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* ('The New Sorrows of Young W.') by Ulrich Plenzdorf.



AT HOME ABROAD - ATTEMPTS AT INTEGRATION

BY MELINDA NADJ ABONJI

Extracts from her keynote speech at the Leipzig Book Fair 2018
Translated by MAX EASTERMAN

YOU'RE A TREE – SO WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

My kindergarten teacher was a kindly soul: one day, she dressed me up as a tree, with brown trousers, a dark-green felt hat on my head and, if I remember, she also put green greasepaint on my face. The reason was that I had a part to play in *Snow White*: I was a fir tree.

There I stood, eyeing up the dwarfs and, of course, the pretty girl playing Snow White; but what else could I have been other than a fir tree, given that I spoke not a word of German, but 'only' Hungarian. My teacher was trying to integrate me into the play, as we would say today, but what about me? I felt humiliated by my costume, embarrassed because I couldn't say anything, ashamed that all I could do was stand there, for what seemed at the time like an eternity. But what I did realise was that I was not the same as Snow White and the dwarfs. I can't remember if there were other trees, just that I was a tree, and that this story, which is now almost no more than a jokey little anecdote, is my first memory of feeling excluded, and that, ironically, that sense of exclusion arose from the action of a teacher, who I am sure was trying to achieve the exact opposite.

I'm pretty sure that when I was five years old, I had just one burning desire, and that was to be the same as everyone else. I didn't have to be Snow White, but if I could at least be a dwarf? Moreover, in no way was I going to be seen in a white blouse with an embroidered collar and sleeves. So I refused to wear traditional folk costume, not just because the other children didn't wear clothes like that (and I may have realised this already in kindergarten, even though wearing the 'right' and 'wrong' clothes wasn't yet a factor in our juvenile rule book), but also because I could see just how much that outfit meant to my parents.

Back then, I could not have put this into words, but even so, I knew

very well that there was hardly any distinction between being cast as a tree and a Hungarian peasant girl: both were the result of an effort to make 'something' out of me that I didn't want to be. Perhaps that was why, when I celebrated my first *Fasching* carnival in Switzerland, it made me uneasy. So I made up my own costume: I stuffed a huge cushion under a long, red gown, put a crown on my head and disguised myself as an old woman with a feather duster. And when my mother asked me who I was meant to be, I just shrugged.

Later on, questions like 'where are you from?' had a similar, alienating effect on me. The question was usually the result of someone seeing my name written down, or when I had to tell someone my surname. That such questions about name or origin are just the beginning of an interrogation was something I learned after reading Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* – and I often saw the astonishment on people's faces when I had revealed where I came from: from Yugoslavia?

When I finally began to be more precise about my origins, that I in fact came from the Voivodina, and that this area, which was known as the bread-basket of Serbia, was populated by a whole raft of different ethnic groups, including Serbs, Slovaks, Croats, Ruthenes, Romanians, Bunjevci, Šokci, Sinti, Roma, Germans, Bulgars, as well as Hungarians, which was my family's nationality; when I uttered the key words 'Hungary' and 'Hungarian mother tongue', I would see my interlocutor's expression relax as they recognised my broad cheekbones, assumed there was fire in my blood, talked animatedly about the *puszta* – the Hungarian steppe – charmingly but pointedly ignoring the fact that I knew nothing about the *puszta* nor indeed about the thermal baths in Budapest, and were deaf to my explanation that the Communist regime in Hungary was hardly comparable to the socialist regime in Yugoslavia.

My point is this: asking someone which country they come from is very often a paternalistic act. The one asking the question is pigeonholing the one answering, assigning them to that country, so that there's no room for detailed distinctions, complex ideas are simplified, and a trigger word is enough to confirm their preconceptions. If I answered the question 'where are you from?' with 'from Zurich, District 4', they'd usually laugh and retort, 'OK, but where do you originally come from?'

Originally I came from a tiny, white house with a loft, an inside courtyard, a henhouse and a pigsty, a dung heap and a garden. My origins are closely and inextricably bound up with my grandmother, and when I went to join my parents in Switzerland, I didn't leave Serbia or my village, Zenta, I left my grandmother, her house and her way of life. That's the correct answer to the question as to where I came from originally.

Melinda Nadj Abonji
Translated by Max Easterman

SWISS ITALIAN

FIFTY YEARS OF SWISS-ITALIAN LITERATURE

BY VANNI BIANCONI

Much of what poetry is about occurs on the border – where the written words meet the white of the page. This may be one of the reasons why so much poetry is written in provincial areas and border regions. Italian-speaking Switzerland – the canton of Ticino and part of Graubünden – once played an important role in connecting and separating the Germanic and Latin, as well as the Catholic and Protestant worlds. In Ticino's capital, Bellinzona (its folk etymology derives from 'war zone'), a wall connecting several castles once enclosed the whole valley, to restrict movements from the north.

Poetry is definitely the leading genre in Italian-speaking Switzerland, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. It's best poets have all operated some sort of connection with other languages and regions; and while that's probably true of every good poet anywhere, here it is perhaps more obvious, but also more inevitable, probably because it's an area of just 366,000 inhabitants, with different cultures on each side. So inevitable in fact, that the region seems to define itself according to opposites: very Italian in the other Swiss areas; rather German in Italy, etc. This is in fact a productive condition, in terms of translation (in both the strict and metaphorical senses) and poetry itself.

Bellinzona was home to Giorgio Orelli (1921–2013), a Swiss poet who, like no other, brought the Italian literary tradition into the Ticino landscape, and vice versa. One of the best poets of his generation, Orelli bypassed the more hermetic 'linea lombarda', developing a poetry of the object, made of observations, asides and anecdotes, all spun into the most captivating phono-symbolic cobweb. Sitting silently on his sofa, generations of younger poets have journeyed, poem by poem, through world literature, following the particular group of letters that happened to stimulate his ear.

Giorgio's cousin, Giovanni Orelli (1928–2016), was one of the region's finest authors, besides being a poet and translator (of Emily Dickinson, in the dark syllabic patois of Valle Bedretto). Other authors we must mention are: Anna Felder (b.1937), Fleur Jaeggy (b.1940), Alberto Nessi (b.1940), Paolo Di Stefano (b.1956), Anna Ruchat (b.1959), Erminio Ferrari (b.1959), Pierre Lepori (b.1968, who writes in both Italian and French), Virginia Helbling (b.1974), Tommaso Soldini (b.1976), Oliver Scharpf (b.1977) and Andrea Fazioli (b.1978). Extracts from some of these you can read in this magazine.

Within our fifty-year timespan, two seminal books were published, both addressing the deep rural misery that Ticino was only just starting to forget: the novel *Il fondo del sacco* (1970) by Plinio Martini (1923–1979), and the narrative essay *Albero Genealogico* (1969) by Piero Bianconi (1899–1984), which opens with the striking statement: 'the distance separating my mother's childhood from her old age is wider than the distance between her as a child and the cavemen'. That woman, by the way, is my great-great-aunt.

Two special prose writers are Enrico Filippini (1932–1988), who with his work as journalist, publisher, translator and novelist, performed miracles to bring German literature to Italy; and Matteo Terzaghi (b.1970), who in short prose works simultaneously manages to create dialogues with photography, the philosophy of language, magic and Robert Walser.

Now, back to poetry. The writer who follows in Giorgio Orelli's footsteps, both in terms of inspiring younger writers and of writing outstanding poetry, is Fabio Pusterla (b.1957). His *Bocksten* is one of the best poetry books written in Italian in the twentieth century. Aside from the strong relationship with the Italian tradition, Pusterla is influenced by poetry in French, particularly that of Swiss poet Philippe Jaccottet, who he translated. Pietro De Marchi (b.1958), even more influenced by Orelli's poetry than the others, seems to have reached full maturity with his recent book, *La carta delle arance* ('The Map of The Oranges'), which won the Gottfried Keller Prize in 2017. De Marchi was born in Italy and moved to Switzerland as an adult, as some of the most interesting younger poets have also done: Fabiano Alborghetti (b.1970), who constantly challenges the most repetitive rhythms while addressing, in his long narrative poems, unsettling social conditions; Massimo Gezzi (b.1976), the sober and full-bodied offspring of the finest Italian tradition; and Laura Accerboni (b.1985), and her short, sharp shards of poems.

I'd like to mention several other poets, but can't even get close to naming them all: beat poet Franco Beltrametti (1937–1995), Aurelio Buletti (b.1946), Massimo Daviddi (b.1954), Prisca Agustoni (b.1975, who writes in Italian and Portuguese and a few other languages), Elena Jurissevich (b.1976), Pietro

Montorfani (b.1980), Daniele Bernardi (b.1981), Yari Bernasconi (b.1982), Andrea Bianchetti (b.1984) and slam poet Marko Miladinovich (b.1988).

Many other factors, such as time and the important demographic changes created by the most recent migrations to Switzerland, mostly from the Horn of Africa and Syria, will soon add to this list, as did the influxes from Italy and the Balkans. As I have tried to suggest, the literature of this region is strongly informed by its linguistic hospitality.

The latest experiment in this direction is an online magazine called *Specimen* which I and colleagues just created in Ticino. It publishes texts in every language and alphabet, and translates them into any and every other language. You can find it here: www.specimen.press.

Vanni Bianconi

Vanni Bianconi was born in Locarno and now lives in London. He has published four poetry collections in Italian and one prose book in English, London as a Second Language. *He's the founder and artistic director of Babel, festival of literature and translation, and of the multilingual web-magazine www.specimen.press.*



I AM THE BROTHER OF XX BY FLEUR JAEGGY
TRANSLATED BY GINI ALHADEFF (AND OTHER STORIES, 2017)

THREE POSSIBLE LIVES: ESSAYS BY FLEUR JAEGGY
TRANSLATED BY MINNA ZALLMAN PROCTOR (AND OTHER STORIES, 2018)

REVIEWED BY TESS LEWIS

Fleur Jaeggy has been writing concise, unsettling works of fiction for four decades. Her haunting prose is all the more addictive for being doled out in slim portions. The publisher New Directions recently served up a veritable feast with two collections: *I am the Brother of XX*, a medley of twenty-one bite-sized stories; and *Three Possible Lives*, delectable distillations of Thomas De Quincey, John Keats, and the regrettably under-recognised French Symbolist Marcel Schwob.

In these two books, Jaeggy's prose gleams and glints like cut gems. Her sentences are hard as diamond and smooth as glass. They offer the reader little purchase and cold comfort. Excess is ruthlessly cut away, yet her pithy sentences are eminently suggestive in their very brevity.

I am the Brother of XX, translated with exquisite precision by Gini Alhadeff, contains deftly sketched portraits of real and imagined figures. In 'An Encounter in the Bronx', the narrator sits in a restaurant with her husband, Roberto Calasso, and their friend Oliver Sacks, but instead of joining the conversation, she communes with a fish that is soon to become someone's dinner. In 'The Heir', a ten-year-old orphan burns down the house of her indulgent adoptive mother: 'Creation,' the narrator pithily notes, 'is a form of destruction.' Equally grim tales follow. Works of art are gateways between the real and the imagined: nymphs are released from their terra cotta likenesses, to their distress, and people access their dead through photographs and paintings.



Fleur Jaeggy © Basso Cannarsa

Death is an overt presence in all but two of these stories. Jaeggy's

close friend Ingeborg Bachmann appears only twice but can be seen as the collection's presiding spirit. The subtle influence of Bachmann's unflinching cycle of novels, *Todesarten* ('Ways of Dying'), can be traced through these stories in the frigid light they shed on the psychological and physical violence human beings perpetrate on themselves and on those close to them and themselves.

Three Possible Lives, elegantly translated by Minna Zallman Proctor, bears the somewhat wry subtitle of 'essays', for these three portraits are rather exercises in biography-as-kaleidoscope. While these essays follow the general arc of their subjects' lives – from birth through childhood, adulthood, and death – they advance through a clustering of facts, images, peculiarities, impressions and anecdotes, which seem to shift and refract as they accumulate, offering new perspectives on, and insights into, these writers. The essay on John Keats, for example, opens with the observation that 'in 1803, the guillotine was a common children's toy'. Jaeggy then reflects on the possible influence of toys on character, and the metaphysical difference between a tiny guillotine and war, concluding that 'children are metaphysical creatures, a gift they lose too early, sometimes at the very moment they begin to talk'. Jaeggy then unexpectedly juxtaposes with this a picture of Keats as a belligerent and combative schoolboy. His metaphysical awakening, we understand all the more forcefully, will come later.

We see Thomas De Quincey taking leave of his youth 'like a caliph takes leave of his rosebuds', struggling with dyspepsia, and indulging in laudanum, all the while wrapping 'his words in smoke, chains, links, captivity, bondage'. The piece on Marcel Schwob is a masterwork of concision. In less than ten pages, Jaeggy captures the essence of a man known as both the Great Sheik of Knowledge and Grimoires, by the eminent Orientalist Claude Mardrus, and Pookiewooky, by his consumptive working-class lover, Louise.

The foreboding atmosphere that pervades these two books, with their undercurrents of despair and of loss – both experienced and anticipated – along with the omnipresent *momento mori*, is, however, far from morbid. Paradoxically, this atmosphere, leavened as it is with by subtle gallows humour, imbues these volumes with a sense of lightness and urgency, and sparks a desire to understand more fully the brief time allotted to each of us. Death, after all, both concentrates the mind and is the mother of beauty.

Tess Lewis

Fleur Jaeggy is a true original of European writing and has been translated into more than twenty languages. *The Times Literary Supplement* named *Proleterka* as the 2017 Best Book of the Year, and her *Sweet Days of Discipline* won the Premio Bagutta and the Premio Speciale Rapallo.

WHATEVER THE NAME BY PIERRE LEPORI

TRANSLATED BY PETER VALENTE (SPUYTEN DUYVIL, 2017)

REVIEWED BY ANNA BLASIAK

There is something delicate and extremely fragile about Pierre Lepori's poetry and about the character(s) he creates. The voice he writes in is hushed – you really need to be free of any distractions to tune into it, to adjust to the seemingly plain language and pace, to the language stripped of anything surplus. And only when you do that, do you start experiencing its richness. Occasionally you can taste a small lyrical morsel popping on your tongue ('Rotting meat of refusal' or 'Roots of hatred do not breed children'). Together, the quiet images created by Lepori strengthen each other, to the point at which their power can become almost scalding, transformative, but also dreamy.

Henceforth what was known as rain,
was now salt,
the smoke rising from the sleepy village,
known as chimney-smoke,
was in fact the cause of my despair.
White bread,
clothes carefully tucked away in the closets
for the summer months, the mothballs
thrown in the sand.
Everything was given to us
once and for all.
But the cry that arose from the stomach
would never give birth to speech.
and the imagined: nymphs

What I admire about this book is the fact that the painful and traumatic issues discussed are presented without the usual drama ('There are wounds with no name'), in a way that almost suggests, without justifying them, of course, that they are a regular part of the fabric of life. There is something archetypal about these poems, something grounding, perhaps even something that can help deal with such issues. Which doesn't mean that the suffering behind those incidents is any less apparent, or that the tragedy is less sizeable. It's just that it is painted with a more subdued, almost pastel-like technique instead of screaming expressionist colours. It's almost as if Lepori focuses on the stretches of silence between words being said and things being done, directing our attention to the



Pierre Lepori © Yvonne Boehler

negative, the reverse of events, as if he believes in silence: 'Silence is your heart of wind and your childhood home'. And somehow he allows the private pain to distil over time into non-personal history, into pure archetypes.

That silence of
the countryside asleep in the sun,
no longer any omission or guilt
for not having spoken: instead there will be
a fire in which nothing burns, crying for rest.

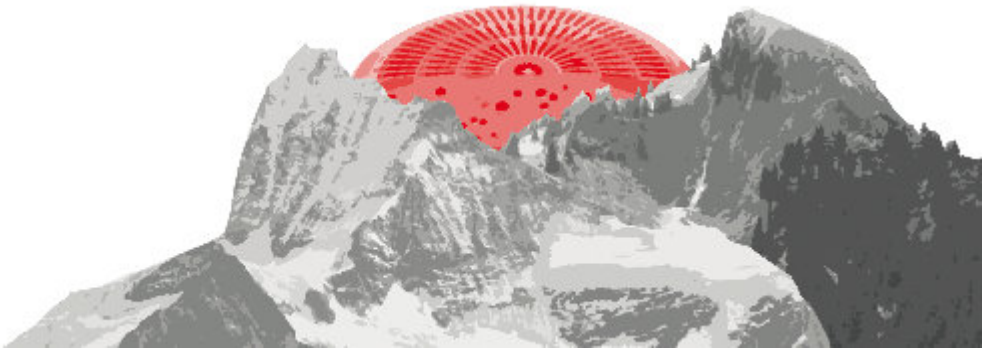
Pierre Lepori had been writing for years before he decided he was ready to publish, before he felt ready to call himself a poet. And that comes across very strongly in this, his first volume. The reader can almost sense all the work that went into simmering those poems down to their complete and absolute essence. As he says in the note closing the book, his 'goal – certainly too ambitious – had been to start medicating the language. This is the reason for certain purely descriptive inserts (though not devoid of affection), in a book born as a path towards the re-appropriation of language.'

There is no doubt that he successfully achieves his goal.

Anna Blasiak

Anna Blasiak is an art historian, poet and translator. She runs the European Literature Network with Rosie Goldsmith. She has worked in museums and a radio station and written on art, film and theatre.

Pierre Lepori is a writer and translator, and a journalist for the Swiss public radio network. His works include the prize-winning *Qualunque sia il nome*, *Strade bianche* (2011), and three novels: *Grisù* (2007), *Sexualité* (2010) and *Come cani*. He's founder of *Hétérographe, revue des homolittératures ou pas*, a queer literary review, and directs the company Théâtre Tome Trois.



DAYS FULL OF CAVES & TIGERS BY FABIO PUSTERLA

TRANSLATED BY SIMON KNIGHT (ARC PUBLICATIONS, 2012)

REVIEWED BY LAUREN BENNETT

The poetry of the Swiss-Italian poet Fabio Pusterla has a distinctively Alpine touch to it; his work feels well suited to the environment of the High Alps, where rugged unforgiving landscapes highlight the fragility and vulnerability of birds and animals struggling to survive. Interactions between nature and humankind feature prominently in Pusterla's work, and the danger the environment poses is coupled with the much greater threat that environment faces from humanity's negligence and ignorance.

This is nature poetry a million miles from clichéd depictions of idyllic, flowery fields. Pusterla instead focuses on images of 'black soil', 'viscous oil slicks' and 'frost that cleaves tree trunks'. There is a distinctly environmentalist streak running through Pusterla's poems: they combine a deep appreciation of the tranquillity and contentment that can be found in nature with an underlying anxiety that this serenity is being trampled on by rampant consumerism and carelessness. However, while the poet is sensitive to the endless and often bleak battle waged between humanity and nature, his work is never overly morose or despairing. Throughout the collection are unexpected moments of grace, as described in poems such as the concise 'On Tiny Wings', in which mirth and joy still manage to bubble up through murky waters. These instances, when nature's inherent threat is overshadowed by its undeniable beauty, even if only momentarily, are mirrored by scenes depicting tender memories of childhood and family that appear in the poems taken from Pusterla's third book, *Things With No Past* (1994).

It is precisely this mixture of contrasts – of light and dark, of harshness and tenderness – that makes Pusterla's poetry so resonant. One poem that for me is a particularly powerful example of this juxtaposition is 'First Strawberries'. A wistful memory of a little girl pretending to climb her own miniature Mount Everest in a meadow full of daisies, enchanted by the wonder of nature, is conjured up when the speaker hears a radio report of a little girl crushed by a tank in Gaza. This pairing of violence and innocence leaves a profound impression on the reader and leads us to reflect, with a great deal of alarm, on the destructive world our children may one day have to face.

Simon Knight skilfully translates the Italian text into English, and his work, securing from Pusterla a lucid understanding of the circumstances that inspired his poetry, is evident; for even in 'the more difficult passages' – as Knight refers to them in his preface to the book – the sense of

earnestness and urgency still shines through. The introduction by Alan Brownjohn also provides enlightening commentary on Pusterla's poetry and further enhances the reader's experience of his work.

Ultimately the collection ends on a hopeful note, with the extended satire *Stories of the Armadillo*, which explores the importance of resistance and persistence in the face of adversity, the armadillo coming to symbolise a kind of undeterred rebellion as he marches on, never becoming panicked or losing courage.

Lauren Bennett

Lauren Bennett is an undergraduate student of English and Comparative Literature. One of her main areas of interest is poetry in translation.

Fabio Pusterla is a poet, translator, essayist and scholar. For his work, translated into many European languages, he has been awarded the Premio Montale, the Schiller Prize, the Premio Dessì and the Premio Lionello Fiumi, the Premio Prezzolini for translation, the Premio Marazza and the Gottfried Keller Prize.

Congedo

Fly gentle
dragonfly
hasten
skim through the rain clouds
of those who despair most
and have no voice,
bring fast into view
your azure, capture our eyes
and our wonder.
Deep amid lost lives
in furrows' black depths
weave your luminous spindle,
lay down the emerald of a hypothesis,
of a wing.

Then, touch every thing
spell its name
make it true.



Fabio Pusterla © Wikipedia / Albus severus

From:* Argéman *by Fabio Pusterla
Translated by Vanni Bianconi
(Marcos y Marcos, 2015)

SWORN VIRGIN BY ELVIRA DONES

TRANSLATED BY CLARISSA BOTSFORD (AND OTHER STORIES, 2014)

REVIEWED BY AINA MARTI

Elivra Dones leads the reader into a world unknown to many, yet real. Set in the 1990s and early 2000s, *Sworn Virgin* tells the story of Hana, a university student from the northern mountains of Albania. In this region a woman is not permitted to live alone, and Hanna can only escape marriage through a tradition by which she becomes a 'sworn virgin' – making an oath to remain a virgin and 'become' a man – a decision, the novel suggests, is reinforced by Hana's experience of an attempted rape while travelling alone. The novel thus engages with the Kanun, an ancient Albanian legal code established in the fifteenth century, which survived until the late twentieth century.

Hana becomes Mark and lives a man's life. Living on his own, Mark cuts his hair, dresses like a man, owns a shotgun, smokes and meets with the other men of the village.

Dones' book makes clever use of the Kanun, a specific Eastern Europe tradition, to raise questions about sex, sexuality and gender in both the West and the East. Leaving Albania, Mark decides to move to the US, where he has a cousin, Jonida, who is a wife and a mother. Jonida's mission is to turn Mark, now thirty-four, back into a woman. Issues of sexuality, gender and identity are therefore explored within the frame of a question Mark urgently feels he must answer: what does it mean to be normal? Through Jonida the novel questions the accepted versions of sex and gender in the USA. All Jonida wants is for Mark to turn, not into Hana, but into 'a normal woman as soon as possible', because Mark wants a job and 'all [employers] want is employees who are as normal as possible'. Mark finds he has flown from a structured society, in which women lack freedom, to another one in which the sense of freedom is overshadowed by notions of normality: 'all she has to do is turn into a woman, for real [...] All she has to do is get a job and a room of her own. All she has to do is to be normal. All she has to do is forget'. Hana might not wish to have a room of her own, as Virginia Woolf did, but no one really cares: she must conform to Western standards.



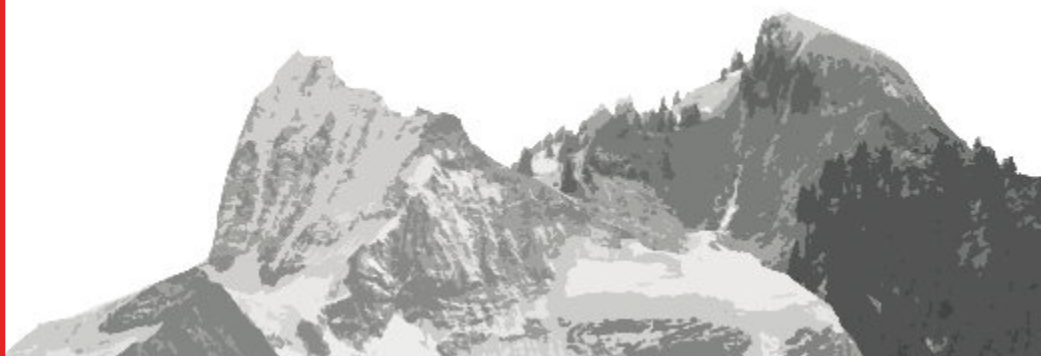
Elvira Dones © Elvira Dones

The novel is therefore critical of both societies. And it is also extremely differentiated and subtle in the way it approaches Mark's transition back into Hana. The Hana he once was is lying, somewhere deep down in the depths of the body; the process of bringing her back to the surface turns out to be pleasing for Mark, as Hana contemplates the possibility of living without conforming to her cousin's normality. In the US, Hana can read and write poetry, take decisions and smoke without forgetting who she has been.

Aina Marti

Aina Martí is Assistant Lecturer in Catalan at Kent University and Researcher at the TV company Bryncoed Productions.

Born in Durres, Albania, **Elvira Dones** is a novelist, screenwriter and documentary film-maker currently dividing her time between the US, Switzerland and Albania. After seven novels in Albanian, she wrote the two most recent in Italian, her adopted language: *Vergine giurata* ('Sworn Virgin') and *Piccola guerra perfetta* ('Small Perfect War'). A film adaptation of *Sworn Virgin* was released in 2015.



RIVETING EXTRACTS

FROM *LIQUIDA ('Liquid')*
BY ANNA FELDER (EDIZIONI OPERA NUOVA, 2017)
TRANSLATED BY SHAUN WHITESIDE

Enjoy the rest of your trip

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

I always hear the hint of a greeting through his panting breaths, an obligatory beginning perhaps concluded beyond my footsteps, and I bet that regular opening each time we meet does not mean the old *Folgendes* of the greetings he delivered in his working life. *Folgendes* – 'what follows' – is what he would peremptorily announce on the telephone, *Folgendes* standing in for surname and hello, *Folgendes* – 'what follows, let's get to the point' – immediately itemising, point by point, the particulars of the insurance policy.

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

If Mr *Folgendes* knew that in the other town by the lake where I was born, in that town in Italian-speaking Switzerland, to which I return at varying intervals to realise that I am at home as soon as I step into the street, in that greeting caught in mid-air, if my dog-walking *Folgendes* knew that

a double of his, an accomplice or a colleague is also getting to the point down there, repeating and multiplying it in the byways of the town centre, walking, walking in our footsteps on behalf of everyone: this other one without a dog, in an overcoat and scarf or in a dark suit, he too a tireless master of the lake, of the lakeside walk and of Paradiso; never in a hurry, but not idling either, with a flat briefcase under his arm or a newspaper or even a baguette. Tall, chest and belly carried prominently, the head always held high to keep the glasses in place, it looks as if he can only see a great distance away, very far off on the horizon, misfortunes and catastrophes as far as the eye can see, *folgendes*, *folgendes* beyond the traffic lights, beyond Campione and the border.

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



Anna Felder © Wikipedia / Cygnaobleu

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

Anna Felder

Translated by Shaun Whiteside

Anna Felder was born in Lugano. She studied at the Faculty of Arts at Zurich University, where she specialised in Romance languages. After spending time in Paris, she gained her doctorate in Zurich. She taught French and Italian and is now a full-time writer. She is best known for her novel *La disdetta* ('The Cancellation', 1974).

FROM *UNO PER UNO* ('One by One') BY TOMMASO SOLDINI (EDIZIONI CASAGRANDE, 2013)



Tommaso Soldini © Edizioni Casagrande, Bellinzona

But I'm not mad. I have my moments of derangement. And I'm Swiss, in the sense that I was born in the Mendrisio area, Genestrerio to be precise, opposite where the priest lived, on the other side of the street. I could see his house clearly from my window, stone-built with green shutters and a front door that had a medieval look about it. If I concentrate, I can hear the scraping of horses' hoofs, the giggles of the ladies, the odour of their handkerchiefs rubbed over their private parts and thrown at the feet of that night's favoured one. Of my father I have no memories. They tell me he lived with us, for a few months. In the attic there are some photographs of him as young man, wearing flared trousers, owlish glasses, a pullover the colour of clotted-blood overrun with the first layer of pus. He was smoking a pipe in the company of my mother, who had him by the ankle, grasping him as if he were the forbidden apple. But for many years I didn't know I had a father. Or rather, I thought my dad was Don Enrico, whom I'd got used to calling father. In fact I also thought he was my mother's dad, because she called him father, too. But then, when I was twelve, my maternal grandparents came from Zurich on a visit, and then I understood. It was because at home we never spoke of the grandparents. My father's parents were dead; mother's angry. With mother, because she had given herself to my father. In the end, my grandmother got cancer of the womb and, before snuffing it, decided to forgive her. We went out to lunch at a restaurant, the third time I had been to one, and I had spaghetti alla Ernest Hemingway, with strong caciotta cheese and swordfish. They told me mother had been a lively child, maybe excessively so. She would hide under the bed or in the wardrobe when it was time for her nap. She didn't play with dolls. She didn't pay attention when they read her stories. She didn't clear the table. But she smoked cigarettes on the sly. Mary Longs filched from grandmother's packet.

Tommaso Soldini

Tommaso Soldini was born in Lugano, and teaches Italian at the Bellinzona Cantonal Commercial college. He has written two volumes of poetry: *Ribelle di nemico privo* and *Lato east*, as well as a book of short stories, *L'animale guida*, and the novel *One by One*.

Editors' note: Despite our best efforts, The Riveter Team *have not been able to find out who translated the extract. If you know, please contact us.*

FROM *UFFIZIO PROIEZIONI LUMINOSE* ('The Light Projection Office') BY MATTEO TERZAGHI (QUODLIBET, 2013) TRANSLATED BY ALTA L. PRICE

There was a well-known book of science experiments for kids with a chapter titled 'Every Eye Has a Blind Spot'. It opened with a horizontal black rectangle framing two illustrations: one looked like a faraway full moon; the other was the head of a little girl. Like the moon, the girl's head seemed to float in the night sky, and even though she was beheaded – or rather disembodied – she looked happy and beamed a mischievous smile.

The caption told readers to cover their left eye, stare at the moon with their right eye, and slowly lean toward the page. It said the little girl would disappear, and that's exactly what happened: she disappeared behind a dark veil, only to reappear as soon as you backed off.

The book went on to say that, if you stood twenty-something yards away from someone, you could make the entire person disappear, even a grown-up, and that it was due to the head of the optic nerve. This spot – the optic disc – can't detect light.

At first I thought the magic of this exercise lay entirely in the possibility of making things and people disappear (an astronaut, I thought, could make the entire Earth disappear). But then I realised that the really inexplicable part was that these objects and people – especially the girl in the black rectangle, on whom I'd developed a bit of a crush – reappeared or simply appeared to the viewer's sense of sight, complete in their own recognisable forms.



Matteo Terzaghi © From the Author's Archive

The 'seeing spots' struck me as even more remarkable than the 'blind spots'. When I thought about animals that had no eyes, I felt sorry for them, and then I also felt sorry for trees and stones.

Matteo Terzaghi

Translated by Alta L. Price

Matteo Terzaghi was born in Bellinzona. His latest publications are the collection of prose pieces *Ufficio proiezioni luminose*, his pamphlet on silence in literature *La gag del cappello*, and the chapbook *Gotthard Super Express*.

Alta L. Price runs a publishing consultancy specialised in literature and nonfiction texts. She translates from Italian and German into English, is currently vice president of the New York Circle of Translators, and is a member of the PEN Translation Committee.

4th August 1995
Croatia backed by NATO has launched its Operation Storm against the Serbian rebels.

'It's Saint Bartholomew today, and Saint Roch tomorrow.' I opened the glass door still in my nightgown and barefoot, it's very hot these days, even here, in this old house just a few hundred metres from the lake. A scorching end of August, oddly so, after a cool and rainy month of July, but he is wearing a thick, heavy woollen jacket almost down to his knees, and blue corduroy trousers, socks and closed-toe shoes. He is still as tall as in the past, but bent over and much thinner after the operation on his heart. His clothes drop loosely on him.

'It's Saint Bartholomew today, and Saint Roch tomorrow.' It's eight o'clock, and he must have already been by earlier this morning, because on the door handle, when I came into the kitchen half an hour ago, there was a yellow flower, like the ones that grow spontaneously along the footpath. Thank goodness, this means that today he hasn't picked anything in the vegetable garden, where he often steals an iris or a daffodil or an orange reed, annoying the neighbours who plant them and don't dare complain.

On Saint Bernard's day he brought me a beautiful sunflower. 'It's Saint Bernard today, Pius X tomorrow'. He doesn't say 'Saint Pius X', just 'Pius X' and smiles as a partner in crime. He still has really bushy and glowing grey crew cut hair, and even though his wife looks after him just as she did before, when he was a renowned architect and very hard to please as far as low-key stylishness is concerned, he looks run-down and happy, like someone who has come to terms with the world and is even able to master it thanks to the calendar saints.



Anna Ruchat © Germana Cartogrnani

This madness of his is kind – made up of flowers, fruit and vegetables, of words which had never come out of his mouth before and are now uttered with childish openness. 'It's Saint Tecla today,' he seems to have said at the end of September last year, when he bumped into one of the people living in the old house under the

arbour, a friend and colleague of his in the old days. 'Tecla that's who's got big tits,' he added in his dialect with a dreamy look, and then continued his walk, dragging his feet on the grass, with his hands buckled behind his back. Who knows where Tecla's big tits popped out from, who knows whose faces and bodies the saints' names bring up from the depths of time.

Anna Ruchat

Translated by Roseanne Rogosin

Anna Ruchat was born in Zurich. She has translated a number of writers from German into Italian and has published novels, short stories, and poetry. She also teaches at the Municipal School for Interpreters and Translators in Milan. Since 2002 she has been in charge of the Foundation dedicated to the poet Franco Beltrametti.



From *La parte dell' annegato*

by Laura Acerboni
translated by George Tatge



Laura Acerboni © Edizioni Nottetempo

Yesterday the tallest boy
put a stone
between his teeth
and began to chew.
He showed
his mother
what a mouth can do
when pushed to extremes
and that a ransacked home
is only a ransacked home.
Yesterday all the tallest boys
made their enemies starve
and quickly gathered up their toys.
They showed their mothers
the order
and discipline of the dead.
Then they ran
to wash their hands
and listen
to the news
in the form of lullabies.

From La parte dell'annegato
(Edizioni Nottetempo, 2015)

Laura Accerboni has published two poetry collections: *Attorno a ciò che non è stato* and *La parte dell'annegato*. She has won the Lerici Pea, Piero Alinari and Achille Marazza awards and was one of the poets selected for the Versopolis project, promoted by the European Union. She is member of the transnational literary agency, Linguafranca.

Versant

by Vanni Bianconi
translated by the author



Vanni Bianconi © From the Authors Archive

And there you are. Rain digs them
and follows steep paths in rivulets,
deer trails slope across. If lost, let
the curving ones lead you, the unseen,
by years of undergrowth. Tread them.
Listen, your steps spell syllables,
taste them they are brief, berries,
nouns. Shout if haunted by a name.
Over your shibboleths, lichens grow
and turn them into REM
but don't be afraid, it's only them,
the Unspeakable remains so
(yet if It stirs within the rock, timbers
screech, the pasture strips bare).

From Il passo dell'uomo
(Edizioni Casagrande, 2012)

From *La Carta Delle Arance*

by Pietro de Marchi
translated by Marco Sonzogni

Orange Papers e con ardente affetto il sole aspetta
Dante, Par., XXIII 8

This tissue paper, multi-coloured,
rustling between the fingers
that smoothed it, stretched it carefully,
especially at the corners, to erect
before our eyes a fragile cylinder,

From La carta delle arance
(Edizioni Casagrande, 2017)

a flimsy tower and then to light it
at its summit, with a match;
and we who had waited intently
to see it, this sun of Sicily
printed on the paper, lifting off
the dish with a slight shrug,
then turning into trembling flight –

but the higher it went, the more it burned,
and, remaining an instant suspended in the air,
look a piece of burnt up sun
a fragment of the flaming tower
falls back onto the ground:
and then, while this confetti of
scorched paper
still floated about us,
and even though no longer hungry
I kept asking for another orange to peel,
I was begging to do it again, to have
another go,
this playing with fire.



Pietro De Marchi © Alexander Jaquemet

Pietro De Marchi was born in Italy and since 1984 has lived in Zurich, where he teaches Italian literature. He has published three collections of poetry, *Parabole smorzate*, *Replica* and *La carta delle arance*, and a book of short stories, *Ritratti levati dall'ombra*. His poetry is available in English in *Here and not Elsewhere. Selected Poems 1990-2010*.

Mulberries

by Massimo Gezzi
translated by Damiano Abeni and Moira Egan

You traced this simple gesture with your hand:
you raised it to your face,
you stretched it towards my window,
while I was driving: I looked,
and against the hazy morning
light I counted them:
eight, eight mulberries with outspread branches
like the tail of a stuffed peacock,
a procession along the line
of our gaze, so perfect
that for a moment I forgot
timetables and connections
and I slowed down to comprehend
how one can say of eight trees in a row
'look, how beautiful!', as you said,
if they have not decided to be that way,
and everything's
just a chain of senseless alternation,
or whether a gesture of the hand and a
smile
are enough to make, out of eight trees
in a row, an illusion of redemption.



Massimo Gezzi © Silvester Vrtjic'

Massimo Gezzi was born in Sant'Elpidio a Mare. He has published three volumes of poetry: *Il mare a destra*, *L'attimo dopo* and *Il numero dei vivi*, and was awarded the Metauro, Marazza and Carducci prizes. He has also published *Tra le pagine e il mondo*, a collection of his reviews and interviews with various poets.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ROMANSH LITERATURE

BY RICO FRANC VALÄR, UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH

Romansh is Switzerland's fourth national language, alongside German, French and Italian. Most of the roughly 60,000 Romansh speakers live in the canton of Graubünden. In Romansh-speaking areas, school classes are taught in Romansh, and the language is part of the high-school and university curriculum. Radio and television programmes are broadcast in Romansh; newspapers and webpages are published in Romansh; and Romansh music, theatre and literature create a lively cultural scene.

Before the sixteenth century, Romansh was mainly a spoken language and culture, expressed in the form of songs, proverbs, poems, legends and myths. This changed with Humanism and the Protestant Reformation, which led to a written form of the language, which was first used for translations of the Bible, and for catechisms or psalms, and which provided a vehicle for sectarian polemics. Early on, several regional written varieties developed, leading to today's five different written regional traditions, all of which have their own grammars, vocabularies and literature.

While written Romansh was primarily used for religious purposes, it was also used for drafting statutes, legal texts, political verse, patriotic songs, rhymed chronicles, travel descriptions and dramatic forms. It was not until the nineteenth century that Romansh literature began to abandon the fields of religion and politics. The political and cultural pressure felt by all European minority groups during the rise of nationalism spurred a movement devoted to the defence and revival of the Romansh identity. This resulted in the first golden age of Romansh literature in the nineteenth century. The writing of that period consists largely of poetry and short stories praising the language, the mountains, the homeland, and the freedom and strength of the Romansh community. The main aim was to bolster the pride and identity of the Romansh people, and the prestige of their language. Poems typical of the period include 'A Farmers Freedom' by Gion Antoni Huonder, 'To the Romontsch People' by Giachen Caspar Muoth and 'Tamagur Wood' by Peider Lansel.

In the decades following WWII, Romansh literature enjoyed a second

heyday. The growing risk that Romansh would become extinct, despite the increasing legal and cultural acknowledgement of the language, spurred a new generation to write in Romansh, inspired in part by modern literary movements in Europe. The literature of this generation reflects a desire to break through cultural and literary boundaries, and to promote the language and its relevance to native speakers. Romansh authors began to write as chroniclers of their times: their short stories and novels depict the whirlwind of changes brought by the modern world to remote mountain communities. It is also during this time that poets searched for new forms and new modes of expression and embracing modern trends, including surrealism, symbolism, expressionism, subjectivity, intertextuality and metapoetry.

Partial translations of the major works from the sixteenth century up to the 1970s are available in English thanks to two anthologies: *The Curly-Horned Cow* (by Reto Bezzola, Owen Editions, 1971) and *Romontsch* (by Douglas Gregor, Oleander Press, 1982). The best-known Romansh work worldwide, however, is the children's book: *A Bell for Ursli* by Selina Chönz, illustrated by Romansh artist Alois Carigiet. It was first published in 1945 and became an international bestseller. It has been translated into nine languages, including German, French, English, Dutch, Japanese and Afrikaans.

Since the 1980s, Romansh literature has addressed new topics and questions, such as ecology, individual liberty, gender and sexuality; it eschews idyllic visions and instead voices controversial appreciations of Alpine society and realities. There has also been a marked interest in linguistic experimentation, language hybridisation and spoken word performance. Poetry remains a very productive field in contemporary Romansh literature. A new trend in publishing – an attempt to reach broader audiences – is bi- or multilingual editions (mainly combining Romansh and German) and translations into other languages (mainly German, French and Italian, and occasionally English).

Renowned living Romansh authors, who are both translated and public figures, include: Leo Tuor, Leta Semadeni, Arno Camenisch, Dumenic Andry, Rut Plouda and Jessica Zuan. Dalkey Archive Press publishes English translations of Romansh literature, for example the anthology *Modern and Contemporary Swiss Poetry* by Luzius Keller, and Donal McLaughlin's translations of Arno Camenisch's trilogy: *The Alp*, *Behind the Station* and *Last Last Orders* (included in this magazine).

Rico Franc Valär

Rico Franc Valär is Professor of Romansh Literature and Culture at the University of Zurich. He has researched the history, cultural backgrounds and literature of the Romansh language and heritage movement and independence movements of minority Romance languages in Europe.

COW BY BEAT STERCHI

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL HOFFMAN (HEAD OF ZEUS, 2018)

REVIEWED BY ALAN ROBINSON

The 2018 reissue of Beat Sterchi's *Cow* ('Blösch'), in Michael Hofmann's vigorous translation, is a major literary event. When first published in 1983, Sterchi's novel won the prestigious Aspekte prize for the best fictional debut in German-speaking countries. It was acclaimed by reviewers as a remarkable combination of documentary realism, modernist techniques, linguistic energy and moral protest. In the English-speaking world, by contrast, Sterchi's novel failed to take off. When Michael Hofmann's translation (then titled *Blösch*) appeared in October 1988, attention was focused on the Booker shortlist, including Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. *Blösch* generated few reviews and was rapidly remaindered by Faber & Faber. Its American release in 1990 as *Cow* coincided with a major dispute at the publishing house, Pantheon Books. Two unfavourable mainstream reviews appeared to then seal its fate. And that, it seemed, was the end of the story – until this year.

Cow's timely republication enables this intensely Swiss novel to address seriously today's global concerns with migration, ecological sustainability and the ethical treatment of animals. The plot follows the intertwined fates of Ambrosio, a Spanish migrant worker, and the lead cow of his employer's herd, Blösch; both end up in a city abattoir as commodities within an exploitative system of industrial meat production.

Beat Sterchi superbly conveys Ambrosio's bewilderment as a cultural and linguistic outsider in inward-looking 1960s Innerwald, the setting of the story. It is a society on the cusp of change: traditional farming is being displaced by the technological modernity of milking machines, chemical fertiliser and artificial insemination. In the new, market-driven rationale, feed supplements boost the productivity of 'large cattle units', formerly known as cows. The village's canny farmers embrace capitalist innovations but are socially conservative. Sterchi captures

brilliantly the speech rhythms of their Bernese dialect, their ingrained mentalities, and their instinctive xenophobia, which pressurises Ambrosio's kindly employer into terminating his contract. He is replaced by a machine.

The chapters depicting a day's labour in the municipal slaughter-house confront readers relentlessly and unsparingly with the gory routines of killing, disembowelling



Beat Sterchi © Gerald Wesolowski

and dismemberment – cows in the morning, pigs in the afternoon. The narrative has an epic scope: in its exhaustive descriptions of butchery; in the socially representative life histories of the individual workmen; in its variety of stylistic voices; and in its symbolic resonance. Sterchi cites Upton Sinclair's muckraking exposé of Chicago slaughterhouses, *The Jungle*, but *Cow* is less an indictment of industrial malpractices than an unforgettable evocation of archetypal life-and-death struggles among humans and between mankind and other creatures, epitomised by the maltreated but indomitable Blösch.

Ever since Beat Sterchi's great Bernese forebear, Jeremias Gotthelf, agricultural novels have been important vehicles for social criticism in Switzerland. In depicting the capitalist endpoint of farming, *Cow* marks the culmination of this genre. Sterchi has subsequently become one of the leading voices in Swiss dialect literature and in 'spoken word' performance, notably in the 'Bern is everywhere' ('Bern ist überall') group, alongside Pedro Lenz and Guy Krneta. *Cow* remains his only novel. It is a monumental and unmissable landmark in Swiss literature.

Alan Robinson

Beat Sterchi is a Swiss author who writes in Standard German and Bernese. He worked as a butcher before moving to Canada then Honduras, where he took a job as an English teacher and published his first poems. He then studied at McGill University in Montréal and worked as a teacher at the Goethe-Institut. He is best known for his 1983 novel *Blösch* ('Cow'), which won several awards.

BEHIND THE STATION BY ARNO CAMENISCH

TRANSLATED BY DONAL McLAUGHLIN (DALKEY ARCHIVE PRESS, 2015)
REVIEWED BY ANDREA CAPOVILLA

This is the second volume in English of Arno Camenisch's Alpine trilogy, preceded by *The Alp* and concluded by *Last Last Orders*. The trilogy, set in a Grisons / Graubünden valley, has made Camenisch hugely popular, both in his native Switzerland and beyond. The first book in the trilogy he wrote simultaneously in both Swiss German and the regional Romansh. Camenisch continues to write in German and Romansh, but The Alp is the only instance when he produced two versions of the same text. Amazingly, the trilogy was swiftly and well translated into English by Donal McLaughlin for Dalkey Archive Press. Camenisch has since published six more books, still awaiting English translation.

Although set in a remote part of Europe, the stories of the Alpine trilogy have both immediate and universal appeal, and part of their attraction is Camenisch's ability to preserve in writing a way of life that may well be vanishing, and a minor language that has no great body of literature to preserve it. I grew up in neighbouring Austria, not far from the area Camenisch writes about, and these stories have a special appeal for me. However, no previous familiarity with the area is required to enjoy them, although in my case it definitely influenced how I read them. The specific setting is matched by a vivid mode of oral storytelling, which is colourful, readable, relatable and transnational.

Behind the Station is told from the perspective of two brothers growing up in a village of forty-one inhabitants (possibly forty-two; more explanation would be a spoiler) in the Surselva valley. Related in short, concise paragraphs, the novel conjures up the essence of childhood, when the mundane attains the aura of the mythical, and apparently unimportant characters come into their own. But behind the children's perspective, and the abundance of hilarity, another story of fragility and loss begins to take shape. Camenisch is a master of



Arno Camenisch © Janosch Abel

the art of elliptical storytelling: the apparently idyllic village life is governed by strict hierarchies, simultaneously appealing and suffocating.

Camenisch's books are great reads, but they also lend themselves particularly well to being read out loud; indeed, part of their success is due to Camenisch's wonderful skills as a performer.

There is, however, another reason why his work is so engaging: his stories, while fixed to a particular location, are anything but parochial; they succeed in immortalising a specific way of life while asking universal questions about belonging and about the need to escape and explore.

Camenisch's most recent novel *Der letzte Schnee* ('The Last Snow'), not yet published in English, also transcends local concerns. In fact, it is best read in the global context of climate change. In the novel, two ski-lift attendants, painted in recognisably Beckettian colours, pass the time waiting for snow, which, in this region, has become 'rarer than cocaine'.

The Riveter is delighted to be able to present an extract from this startling book below.

Andrea Capovilla

Andrea Capovilla is Director of the Ingeborg Bachmann Centre for Austrian Literature and Culture (IBC).

Arno Camenisch, born in Tavanasa in Graubünden, writes in German and Rhaeto-Romansh (Sursilvan). One of Switzerland's master storytellers, his novels include *The Alp*, *Behind The Station* and *Last Last Orders*. His texts also appeared in *Harper's Magazine* as well as in *Best European Fiction 2012* published by Dalkey Archive Press.

RIVETING EXTRACTS

FROM *DER LETZTE SCHNEE* ('The Last Snow') BY ARNO CAMENISCH (ENGELER-VERLAG, 2018) TRANSLATED BY ANNIE RUTHERFORD

Ora pro nobis, the old man up in heaven is taking his time this year, michty me, it widna exactly be wrong if it'd snow a bit, says Paul and looks at the sky, but that donkey Saint Peter's keeping us waiting and his boss has other things to be getting on with. He holds a hand above his eyes, a woolly hat on his head, and stands in front of the ski lift's wee hut. The sky is blue as steel, the sun is rising. What can you do, there's been a wee bit at least, just take it as it comes, Georg says and straightens his cap, there'll be more, but we canna exactly do magic. He's wearing an old ski jacket and holds a red bucket in his hand. There's a coating on the ground anyway, so at least it looks like winter, bit of sugar on the mountains, it's a start, eh? The Almighty's lost His nerve, says Paul, or do we have to go down on our knees for snow, it's rarer than cocaine now, it is. Next year we'll do what the Austrians do, we'll simply roll the snow up like a rug at the end of the year and stow it in the bunker, and as soon as November's shoved October off its perch and it gets colder again and you have to wear gloves when you're out on the moped, we'll fetch the old snow out of the depot and roll it out, no one'll notice if we put down a bit of last year's snow, who'd even think of it, and it doesna say anywhere that it's not allowed, does it, after all, the Austrians cheat too. Georg puts the red bucket down next to Paul and takes a cigarette out of the pocket of his ski jacket and lights it, hm. And if they catch us, says Paul and looks at the sky, we'll play deid. *Madre mia*, that we'd have to live to see this too. Whoops, now the cigarette's fallen out of my mouth, says Georg and looks down into the snow.

They stand next to the ski lift with their hands in their pockets and look at it, she's bonnie, eh, says Paul, he looks at Georg, built in 1971, the nag's got a good while in her yet, she's already given us loads of pleasure, the bonnie tow. Georg

straightens his cap, he's holding a coffee cup made of glass, do you want a filter coffee too, he asks and turns to Paul. Steam rises from the coffee. His red jacket has the ski lift's symbol on it. We were the first, we had the world's very first ski lift here in our district, it all started here, and from here the tow conquered the world like wildfire, we're at the hub of the world, says Paul and nods. Hm, says Georg and pours himself a coffee, strictly speaking, he says and pulls a face, well, actually it wisna the very first ski lift. He puts sugar in his drink. Ach, what are you saying, says Paul, of course we had the first one in the world, that'd be news to me, we dinna want to start rewriting history at our age, do we? Aye, of course we had the first T-bar lift, says Georg, that's right, but. But what, says Paul, nae buts, there you are then. Aye, says Georg, but them in Schneckenhof in Germany, back there in the Black Forest, they were almost even earlier. What 'hof', asks Paul, in the Black Forest, there's no been snow there for ages, why should they have a ski lift, I'd like to know, that's just nonsense. That Mr Winterhalder thought it up, says Georg and takes a sip of coffee, for the spa guests who went there to fix their motors. Paul laughs, for the asthmatics, he says, and looks, hands in his pockets, up the mountainside, that doesna count, that wisna a proper ski lift, that was a rope with a pulley and two lads who worked at it, naebody knows if anyone ever went up this rope, it was more of an elevation aid, which you could use when someone had bronchitis and had coughed out his lungs till they lay on the floor like rags, so they could stand up again. It wisna a proper tow, it was just for their health, health equipment, and it didna even have electricity, you still had to pour water onto it, no, no. Georg shrugs his shoulders and says, hm. Ours was still the first proper tow, says Paul, a T-bar, still the most honest way to get to the top of a mountain, switched on for the first time in Davos in 1934 – at Christmas, as it should be – and since then business has been good in Grisons, and as long as Saint Peter doesna take the powder away from us, it'll go on for a long while yet, but there you are. Georg stirs his coffee.

Arno Camenisch

Translated by Annie Rutherford

FROM *NAW MUCH OF A TALKER*
BY PEDRO LENZ (FREIGHT BOOKS, 2013)
TRANSLATED BY DONAL McLAUGHLIN

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

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

So ah takes masel intae Cobbles, fancied a wee coffee ah did, wi a guid shot ae schnapps in it.

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

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

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



Pedro Lenz © Pedro Lenz

Impresses nae cunt, that.

So ah goes intae Cobbles, like ah say, an' order a coffee wi schnapps.

Regula asks hiv ah the money fur it?

Naw a bad question, ah admit.

Dae me a favour, Regi, ah gi'e it, spare me the patter, bring me o'er the coffee jist an' we'll take it fae there.

Total patter-merchant ur whit, she goes – an' goes an' fetches it.

She's like that, when she comes back: Ah didnae pit it through, an' she looks at me thon wey – ah dunno whit way, masel. Diffrint, anyhoo, diffrint fae usual, wi a bit mair longin in her eyes, or summit. Ahv nae idea whit like it is fur ither guys, see me but? That kinda thing warms ma heart – toasts ma insides, it dis – a woman like Regi lookin at me like that.

Thanks Regi, love. Ye'll get yir reward in heaven. The money an' aw some time.

Gi'e her peace wi that kind patter, she gi'es it next, an' ahm naw tae start getting used tae it eether, cos if Pesche finds oot she didnae pit it through, aw he'll'll break loose so it will. Ah know masel whit like he can be.

She's brilliant, Regula, ye hiv tae hand it tae her, she looks oot fur us, jist takes it intae her heid naw tae pit summit through, nae cunt'll know, an' anyhoo: Pesche, the gaffer'll be the last wan tae notice. Goalie here, meanwhile, his his coffee an' that's aw that matters.

Ahd known furra long time she his a big heart, Regula. That evenin there but, ah started tae like her a loatae other ways too.

It's strange, that. Dead strange. Yiv known a woman fur years an' naw thought nuthin of it, an' suddenly, Christ, suddenly she's got summit. She his: she's suddenly got summit that's got unner yir skin, suddenly ye like her like. Explain that yin tae me! That particular evening, ahd a loatae questions tae answer, tae be honest. Suddenly, but, wan single question, jist, intristit me – an' that wis: wis there any chance at aw, in this here lifetime, that me an' Regula kid become an item mibbe?

Regula, love, ah gave it, kin ah ask ye a wee favour? Kid ye slip me a fifty tae Monday? Whit it is is: ahm owed a load ae money, jist hivnae actually got it actually yet. A wee cash-flow problem. Ye ken hoo it is –

She looks at me like that. Then goes like that: so ah hidnae changed at aw in the Joke, eh? Ye widnae think, tae listen tae me, ahd done nearly a year in there, ah hidnae changed a bit still full o the same auld shite ah wis.

Don't yet yirsel work up, Regi. Ye dont know whit yir on aboot. Ye know fuck aw aboot me, fuck aw aboot the Joke an' aw. An' it's better that wey, believe me. Ye should coont yir blessins. As fur the dosh: ahm naw begging, certainly naw goney beg fae you, it's up tae you, eether yiv a fifty or ye hivnae an' we kin talk aboot summit else. That's aw there is tae it.

She gave me the fifty: folded it an' pit in ma breast pocket, wi'oot a word. Ah took her haun, gi'ed the inside ae her arm a wee kiss an' gave it: see if ye didnae hiv tae go tae work, ahd take ye straight hame so ah wid an' blow ye away. Ah swear, Regi, ahd make ye a happy woman.

She wis like that tae me: ah wis a daft bastard, really wis, an' she gave a wee laugh again, it really wis. Ah hidnae hid much tae laugh aboot recently, ah really hidnae.

Pedro Lenz

Translated by Donal McLaughlin

Pedro Lenz was born in Langenthal and is famous for his poems, articles and novels written in dialect. He has won numerous poetry slams and prizes, notably for *Der Goalie Bin Ig*, a novel about a downtrodden ex-con with big dreams. It was translated into Glasgwegian dialect as *Naw Much of a Talker* and made into the Swiss vernacular film *I am The Keeper*.

Donal McLaughlin is a freelance writer and translator. He was Scottish PEN's first *écrivain sans frontières* and a recent recipient of the Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial Award.

FOUR POEMS BY LETA SEMADENI
TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY TESS LEWIS

Born in Scuol in 1944, Leta Semadeni writes concise, luminous poetry in both German and the Vallader dialect of Romansh. She is equally at home in, and slightly removed from, both languages and publishes almost all her poetry in bilingual editions. Semadeni does not translate her Romansh poems into German, or vice versa, but recreates them in the other language, so that the shifting ground under the reader of both versions seems to give only a small shrug. Indeed, a sense of ambivalent familiarity runs through all of her work. She is an acute observer of the natural world, often discerning kindred souls in the animals around her but resisting the temptation to anthropomorphise them. Animals, like words, open new realms of perception for her. Words are like animals, she has noted, 'inasmuch as they have their own lives and can be very stubborn'.

Leta Semadeni's poetry and her novel, Tamangur, *have been recognised with a number of awards, including the literary prize of the Canton Graubünden, the Schiller Prize in 2011, and the Swiss Literature Prize in 2016.*

Words

Some words
extend their illuminate bodies
from books

Build nests
inside me

Feed off me

Fast growing
fluorescent mushrooms

From In mia vita da vuolp- In meinem Leben als Fuchs *(Chasa editura rumantscha, Chur 2010)*

That's why

Because we
are different
from each other
tensed in skins
we need
so many words

From RAZ *(Verlag Martin Wallimann, Alpnach 2011)*



Leta Semadeni © Yvonne Boehler

From Poesias da chadafö - Küchengedichte (*Uniun dals Grischs, 2006*)

City Vixen

Every night the vixen
devours the remains
of the day cleans
the bowl paws
at my polished
sleep

Village Butcher

Upstairs after the slaughter
to wash the blood off
with Smetana

This bath in the Moldau
refreshes drowns out
the lowing

Along the banks graze
the calves' ghosts

The stream becomes a torrent

And he kneads
the white flesh
of his wife to
quiet the roar

Leta Samedani

Translated by Tess Lewis

Leta Semadeni was born in Scuol, Switzerland and studied languages at the University of Zurich. She taught at several schools in Zurich and Engadin and worked in Latin America, Paris, Zug, Berlin and New York. Since 2005 she has lived and worked as a freelance writer in Lavin. Semadeni has been awarded several prizes for her work, including the 2016 Swiss Literature Prize.

FINAL FEATURE 1

And finally, as a special treat, the Swiss Riveter *team is honoured to publish these reflections on his birthplace, by Swiss-British writer Alain de Botton. This is the text of the address Alain made at our first* Literally Swiss *event which took place at The Tabernacle in London in February 2018.*

REFLECTIONS ON ZURICH

BY ALAIN DE BOTTON



Alain de Botton © Penguin General

The most sincere compliment you could pay Zurich is to describe it as one of the great bourgeois cities of the world. This might not, of course, seem like a compliment – the word 'bourgeois' having become for many, since the outset of the Romantic movement in the early nineteenth century, a significant insult. 'Hatred of the bourgeois is the beginning of wisdom,' felt Gustave Flaubert, a standard utterance for a mid-nineteenth century French writer, for whom such disdain was as much a badge of one's profession as having an affair with an actress and taking a trip to the Orient. According to the Romantic value system, which today still dominates the Western imagination, to be bourgeois is synonymous with labouring under an obsession with money, safety, tradition, cleanliness, family, responsibility, prudishness, and (perhaps) bracing walks in the fresh air. Consequently, for about the last two hundred years, few places in the Western world have been quite as deeply unfashionable as the city of Zurich.

Zurich is exotic. We normally associate the word 'exotic' with camels and pyramids. But perhaps anything different and desirable deserves the word. What I find most exotic about the city is how gloriously boring everything is. No one is being killed by random gunshots, the streets are quiet, the parks are tidy, and, as everyone says (though you don't see people trying), it is generally so clean you could eat your lunch off the pavement.

What most appeals to me about Zurich is the image of what is entailed in leading an 'ordinary' life there. To lead an ordinary life in London is generally not an enviable proposition: 'ordinary' hospitals, schools, housing estates,

or restaurants are nearly always disappointing. There are, of course, great examples, but they are only for the very wealthy. London is not a bourgeois city. It's a city of the rich and of the poor.

People are happy to be ordinary in Zurich. The desire to be different depends on what it means to be ordinary. There are countries where the communal provision of housing, transport, education, or health care is such that citizens will naturally seek to escape involvement with the group and barricade themselves behind solid walls. The desire for high status is never stronger than when being ordinary entails leading a life that fails to cater to a median need for dignity and comfort.

Then there are communities, far rarer, where the public realm exudes respect in its principles and architecture, and where the need to escape into a private domain is therefore less intense. Citizens will lose some of their ambitions for personal glory when the public spaces and facilities of a city are themselves glorious to behold. Simply being an ordinary citizen can seem like an adequate destiny.

In Switzerland's largest city, the urge to own a car and avoid sharing a bus or train with strangers loses some of the urgency it may have in Los Angeles or London, thanks to Zurich's superlative tram network – clean, safe, warm, and edifying in its punctuality and technical prowess. There is little reason to travel alone when, for only a few francs, an efficient, stately tramway will transport one across the city at a level of comfort an emperor would have envied.

This commitment to the 'exalted ordinary' continues in architecture. Zurich has very few iconic buildings. The museums and the opera house are sedate. Nothing is flashy. And yet this is a city with some of the best architecture in the world; ordinary buildings have to them a quality and thoughtfulness at the level of design that in other places would be accorded only to the icons. Visitors will notice beautiful detailing in the window tracery and concrete finish of schools and railway stations. There are parking lots that should be winning prizes, and primary-school buildings that display world-beating approaches to the innovative use of timber and brick. For a rent that would buy you a dilapidated one-room box in New York, you can live like a merchant prince in a brand-new apartment building.

Zurich's distinctive lesson to the world lies in its ability to remind us of how truly imaginative and humane it can be to ask of a city that it be nothing other than boring and bourgeois.

Alain de Botton

Alain de Botton was born in Zurich and now lives in London. He is a writer of essayistic books on love, travel, architecture and literature that have been best-sellers in thirty countries. Alain also started and helps to run a school in London called The School of Life, dedicated to a new vision of education.

FINAL FEATURE 2

The Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia has contributed both financially and creatively to The Swiss Riveter. *Here Editor-in-Chief Elke Huwiler introduces us to Pro Helvetia's own magazine* 12 Swiss Books.

12 SWISS BOOKS
BY ELKE HUWILER

***12 Swiss Books* is published annualy by the Literature and Society Department of Pro Helvetia. The magazine was launched in 2012 as the main promotional tool to raise international awareness of Swiss literature. Each issue focuses on introducing to the public (and publishers) twelve newly published works of literature in German, French, Italian, and, whenever possible, Rhaeto-Romance.**

The translation of literature is one of the most important ways of promoting national literature to the outside world – and it is one of the main goals of the Literature and Society Department of Pro Helvetia. Every year, the department choses twelve of the best and most recently published works of Swiss literature, providing synopses, reviews and sample translations, and recommends a further six books, to present in the magazine. In order to be selected, these twelve books must be of outstanding literary quality. The magazine also aims to balance established and new writers, as well as demonstrating the diversity of Swiss culture.

Twelve native English language translators from Britain are asked to assess the twelve books: they write a review of each book, describing its content and qualities and giving their opinion about why the books are worthy of translation. In addition, they write a sample translation of three to five pages, so that foreign publishers interested in the books can get an impression of the style of the texts in question.

As well as introducing these twelve titles and recommending a further six, the magazine introduces readers to the winners of the annual Swiss Literature Awards and provides useful information about the support opportunities for publishers, translators and agencies, with details of residencies and grants.

Every year *12 Swiss Books* includes a topical feature about a mover and shaker in the British literature and translation world, someone who has a keen interest in Swiss writing and international literature. You'll already be familiar with this special feature as it is the brainchild of your Riveter-in-Chief, Rosie Goldsmith.

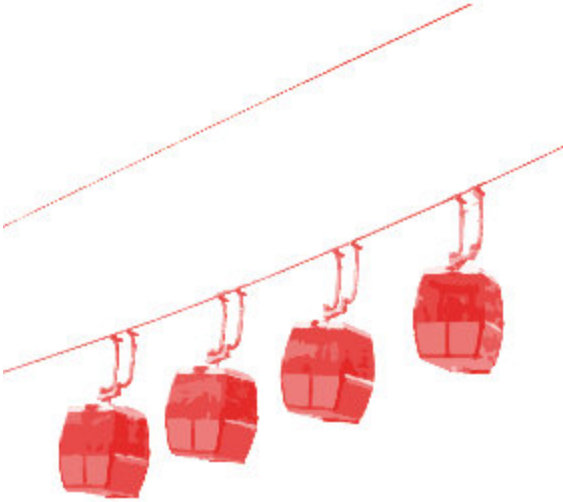
Amongst others, Rosie has interviewed the critic Boyd Tonkin, translator Frank Wynne and Swiss-British author Alain de Botton (who also features in this magazine).

Every year, *12 Swiss Books* is widely distributed across the world of publishers, translators and literary agents – the magazine's main target audience. Pro Helvetia also uses the magazine across the year as a calling card for Swiss literature at a variety of key encounters with cultural institutions, book fairs and literary festivals.

The magazine is launched each year at the autumn Frankfurt Book Fair and is also available online: www.12swiss-books.ch

Elke Huwiler

Elke Huwiler is a graduate of German and Spanish literature and holds a PhD in modern German literature. At Pro Helvetia, she works as an administrator for German-language literature and book services. In 2018, she was Editor-in-Chief of the 12 Swiss Books *magazine.*





RIVETING WRITING FROM SWITZERLAND

A LISTING OF TRANSLATED SWISS LITERATURE (SINCE 2010) BY STEPHEN WATTS

Below is a partial, though fairly thorough, list of modern Swiss poetry and prose published in English translation since 2010. I've not included straightforward reprints of earlier translations, and have only included new editions of existing translations if they are substantially re-edited. It is therefore essentially a bibliography of new translations. This puts the emphasis on translation and the seeming increase in translated titles, but it does mean that authors such as Max Frisch or Friedrich Dürrenmatt, many of whose works were translated before 2010, do not have a full listing here, and other Swiss writers without new translations may be absent.

The one exception to this is for translations from Romansh, which are so scant and with none, so far as I can see, published since 2010, that I have simply listed the very few titles, whatever their publication date. Maybe the time is ripe for a funded programme of new translations from Romansh.

I have included authors who were Swiss born but lived mostly outside Switzerland (Blaise Cendrars and Robert Pinget, for example) and also writers (such as Hermann Hesse, or Agota Kristof) who, while not Swiss born, did live many years in Switzerland or took Swiss citizenship.

The majority of the list is of translations from Swiss-German and Swiss-French writers, with fewer Swiss-Italian, and very few, almost no, Romansh. I've listed in total 144 titles published since 2010: if this seems surprisingly high, then it represents a healthy interest in translation and a willingness on the part of a few publishers to promote the translation of Swiss literature. Without certain publishers (Dalkey Archive and Seagull Books, for instance; both have dedicated Swiss Lists) this bibliography would be a lot poorer. It would be wonderful to see larger publishers showing a greater interest in Swiss translations and we might hope that committed smaller publishers will not only maintain, but can expand, their interest in new Swiss writers.

Stephen Watts

Stephen Watts is a poet, editor and translator. In 2017 he was Translator in Residence at Southbank's Poetry International and National Poetry Library. His recent books include Republic of Dogs/Republic of Birds, *which is being made into a film. He is also a bibliographer of modern and contemporary poetry and prose in translation.*

FRENCH POETRY

CENDRARS, Blaise (1887-1961) (Swiss-born, but naturalised French citizen in 1916)
(Note : many earlier translated poetry titles)
LA PROSE DU TRANSSIBERIEN ET DE LA PETITE JEHANNE DE FRANCE, tr. Timothy Young. Yale University Press (New Haven CN & London) folded sheet + 25pp (note 4pp), 2010. Facsimile of 1913 original with Sonia Delaunay's colour illustrations (limited edition 150 copies).
TRANS-SIBERIAN PROSODY And Little Jean From France, tr. Dick Jones. Old Stile Press (Llandogo UK) 41pp, 2014. Small print-run with drawings by Natalie d'Arbellof.
CHAPPUIS, Pierre (b.1930)
LIKE BITS OF WIND: Selected Poetry And Poetic Prose 1974-2014, tr. John Taylor. Seagull Books (Calcutta, London, NY) 371pp, 2016. Seagull Swiss List.
JACCOTTET, Philippe (b.1925)
AND, NONETHELESS: Selected Prose & Poetry 1990-2009, tr. with intro. John Taylor. Chelsea Editions (NY) 422pp, 2011 (mostly poetry).
SEEDTIME, Notebooks 1954-79, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 345pp, 2013 (prose notebooks with many entries as poems or prose poems). Swiss List.
THE SECOND SEEDTIME, Notebooks 1980-1994, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 208pp, 2017, cloth only. Swiss List.
JACCOTTET, tr. Ian Brinton. Oystercatcher Press (Hunstanton UK) 22pp, 2016.
MICHELOUD, Pierrette (1915-2007)
WORDS AND THE STONE, tr. Antonio D'Alfonso. Ekstasis Editions (Victoria BC) 206pp. 2014.
RAHMY, Philippe (1965-2017)
MOVEMENT THROUGH THE END/MOUVEMENT PAR LE FIN, tr. Rosemary Lloyd, pref. Jacques Dupin. Bitter Oleander Press (Fayetteville NY) 95pp, 2014.
RAMUZ, Charles Ferdinand (1878-1947)
RIVERSONG OF THE RHONE/(CHANT DE NOTRE RHÔNE), tr. Patti M. Marxsen. Onesuch Press (Melbourne, London, NY) 79pp, 2015. Epic prose poem.
TAPPY, José-Flore (b.1954)
SHEDS/HANGARS, tr. John Taylor. Bitter Oleander Press (Fayetteville NY) 232pp, 2014.
VALLOTTON, Jean-Pierre (b.1955)
WINGS FOLDED IN CRACKS: Selected Poems, tr. Antonio D'Alfonso. Guernica Editions (Toronto, Buffalo NY, Lancaster UK) 203pp, 2013. Essential Translations Series 14.
VOÉLIN, Pierre (b.1949)
TO EACH UNFOLDING LEAF: Selected Poems 1976-2015, tr. John Taylor. Bitter Oleander Press (Fayetteville NY) 328pp, 2017.

FRENCH PROSE

BENOZIGLIO, Jean-Luc (b.1941)
PRIVY PORTRAIT, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 264pp, 2014 (novel). Swiss List.
BOUVIER, Nicolas (1929-1998) (note earlier titles & editions, mostly non-fiction prose).
THE SCORPION FISH, tr. Robyn Marsack. Eland Books (London) 150pp, 2014 (novel/travel writing). With b/w illustrations (1st published, Carcanet 1987).
BUTI, Roland (b.1964)
YEAR OF THE DROUGHT, tr. Charlotte Mandell. Old Street Publishing (Tiverton UK) 148pp, 2017 (novel).
CENDRARS, Blaise (1887-1961) (lived mostly out of Paris & became French citizen) (note: many earlier prose titles & editions still in print)
THE BLOODY HAND, tr. Graham MacLachan, pref. Nicolas Beaupré. Vagamundo (Pont-Aven) 348pp, 2015 (war narrative). With 50 illustrations by French soldiers of life in the trenches.
CHESSEX, Jacques (1934-2009)
A JEW MUST DIE, tr. W. Donald Wilson. Bitter Lemon Press (London) 91pp, 2010 (short novel).
THE TYRANT, tr. Martin Sokolinsky. Bitter Lemon Press (London) 189pp, 2012 (novel).
JACCOTTET, tr. Ian Brinton. Oystercatcher Press (Hunstanton UK) 22pp, 2016.
COLOMB, Catherine(1893-1965)
THE SPIRITS OF THE EARTH, tr. John Taylor. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 227pp, 2016 (novel). Swiss List.
COMMENT, Bernard (b.1960)
THE SHADOW OF MEMORY, tr. Betsy Wing. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin & London) 205pp, 2012 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
EBERHARDT, Isabelle (1877-1904)
WRITINGS FROM THE SAND: Collected Works, Vol. 1, ed. Marie-Odile Delacour & Jean-René Huleu, tr. Melissa Marcus. University Of Nebraska Press (Lincoln NB) 570pp, 2012.
HOREM, Elisabeth (b.1955)
THE RING, tr. Jane Kuntz. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 135pp, 2013 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
JACCOTTET, Philippe (b.1925)
OBSCURITY, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 160pp, 2015 (novel). Swiss List.
THE PILGRIM'S BOWL, tr. John Taylor. Seagull Books (London. NY, Calcutta) 64pp, 2015 (meditation on Giorgio Morandi). Swiss List.
A CALM FIRE and Other Travel Writings, tr. John Taylor. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 312pp, 2018 (essays). Swiss List.
KRISTOF, Agota (1935-2011)
THE NOTEBOOK, tr. Alan Sheridan aft. Slavoj Zizek. CB Editions (London) 167pp, 2014 (novel). First published 1989.
THE ILLITERATE, tr. Nina Bogin, intro. Gabriel Josipovici. CB Editions (London) 44pp 2014 (brief prose memoir).
2 NOVELS, tr. David Watson & Marc Romano. CB Editions (London) 241pp, 2015.
COLLECTED PLAYS, tr. Bart Smet. Oberon Books (London) 268pp, 2018.
MAILLART, Ella K. (1903-1997)
THE CRUEL WAY: Switzerland To Afghanistan In A Ford, 1939, tr. not named. University Of Chicago Press (Chicago & London) 217pp, 2013 (first published, Heinemann 1947 & Virago 1986)
MOURON, Quentin (b.1989) (lives in Canada)
THREE DROPS OF BLOOD AND A CLOUD OF COCAINE, tr. W. Donald Wilson. Bitter Lemon Press (London) 206pp, 2017 (novel).
PINGET, Robert (1919-1997) (note: many earlier titles (& author lived mostly in France))
GRAAL FLIBUSTE tr. Anna Fitzgerald. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 160pp, 2015 (novel). French Literature Series.
FABLE, tr. Barbara Wright. Red Dust Books (NY) 63pp, 2016 (short novel/prose text). (First published, John Calder 1980).
RAMUZ, Charles Ferdinand (1878-1947)
BEAUTY ON EARTH, tr. Michelle Bailat-Jones. Onesuch Press (Black Hill, Australia) 224pp, 2013 (novel).
WHAT IF THE SUN..., tr. Michelle Bailat-Jones, fore. Laura Spinney. Onesuch Press (Black Hill, Australia) 178pp, 2016 (novel).
DERBORENCE: When The Devils Came Down, tr. Laura Spinney. Onesuch Press (Black Hill, Australia) 118pp, 2018 (novel). (note : many translated titles from mid-C20th)
REVAZ, Noëlle (b.1968)
WITH THE ANIMALS, tr. W. Donald Wilson. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin & London) 232pp, 2012 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
EFINA, tr. David Ball & Nicole Ball. Seagull Books (Calcutta, NY, London) 208pp, 2014 (novel). Swiss List.

GERMAN POETRY

AMANN, Jürg (1947-2013)
LIFELONG BIRD MIGRATION/Lebenslang Vogelzug, tr. Marc Vincenz, German & English texts. Spuyten Duyvil (NY) 132pp, 2017.
BRAMBACH, Rainer (1917-1983)
COLLECTED POEMS, tr. Esther Kinsky. Seagull Books(London, NY, Calcutta) 150pp, 2014. Swiss List.
BURKART, Erika (1922-2010)
A LATE RECOGNITION OF THE SIGNS, tr. with aft. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil Press (NY) 105pp. (With extensive interview between tr. & Ernst Halter & 4 b/w photos).
SECRET LETTER, tr. Marc Vincenz. Červená Barva Press (Somerville MA) 83pp, 2016.
NIGHTSHIFT/AN AREA OF SHADOWS, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil (NY) 146pp, 2013. (With poems also by Ernst Halter (b.1938)).
DÜRRENMATT, Friedrich (1921-1990)
THE POSSIBLE IS MONSTROUS: Selected Poems, tr. Daniele Pantano, aft. Peter Rüedi. Black Lawrence Press (NY) 214pp, 2010.
HESSE, Hermann (1877-1962) (lived in Switzerland & took Swiss citizenship in 1923)
SEASONS OF THE SOUL, tr. Ludwig Max Fischer, fore. Andrew Harvey. North Atlantic Books (Berkeley CA) 113pp, 2011.
LUTZ, Werner (1930-2016)
KISSING NESTS, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil (NY) 110pp, 2013 (paper only).
MERZ, Klaus (b.1945)
OUT OF THE DUST, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil(NY) 77pp, 2014 (with 5 b/w illustrations by Heinz Egger).
UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT, tr. Marc Vincenz. White Pine Press (Buffalo NY) 140pp, 2018. Companions For The Journey Series.
HESSE, Hermann (1877-1962) (lived in Switzerland & took Swiss citizenship in 1923)

SEASONS OF THE SOUL, tr. Ludwig Max Fischer, fore. Andrew Harvey. North Atlantic Books (Berkeley CA) 113pp, 2011.
LUTZ, Werner (1930-2016)
KISSING NESTS, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil (NY) 110pp, 2013 (paper only).
MERZ, Klaus (b.1945)
OUT OF THE DUST, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil(NY) 77pp, 2014 (with 5 b/w illustrations by Heinz Egger).
UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT, tr. Marc Vincenz. White Pine Press (Buffalo NY) 140pp, 2018. Companions For The Journey Series.
NEESER, Andreas (b.1964)
GRASS GROWS INWARD, tr. Marc Vincenz. Spuyten Duyvil (NY) 126pp, 2014 (with illustrations by Hugo Suter).
RAEBER, Kuno (1922-1992)
BE QUIET: Selected Poems, tr. Stuart Friebert,intro. Deborah Bogen. Tiger Bark Press (Rochester NY) 127pp, 2015.
WATCH OUT: Selected Poems, tr. Stuart Friebert. Lost Horse Press (Sandpoint ID)/ University Of Washington Press (Seattle WA) 90pp, 2016.
VOTIVES: Selected Poems From The Literary Remains, tr. Stuart Friebert with Christiane Wyrwa. Lost Horse Press (Sandpoint IN) 110pp, 2017.
WALSER, Robert (1878-1956)
THIRTY POEMS, tr. with intro. Christopher Middleton. Christine Burgin Gallery/New Directions Publishing (NY) 62pp, 2012.
OPPRESSIVE LIGHT: Selected Poems, ed. & tr. Daniele Pantano, intro. Carolyn Forché. Black Lawrence Press (Pittsburgh PA) 180pp, 2012.

GERMAN PROSE

ABONJI, Melinda Nadj (b.1968)
FLY AWAY, PIGEON, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 210pp, 2014 (novel). Swiss List.
ALLEMANN, Urs (b.1948)
BABYFUCKER, tr. with intro. Peter Smith, aft. Vanessa Place. Les Figues Press (Los Angeles CA) 136pp, 2010 (novel/experimental text).
THE OLD MAN AND THE BENCH, tr. Patrick Greaney. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 114pp, 2015 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
BALL, Hugo (1886-1927) (lived in Switzerland from 1915-1927)
FLAMETTI or The Dandyism of the Poor, tr. Catherine Schelbert, intro. Marc Dachy. Wakefield Press (Cambridge MA) 200pp, 2014 (novel).
BÄRFUSS, Lukas (b.1971)
ONE HUNDRED DAYS, tr. Tess Lewis. Granta Books (London) 180pp, 2012 (novel)
CAMENISCH, Arno (b.1978)
THE ALP, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL & London) 82pp, 2014 (short novel: 1st of trilogy). Swiss Literature Series.
BEHIND THE STATION, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL & London) 86pp, 2014 (novel: 2nd of trilogy). Swiss Literature Series.
CANTIENI, Monica (b.1965)
THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF GOOD REASONS, tr. Donal McLoughlin. Seagull Books (Calcutta, London, NY) 184pp, 2014 (novel). Swiss List.
CAPUS, Alex, (b.1961) (note: earlier titles)
SAILING BY STARLIGHT: In Search Of Treasure Island, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing (London) 136pp, 2010 (novel).
A MATTER OF TIME, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing (London) 203pp 2011 (novel).
LEON AND LOUISE, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing (London) 265pp, 2012 (novel). ALMOST LIKE SPRING, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing (London) 149pp, 2013 (novel).
SKIDOO: A Journey through the Ghost Towns of the American West, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing/Armchair Traveller (London) 84pp, 2013 (travel writings).
A PRICE TO PAY, tr. John Brownjohn. Haus Publishing (London) 233pp, 2014 (novel).
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DÜRRENMATT, Friedrich (1921-1990) (note: many earlier titles & editions)
CORRESPONDENCE, tr. Birgit Schreyer Duarte. Seagull Books (Calcutta, London, NY) 290pp, 2011 (correspondence with Max Frisch). Swiss List.
SELECTED ESSAYS, tr. Isabel Fargo Cole. Seagull Books (Calcutta, London, NY) 202pp 2013 (essays). Swiss List.
SUSPICION, tr. Joel Agee. Pushkin Press (London) 96pp, 2017 (novel).
THE JUDGE AND HIS HANGMAN, , tr. Joel Agee. Pushkin Press (London) 124pp, 2017 (novel).
THE PLEDGE: Requiem For The Detective Novel, tr. Joel Agee. Pushkin Press (London) 155pp, 2017 (novel).
THE EXECUTION OF JUSTICE, tr. John E. Woods. Pushkin Press (London) 224pp, 2018 (novel).
ELMIGER, Dorothee (b.1985)
INVITATION TO THE BOLD OF HEART, tr. Katy Derbyshire. Seagull Books (NY, London, Calcutta) 152pp, 2011 (novel). Swiss Series.
FRISCH, Max (1911-1991) (note : many earlier translated novels & plays)
ZURICH TRANSIT, tr. Birgit Schreyer Duarte. Seagull Books (London & Calcutta) 84pp, 2010 (screenplay from a novel). German List.
BIOGRAPHY: A GAME, tr. Birgit Schreyer Duarte. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 121pp, 2010 (play). German List.
AN ANSWER FROM THE SILENCE: A Story from the Mountains, tr. Mike Mitchell. Seagull Books (Calcutta & London) 118pp, 2011 (short novel).
DRAFTS FOR A THIRD SKETCHBOOK, ed. Peter von Matt, tr. Mike Mitchell. Seagull Books (Calcutta & London) 194pp, 2013 (prose sketches, diary entries etc.). Swiss List.
FROM THE BERLIN JOURNAL, ed. Thomas Strässle & Margit Unser, tr. Wieland Hoban. Seagull Books (Calcutta, London, NY) 220pp, 2017 (diaries/journals). Swiss List.
GAHSE, Zsuszanna (b.1946) (author lives in Switzerland)
VOLATILE TEXTS: US TWO, tr. Chenxin Jiang. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 100pp, 2016 (prose texts). Swiss Literature Series.
HASLER, Eveline (b.1933)
ANNA GOELDIN: THE LAST WITCH, ed. with aft. Waltraud Meierhofer, tr. Mary Bryant. Lighthouse Christian Publishing (Savage MN) 271pp, 2013 (novel).
HESSE, Hermann (1877-1962) (with very many titles & editions published before 2010)
STEPPENWOLF, tr. David Horrocks. Penguin Books (London) 258pp, 2012 (novel). New translation. Also published by Folio Society in cloth edition in 2018.
SINGAPORE DREAM, tr. Sherab Chödzin Kohn. Shambala Books (Boulder CO) 224pp, 2018 (travel writings).
HILDESHEIMER, Wolfgang (1916-1991) (author lived in Switzerland from 1957-1991)
TYNSET, tr. Jeffrey Castle. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 170pp, 2016 (novel/extended monologue). Swiss Literature Series.
HOHL, Ludwig (1904-1980)
ASCENT, tr. Donna Stonecipher. Black Square Editions (NY) 88pp, 2012 (novella).
LAEDERACH, Jürg (b.1945)
THE WHOLE OF LIFE, tr. Geoffrey C. Howes. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL & London) 300pp, 2013 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
LENZ, Pedro (b.1965)
NAW MUCH OF A TALKER, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Freight Books (Glasgow) 155pp. 2013 (short novel) (translated into Glaswegian Scots).
LOETSCHER, Hugo (129-2009)
NOAH: a Novel of the Boom Times, tr. Samuel P. Willcocks. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 183pp, 2012 (novel). Swiss List.
LÜSCHER, Jonas (b.1976)
BARBARIAN SPRING, tr. Peter Lewis. Haus Publishing (London) 132pp, 2014 (novel).
MEIER, Gerhard (1917-2008)
ISLE OF THE DEAD, tr. Burton Pike. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin & London) 102pp, 2011 (novel: 1st of tetralogy). Swiss Literature Series.
MERZ, Klaus (b.1945)
STIGMATA OF BLISS, tr. Tess Lewis. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 185pp, 2016 (3 novellas) (with 12 b/w drawings/paintings by Heinz Egger). Swiss List.
NIZON, Paul (b.1929)
MY YEAR OF LOVE, tr. Jean M. Snook. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 172pp, 2013 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.
SCHWARZENBACH, Annemarie (1908-1942)
ALL THE ROADS ARE OPEN: The Afghan Journey 1939-1940, tr. Isabel Fargo Cole. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 140pp, 2010 (travel journal/essays).
LYRIC NOVELLA, tr. with intro. Lucy Renner Jones. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 140pp, 2011 (novella). Swiss List.
DEATH IN PERSIA, tr. Lucy Renner Jones. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 116pp, 2013 (diary & travel journal). Swiss List.
SCHWITTER, Monique (b.1972)
GOLDFISH MEMORY, tr. Elunid Gramich. Parthian Books (Ceredigion UK) 161pp, 2015 (short stories).
SEELIG, Carl (1894-1962)
WALKS WITH WALSER, tr. Anne Posten. New Directions Publishing Co. (NY) 138pp, 2017 (prose texts/memoir).
SIMON, Christoph (b.1972)
ZBINDEN'S PROGRESS, tr. Donal McLaughlin, intro. Barbara Trapido. And Other Stories (High Wycombe UK) 172pp, 2012 (novel). Series: Book 07.
STAMM, Peter (b.1963) (note: other earlier titles & editions)
IN STRANGE GARDENS and Other Stories, tr. Michael Hofmann. The Other Press (NY) 243pp, 2011 (short stories).
WE'RE FLYING: Stories, tr. Michael Hofmann. Granta Books (London) 370pp, 2013 (reprs.) (short stories). Also published by Other Press (NY).
SEVEN YEARS, tr. Michael Hofmann. Granta Books (London) 264pp, 2013 (& reprs.) (novel). First published by Other Press (NY) same).

ALL DAYS ARE NIGHT, tr. Michael Hofmann. Other Press (NY) 185pp, 2014 (novel). Also published by Granta Books (London), same.
TO THE BACK OF BEYOND, tr. Michael Hofmann. Other Press (NY) 139pp, 2017 (novel). Also published by Granta Books (London), same.

STEINBECK, Michelle (b. 1990)
MY FATHER WAS A MAN ON LAND AND A WHALE IN THE WATER, tr. Jen Calleja. Darf Publishers (London) 160pp, 2018 (novel).

STERCHI, Beat (b.1949)
THE COW, tr. Michael Hoffman. Head Of Zeus Books (London) 378pp, 2018 (novel) (first published by Faber in 1988).

SUTER, Martin (b.1948)
THE CHEF, tr. Jamie Bulloch. Atlantic Books (London) 297pp, 2013 (novel).
MONTECRISTO, tr. Jamie Bulloch. No Exit Press (Harpenden UK) 287pp, 2016 (novel).
THE LAST WEYNFELDT, tr. Steph Morris. No Exit Press (Harpenden UK) 208pp, 2017 (novel).
ELEFANT, tr. Jamie Bullough. 4th Estate/HarperCollins Publishers (London) 344pp, 2018 (novel).

ULLMANN, Regina (1884-1961)
THE COUNTRY ROAD, tr. Kurt Beals. New Directions Publishing Co. (NY) 147pp, 2015 (short stories).

VETERANYI, Aglaja (1962-2002)
WHY THE CHILD IS COOKING IN THE POLENTA, tr. with aft. Vincent Kling. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin & London) 200pp, 2011 (novel). Swiss Literature Series.

WALSER, Robert (1878-1956) (note: many earlier titles & editions)
ANSWER TO AN INQUIRY,tr. Paul North. Ugly Duckling Presse (NY) 64pp, 2010 (prose/theatre piece) (with drawings by Friese Undine).
THE WALK, tr. Christopher Middleton with Susan Bernofsky. New Directions Publishing Co. (NY) 96pp, 2012 (short novel/prose). New edition.
MICROSCRIPTS, tr. Susan Bernofsky, aft. Walter Benjamin. Christine Burgin Gallery/New Directions Publishing Co. (NY) 160pp, 2012 (with reprs.) (short prose pieces).
BERLIN STORIES, ed. Jochen Greven, tr. with intro. Susan Bernofsky. NYRB/New York Review Books (NY) 139pp, 2012 (short stories/prose pieces). NYRB Classics Series.
A SCHOOLBOY'S DIARY AND OTHER STORIES, tr. Damian Searls, intro. Ben Lerner. NYRB/New York Review Books (NY) 179pp, 2013 (stories/prose pieces) (with b/w drawings by Karl Walser. NYRB Classics Series.
FAIRY TALES: DRAMOLETTES, tr. Daniele Pantano & James Reidel. New Directions (NY) 128pp, 2015 (short plays/theatre pieces).
GIRLFRIENDS, GHOSTS, AND OTHER STORIES, tr. with aft. Tom Whalen with Nicole Kongeter & Annette Wiesner. NYRB/New York Review Books (NY) 181pp, 2016 paper only (brief prose texts). NYRB Classics.
COMEDIES, tr. Daniele Pantano & James Reidel. Seagull Books (Calcutta, NY, London) 224pp, 2018 (short plays).

WEIHE, Richard (b.1961)
SEA OF INK, tr. Jamie Bulloch. Peirene Press (London) 118pp, 2012 (short novel/lyric prose) (with reproductions of 11 paintings by the C17th Chinese artist, Bada Shanren).

WERNER, Markus (b.1944)
ON THE EDGE: a Novel, tr. Robert F. Goodwin. Haus Publishing (London) 120pp, 2012 (novel).
ZÜNDEL'S EXIT, tr. Michael Hofmann. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin & London) 124pp, 2013 (short novel). Swiss Literature Series.
COLD SHOULDER, tr. Michael Hofmann. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin) 117pp, 2016 (short novel). Swiss Literature Series.

WIDMER, Urs (1938-2014)
MY MOTHER'S LOVER, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (NY, London, Calcutta) 127pp, 2011 (& 2018) (novel). Swiss Series.
MY FATHER'S BOOK, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (NY, London, Calcutta) 173pp, 2011 (& 2018) (novel). Swiss Series.
ON LIFE, DEATH, AND THIS AND THAT OF THE REST, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 119pp, 2013 (essays). Swiss List.
THE BLUE SODA SYPHON, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 108pp, 2014 (short novel). Swiss List.
MR. ADAMSON, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 176pp, 2015 (novel). Swiss List.
IN THE CONGO, tr. Donal McLaughlin. Seagull Books (London, NY, Calcutta) 229pp, 2016 (novel). Swiss List.

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ALBORGHETTI, Fabiano (b.1970)
DIRECTORY OF THE VULNERABLE, tr. Marco Sonzogni. Guernica Editions (Toronto, Buffalo NY, Lancaster UK) 135pp, 2014. Essential Translations Series 25.
PORTRAITS OF ABSENCE, tr. Marco Sonzogni & Ross Woods. Guernica Editions (Toronto, NY etc.) 144pp, 2017.

DE MARCHI, Pietro (b.1958)
HERE AND NOT ELSEWHERE: Selected Poems 1990-2010, tr. Marco Sonzogni. Guernica Editions (Toronto, Buffalo NY & Lancaster UK) 117pp, 2012. Essential Translations Series 7.

LEPORI, Pierre (b.1968)
WHATEVER THE NAME, tr. Peter Valente pref. Fabio Pusterla. Spuyten Duyvil Press (NY) 130pp, 2017

NESSI, Alberto (b.1940)
TRIVIA THIEF: Selected Poems 1969-2009, tr. Marco Sonzogni. Guernica Editions (Toronto, Buffalo NY & Lancaster UK) 149pp, 2011. Essential Poets Series 187.

ORELLI, Giorgio (1921-2013)
PONDERING THE WEIGHT OF BEING: Selected Poems 1944-2013, tr. Marco Sonzogni & Ross Woods. Guernica Editions (Toronto, NY, Lancaster UK) 170pp, 2015. Essential Translations Series 33.

PUSTERLA, Fabio (b.1957)
DAYS FULL OF CAVES AND TIGERS/Giorni Pieni di Caverne e di Tigri, tr. with pref. Simon Knight, intro. Alan Brownjohn. Arc Publications (Todmorden UK) 132pp, 2012. Visible Poets Series Vol. 32.

SCHARPF, Oliver (b.1977)
A CHOICE OF UPPERCUTS, tr. Marco Sonzogni. Guernica Editions (Toronto, Buffalo NY, Lancaster UK) 103pp, 2010. Essential Poets Series: 180.

ITALIAN PROSE

JAEGGY, Fleur (b.1940)
I AM THE BROTHER OF XX, tr. Gini Alhadeff. And Other Stories (Sheffield UK) 133pp, 2017 (short prose pieces/stories).
THESE POSSIBLE LIVES, tr. Minna Zallman Proctor. New Directions Publishing Co. (NY) 64pp, 2017 (essays).
SWEET DAYS OF DISCIPLINE, tr. Tim Parks. And Other Stories (Sheffield UK) 102pp, 2018 (novel). This translation first published 1991.

ORRELLI, Giovanni (1928-2016)
WALASCHEK'S DREAM, tr. Jamie Richards, intro. Daniel Rothenbuhler. Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, Dublin, London) 175pp, 2012 (novel). Swiss Series.

ROMANSH (& ASSOCIATED DIALECTS) PROSE

BIERT, Clà (1920-1981)
ONLY A GAME and Other Stories, tr. Alan Brown. Peter Owen Publishers (London) 94pp, 1969 (short stories). Translated from German versions of the Romansch originals. Council Of Europe: Translations Series.

CAMENISCH, Arno (b.1978) (see above under 'Swiss German: Prose)

HALTER, Toni (1914-1986)
THE HIGH MEADOWS, tr. Anna Lee-Samos. Oxford University Press (Oxford etc.) 215pp, 1980 (novel).

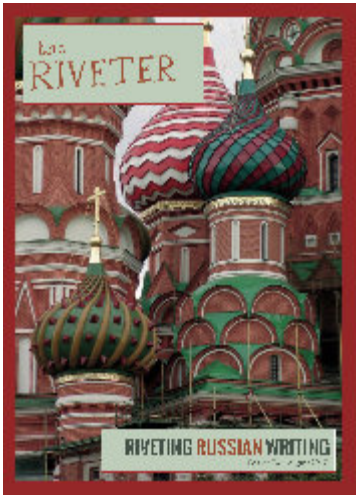
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THE CURLY-HORNED COW, ed. Reto R. Bezzola, tr. Elizabeth Maxfield Miller (from Ladino) & W. W. Kibler (from Surselvan) with others. Peter Owen Publishers (London) 215pp, 1971 (poetry & prose).
ROMONTSCH: Language and Literature: The Sursilvan Raeto-Romance of Switzerland, ed. & tr. D. B. Gregor. Oleander Press (Cambridge UK) 388pp, 1982, paper only. With bilingual prose & poetry. Oleander Language & Literature Series: 11.

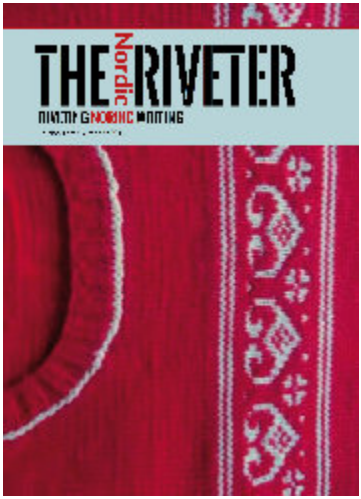
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NEW SWISS WRITING 2010, tr. Donal McLaughlin (esp.), Andrew Shields & others. Solothurn Literary Days (Solothurn) 168pp, 2010 (poetry & prose by 38 authors from all 4 languages).

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY SWISS POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY, ed. Luzius Keller, tr. John Taylor(Fr,), Simon Knight, Jamie Richards(It.), Donal MacLaughlin (with ed.) (Rom.), Burton Pike & Reinhard Mayer (Ger.). Dalkey Archive Press (Champaign IL, London & Dublin) 378pp, 2012 (work by 74 poets writing in French, German, Italian & Romansh with English translations). Swiss Literature Series.


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