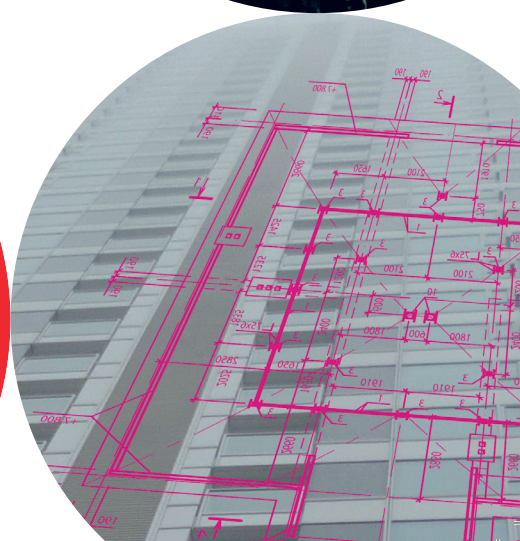
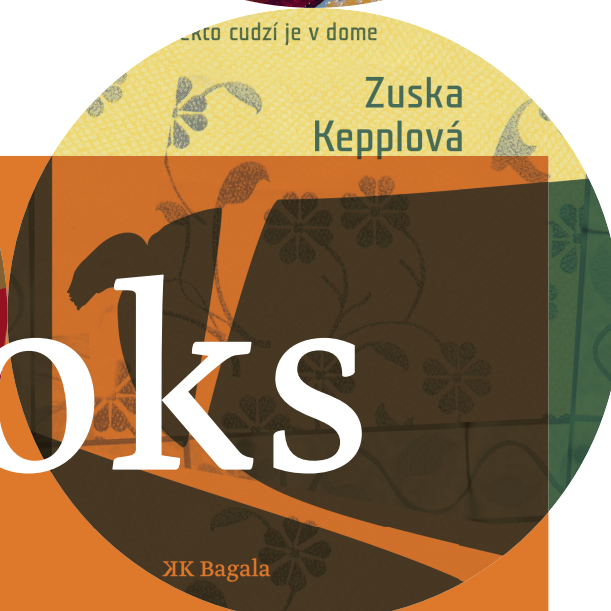


Centre
for Information
on Literature
Bratislava



Peter Balko

Once in Lošonc

A story of friendship through thick or thin.

A story about growing up, intermingled with miracles, tragedy, first loves, sorrows and little pleasures. A story about the forgotten town of Lošonc on the Slovak-Hungarian border and its history, as remembered by its inhabitants and written down in notebooks by a talented "recorder". A Slovak Tom Sawyer with traits of magic realism.

The main character and narrator of the story, eight-year-old Leviatan, is a well-behaved boy from a good family. He has a passion for writing down everything that takes place around him, while adding a bit here and there. But what he enjoys even more is spending time with his best friend Kápia, who, unlike him, is a proper scamp and prankster. Each of them has his assets, which they manage to combine in such a way that they become a pair to be feared. The first, armed with a bow, cleans his teeth every evening and then sits down to write his diary. The other torments animals, hits girls and pisses on weaker classmates' anoraks. But he is a true friend. Through thick or thin. In the course of the adventures they have together, they get to know the now forgotten town of Lošonc on the Slovak-Hungarian border, where nations, cultures and languages meet. Once an important traffic intersection, a haven for noble families as well as historical unrest, its glory now exists only in memories. We follow its fate through family history and the memories of grandparents or local inhabitants, but transformed by the pen of the narrator, who thus creates a new local mythology.

“This is an autobiography which reflects not only my own elusive memories, but also those of my parents, grandparents and the town of my birth, Lučenec, whose historical and Hungarian name is Lošonc. Macabre legends about the south of the country, a bizarre guide to the town as well as purely surreal inventions, which, with my love of magic realism, I could not resist including. For some this is distracting stylization, for me it is a game I enjoy.”

Peter Balko (1988)

Peter Balko studied film script writing and dramaturgy at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where he is working at the moment as a PhD candidate. He won the first prize in the Povedka 2012 short story competition. He had contributions published in the Povedka 2012 and Pulz V4 collections. Together with Lucia Potúčková and Maroš Hečko he published a collection of poems *Metrofóbia* (Metrophobia, 2012). His independent book debut was the prose work *Vtedy v Lošonci. Via Lošonc* (Once in Lošonc, 2014), which is set in the town of his birth, Lošonc. Here he has organised a literary festival Medzihmla. His prose debut placed him among the finalists of the Anasoft Litera 2015 and he won the Readers' Prize. In 2015 he won the Tatra Bank Foundation Prize for young authors. For the book *Vtedy v Lošonci. Via Lošonc*, the Centre for Information on Literature (LIC) awarded him the Ján Johanides Prize in the category for The Best Prose Work by a Young Author Under 35. Peter Balko is assistant director as well as co-author of the screenplay, for the film *Kandidát* (The Candidate, 2013).



PHOTO (C) DÁVID KORONCZI

Peter Balko

Vtedy v Lošonci. Via Lošonc

Published by:
Koloman Kertész Bagala,
Bratislava, 2015, 193 p.

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Irena Brežná

Ungrateful Foreigner

Home is where you can grumble and she was not at home. The main character does not just want to be grateful in the country that has received her, as she is expected to be. But they try to round off her edges and make her someone who is obedient, keeps to the rules and toes the line. The novel shows that living together is only possible if both sides come out in the open. At the very end there is an identity that has been gradually sewn together: "Emigration".

The inclusion or removal of the letter in brackets gives the Slovak title, *Nevďačná cudzin(k)a* two meanings: Ungrateful Foreigner and Ungrateful Foreign Country. In her novel the author comes to terms with her experience of emigration, as well as her acceptance of the role of a refugee who is expected to be grateful and glad that she can at last live in a free country. But how could she explain that she feels so bad in this better world? By using two tiers of memories connected through the first-person narrator the author reflects with sarcasm and humour on her own experiences when settling down in a new country. Together with the main character you will rebel against the one-sided preconceived opinion of the native population that an immigrant should blend in with the majority, learn their language, be obedient, not stick out, not grumble and should suppress their original identity. But despair from the loss of the original homeland gradually changes into pleasure derived from the gaining of new, hybrid identities of the most varied kind in the foreign country. The second, equally striking, theme is the troubled lives of present-day migrants who come to Switzerland from their native country with the hope of a better life and for whom the author mediates in the role of interpreter. The novel represents a culmination of original literary work with personal and collective sorrow. It shows a possible way of coming to terms with the loss of the homeland, while not losing one's own identity.

“Ingratitude is the right of the heroine to critical thinking. Just as when I live in my own country I have a right and even duty to criticise it. But why is a foreigner deprived of this right? They are no asset to that society, if they are only people who are expected to praise it and be forever grateful. From this point of view the heroine is quite cheeky; she is wise, self-confident and pretty – I deliberately made her so. She wants to survive, but at the same time, she does not want to give up her own self.”

Irena Brežná (1950)

A Slovak-Swiss writer and journalist. Her life and her writing are marked by her experience of emigrating from Czechoslovakia to Switzerland in 1968. This watershed experience forms the bedrock of her newspaper articles, essays and prose works as well as her work as a psychologist, translator and interpreter. She studied Slavonic Studies, Philosophy and Psychology at the University of Basel. She was actively engaged in work for Amnesty International, she worked as a psychologist and interpreter for refugees. She has carried out and supported various humanitarian projects, for example in Guinea and in Chechnya. In Slovakia she cooperates with the feminist educational and publishing project *Aspekt*, which she has supported ever since its foundation. For the most part she writes in German and she has received a number of awards for her journalistic and literary texts. She is a regular contributor to several Swiss and German newspapers and magazines; since 2014 she has regularly written for the Slovak SME daily paper. Her first novel published in Slovakia was *Psoriáza, moja láska* (Psoriasis, My Love, 1992) and after a longish interval she published an extensive selection of texts in 2005 under the title *Tekutý fetiš* (Liquid Fetish). In the novel *Na slepačích krídlach* (On Chicken Wings, 2007) the author returns to her childhood in Czechoslovakia. Her latest novel *Nevďačná cudzin(k)a* (Ungrateful Foreigner, 2015) has met with success both at home and abroad; it has won The Swiss Confederation Prize, The Dominik Tatarka Award, and has been nominated for the prestigious literary prize Anasoft Litera 2016.

All books originally published in German

Translated titles:

DUTCH, FRENCH, ITALIAN,
MACEDONIAN, RUSSIAN,
SLOVAK, SWEDISH:

***Die undankbare Fremde* (Ungrateful Foreigner)**

Berlin: Galiani Verlag Berlin, 2012

CZECH, FRENCH, RUSSIAN, SLOVAK:

***Die beste aller Welten* (The Best of All Worlds)**

Berlin: Berliner Verlag, 2008

ITALIAN:

***Die Wölfinnen von Sernovodsk* (The Bitchwolf from Sernovodsk)**

Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1997



PHOTO (C) PETER PROCHÁZKA

Irena Brežná ***Nevďačná cudzin(k)a***

Published by:
ASPEKT,
Bratislava, 2015, 160 p.

ISBN: 978-80-8151-027-4



Translation Rights:

Irena Brežná
www.brezna.ch

Rudolf Dobiáš

Stories from a Dark Age

An authentic literary testimony to the difficult period of the 1950s, written by a former political prisoner.

In his book *Príbehy z prítmnia* (Stories from a Dark Age) Rudolf Dobiáš records the tragic lives of people who were persecuted by the communist regime. His heroes are usually political prisoners, but there are also displaced persons or those dismissed from work. They are people the regime pushed out, often without cause, to the very fringes of society. Nevertheless, they put up with all these wrongs and do not lack an inner strength that helps to preserve their sanity. The book is above all testimony to the era of communism that for forty years oppressed people's lives, deformed characters, tormented people's consciences, slowed down the development of society, concealed judicial murders, Siberian gulags and the sufferings and death of millions. The novella *Temná zeleň* (Gloomy Green) is a gripping story of the firm friendship between two men who meet in prison. One is a seasoned and much-travelled man, the other a boy on the threshold of adulthood. Threading through the story are references to a betrayal that took place between the friends. It suggests the impossibility of forgiving and forgetting.

“Imprisonment, torture and persecution crushed many people, and one of the things that helped them to survive was literature.”

Rudolf Dobiáš (1934)

Prose writer, poet, journalist, author of radio plays and works for children and young people, he started studying Slovak and Russian at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University, but did not finish his studies, because at the age of nineteen he was charged with anti-state activities and imprisoned for eight years. After six years spent in the uranium mines he was released in 1960 thanks to a political amnesty. After doing his military service, he worked as a miner, a factory worker, professional writer, and later as an editor. Following several books for children and young people, in 1977 he published a collection of poems entitled *Slávnosti jari* (Spring Festivities). He returned to social and cultural life in the nineties. Collections of his novellas have been published: *Temná zeleň* (Gloomy Green, 1996), *Tajní ľudia* (Secret People, 1999), *Zvony a hroby* (Bells and Graves, 2000), *Znovuzrodenie* (Rebirth, 2007), in which

he records the lives of people persecuted by the communist totalitarian regime. The author included sixteen of these in a collection entitled *Príbehy z prítmia* (Stories from a Dark Age, 2014). In 2013 he published a novel about the enforced collectivisation and a popular rebellion under the title of *Johana. Johanin chlapec. Kronika lásky a smrti*. (Johana. Johana's Boy. A Chronicle of Love and Death). The strength of his works lies in his first-hand experience, as well as his talent as a writer whose prose is influenced by lyricism. In 2015 he was awarded the Prize of the Slovak Ministry of Culture. At present he is active in the Confederation of Political Prisoners, on radio and television boards, the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission of the Slovak Republic and at the same time is editor-in-chief of the journal *Naše Svedectvo* (Our Testimony), published by the Confederation of Political Prisoners.



PHOTO (C) LUCIA GARDIN & LIC

Rudolf Dobiáš *Príbehy z prítmia*

Published by:
Hlbiny s.r.o.,
Bratislava, 2014, 391 p.

ISBN: 978-80-89743-00-1



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Zuska Kepplová

Reflux

The main character in the book, Eva, comes back from her studies in the USA to find that the really exotic life she was seeking when she went abroad is awaiting her at home, in Slovakia. There is a stranger in the house.

Eva, a student of African literature, returns to a little Slovak town, where she meets her family and her childhood friends—her brother, who is working as a manager in a car factory, her sister on maternity leave, Indian-looking Milan, a builder, Eric, a popular Roma classmate who has a Nazi eagle tattooed on his head, her mother, who thinks that schools in the West turn students against their own families and her grandmother, who survived deportation to a labour camp in Russia, but does not remember much about it now. The book is divided into three parts. The first describes Eva's time at an insignificant university somewhere in the middle of a maize field and her return to Slovakia on account of her grandmother's worsening state of health. At her mother's entreaty, she decides to look after her grandmother. In the second part Eva takes a job as a teacher at the local elementary school, but she comes to realize more and more that although she has returned home, she is no longer on the same wavelength as any of those close to her. The last part describes Eva's departure for Prague to join her father, who deserted the family some time in the past and now lectures at the university. With this book the author again shows that apart from a talented pen, she has the ability to capture the character of the times. Her characters reflect the lifestyle of a generation that is, in contrast to that of her parents, a generation on the move.

“Before, I’d got the idea that I was terribly bored at home and everywhere abroad was terribly interesting. When I returned I tried to see Slovakia through the eyes of a foreigner. I discovered that it was not such a great stress to be at home. Only occasionally I ask myself: What have you achieved in life? You live two streets away from your parents.”

Zuska Kepplová (1982)

In her works this representative of prose writers from the generation of modern nomads captures in an original manner the destinies of the generation of young people who, after the opening of the borders, took advantage of the opportunity to go to study or work abroad. In her prose works we follow characters whose dreams of life abroad, of a job, human and social recognition are often not in accord with reality. The central theme of her prose works is the search for one’s own identity in a new environment and the meaning of home. Her first novel was *Buchty švabachom* (Sweet Buns with Gothic Script, 2011), for which she was awarded the Ján Johanides Prize and got a nomination for the Anasoft Litera Prize. She followed this with a collection of two novellas *57 km od Taškentu* (57 km from Tashkent, 2013). Her latest novel is *Reflux* (2015), which made her one of the ten finalists for the prestigious Anasoft Litera Prize. She lives in Bratislava, where she works for the SME daily paper.

Translated titles:

HUNGARIAN:

Hotel Sza_adság

(Fre_dom: Sweet Buns with Gothic Script and 57 km from Taškent)

Budapest: L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2016



PHOTO (C) LUCIA GARDIN & LIC

Zuska Kepplová
Reflux

Published by:
Koloman Kertész Bagala,
Bratislava, 2015, 256 p.

ISBN: 978-80-8108-058-6



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Monika Kompaníková

At the Confluence

Life in which regular activities follow one another in a never-ending cycle and in which there is no time to think about one's own fulfilment. On the one hand we have a mother looking after her son, her sick father and her clients, on the other a little girl caring for her overworked father. Both long for fulfilment, which finally arrives, even if only for a short while; it warms the heart and gives hope for whatever is to come.

Anička is still attending elementary school and Hana is a single mother, but they both move along paths of the most narrow and fragile relationships and emotions. The former locks her drunken father in a room and undergoes a distressful journey in search of acknowledgement and appreciation, the other vacillates between duties to her son, her father and her own desires. The one dreams of a dress with frills and the main role in a school play, the other wants to have a little time for herself, to escape from the routine duties which make her forget herself and her own heart. Seemingly banal, everyday situations bring them to a confluence, to a place from which each leaves permanently marked and changed. The dominating element in the novel is the attempt of both protagonists to overcome life's restrictions, to find their own stable world and create a new and "better" home, while the author focuses mainly on extreme, critical situations. As in her previous work, here too the dominating theme is the lack of closeness, intimacy and love between children and parents. With her novel *Na sútoku* (At the Confluence) Monika Kompaníková has once again confirmed her talent as an original storyteller, for whom focus on detail, psychologically complex characters and economy of expression to the point of minimalism are typical features of her work.

“Adults are often convinced that they know exactly what children need and when they are happy, but that is a mistake. We are different in our physiognomy and merely on account of our height we see the world from a completely different perspective. If I sit on the ground, I can see childhood and children with their problems, traumas, yearnings, anxieties and fear.”

Monika Kompaníková (1979)

One of the most outstanding writers of contemporary Slovak prose. She studied painting and graphic art at the Academy of Fine Arts. Her literary debut was a collection of short stories entitled *Miesto pre samotu* (A Place for Loneliness, 2003), for which she was awarded the Ivan Krasko Prize. In 2006 her novella *Biele miesta* (White Spaces) appeared and was nominated for the Anasoft Litera Prize. The most frequent theme of her works is human loneliness, which usually takes the form of isolation from the outside world. Her characters are for the most part people living on the fringes of society, who have a past that is unclear or only sketchily hinted at. In 2008 she won the Tatra Bank Foundation Prize for young authors. Her novel *Piata loď* (The Fifth Boat, 2010), for which she received the Anasoft Litera 2011, has been used as the basis for short student screenplays, a short animated film, theatre productions, a documentary film and a feature film. In 2013 her book of fairy tales *Hlbokomorské rozprávky* (Stories from the Deep Sea) was published, winning the Most Beautiful Book of the Year award. Her latest work is the novel *Na sútoku* (At the Confluence, 2016). At present she is working for the Artforum bookshop and publishing house and she contributes to Slovak daily papers.

Translated titles:

SERBIAN:

Bela mesta
(The White Places)

Zrenjanin: Agora Publishing, 2010

CZECH:

Páta loď
(The Fifth Boat)

Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2012

GERMAN:

Das fünfte Schiff
(The Fifth Boat)

Passau: Verlag Karl Stutz, 2014

ARABIC:

As Safina Al Khámisa
(The Fifth Boat)

Gizza: Sefsafa Publishing House, 2014

HUNGARIAN:

Az ötödik hajó
(The Fifth Boat)

Bratislava: Kalligram, 2016

Mélytengeri mesék
(Stories from the Deep Sea)

Budapest: Naphegy Kiadó, 2016



PHOTO (C) LUCIA GARDIN & LIC

Monika Kompaníková
Na sútoku

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Artforum,
Bratislava, 2016, 148 p.

ISBN: 978-80-8150-127-2



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Peter Macsovszky

Tantalópolis

In Brazil, when you stick a pencil in the ground, within a week it has grown into a jungle.

When you open this book, you will find yourself in another world. Its main character is Szoborkay, a Slovak Hungarian, who moves from Europe to the fictive Brazilian town of Tantalópolis, to work as a natural scientist in the university there. Szoborkay is a nomad, a loner, a distinguished person; after all, his knowledge of the fine arts, which thanks to his mother and girl cousins he has been cultivating since early childhood, is as wide as the Amazon. It is hardly surprising that his main problem is corporeality. In the foreground the narrative is a story of a middle-aged man settling down in a foreign geographical and cultural environment, where he comes up against the South American climate, its society and flourishing bureaucracy. He thus creates an insightful picture of a hot Latin American country. On a less obvious level *Tantalópolis* pays tribute to the disappearing world of Szoborkay's childhood, 20th century Europe. A special feature of the novel is the atypical sentence structure, which aims to disturb the text's own rhythm and thus hold the reader's attention. It is a book about the hot tropics, which will, however, give you pleasant cold chills.

“Without doubt the courage to try to discover through writing the reason for writing deserves respect. Not everyone is willing to risk writing. Just as not everyone is willing to adhere to the virtue of remaining silent. Texts ‘descend’ into the writer’s mind from the universe of other texts, so that later, after being captured on paper, they again blend in with other texts—whether in a kind of spiritual limbo and paradise, or in an earthly hell.”

Peter Macsovszky (1966)

Peter Macsovszky studied Slovak Language, Art and English at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra and later he lectured there on Aesthetics and Literary Criticism. As his mother tongue is Hungarian, he also writes in Hungarian. His literary debut in 1994 was a remarkable collection of textual collages *Strach z utópie* (Fear of Utopia), which immediately stirred up the stagnant waters of the contemporary Slovak poetic scene and won for him his first literary award—the Janko Kráľ Prize. He is the author of several other collections of experimental lyrical texts, for example, *Cvičná pitva* (Practice Autopsy, 1997), *Súmračná reč* (The Dark Speech, 1999) or *Tovar* (Goods, 2006), but he also entered the new millennium as a prose writer, and that with the novella *Frustraeón* (2000). Under the pseudonym of Petra Malúchová he wrote a controversial collection of poems *Súmrak cudnosti* (The Twilight of Virtue, 1996) and in cooperation with the writer Denisa Fulmeková *Klebetromán* (Gossipnovel, 2004). These were followed by *Lešenie a laná* (Scaffolding and Ropes, 2004), *Hromozvonár* (Thunder-ringer, 2008) and *Mykať kostlívami* (Shaking Skeletons, 2010). Peter Macsovszky’s latest literary work so far is the novel *Tantalópolis* (2015). The author makes use of the methods of conceptual art, the technique of textual assemblage, of textual collage and a complex experimental approach is typical of his work.



PHOTO (C) IVANA IVÁNOVÁ

Peter Macsovszky
Tantalópolis

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drewo a srd,
Bratislava, 2015, 276 p.

ISBN 978-80-8955-023-4



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Márius Kopcsay

Asvabazhdenie

A work of geopolitical grotesque fiction about events taking place from Crimea 2014 to Syria 2015. The protagonist struggles with the pessimism of the time, but would like to remain an optimist, although he himself is naturally sceptical.

Middle-aged Marek Pokorný is inundated with negative news from the world, in particular from Ukraine, as well as discussions on the social network which have an evident lack of common sense. Grotesque situations in life lead to consideration of whether we can be happy even in less happy times. In the book *Asvabažđenje* (*Asvabazhdenie*) the author has included a large number of minor characters: waiters, neighbours, a caretaker and colleagues. The book shows that any disillusioning reality can be described with humour, probably the best way of dealing with it. The protagonist discovers that development need not be only linear and positive. That liberation can also be occupation and that a person is his own best occupier. That it is possible to talk to a bag and go for walks with a hair dryer, that stars send us signs and that the whole universe is woven from emptiness.

“My mother complains that my books are depressing and full of vulgarisms. She says I should write an amusing book. I’m afraid I won’t manage that, but sometimes I wonder what a person must do to write an optimistic book. I might, however, like to write a children’s book. It would probably fulfil the first condition—it would be neither vulgar nor pessimistic. At least I hope so.”

Márius Kopcsay (1968)

Writer, journalist, scriptwriter and musician. His first published work was a collection of short stories *Kritický deň* (Critical Day, 1998), for which he was awarded the Ivan Krasko Prize. This was followed by *Stratené roky* (Lost Years, 2004), *Domov* (Home, 2005), *Zbytočný život* (Useless Life, 2006), *Mystifikátor* (Mystificator, 2008), *Medvedia skala* (Bear Rock, 2009), *Veselé príhody z prázdnin* (Funny Incidents from the Holidays, 2011), *Jednouholník* (Monogon, 2014) and *Asvabazhdénie* (Asvabazhdenie, 2015). Everyday life dominates his novels and his heroes live in constant fear that they will not survive; they are permanently occupied with solving practical problems; their lives are made up of unfulfilled ambitions and complexes, while they secretly long for a better lot. The grotesqueness of Kopcsay’s prose works is also intensified physiologically—through appearance and overall physique, which is accompanied by a loss of vitality and even chronic pains. He also deals idiosyncratically with the themes of home and family life. Instead of the traditional ideas of the “warm family hearth” we find only coldness, a feeling of estrangement and chaos. Sentimentality and moralism are alien to the author and he protects himself from them with functionally—used vulgarisms or the description of various physiological processes. In 2007 he was awarded the Anniversary Prize of the Association of Slovak Writers’ Communities and so far as many as five of his books have been shortlisted for the Slovak Anasoft Litera Prize. At present he is working as a journalist for the SME daily paper.

Translated titles:

CZECH:

Ztracené roky
(Lost Years)

Zlín: Kniha Zlín, Ing. Marek Turňa, 2008



PHOTO (C) LUCIA GARDIN & LIC

Márius Kopcsay
Asvabazhdenie

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Koloman Kertész Bagala,
Bratislava, 378 p.

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Iris Kopcsayová

Without Love

Some might say that this is a typical work by a woman intended for women readers. But the author's irony, even sarcasm, refreshing wit and sharp insight into the problem of male-female relationships guarantee an exceptional experience.

Do you want to know what marriage is all about? Would you like to compare your experience with that of somebody else? Are you a man? Or, on the contrary, are you a woman? And would you be interested to know how your other half regards relationships? Then this book would be an ideal Christmas or birthday gift for you. The main character, a woman without a name, remembers, maps and reconstructs her life and her marriage of twenty years. The central theme is her relations with her husband, a man without a name. Their getting to know each other, intimacy, the birth of their children, increasingly frequent conflicts, debts, his infidelity, her frustration, the slow transformation of partners into strangers, their gradual mutual alienation. In a marriage husbands who are intellectuals with artistic ambitions and forever struggling with economic difficulties, face enormous pressures and these, in combination with the husband's infidelity, are more than the family can take and the couple part, while staying in close contact. Despite the many difficulties they manage to bring up their two children successfully, apparently without problems. In spite of all the author's efforts to be objective, the book sounds like an unflattering report on men—and perhaps justifiably?

*“Does Michel Houellebecq write erotic novels?
Or does Lars von Trier shoot erotic films?
And yet the critics accuse them of pornography.
I have written a novel in which, apart from
frustration there is sex, as there is in life.
Originally it was meant to be an essayistic
novel. It probably got a little out of hand.”*

Iris Kopcsayová (1967)

Iris Kopcsayová was born in Bratislava, where she graduated in 1990 from the Faculty of Law, Comenius University. Since she finished her university studies she has worked as a journalist in print media, has cooperated with the Czech weekly Týden, and has written scripts for successful television programmes. She also wrote the storylines and scripts for the crime series *V mene zákona* (In the Name of the Law) and *Prvé oddelenie* (First Department). She is active in the civic association *Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť* (Citizen, Democracy and Responsibility.) The novel *Bez lásky* (Without Love, 2015) is her book debut.



PHOTO (C) ZUZANA GAVULOVA

Iris Kopcsayová
Bez lásky

Published by:
drewo a srd,
Bratislava, 2015, 302 p.

ISBN: 978-80-5560-271-4



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Peter Pišťanek

Recipes from the Family Archive

Family recipes, culinary treasures, the majority of which were collected by the writer's grandfather, who before the war was a high-class waiter and globe-trotter and under socialism a village innkeeper. Peter Pišťanek comments in an inimitable way on their origin and the period with which they are associated.

The author makes use of the cookery book form in his own 'search for lost times'. Each of the recipes is accompanied by a commentary that draws on memories from the author's childhood, spent in the proximity of a brick factory. The atmosphere of the book is therefore one of awareness of the irretrievability of the past and sadness over the disappearance of cherished places. Sometimes these commentaries take the form of short episodes, at other times they are merely small observations, descriptions of the setting or situation the author associates with different dishes. The criteria for the selection of the recipes is for the most part their unusualness (Tube Pan Cake Made from Beans) and by far the greatest attention is paid in the book to sweet dishes (Chocolate Ecstasy), which the child gourmet remembers most vividly. The circumstances in which some of the recipes were acquired are also of interest; they earn respect for those who acquired them. Rivalling the sweet dishes are the "manly" ones that the author associates with his gourmet grandfather, or are the kind that people usually only appreciate in adulthood. This book confirmed Peter Pišťanek's appetite for experimenting with, and for sketching in a masterly and unusual way, not only the dishes themselves, but also the rituals, social atmosphere and customs connected with their preparation which he also portrays most originally.

“I felt that I was swimming in foreign waters, that I was improvising and imitating. At the same time, something was whispering to me, telling me that those waters must have an end—that if I didn’t give up, I would successfully cross them and find myself and my own voice.”

Peter Pišťanek (1960–2015)

Peter Pišťanek studied Film Script Writing. In the eighties he was co-founder of the cult music group Devínska Nová Vec. In the nineties he became editor-in-chief of the first Slovak internet magazine, inZine. At the end of the eighties he began to contribute to the magazine *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak Views). In 1991 his first book appeared under the title of *Rivers of Babylon*, in which he was the first Slovak author to offer a new type of literature based on an original combination of ‘classical’ and ‘peripheral’ genres. Other works we could mention are a volume of novellas *Mladý Dôňč* (Young Dôňč, 1993), a collection of short stories *Skazky o Vladovi pre veľkých a malých* (Tales of Vlado the Great, 1995) or the novel *Rukojemník* (The Hostage, 2014). Together with the Slovak prose writer Dušan Taragel he published a collection of short stories in 1999 entitled *Sekerou & nožom* (With an Axe and Knife). On more than one occasion Peter Pišťanek drew inspiration from the area where he lived, which lay between a large town and the countryside. His early works are characterised by straightforward narration and fast-moving plots; instead of psychological analysis, he wrote his works impersonally and laconically. Terseness and ironic observations on Slovak reality are typical of his style. Very precise descriptions are for the most part to be found in his later work, which is, however, also marked by a greater tendency towards emotiveness and bitter sentiment. Several Slovak films have been based on his works. In the book *Recepty z rodinného archívu* (Recipes from the Family Archive) he explores the relationship between food and memory.

Translated titles:

CZECH:

**Muzika
(Music)**

Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2008

Rivers of Babylon 1

Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2009

Rivers of Babylon 2

Zlín: Kniha Zlín, 2011

**Rukojmí. Lokomotivy v dešti
(The Hostage)**

Praha: Nakladatelství Slovart, 2014

ENGLISH:

Rivers of Babylon 1

London: Garnett Press, 2007

Rivers of Babylon 2 – The Wooden Village

London: Garnett Press, 2008

Rivers of Babylon 3 – The End of Freddy

London: Garnett Press, 2008

TURKISH:

Babil’ in Nehirleri

(Rivers of Babylon 1)

Istanbul: Pupa, 2009

SERBIAN:

Rivers of Babylon

Beograd: IP Dobar naslov, 2011

SPANISH:

Nuevos estropicuentos de Claudio para principitos y elefantes

(New Tales of Vlado)

Madrid: Ediciones Xorki, 2012

HUNGARIAN:

Egy szlovák vendéglős kedvenc receptjei

(Recipes from the Family Archive)

Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2016



PHOTO (C) LUCIA GARDIN & LIC

Peter Pišťanek

Recepty z rodinného archívu

Published by:

Koloman Kertész Bagala,
2003, 88 p.

ISBN: 978-80-8912-904-1



Translation Rights:

LITA, autorská spoločnosť
lita@lita.sk

Jaro Rihák

Pentcho. The Story of a Steamboat

A story about five hundred people, mostly young Jews, sailing down the Danube and across the sea on a river steamboat in 1940 in an attempt to reach Palestine. The author has drawn on the narratives of passengers on the boat. It is a historical story, but it happens in every period. Yesterday to them, today to me, tomorrow to you.

The date is 1940. If someone decides to sail 1 868 kilometres from Bratislava to the mouth of the Danube, on a rusty river steamboat written off as scrap, it is a long voyage. If someone wants to sail on a Danube steamboat from the mouth of the Danube another 2 400 kilometres on the Black Sea, in order to cross the Mediterranean to Haifa, that takes courage. And in this way four hundred people crowded onto the little fifty-metre steamboat Pentcho, which set out from Bratislava's Winter Port. A few days later it took on board a further hundred prisoners from the Dachau concentration camp who wanted to reach what was then British Palestine. It was wartime and the only route still open to them was a voyage along the international river, the Danube. All that was necessary was a visa to Paraguay, not to get off the boat onto the river bank, to go hungry and to trust the one-legged captain. It was one of the most daring journeys ever made in the history of sailing. An almost-forgotten story, written according to the authentic accounts of the participants. Europe had turned her back on them and they turned their backs on her. Nowadays the story of the voyage takes on quite new dimensions.

“The story touches me personally. It touches me just as much as the stories of those who are at this moment rocking on the waves of the Mediterranean, dying, going hungry and dreaming of Europe, in precisely the same way as the heroes of the Pentcho steamboat once dreamed.”

Jaro Rihák (1951)

A graduate in directing from Prague's Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU), he is the author of documentary and fiction films for television, as well as radio plays. *Pentcho. Príbeh parníka* (Pentcho. The Story of a Steamboat) was originally written as the screenplay for a film, *Na druhú stranu*, for which the author won the main prize of the Czech RWE & Barrandov Studio Film Foundation. Coproduction partners are now being sought for its making. An extended version of the screenplay was published in book form and this reached the final round of the prestigious literary prize Anasoft Litera 2016. The author lives in Devín, a suburb of Bratislava, situated on the 1880th kilometre of the River Danube.



PHOTO (C) ADAM RIHÁK

Jaro Rihák

Pentcho. Príbeh parníka

Published by:

Marenčin PT, Bratislava, 2015, 330 p.

Sandberg Film, Bratislava, 2015

ISBN:978-80-8114-495-0



Translation Rights:

Jaro Rihák

jarorihak@gmail.com

Vanda Rozenbergová

Freedom to Pheasants

The collection of short stories Freedom for Pheasants is a mosaic of narratives about little saviours of the world, self-appointed detectives, voyeurs and also domestic despots. The collection has no lack of imagination, of the absurd, of the bizarre or of everyday rituals.

Altaluna makes her parents buy her a dog, which she trains to attack a neighbour she has seen tormenting a dog. Artur freezes various juices and keeps supplies for the household in case the end of the world should come. A woman with the nickname Swallow every day from the balcony watches a sleeping neighbour and longs to have her solitary life. The survival kit that a grannie has been carrying around for years in her handbag also has its significance, as does the concurrence of chance events. The collection of short stories *Freedom for Pheasants* reveals what goes on in families behind their garden fences or the walls of prefabricated flats. The topic of many of them is hidden psychological abuse and the relationship between the tormentor and the victim. It speaks of infidelity, revenge, the craving for justice, as well as of finding a way of escape. The heroes of the stories often fight for justice, which they try to achieve in an original way. It is a book you will want to read at one sitting.

“Sometimes it is impossible to define the borderline, because the victim is not aware of the abuse.”

Vanda Rozenbergová (1971)

Writer, painter and bibliographer. She studied journalism and has experienced various occupations. She has worked as a teacher, has prepared tenders for wooden window frames and has also earned a living working in a betting shop. At present she works as a bibliographer in a library in the Slovak town of Prievidza. She has three times been a finalist in the short story competition *Poviedka* (Short Story, 2001, 2005, 2006). As an author she has contributed literary texts to the radio prose serial *Minimomán* (Mininovel). In 2011 she published a collection of short stories *Vedľajšie účinky chovu drobných hlodavcov* (The Side Effects of Breeding Small Rodents), in 2012 a novel *Moje more* (My Sea) and three years later another collection of stories in prose entitled *Slobodu bažantom* (Freedom for Pheasants), which reached the final round of the literary competition Anasoft Litera 2016.



Vanda Rozenbergová
Slobodu bažantom

Published by:
Slovart, Bratislava, 2015, 198 p.

ISBN: 978-80-556-1454-0



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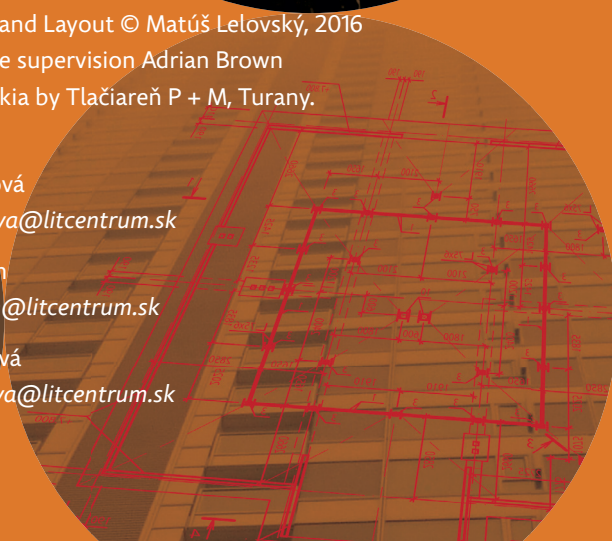
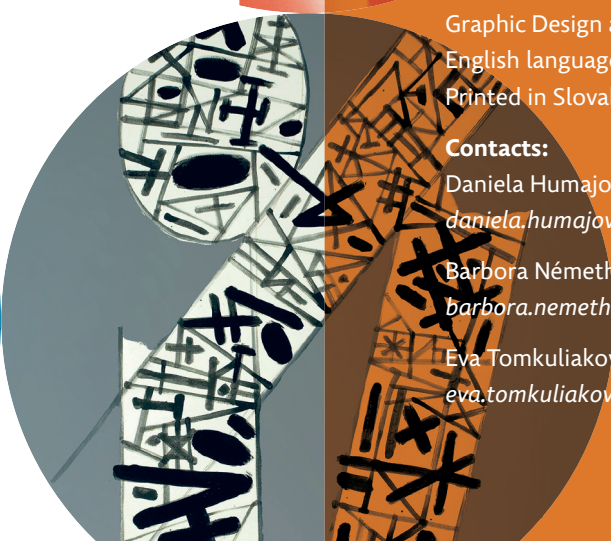
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УКБАГАЛА

PETER BALKO

Vtedy v Lošonci

· VIA LOŠONC ·



PRO LIBRIS

Yes, I was in love and I was proud of it!

If there was someone in my surroundings, however, who could wear the word pride stitched on their shirt as a sign of perfection, it was Bielik of the fourth year. A twinkle would come into the eye of all parents, neighbours, lumberjacks, plumbers and down-and-outs just at the sight of the young buck. He had golden hair, the legs of a tractor driver and just the right arrangement of freckles for all the girls to think he was sensitive but not overly so, a bit rough-and-ready but not aggressive, a good talker but not one who never knew when to shut up. In the school magazine he came first in a poll for the most beautiful nape, dry and wet hair and even little fingernails. He was a keen gymnast and there was talk of him riding a motorbike at nights without wearing a helmet. That was why every girl wanted to bear his children and every boy to bask in his reflected glory. If our school had been a henhouse, Bielik would have been a beautiful Hellenistic broiler.

He was the leader of a notorious Lučenec gang of little vagabonds and sociopaths with whom Kápia and I had fought many legendary battles in our struggle to gain control of the southern district. Kápia was a feared fighter and had left his toothmarks in the bodies of many a young upstart but thanks to my general clumsiness and lack of fighting skills (which began and ended with threats and spitting), we lost every scrap we ever got into. After each ignominious defeat we would lie on the ground listening to Bielik's haughty snigger and feeling the hot urine of the conquerors on our faces. But we would always bounce back and carry on where we had left off, confident that one day Bielik would get his comeuppance.

Unfortunately Alica also fell for Bielik. And that wasn't just a figment of my lovesick imagination but a fact which they confirmed in the school corridor during a break in the lessons one day. They were locked together, breathless and happy and I could feel my gallbladder bursting. I wanted to die a tragic death, there and then on the spot. But I lived on, watching Bielik's long fingers playing with her hair, rubbing, en passant, the pointy tips of her breasts where they were clearly planning to soon settle. Such was the cruel geometry of rivals at primary school.

"If you want, we can kill him," said Kápia, belching loud to signal his intent. "But we'll have to wait till spring. The ground is frozen hard at the moment. We'd have nowhere to bury him. What do you say?"

The third question: where do Chuck Norris' parents come from?

I was again made the standing joke during P.E. We had rope climbing and the teacher got so angry that after the lesson he left me hanging from the rings for a full ten minutes...



Irena Brežná Nevďačná
cudzinka



ASPEKT 

We moved into a flat in a new building at the edge of the town. My parents got jobs on the twelfth floor in a company that produced synthetic dyes. Mummy was proud of the fact that thanks to her the world was becoming more colourful. With their first wages we went to buy some furniture. In the cellar of a house the owner showed us some sturdy second-hand furniture, but when he told us how much he wanted for it, Mummy shook her head and tutted. The closer the owner looked at us, the sadder he became. And as if it might cheer him up, he lowered the prices. He lowered them so much that Mummy now only nodded in agreement. In our presence this man was ashamed of his little house and his peaceful life; he was ashamed that he could do nothing about the injustice that had befallen our country, and he was profoundly ashamed to see how delighted Mummy was with his furniture. Although he was moved, he didn't overdo it and he didn't humiliate us with ridiculous prices. I didn't know that such decent shame existed, but it was just that that welcomed us to this foreign country in the midst of all this bourgeois junk. And as is the custom at welcoming ceremonies, we also received a gift. When I asked the price of a red Kelim rug, the man lifted it from the floor as gently as if it were a new-born baby and said, "It's yours".

He didn't sigh and he didn't press a wet kiss on my forehead. In this way I learned that here good feelings camouflage themselves and hide quietly like partisans. In the evening I lay down on the Kelim rug and wept. From that time on tears visited me once a week; I opened the door to them and we spent the whole night together. One such night I realised that I was rich. I had something that the ashamed man lacked: I had a tragic fate. I didn't have to worry that I might lose it, and I didn't have to try to increase its value. A tragic fate was stable property. People who had only known little misfortunes were always fretting over all kinds of silly little things.

Rudolf Dobiáš

Príbehy z prítmnia



Gloomy Green

(...)

A man's distant voice somewhere at the other end of the world was melancholically calling: "Hello. Hello. Hello." He infected me and I repaid him in the same coin.

"Hello."

The voice at the other end of the continent brightened up.

"Hello!" It sang sweetly.

"Hello," I echoed dully.

"Who's there?" The foreign accent in that voice could be felt like garlic in goulash.

"Bizub," I said. "Who's calling?"

"Hoffart. Peter."

The name meant nothing to me. And yet I had a feeling it was like a burnt stain on the bottom of the pot of my memory. Hoffart? My brain began to turn slowly on its axis. It examined clues, sniffed at the decades, browsed in yellowing files. Hoffart?

"What do you want, please, Mr Hoffart?"

"Celo? Celo Bizub?"

"Celo." I recalled a game from childhood... Warm, warm, cold, cold. I felt hot. Beads of sweat poured down my forehead. A little stream flowed down my back. At the other end of the wire (I don't know why I imagine a wire stretched out between me and the caller) hoarse laughter could be heard. The trail in my memory was becoming clearer and clearer. I was confused by the fact that this laughter sounded bawdy, unfamiliar, really disgusting. Then a face flashed in the mirror of my memory.

"Kamagore!" I cried out aghast.

"I've found you at last." Hoffart stopped laughing. The relief in his voice was the answer to all my as yet unspoken questions. "I was beginning to think you were no longer alive. I'm really glad I've found you, kamagore."

"In the camp everyone called him Kamagore," I said.

"Kamagore?" The fellow on my right slowly shook his head, mystified. "That's nonsense. Do you know what that word means?"

Should I explain to him that I had never tried to discover the meaning of that word? For me it had a universal meaning. It was a form of address, a greeting, a curse, an oath, a secret instruction. It didn't mean anything, and yet it meant everything. And on each occasion I understood it differently.

Reflux

Nieкто cudzí je v dome

Zuska
Kepplová

ЖК Bagala

Sometimes she wondered what her mum might sound like on drugs. There was a time when she and her brother Fero had been dying to slip into their mum's fruit juice something that would change her beyond recognition, to mix her a cocktail that would make her fast and agile, or spoilt and cuddly, or make her sit down at the kitchen table and brood, with her fingers tracing the flowers of the latticed pattern on the tablecloth.

"Remember that urban legend which says that if you wash down 'E' with blueberry juice you're gonna die?"

They could have done it but they blew their chance! If mum had known, if she'd only known... but do parents ever have an inkling that rather than bringing up their offspring they had, in fact, only had a narrow escape, managed to get away in one piece: any object will do to hit, stab, stun, poison or at least stain someone! Once Eva had hurled a tomato at her mum with all her might and then claimed that it was a Spanish tradition.

"But Eva, I'm in a different place now," Fero said, sounding rather confused on the phone, his voice lower than usual all of a sudden, something inside him seemed to have snapped as he glanced in the rear-view mirror and changed lanes. "Don't even dream of telling this to anyone."

"What, the thing about blueberry juice?"

"You know what I mean, and don't even dream of it!"

Yet Eva was certain that you could tell just by looking at him: "Fero, anyone who's been through that kind of thing, which means every other person under forty, can tell if they take one look at you!" Maybe the Koreans can't tell, Fero hoped. "You've got bulging eyes, you rave about unimportant stuff, you prattle on and make things up, then something flips inside you and you're at a party, standing by a fish tank with billfish lit by a blue spotlight, a bottle of mineral water in your hand, jabbering about life, how you're planning to hitchhike to Spain or the Senec Lakes or whatever, knowing full well that none of this will matter the next morning, you rattle away at the Koreans and seem committed, ambition makes you clench your teeth at night but it's all just a flashback converted into hard work interrupted by fresh surges of ideas, you switch between windows and never quite finish anything except when you force yourself, when you give yourself a kick up the arse, but in the meantime you give the appearance of a dynamic staff member keen to participate in everything, support everything and go wherever they send you and since you picked the right moment to switch from dope to the gym and landed a job, you now have the energy to give it your all, but this ALL is just the same as when you wouldn't stop dancing in front of the speaker even after the lights had been turned on and the cleaning lady tried to push you out with her broom, but after she turned on her vacuum you started dancing again and screamed let's go to the Costa del Sol (or Senec?)."



Monika Kompaníková

Na sútoku

Artforum

We are laughing on our way back and the atmosphere in the car, so thick you could have cut it with a knife only a minute ago, is suddenly clear and fresh. The tyres crush frost-stiffened tree branches and stalks of grass, then skid along the potholed tarmac and for the remaining ten minutes glide down a high-grade road that feels as though it's November, five degrees warmer than the soil up in the woods. The time that's Hanka's own is running out, it can be measured in minutes. Once his car has pulled up in one of the streets near the school, I will have to leave the gentle, playful, Hanka behind in the passenger seat and shoehorn myself into the shape of a dependable mother of a young second grader, a dependable daughter of a dying father, and a dependable clerk at a legal advice bureau. The car door slams shut, metal clangs on metal, the car leaves.

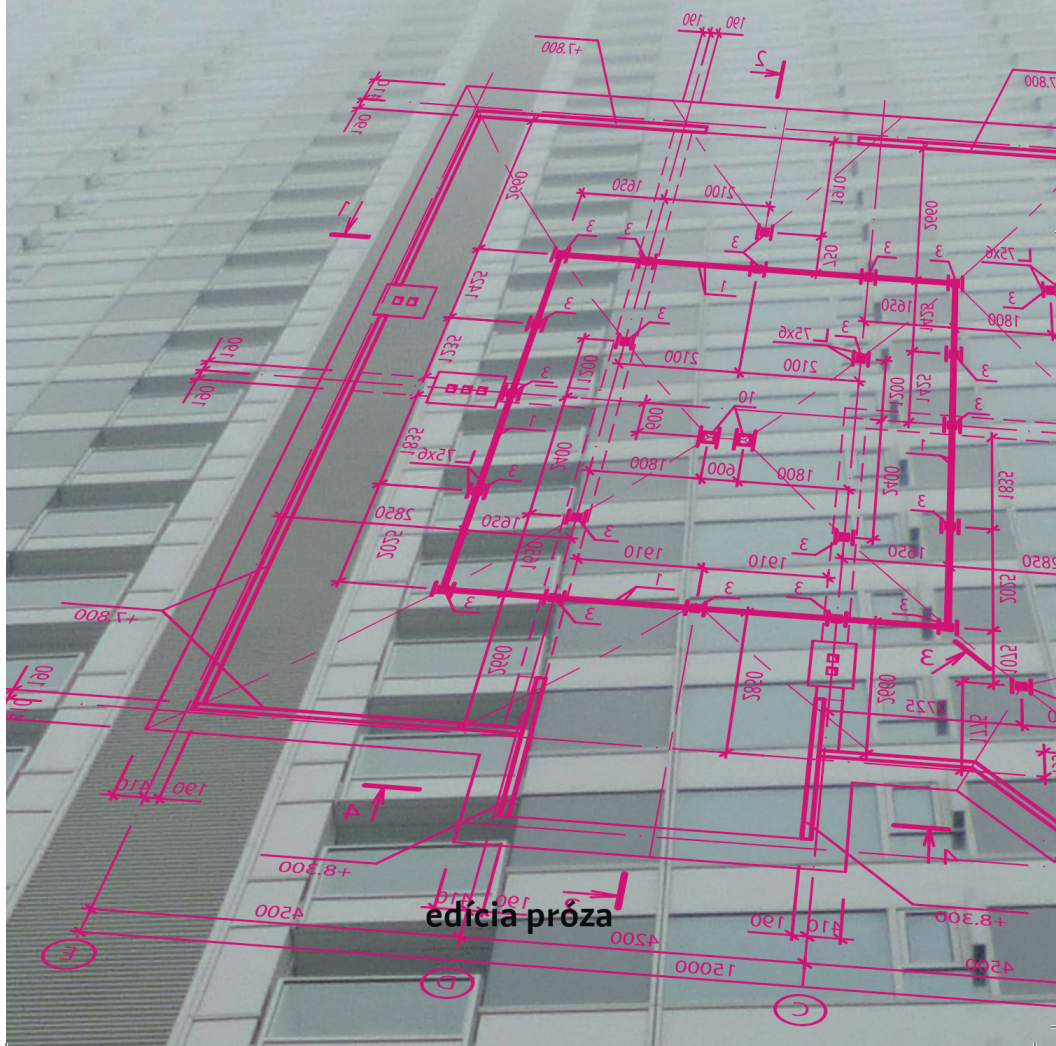
I spend the last five minutes of the drive getting ready for this transformation; I must be graceful and walk away serenely like a stag in the woods. I mustn't think of the complicated scenario, only of the two people I haven't chosen myself and who haven't chosen me, the only two people in this world with whom I am spending my time because I have to. Everyone else can always take a step back and wait, I can also wait if I must. I feel lousy, I hate everything around me and everything that's stuffed inside me, all the self-pity that's engulfing my head, everything outside the windows of the moving car, the road, the streets, the school, school concerts, work, clocks, the speedometer, the green light at the junction. What would happen if I stayed on for another five, ten minutes ... what would happen if for once I wasn't on time and spent those few minutes on myself?

He pulls up in a narrow residential street behind the school. A married couple rush past, the parents of one of my son's classmates. They rush past only to remind me that the school concert is about to begin and that they haven't put on their coats just to make me realise that this important place is so close, it's right here, only a few steps away, there's no need to put your coat on, the cloakroom will be full anyway. I hate full cloakrooms and people who don't feel the cold.

The car purrs and time flows away so fast it's not worth turning the ignition key and switching the engine off. The silence would only spark off another conversation, something neither of us wants right now. I need much more time for a proper conversation. "Off you go or you'll be late," he urges me and I turn away offended because I was hoping to hear something quite different. "I'll give you a call when I'm back," he adds with an encouraging smile. By now the dependable parents must have taken their seats on the wooden bench in the gym and started checking how much space is left on their camera's memory card...

PETER MACSOVSZKY

TANTALÓPOLIS



edícia próza

(16) The flight from Paris to São Paulo takes slightly more than eleven hours. One day such a length of time will seem incredible. Rather like the adventure of Count Lesdain now seems to us. According to Hanzelka and Zikmund. It took him 37 days. To drive his car from Rio to São Paulo in 1908.

Hanzelka and Zikmund write in the same book that. If the road is dry, a good car can now complete the same journey in just eight hours.

In 1993 when Szoborkay flew across the Atlantic for the first time—to New York—he felt like he was dreaming. Eight or nine hours in the air? In the huge torso of a jumbo jet? He couldn't believe it was possible even after an hour and a half sitting there with his seatbelt fastened. He had to pinch himself. At that time he had no doubts about the limits of reality: he knew that walking across his home town was a reality but to sit in a jumbo jet heading for America was nothing less than madness. It simply should never have happened. Only God knew where it would all end up.

In the two decades that followed, however, Szoborkay's perceptions greatly changed and now what for others is just everyday routine has become for him a muffled and blurred film in which he feels like a stranger. And what is an unreal, unattainable or dangerous event for others—a flight to São Paulo, for example—has become something quite mundane. He wishes he could go back, so that the everyday could feel that way again and the exotic regain its old stamp of adventure!

It occurs to Szoborkay that he thinks that way because his senses have become dulled. Only now does it dawn on him that journeys to far-off destinations may have lost their glamour not just to him but also to the whole world. Just think how many more airline connections there are now than in 1977, for example, when he flew to Karlovy Vary, or in 1993. Since then everything has proliferated and become available to so many more people and thus the glamour of many things has now disappeared. To fly from one place to another doesn't really impress anybody anymore. Instead the world has started to admire people who choose to cycle to some distant country or go on foot. To walk two thousand kilometres, wear out several pairs of sports shoes and then have your photo taken with a hermit at the foot of a rocky mountain—now that is something. Or even better: to simply remain sitting on your ass. The world will come to you and take your photo.

Szoborkay has no need for other people's admiration. Though, nor even their interest. All he wants is peace. Hence this long journey, hence this long, slow, drawn out escape. Everyday wisdom says that you can't run away from yourself. With the right will, though—and some skill—there are still many things. You can run away from. So why not give it a try?

The plane starts to descend and lights can be seen far below. In less than an hour, the plane will land at Guarulhos international airport. There is still time, however, for it to fall from the sky and crash on to that endless carpet of skyscrapers that gave Szoborkay such a sense of euphoria when he saw it for the first time a year ago.

Szoborkay wonders how he would divide the passengers into different groups. According to how they react to flying. He quickly comes up with four categories: 1. People who are afraid of flying; 2. people who are not and therefore act with total assurance; 3. people who are in a constant state of indecision and are not sure whether to enjoy the flight or be frightened; and 4. people who enjoy flying.

He then divides the first group into subcategories: a) those who are afraid from the start of the flight to the end; b) those who are only afraid of take-off and landing; c) those who are only afraid of turbulence; d) those who are afraid of stomach problems caused by the cabin food; e) those who are afraid of a lack of air and subsequent panic attack when a long, motionless queue of heavily breathing and sweaty bodies builds up in the aisle; f) those who are afraid that they will have noisy passengers or parents with naughty children sitting either next to them, in front of them or behind them.

The following types belong to the second group: a) those who act with assurance because flying has become merely routine and events going on around are of no interest to them; b) those who behave nonchalantly in the hope that everyone will see them; c) those who are very self-confident, whistle to themselves and then suddenly stumble or bang into a seated passenger with their carry-on luggage; d) those who keep getting up during a flight to see if they don't have any acquaintances on board.

Members of this group include robust American women flying with a children's choir to a festival in some remote place with a name impossible to memorize. There is no question they will have reserved their seats in advance and had a choice of where to sit so heaven only knows why they haven't been placed next to one another but instead behind each other, diagonally where possible. And so over their shoulders and the heads of the people next to them. They converse with one another, their expert. Piercing voices occasionally ticking off one of their charges. Then they order a glass of champagne with a wink at their co-passengers and a coy smile. Perhaps they realize how loud they are but they go on gesticulating and make no effort to turn down the volume.

The third category is made up of the most unpredictable passengers. Who could be divided into so many different subcategories that Szoborkay decides not even to attempt it. Instead he draws up some very roughly defined sub-groups: a) those who remain vaguely unsure of themselves throughout the whole flight; b) those who are edgy only during the commotion of take-off and landing; c) those whose behaviour reflects their moods: from convulsions of laughter to noisy remarks and comments right through to anxious, heaving silences.

Although members of this third category are, in Szoborkay's eyes, distinguished by a high level of unpredictability, the very worst passengers are still those who belong to category number four. Because these (i.e. the ones who enjoy flying) love to behave theatrically, pathetically, assertively, arrogantly. They recline their seats as far back as they can, endlessly call the air hostess, rustle their newspapers, holler, guffaw and consume as much as their bodies can ingest. Szoborkay has never understood the behaviour of such nuisances and is not convinced by the explanation that this is how they cope with their fear, insecurity and anxiety when in the close company of a multitude of strangers.

And which category would he, Szoborkay, put himself in? Or would he create a special category exclusively for himself? Or could he belong to each of the four categories depending on where he was flying, for what purpose and under what conditions? Or depending on the length of the flight and his state of mind when boarding the plane and when leaving it?

No, he is no incomprehensible law unto himself; he doesn't oscillate between categories. Szoborkay belongs to a special subcategory: the rather weak and heterogeneous group of passengers who can remain silent even during turbulence.

Turbulence does not bother him. The only thing which does bother him about flying are his fellow passengers. He is bothered by their fear. Because fear. Their deep, underlying, collective fear. Is the trigger of all the childish acts which passengers commit regardless of whether the flight takes forty-five minutes or eleven hours and of whether the planes is flying over inhabited regions, forests, mountains or the ocean.

The more Szoborkay flies—whether as tourist, visitor, spiritual explorer, academic or pedagogue—the more he feels he would be happy to die in an air crash: it would be a quick, comfortable and rather noble death. If he was travelling to a conference, for instance, and his plane was to plummet into the endless Atlantic or into the orange clay of the equally endless Brazilian bush, the academic community would see his death as a sacrifice at the altar of science.



УК БАГАЛА

MÁRIUS KOPCSAY

Asvabaždénie

GEOPOLITICKÁ GROTESKA



Let's say NO to Putin! Someone issued the call on Facebook and Marek Pokorný imagined how Putin would blanch when he learned that a petition against him had been signed not only by František Šebej and Štefan Hríb but even by Marek Pokorný himself. Momentarily he pondered whether to join in the discussion, but in the end he didn't post anything, since he thought it a futile discussion and petition and, supposing he signed, a worthless signature. At the same time he was conscious that someone who rarely signs few petitions is risking social isolation. Especially in today's world, where instead of differentiated thinking increasingly there are categorical judgments, and whoever cannot pronounce them in public discussion loses not only the ground under his feet but even his entitlement to live.

Whoever criticises Putin is an American imperialist.

Whoever criticises the Americans is a Putinist and a Russophile.

Whoever opposes the activities of the Alliance for the Family is considered an antinomian liberal and propagator of moral downfall.

And whoever thinks that adoption of children by homosexuals may have its perils is seen as a bigoted, intolerant, Catholic.

In the spirit of present-day logic Marek Pokorný was obliged to adjudge himself a pro-Putin American imperialist, a decadent amoral Catholic free-thinker with homosexual and homophobic inclinations, and a heartless right-winger simmering with Communist resentments.

That was why he had no friends and, worse still, no admirers. What good is a friend to anyone if he doesn't give admiration? Marek would exchange all friendships for a few minutes' glory, without a qualm. But no one set any value on his opinions, which were too complicated; after two sentences no one wanted to listen to him any more, because it wasn't clear what current, grouping or financial combination their exponent should be identified with.

But that's just incidentally, to keep the story going while Marek, as his instant coffee was cooling, watched from his window the eccentric emeritus professor Fekiač and his even more eccentric dog in action, which is to say sniffing the terrain. When he'd drunk his coffee he went through his morning exercises, strangled his belly with an implacable one-metre tape measure, showered, not looking in the bathroom mirror (what a beautiful time it had been when he didn't need to fear this sight) and since this was the start of his day off he devoted himself to activities for which otherwise, when engaged in the editors' office, he never had time.

“On the eve of war in 1914 people were drinking coffee, carefree, just like you are now, Marek. But after a hundred years we're back where we were, on the threshold of another century, the most hopeless and bloodiest yet...”



IRIS KOPCSAYOVÁ
BEZ LÁSKY

Ženský román pre silné nátury

edícia próza

The woman discovered that banks only regarded her as a trustworthy customer if she was not unemployed, if she was not in a trial or notice period and if she had not failed to maintain regular payment of loan instalments. When all these things happened to her, she found herself in disgrace and she could not count on the banks to help her.

It didn't even help when she at last found a job. It was not really how much she was earning that interested the banks; they didn't like the fact that she was in a trial period and only had a fixed-term contract. She therefore got the employer to change her work contract and waited until her first four salaries were paid into her bank account. Just as the banks had instructed. However, when she asked the banks for a loan, they informed her that at least three months had to pass from the time she had failed to maintain her loan payments. When the requested three months had also passed, the banks told her that this still wasn't enough and that she would have to pay on time for a longer period. Then they would see. At least half a year, they said.

The woman obediently met all the banks' requirements. But each time they came up with a fresh condition, fresh obstacles; they demanded the fulfilment of more and more conditions before the woman could wipe out the black points she had accumulated with them and which—it seemed to her—they delighted in recording beside her name. When she already had the feeling that she had carried out all these tasks, they announced that she could not get a fresh loan because she had too many already. It was like being in an enchanted kingdom or in Kafka's Castle. Of course she had too many loans. While the banks refused to lend to her, she kept taking more and more loans with excessive interest rates from non-banking financial institutions and she hoped that she would one day replace these with more favourable loans from the banks, which she would pay off when her husband's income increased, which according to him should happen very soon. But it didn't.

In this way she was always drowning in debt. Although she didn't find her work satisfying, it gave her at least some feeling of confidence. Confidence that she would be able to pay off at least some of her debts. And apart from that, she thought, she was sitting in an editorial office, in a warm room, at a computer, so what more could she want? After all, she told herself day after day there were so many people in the world who were doing worse things and earning less than she was.

Peter Pišťanek
RECEPTY
z rodinného archívu



Chocolate Ecstasy

When I browse through Grandad's archive of recipes, I'm sometimes astonished what varied and exotic dishes I find in it. And from what varied and exotic sources they come. The recipes I like best are the now yellowing ones cut out from various ancient magazines. You read mysterious bits of articles on the back and suddenly regret that the whole text has not survived. This recipe comes from some American or English magazine and Grandad cut it out together with the headline ECSTASY IN CHOCOLATE!

As in my childhood (about 35 years ago) we didn't have a freezer, but only a small freezer compartment in the refrigerator, Grandad had to freeze his cake on the window sill. If for no other reason, this cake became an exclusively Christmas event in our family. I remember that one time the tits had a good peck at it. Other times we had a mild winter and the temperature didn't go below freezing during the Christmas holidays. Then there was no cake. Fortunately, nowadays we don't have to rely on natural frost. We have a freezer. It's a pity Grandad didn't live to see it.

Ingredients:

3 large bars of plain chocolate
50 ml water
8 eggs
100 g vanilla sugar



Melt the chocolate in a basin over hot water, stir and add a little water to make it smooth. Add the sugar, remove from the heat and leave to cool a little. Add the egg yolks and stir well. In the meantime whisk the egg whites until stiff and stir a couple of spoonfuls into the chocolate mixture to make it lighter. Then carefully fold the chocolate mixture into the whisked egg whites.

Grease a smallish round tin and dust with sugar. Pour half the mixture into it to form a 3-4 cm layer. Bake in the oven for about 25 minutes at 200° C. Put the rest of the mixture in the refrigerator.

When baked, turn the base out, leave to cool and then put it in the freezer for an hour. The middle will sink and form a bowl-like depression. Pour the cooled chocolate mixture into it and leave the whole cake overnight in a cool place.

Before serving, decorate with whipped cream and grated chocolate.

JARO RIHÁK

PENTCHO

PRÍBEH PARNÍKA

MARENČINPT & SANDBERG Film



– May I point out, Captain, that tomorrow is the beginning of a major Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur? You must stop working... People ought to start getting ready.

Markeyevich is lost for words. Yes, this is the same man who joked about the mine. The Captain grows serious and turns to Citron.

– Mr Citron, if this man isn't down on the lower deck where he belongs within three seconds I'll have him locked up in the engine room and tied to a hot boiler! Do you want to survive? You can celebrate your holiday if we survive. Is that clear?

Despite his active protestations the men lead the teacher down to the men's deck. Ali stands on the captain's bridge, surveying the sea through a pair of binoculars. He spots something and shouts.

– Land ahoy! Captain! An island!

Exactly where the Captain predicted it a small strip of distant land has appeared. Just at that moment the men finish erecting the mast, the women are done sewing. The old Singer machine has gone quiet. Greta, Lila and the young Polish women bring the sails.

– Here are the sails, Captain!

Markeyevich picks the men to be in charge of the jib and the mainsail. He shows them how to hold the towlines and where to tie the rope. He attaches a small strip of canvas to a steel cable. The scrap of fabric flutters in the wind. The wind direction is favourable. Everyone on board watches the Captain intently.

– Unfurl the sails! Steering wheel to southwest!

The Captain watches the sails in suspense. They are too small for the iron steamboat but the wind has picked up in the meantime, the sails unfurl slowly, and Pentcho begins to move. Professor Haas hums an Italian song he has recently learned, whose lyrics speak of sailors and sails on the horizon "that are just an illusion". Karol joins in, Berliner goes to fetch his fiddle and soon the others join in singing the chorus.

Karchi bends over the prow and sees the steamboat slowly parting the waves. He turns around and shouts happily, so the whole boat can hear.

– We're sailing! We're a sailing boat...

"October 8th. Everyone has been talking about the holy day of Yom Kippur. My Mum has been looking forward to it, too. Nobody knew where and how we would celebrate it. Now we know. On the island!"



SLOBODU BAŽANTOM

VANDA ROZENBERGOVÁ



Ruben's Birthday

She is an interesting woman in every way. She has graceful manners, puts a napkin in her lap when she eats, applies hand cream whenever necessary and cleans her silver earrings in a special solution every month. She doesn't make any special demands but is happy just to sit in her room reading books and drawing circles. Occasionally she feels a sharp pain in her calves, a memory, perhaps, of the times when she still worshipped her husband and hoped that he would rub menthol cream into her feet and into the rest of her body. She looks very pretty even though she has just come out of hospital. It is thanks to her lifestyle; nourishing creams have kept her skin firm and a simple diet kept her slim. A few days in hospital will not change that. The only thing which really shows her age is her hair. It's grey—almost white—and she has it tied up in a bun.

Vanda's grandmother draws circles and writes down events inside them because she is interested in the theory of chance. If the events are connected, she joins them together with arrows that are not always visible at first glance. Vanda has been watching her do this since she was very small; she is, thank God, a born pupil and absorbs the flow of her grandmother's words with all her senses. "You'll receive an invitation to Paris," says Grandma. "You won't even consider going. It's expensive and you are afraid of flying. That same day you'll take a taxi to the dentist and the first song you hear once you get in will be in French. Then in the waiting-room, the only free seat will be next to a woman with a Paris logo on her t-shirt. And then when you get into the dentist's chair, he will say to you: 'How are you, Madame?' None of that would seem strange to you were it not for the fact that the invitation to Paris had arrived that very same day. Do you understand, Vanda? Imagine you've just finished reading a novel in which the main character is called Albert; as soon as you go out into the street you meet a classmate with the same name. Or if yesterday you were paying at a cash till and were five cents short, the next morning the first thing you see is a five-cent coin on the pavement. These aren't coincidences—how could they be? It's synchronicity. It's God."

Vanda admires her grandmother's projects and even if she doesn't fully understand them, she likes looking at the arcs and the intersections along which words and sentences are written; in Grandma's maps, there is life with explanations. Vanda's mother makes a point of constantly challenging the older woman's theories and rejects the idea of synchronicity. "The little girl will just get confused—don't bother her with it," she tells Grandma.