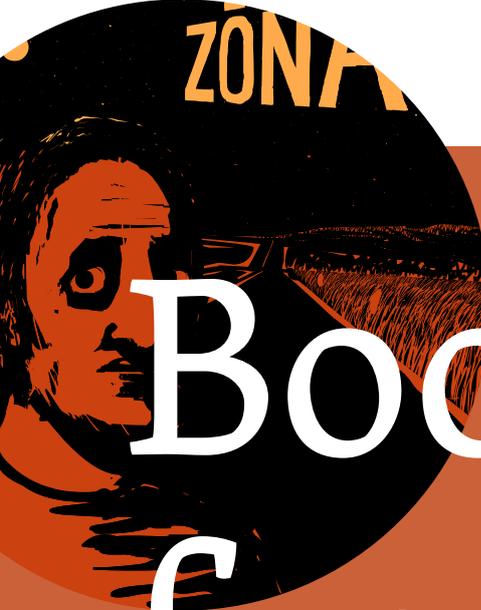


Centre for
Information
on Literature
Bratislava



Books from Slovakia 2018



Rudolf Jurolek

Mr. O

Mr. O, a lonely fifty-something, is trying to put his life back together after his wife left him. To overcome despair, he sets off on a journey.

An oversensitive, traumatized man with psychological problems, Mr. O quits his job to undertake a journey. It is a self-destructive decision, but in his understanding, the world in which he must live has such a systemic error that to participate in it through any kind of work would be dishonest. He reminisces, dreams, and suffers, as if someone had tasked him with suffering for the world. He feels helpless when he has to obey societal norms and play by the rules. He has his own ideas about how society should be organized.

The author depicts a person who does not have a place in society, and as such, his perception of it is much more intense and more sensitive. He lives under constant pressure from within, which tells him that something is missing. One day he spots a strange couple running through town. There is something unsettling about them. It is as if they knew about some danger of which the others are yet unaware. Others slowly join the couple. In the end it looks as though the whole town is running, and Mr. O can't resist and joins them. Flashbacks alternate with the present and with the distant past (memories of childhood, which surface mostly when the protagonist experiences intense loneliness). The book is noteworthy for its structure and opinions, and it offers much food for thought.

“Writers often have masochistic tendencies. For example, they leave their protagonist on a forest path eating strawberries, looking up at the sky and feeling happy, while they continue their own journey, thirsty and hungry.”



Rudolf Jurolek (1956)

Studied at the Technical University in Košice, as well as at the Technical University in Bratislava as an education major. He has worked as a teacher, a journalist, and an editor. He started a small poetry publishing house, which has been renamed Solitudo. Among his most famous poetry collections are: *Život je možný* (Life is Possible, 2006), *Smrekový les* (A Spruce Forest, 2009), and *Polné vety* (Sentences Afield, 2013). He has written a series of lyrical reflections for the multi-author book *Krajina vo mne* (The Country Inside Me, 2015). His collection of poetry *Life is Possible*, which was published in a bilingual Slovak/German edition, won the Bank of Austria prize in 2008. In 2017 Jurolek published *Pán O* (Mr. O) a piece which, not surprisingly, is more poetry than prose.

Translated titles:

GERMAN :

Das Leben ist möglich
(Life is Possible)

Wieser Verlag, Klagenfurt 2008

Rudolf Jurolek
Pán Ó

Published by:
F.R.&G., Bratislava 2017, 136 p.

ISBN: 978-80-89499-47-2

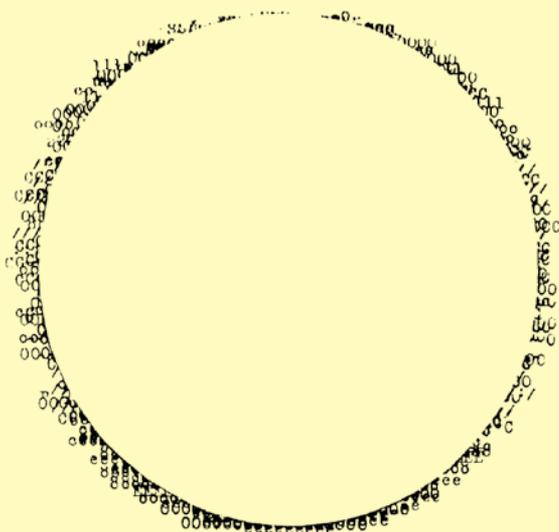


Translation Rights:

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RUDOLF JUROLEK

Pán Ó



— F. R. & G. —

You know all the things he's come up with. He used to think he should be an athlete, preferably a runner. Or he wanted to play the guitar, sometimes even the violin, and other times the saxophone. And as far as he could remember, he had always wanted to travel; occasionally he would have been content just to go across Slovakia. Time and again he wanted to live on a Pacific island. And often he wanted to be a hermit in a remote, quiet place, in the mountains. Not in the desert. He had a recurring desire to learn to dance, and he wanted to study languages. He started many things, but didn't stick with any of them; after a point he would give up, sooner with some things, later and more begrudgingly with others. So far he hadn't become anything.

Nowadays a worker must possess nearly cybernetic qualities, thought Mr. O. Every employer seeks high productivity, endurance, dependability, positive thinking, ability to work under stress, and so on and so forth. People no longer work; they perform. But progress seems to have passed him by, and he is not qualified – he is a creature of low productivity, little endurance, scant dependability, and hardly any stress resistance.

A fly landed on his hand. Then it flew away. Even a fly considers him a part of the world; it takes him for granted.

He would like to take his thoughts as far as he could, to some conclusion. As it is, he seems to be running in circles, flailing, changing position and direction, and searching in nothing.

You know him; getting caught up in impossible situations is his way of life. Yet he knows that what really matters is whether it's rainy or sunny, whether or not his head hurts, and whether there's money left in his account.

It's dreary outside, but some corner of Mr. O's soul is still in the bright and sunny Mediterranean country the two of you have recently come back from. It always amazes him how people can return from a beach vacation and go back to the office or the factory the next day as if it were nothing. He's never ready for it, and he always succumbs to panic. First he must ascertain where he is, in what astronomical and historical time period, and what is going on.

Peter Krištúfek

Lady Xanax, Mr. Snow White, and Me

Hyperconsumerism turns grotesque: the world is nasty; it has no rules, and no meaning. A satirical account about the lost generation that is stuck between late Communism and early Capitalism.

Tomáš was born with six toes on each foot. Already as a child he has figured out that the world is absurd and complicated, and he will have an easier time if he pretends to be insane. So he stands on the sidelines and observes. His sister, Lady Xanax, does drugs, goes on diets, suffers from depression, and looks for a rich husband. Mr. Snow White is Tomáš's father, who is an expert at producing a beer head, and an alcoholic that can't cope with himself or his family.

Krištúfek's novel has three parts. Part one recounts the childhood and adolescence of the "slow" Tomáš. He has trouble in school, so his mother gets him through by sleeping with his teacher. In part two Tomáš lives in the bowels of supermarkets where he eats stolen groceries, sleeps in broom closets, and comments on our times. His supermarket adventure ends with a return home, where his mother now lives with his teacher. Part three is set in a homeless shelter on the outskirts of town. It is a refuge for those unfortunate few who did not adapt to the changing times and found themselves on the margins of society. All three settings – the dysfunctional family, the supermarket, and the homeless shelter – are institutions the author uses to caricature the present, the instability, and persistent toil, combined with the knowledge that we are always behind and are nothing more than pieces in someone else's game.

“Much of my writing works on the visual level, through montage and the exploration of detail. Overall, however, I don’t worry about the degree of cinematic vision or other such things as I write. I can’t and don’t want to have distance from my writing. I can’t be both on the inside and the outside. I am influenced by many things I like: minimalist music, the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, the medieval understanding of the world, psychology, psychiatry, and Peter Greenaway’s films.”



Peter Krišťufek (1973 – 2018)

Writer, poet, and director. He studied film and television directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Krišťufek wrote eleven books of fiction and a collection of poetry, worked as a radio host, and directed television documentaries about literature, books, and art. In 2002 he won the Ivan Krasko prize for his literary debut *Nepresné miesto* (The Inexact Place), a collection of short stories. His best-known Works include: *Šepkár* (The Prompter, 2008), *Mimo času* (Outside of Time, 2009), *Blíženci a protinožci* (Twins and Antipodes, 2010), *Dom hluchého* (The House of the Deaf Man, 2012), *Atlas zabúdania* (The Atlas of Forgetting, 2013), *Ema a smrtihlav* (Ema and the Hawkmoth, 2014), *Telá* (Bodies, 2016), and his final work, *Lady Xanax, pán Snehulienka a ja* (Lady Xanax, Mr. Snow White, and Me, 2018).

Krišťufek’s narrative style is reminiscent of scene changes in a drama or action film. Each episode draws the reader in, and is constructed in a compelling manner. The protagonists are oddballs and lunatics, individuals with unusual hobbies and anxieties. They invent their own realities which become the place where they eke out a lonely and isolated existence. These characters have different values from ordinary people, and as a result, they are unaware of their own outsider status.

Translated titles:

ARABIC:

تايب مصلا

(The House of the Deaf Man)

Dar Al Hiwar Publishing and Distributing, Lattakia 2016

AMHARIC:

ደንቆሮ ቤት

(The House of the Deaf Man)

Hohe Publisher, Adis Abeba 2016

BULGARIAN:

Kščata na gluchija

(The House of the Deaf Man)

Geia Libris, Sofia 2017

CZECH:

Dum hluchého

(The House of the Deaf Man)

Větrné mlýny, Brno 2016

ENGLISH:

The House of the Deaf Man

(Dom hluchého)

Parthian, Cardigan 2014

POLISH:

Dom głuchego

(The House of the Deaf Man)

Książkowe Klimaty, Wrocław 2015

RUSSIAN:

Sufler

(The Prompter)

Izdatelstvo MIK, Moscow 2016

Peter Krišťufek

Lady Xanax, pán Snehulienka a ja

Published by:

Marenčin PT, Bratislava 2018, 256 p.

ISBN: 978-80-569-0047-5



Translation Rights:

Marenčin PT

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LADY
XANAX,
PAN
SNEHULIENKA
A JAK
PETER
KRIŠTŮFEK

MARENČIN PT

When I was about five years old, I spent the summer at Grandpa's. On my father's side. He lived in Bodovka. He let me stay with him because my parents had to go somewhere. And also because he lived "alone like an amputated finger" (sic!) in a large house outside the village and was bored.

The first few days were a lot of fun. We went fishing, spent hours drinking tea on the veranda, went out for beer, and cut the grass. And we fed the rabbits. Or we watched the birds, those epicurean beasts that lived in a birdhouse made from a crate with the large inscription, GRAND VINS DE ROUSILLON.

Then one afternoon Grandpa took a nap, and there was no way to wake him. I tried everything I could think of. I poked him, jabbed him, smothered him with a pillow, poured water on him, all to no avail. As a last ditch effort I set two alarm clocks and let them go off right by his ears. No effect.

So I let him sleep until the evening.

Around five I got a bit anxious. I knew where he kept his money – in a jar in the cupboard, with the spare keys and late Grandma's fake teeth – so I went to the store. Grandpa usually went around this time. They knew me at the store. I bought beer and chocolate. Beer for him, chocolate for me.

The next day Grandpa kept sleeping.

I was afraid he might die of thirst – I had seen a movie on TV about a desert, which showed this quite graphically – so I opened a bottle of beer. Grandpa was lying on his back, and the beer went into his mouth pretty easily. Some of it dribbled down his chin, and a tiny bit went down the back of his neck, but all and all, I did OK.

When he hadn't woken up by the afternoon, I tried to feed him. I found a piece of old bread in the kitchen, spread some jam on it, and brought it to his bed. I broke off a piece and pushed it between his teeth. It was a good idea, but Grandpa did not want to swallow. When his mouth was full, I gave up. Even so, half his face was smeared with jam.

No matter, I told myself, no one has died of hunger yet, not even in the movie about the desert. At least I hadn't heard of such a thing.

In the evening the neighbor, Mr. Jedenástik, came to visit. I told him that Grandpa was having trouble with his voice. And that he was very sick, and couldn't get out of bed. I didn't want to tell him that he had been asleep for days. That would have been embarrassing!

I left Mr. Jedenástik sitting on the veranda, and took messages to Grandpa. Then I turned around, and on my way back I invented his answers. Perhaps Mr. Jedenástik found it odd, but he didn't say anything.

Peter Macsovszky

The Surface of Your Planet

*The fact that I'm paranoid
doesn't mean they're
not out to get me.
A report on the comical
and malign forms of
a persecution mania.*

The Surface of Your Planet captures the life and thoughts of the fictional character Gabriel Ferde during the last four decades. Gabriel's narrative of his life goes far back to some indefinite time when he was a secondary school student. That was when he met the mysterious Norbert Mášik, who became his fellow-pupil and friend. Much later Gabriel began to suspect that in the past, under the communist regime, Norbert had been assigned to him as an agent of the secret service and that his task was to provide reports on Gabriel's life to the Centre. This feeling of uncertainty, distrust of others, conspiracy, even paranoia, runs through the entire book as a core motif. The author adds evocativeness to the text by ending the questions which Gabriel poses not with question marks, but with full stops. Thereby the reader is exposed to a loss of certainty about the nature of this world and the possibility of revealing "truth".

The novel is a kind of literary geography. It begins in Gabriel's native "small town", but through Nitra, Bratislava and Prague makes its way to a variety of places in USA, Holland and Bulgaria, eventually as far as Argentina. Always there is a focus on the culture of the given place, its characters and their adventures. Often with very witty commentaries. But the novel is, at the same time, an act of homage to many of the outstanding cultural figures of this world.

“Simply because I use facts from my life, this does not necessarily mean that I’m speaking about myself. The ugly style of the book is meant to make an association with junk art. For example, I have put paragraphs where, not only in my opinion but according to experts on style, they ought not to be.”



Peter Macsovszky (1966)

Graduated in Slovak, art education and English. Has lectured at university on aesthetics and literary criticism. Since Hungarian is his mother tongue, he also writes in that language. He made his debut in 1994 with the 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 gained him his first literary award, the Janko Král’ Prize. He is the author of a number of further collections of experimental lyrical texts, *Cvičná pitva* (Training Autopsy, 1997), *Súmravná reč* (Twilight Speech, 1999) and *Tovar* (Merchandise, 2006); however, he entered the new millennium also as a prose-writer, with the novella *Frustraeón* (2000). Under the pseudonym Petra Malúchová he wrote a controversial collection of poems, *Súmrak cudnosti* (Twilight of Modesty, 1996) and together with the

prose-writer Denisa Fulmeková *Klebetromán* (Gossipnovel, 2004). These works were followed by *Lešenie a laná* (Scaffolding and Ropes, 2004), *Hromozvonár* (Thunderbellman, 2008) and *Mykať kostlivcami* (Making Skeletons Dance, 2010). For his novel *Tantalópolis* (2015) he received the Anasoft litera Prize. *Povrch vašej planéty* (The Surface of Your Planet, 2017) is his most recent prose work. The author uses the procedures of conceptual art and a technique of textual assemblage and textual collages; complex experimentation is an approach which is peculiarly his own. With Július Fújak and Peter Varsavik he has recorded two experimental albums. Macsovszky is also an outstanding translator, and he won the Ján Holly Prize for his translation of the Hungarian writer Miklós Szentkuthy’s novel *Burgundian Chronicle* in 2017.

Peter Macsovszky *Povrch vašej planéty*

Published by:
Vlna/ Drewo a srd
Bratislava, 2017, 260 p.

ISBN: 978-80-89550-30-2



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Peter

Macsovszky

Povrch

vašej

planéty

We participants, if I remember rightly, numbered ten. Three of those ten were men. I cannot remember anything about their faces, nor their names or countries of origin. I do know that one woman was from Poland, another from Hungary. Of the other women in our group there was a Serbian and a Rumanian. The person who stuck in my mind was Oxana, though I didn't retain her surname. She was from Russia.

Oxana brought to mind an old-time Russian aristocratic lady, one of those exiles who fled from the horrors of the October Revolution and the subsequent Civil War and found refuge in Paris, where they became teachers of Russian or the piano, or founded ballet schools. Oxana wore her grey hair coiled in a chignon. Spectacles hanging on a chain. She dressed in a costume, grey or ochre-coloured. Her English was perfect, though admittedly spoken with a strong Russian accent. The sentences came slowly from her lips, making an impression of confusion and absent-mindedness. Nonetheless, with her honed logic Oxana was able to put John in difficulty, though she never struck triumphal poses. America did not cause her a culture shock.

Most of the tasks which we undertook were, needless to say, focused on methods of acquiring and verifying information. Or effective communication with uncommunicative or hesitant individuals. John and Deirdre, using toy telephones, made presentations of the kinds of words with which to persuade a reluctant or taciturn expert, or alternatively a witness of some tragic event. Oxana would follow what the trainers were doing for a while and then indicate her wish to speak. She would ask what method she herself ought to resort to, as a resident of Moscow, when she needed to verify some fact out in the countryside. Fifty kilometres beyond Moscow the telephone network came to an end, which meant she would have to get into her old Volga car and personally march to the place in question.

John manifestly didn't know what to say to that. He'd never yet heard the like. All he could do was smile blankly. He looked at Deirdre, but she too was just smiling blankly. When the Americans smile like that, there are a number of possibilities that occur to one of our own: 1, the American has not understood what we have just said; 2, the American cannot imagine the situation which we have just told him about; 3, the American thinks we are using him as a weapon; 4, the American thinks that if he's wearing this sunny smile, we will not notice that he's perplexed; 5, the American doesn't know if he hasn't perhaps been a target of verbal terrorism.

Jana Micenková

Sweet Life

If you are over thirty but still haven't achieved a normal everyday biorhythm, this is the very book for you.

These are stories for those of us who have at least one university degree but still cannot make it as copywriters, bloggers or even account managers. Or for those who still hope Tom Hardy will come and rescue us from our own boring wedding: stories for all of us who have still not understood that it will probably always be thus and that the best thing we can do is just make fun of everything. We can all find something hidden between the lines of this book, something we are avoiding in our lives or are not willing to admit to. Jana Micenková does not go out of her way to dazzle us; instead she splashes in our faces the things we don't want to know. Her stories are so full of vulgarisms, in fact, you sometimes have the feeling they cannot have been written by a woman. But each of these stories builds up gradually to a climax and keeps the reader hooked throughout.

“According to the psychologist Erich Fromm, necrophilia is not about sex with corpses. Instead he sees the disorder as being a person’s close attachment to dead things. And these days it is typical... that a person is more closely attached to their smartphone than to another person.”



Jana Micenková (1980)

She first studied Slovak Language and Literature at Prešov and then Scriptwriting and Dramaturgy in Prague, where in 2013 she founded the independent Nekroteatro (www.nekroteatro.cz) ensemble which she has directed ever since. Her play *Nekrogames* won her the Slovak Literary Fund award for the Best Dramatic Text of 2013 as well as the VEJK AP 2012 young dramatists' award. Her story with the same title won her the 'Poviedka 2012' short story competition. Her novella *Najkrajšie roky* (The Most Beautiful Years) won her the special jury prize in the DEBUT 2012 literary competition. She is currently working on the script of her first film titled *Babička* (Grandma). The book *Sladký život* (Sweet Life, 2017) is her full-length prose debut.

Jana Micenková
Sladký život

Published by:
Marenčin PT, 2017, 221 p.

ISBN: 978-80-89921-16-4



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Jana Micenková

SLADKÝ ŽIVOT



MARENČIN PT

MARENČIN MEDIA

The poor old dear! It seemed she was letting herself be bullied by that nasty force of nature because soon she started praying in the morning, too – and out loud so she could be heard.

Milada gradually tightened the screw and even started borrowing money from her. When the old woman objected and told her to be thrifter and not just throw things in the bin, Milada immediately started blackmailing her: *But Mrs Poláčiková, you know that we Christians should help one another...*

I did not want to get involved in these arguments but could feel things were getting out of hand.

I'm just an ordinary dickhead who wants a bit of peace and quiet – I don't want to get into any conflicts. I do my job as best as I can, advising people on the best roaming tariff for them. I even do voluntary work from time to time, helping people in need.

Sometimes I did wonder, though, how much sense there was much helping some imaginary, anonymous children in Africa when a pensioner in my own house was being so mistreated. But what could I do? Mrs Poláčiková didn't seem to be suffering too much – somehow she took it all in her stride.

One morning I wanted to make myself some tea when I found some pieces of tomato in the electric kettle. Milada was outside at the time and so I asked the old lady:

Mrs Poláčiková, is everything ok?

Yes, of course, young lad.

Then what are those pieces of tomato doing in the kettle?

Oh that's Miss Milada. She must have been making tomato soup.

If it had been a standup comic speaking, I would have enjoyed the joke. But from the mouth of the old woman, it sounded completely natural. Or perhaps she really thought it was nuts but had told herself that God loves us all the same – even loonies who boil tomatoes in an electric kettle and throw clean socks into the bin. All the same I asked her again if she didn't need any help or if anyone was hurting her but she just waved her hand and laughed: *Not at all...not at all...everything is fine.*

I realized that old people, many of whom could probably have survived a concentration camp, were not so easily upset. And to them some crazy Miss Milada was no more annoying than a fly buzzing around a lamp. Who knows in fact, whether it wasn't just some game they were playing together, some senile wind-ups to get them through the day... Thus, at least, I explained it to myself, as a way of excusing my own cowardice, perhaps. And so I went on tolerating their endless bickering:

Milada, please don't throw tomatoes into the kettle – the kettle is for everyone.

Václav Pankovčín

Marakéš

... in many places, not only in eastern Slovakia, the casting of a spell or a curse is regarded as quite an everyday phenomenon in which many people believe.

Marakéš is an imaginary village somewhere between Alaska and the Sahara, but most likely somewhere in the east of Slovakia. It is populated by peculiar characters such as Janko Huj, who proclaims the end of the world, Mr Šalamaha, whose hair suddenly grows to half a metre in length, Laco Kulbaga, who moves in mysterious ways from one place to the next, and Pišta Perdzej, who has befriended UFOs. In a word, this is what Márquez's Macondo would be like, were it located in some forgotten corner of the Slovak countryside. Reissued now, nearly 20 years after the untimely demise of the author, who has since acquired a near-mythical status, the stories (or story-fancies, as the author himself referred to them) set in this magical place have remained surprisingly fresh and bring a blazing literary imagination into contemporary Slovak literature.

“I feel the need to create my own literary space to inhabit, although the actual storylines do not necessarily depend on this space. Before I started to create this world Marakéš had the real shape of my native village of Papín. However, as I go through life gathering experiences, it is not so much Papín, Marakéš or (most recently) Lináres – that is to say the place of the action – that plays an important role in my current literary cosmos, but what the story is about and how that affects me and, most importantly, the reader.”



Václav Pankovčín (1968 – 1999)

He was one of the most talented Slovak writers to emerge after 1989. His writing was inspired primarily by Latin American fiction, or rather, to be more precise, by magic realism. Pankovčín was interested in the irrational, which he would weave into a rational situation, imbuing it with elements of magic and the inexplicable. He debuted in 1992 with a collection of adventure stories for children, *Mamut v chladničke* (A Mammoth in the Fridge), followed by *Asi som neprišiel len tak* (I Guess I Must Have Come for a Reason, 1992), *Marakéš* (1994), *Tri ženy pod orechom* (Three Women Under a Walnut Tree, 1996), *Bude to pekný pohreb* (It Will Be a Beautiful Funeral, 1997) and *Polárny motýľ* (The Polar Butterfly, 1997). A few days before his sudden and tragic death he completed a novel, *Lináres*. To mark the 50th anniversary of his birth his collected works are being reissued in a new edition.

Translated titles:

CZECH:

Tři ženy pod ořechem

(Three Women Under a Walnut Tree)

Kalich, Praha 2006

POLISH:

Marakesz

(Marakéš)

Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wolowiec 2006

To będzie piękny pogrzeb

(It Will Be a Beautiful Funeral)

Pogranicze, Sejny 2009

RUTHENIAN

Tri ženy pid orichom

(Three Women Under a Walnut Tree)

Lemko Tower, Strzelce Krajeńskie 2015

UKRAINIAN:

Ce bude garnij pochoron

(It Will Be a Beautiful Funeral)

Poligrafcentr Lira, Uzhhorod 2016

Václav Pankovčín

Marakéš

Published by:

Koloman Kertész Bagala,
Bratislava 2018, 304 p.

ISBN: 978-80-97277-75-8



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XXI. GALA

VÁCLAV PANKOVČÍN

Marakéš

ŠICKE ME NAŠE!



Mr Šalamaha was born with a full head of hair, a moustache and a beard, and when he smiled, a wave of heat swept over old Ovaňa, the midwife: the boy had a complete set of teeth, including all his wisdom teeth, and that was when old Ovaňa said to Haňa Šalamahová:

“Haňa, this boy won’t depart this life in an ordinary way. He won’t depart this life as an ordinary mortal, although I may be mistaken.”

That’s when old Ovaňa took a bowl, filled it with holy water, set some herbs alight and waved them, smoking, above little Janko Šalamaha, then she lit a candle and began to pray, yawning dreadfully throughout, and in between her yawns she said:

“Haňa, this boy is destined not to depart this life in the normal way, but he won’t be killed either. But that’s all I can be sure of.”

Then midwife Ovaňa washed the boy in the bowl using the holy water, burned the herbs above the bowl and sat down at the table, where she began to read aloud from the Bible, then read the cards, kept yawning and saying:

“No, this boy won’t depart this life in the normal way.”

And little Janko Šalamaha began to sneeze from the smoke, muttering something under his breath and wriggling about, quite unhappy about the fuss old Ovaňa was making.

And old Ovaňa kept on yawning, reading the cards and the Bible, but however hard she tried, she could not work out how Janko Šalamaha would depart this life.

And at that moment old Ovaňa heard the boy say – she was sure she had – and was willing to swear that it was little Janko Šalamaha who said:

“You silly old hag, stop all this nonsense!”

Old Ovaňa rushed out of the Šalamahas’ house drenched in sweat and ran around Marakěš shouting:

“Dear, oh dear, Haňa Šalamahová has just given birth to a little boy with teeth, hair and a beard! Dear oh dear! And the boy is already talking!”

That made some people think the old woman was drunk, or that she must have dreamt it all.

But the next day all Marakěš came flocking to the house to take a look at the boy with a moustache, even though you are not supposed to gawp at a newborn, but the women who were familiar with these matters claimed that a boy born with teeth and hair can come to no harm because he will simply have a strong personality capable of withstanding every possible spell and the evil eye.

And as the nosy parkers of Rantaprapán stood above the cradle inspecting little Janko Šalamaha, it is rumoured they heard the little boy muttering under his breath:

“Stop gawping, you fools!”

Daniel Majling

The Zone

Forget about Scandinavian crime novels: the most hard-boiled stories are set in the Gemer region of Slovakia!

The Zone is a small area in southern Slovakia with a suspiciously high incidence of pathological behaviour, mental illness and suicide rates. It is here, a place where the long-term mining of heavy metals prevents the secretion of happiness hormones, that the book's protagonist finds himself while searching for an old friend who has mysteriously disappeared. His misgivings grow as he encounters more and more uncanny situations and suspicious individuals in the Zone: where has his old schoolfriend vanished? What secrets are the staff of a local library trying to keep from him? And how does all this relate to the murder of a London imam, the works of Franz Kafka, and traditions of the Ute native American- Indian tribe? Daniel Majling's new graphic novel continues in the vein of its author's unique caustic humour and sense of the absurd, pressed into the service of an unsparing take on the crime genre.

“I have never studied the history of comic books to learn what is allowed and what isn’t, what has already been tried and what has never been tried before. One day I just decided to start drawing these stories and didn’t care about anything else.”



Daniel Majling (1980)

Slovakia’s most successful comic book author. He works as dramaturg at the Slovak National Theatre. His first foray into comics was with the stories featuring the asocial cynic *Rudo* (2015), which went viral. He debuted as fiction writer in 2017 with a collection of “fake” stories, *Ruzká klazika* (Rushian Clashics, 2017), voted Book of the Year and shortlisted for Slovakia’s most prestigious literary prize, Anasoft Litera. His writing typically relies on spoofery, frequent allusions to works of world literature and philosophy, and a sarcastic view of the world that sometimes verges on the cynical. He lives in Bratislava and his stories are set in the remote Slovak countryside of the Gemer region, around which he has spun idiosyncratic, original, myths of his own.

Translated titles:

CZECH:

Rudo. Komiksové povídky
(Rudo. Comics Short Stories)

Labyrint, Praha 2015

Ruzká klazika
(Rushian Clashics)

Labyrint, Praha 2018

Daniel Majling
Zóna

Published by:
BRAK, Bratislava 2018, 176 p.

ISBN: 978-80-89921-16-4



Translation Rights:
BRAK Publishing House
vydavatelstvo@brakfestival.sk

DANIEL
MAJLING

ZONA

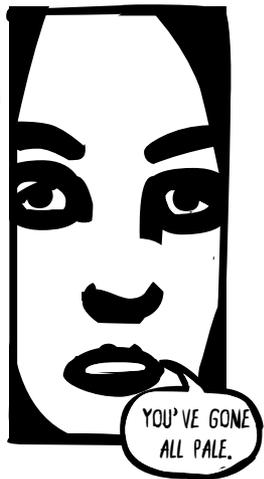
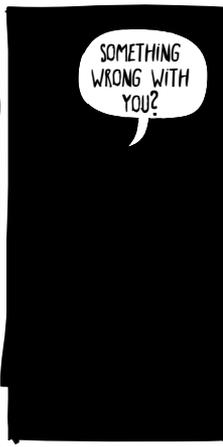
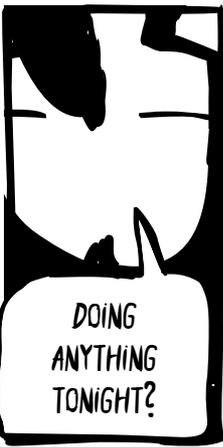




MY NEIGHBOUR. IF HER HAMSTER NEEDED A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT, I'D HAPPILY DONATE ONE OF MINE HAD I THE SLIGHTEST HOPE THAT IT INCREASED MY CHANCES WITH HER.



I FIND IT HARD TO MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT WITH HER.





OVER THE YEARS I'VE HAD TO REVISE THE STORY I'LL TELL MY GRANDCHILDREN ONE DAY ABOUT HOW I MET THEIR GRANDMA.

FIRST I ELIMINATED THE ROMANTIC...



OUR EYES MET AT A UNICEF MEETING.

THEN I GAVE UP THE PRAGMATIC...



SHE WAS MY SECRETARY AND HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR BMWs.

RIGHT NOW, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS...



EVERYONE WARNED ME SHE'S A SLUT BUT AFTER THREE DRINKS...

IN ANY CASE, THE SCENARIO:

DOING ANYTHING TONIGHT?



WAS NO LONGER ON THE CARDS.

NO.

GREAT, SO HOW ABOUT YOU TRAIN YOUR DOG TO STOP CRAPPING ON MY DOORSTEP.



IT'S NOT MY DOG!



I'M JUST LOOKING AFTER IT FOR A COLLEAGUE WHO'S REALISED THAT I'M A WEAK CHARACTER DESTINED TO BE USED BY OTHERS.

WAY BACK A CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST FOUND THAT THE ONLY POSITION I'M CAPABLE OF ASSUMING IN SOCIETY IS THAT OF SCAPEGOAT.

WERE I JESUS CHRIST, MY OWN DISCIPLES WOULD HAVE CRUCIFIED ME BEFORE I FINISHED THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

THE POSTMAN PUT THIS IN MY MAILBOX.

HAVE A WORD WITH HIM. NEXT TIME I'LL BIN IT.



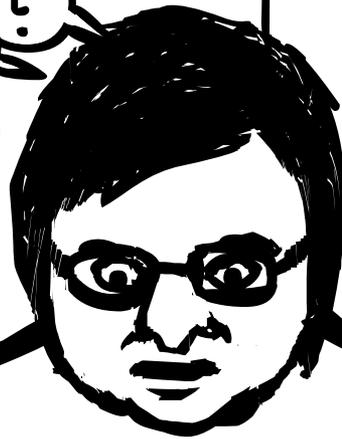
SANATORIUM
AND
PREDNA HORA

Come and see me.

Room number 7 E



Rudolf Maylan
Dostojevskijho b.
742 28 Bratislava



Jozef Puškáš

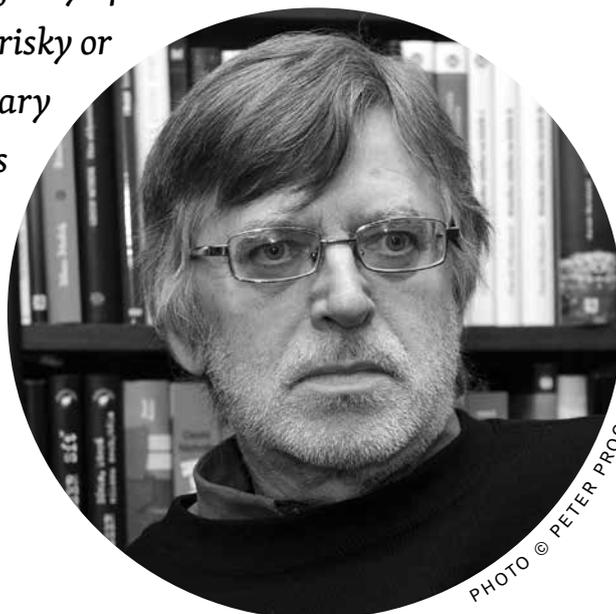
Thief of Souls

A psychological crime novel. A tabloid journalist becomes editor-in-chief of a daily paper owned by a very influential man who frequently breaks the law and whose greed knows no bounds.

The protagonist, Roman Santus, accepts the post of editor-in-chief and looks set for a successful career. However, Maurer, the owner of the tabloid "Scandal", sees his paper as a means of gaining influence and he twists facts and seeks sensation at any price. In comparison with the ideal of journalism this is a fiasco. Santus struggles with a loss of self-respect, with the scorn of his grown-up son Filip. But there are also personal considerations that sanctify his actions: his new family, another son, another woman he loves. His wife Daniela has her own child: a sickly son, Kristián. He is discovered to have a benign tumour on his brain. Fortunately the operation is a complete success and Kristián is soon home again. His parents begin to visit a psychologist, who in the course of the novel offers the reader psychological insight into the characters of Kristián and his parents. The turning point comes after Daniela's brother-in-law has a car accident in which a little girl dies. The Scandal tabloid does not miss an opportunity to report it on the front page, thus setting in motion a series of dramatic events: the reaction of the despairing mother of the dead child, revengeful attacks on Roman (as the person responsible for the daily), anonymous messages, intrigues, as well as Maurer's attempts to involve Santus in his power-grabbing plans, using as incentives the vision of easily earned money, the desire for revenge, envy and jealousy. Filip Santus also gives us his view of relationships in the work he is writing on the topic of the family.

This is a gripping novel written in an elegant style with a realistic Slovak setting. It will also be enjoyed by male readers. The author points to the fragility of our existence, whether private or social, and also why we fail. It lays bare the practices of the gutter press for all to see.

“Journalism as it is today, that is, in its pursuit of sensational topics, has little appeal for me. It is truly outrageous how the majority of the owners of periodicals pressure their editors to pursue risky or sensitive topics with no regard to morality or elementary human dignity. When trouble arises, the owner leaves his editor in the lurch, pretending he had nothing to do with it. I am afraid that the popular press has become a very cynical and ruthless environment that has nothing in common with journalism.”



Jozef Puškáš (1951)

He studied film dramaturgy and scriptwriting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (1969–1974). He worked as an editor in the *Smena* publishing house and as a journalist for the daily newspapers *Národná obroda* and *Práca*. At the present time he teaches at the *Ateliér scenáristickej tvorby* (Studio of Screenwriting) at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Jozef Puškáš has become known in Slovak literature as an author of psychological prose works, in which he often critically reflects on social conditions and the deformation of human relationships. His main prose works include *Hra na život a na smrť* (Game of Life and Death, 1972), *Utešené sklamanie* (Delightful Disappointment, 1977), *Priznanie* (Confession, 1979), *Štvrtý rozmer* (Fourth Dimension, 1980), *Záhrada [v piatom období roka]* (The Garden [in the Fifth Season of the Year], 1984), *Sny, deti, milenky* (Dreams, Children, Mistresses, 1985), *Vreckový labyrint* (Pocket Labyrinth, 1992), as well as a book of short stories *Freud v Tatrách* (Freud in the Tatras, 2004), where the author makes use of irony and farce and is not deadly serious in any of the stories. His cinematic debut was the film *Štvrtý rozmer* (Fourth Dimension), for which he wrote the script on the basis of his own novel of the same name. He is the author of a number of film scripts. Together with Dušan Dušek he published a book of discussions and reflections on the topic of film script and prose writing under the title of *Písať príbeh* (Writing a Story, 2017).

Translated titles:

HUNGARIAN:

Zseb-labirintus

(Pocket Labyrinth)

KT Kiadó Kft, Komárno 2000

Jozef Puškáš

Zlodej duší

Published by:
Slovart, Bratislava 2017, 270 p.

ISBN: 978-80-556-2769-4



Translation Rights:

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JOZEF PUŠKÁŠ

ZLODEJ DUŠÍ



Santus popped into a shop for bread and bought a paper from the newsstand at the corner.

On page two he found an editorial written by Foxy, his deputy. It became clear that in his absence the previous day the police had been searching the office. The time is out of joint! Foxy had declared indignantly. Lawlessness and injustice. A debauched banding together of oligarchs and politicians in the highest positions. All to the comic opera accompaniment of incompetent police departments. Were they really investigating, or just trying to give that impression? Strange that in the case of the murder of a well-known businessman and publisher the police were ignoring important clues leading to organised groups, and instead they had seized the editor-in-chief, who had nothing to do with the crime. Strange that they should search the editorial office of an independent newspaper that tended to criticize. The perpetrator and motive for the murder were not clear, but there was already a dangerous side effect: an attack on the very essence of democracy – freedom of speech. Who could benefit from this? Cui bono?!

In the kitchen he found Daniela laying the breakfast table for four. She said that upstairs the others were already out of bed. She'd told her sister she could stay as long as she liked. In fact it would be for the best and it would be good for Kristián to have time to recover. Santus nodded without conviction.

“Are you sure she's in a fit state to take care of him?”

“Yes, don't worry. Is it the first time those two have quarrelled?”

With the feeling that things were getting back to normal, they got into the car and joined the stream of traffic rushing along the motorway towards the capital. It was snowing and the surrounding landscape was turning white. Santus switched on the radio. The forecast announced that severe winter weather was on the way and the traffic news called on drivers to take care.

He told Daniela about Foxy's commentary in *The Scandal* and she reached behind her for the paper, intending to read the article, but at that moment her mobile phone rang. She took the call and listened in silence; when he glanced at her he saw her turn pale. She breathlessly uttered a couple of terse questions which didn't tell him anything.

“Emil...” Daniela stuttered. “From hospital. Yesterday Lydka stabbed him with a knife. Apparently it was a miracle he didn't bleed to death. He's already reported it to the police.”

Santus automatically stepped on the brake, swerved towards the hard shoulder and immediately swung back onto the road. There was a long blare of a horn from someone behind him. He took no notice. He moved over into the fast lane and stepped on the gas.

Vanda Rozenbergová

Man Out of a Pit, Children Out of Love

*Everything was on me,
but you wouldn't have
heard me curse fate.*

In Peter's family the mother dies, and all of a sudden he has to take care of everyone: his little brother, nicknamed Cabrera; his sister Valéria, who suffers from unrequited love; his father, who had all but the middle finger of his right hand bitten off by a dog when he was a child; and a messy Grandma, who decided to move in after their mother's death. To make matters worse, the father lives in a pit. It's no ordinary pit, but a pit in a couch, where the father spends his days blowing up tanks in a computer game with his middle finger. Consequently, the children call him Tankman. As a way to distract themselves from how much they miss their mother, they adopt a hyperactive little dog. Unfortunately, Peter gets stuck taking it for walks all the time, because no one else feels like it. Peter is twenty-five and takes everything seriously. Perhaps too seriously.

“I am surrounded by people who are so egotistical that it has never occurred to them how much they inspire me.”



Vanda Rozenbergová (1971)

Writer, painter, and bibliographer. She studied journalism, but has held a number of jobs, including being a teacher, a salesperson for a windows company, and a clerk at a betting agency. Currently she works as a bibliographer at the library in Prievidza. Rozenbergová has been shortlisted in the literary competition Short Story three times (2001, 2005, 2006). She was a regular contributor on the radio prose miniseries *Miniromán* (Mininovel). In 2011 she published a collection of short stories *Vedľajšie účinky chovu drobných hlodavcov* (The Side Effects of Raising Small Rodents), in 2012 a novel *Moje more* (My Sea), and three years later, another collection of short stories, *Slobodu bažantom* (Freedom for Pheasants), which was shortlisted for the Anasoft Litera award in 2016. Her latest novel, *Muž z jamy, deti z lásky* (A Man Out of a Pit and Children Out of Love), was published in 2017.

Vanda Rozenbergová
Muž z jamy, deti z lásky

Published by:
Slovart, 2017, 216 p.

ISBN: 978-80-556-2765-6



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MUŽ Z JAMY A DETI Z LÁSKY



Vanda Rozenbergová

Valéria was huddled up in an armchair with her legs tucked under her. I didn't see her any other way. No one likes a sour face, and that was the only kind she had. She uttered even short words with her mouth half-closed: God forbid that her features should have stretched into a smooth surface. I remarked how tall two of the cherry trees in our garden had become, and how nice it was to stand beneath them and look up into their treetops. "Cliché," she hissed, and brushed aside her unwashed hair.

We clung to our mother's things like leeches. Why? I picked up the leash and took the dog for a walk. I didn't want to let something crass slip out. The sight of the plastic tablecloth my mother had bought and cut down was anything but cheerful; why did we keep it on the table? The leftovers of the hand cream she used to use, the empty glass jars she had stacked up in the basement that were in everyone's way – none of it gave us strength. It was getting dark, and the moon was full. The pear tree in the middle of our yard hadn't blossomed, nor did it bear fruit. In the garden, as neglected as the house, where all the trees were as old as Mother, dry branches announced themselves with cracking sounds, but no one in the house cared. My father used to say that to cut down a pear tree meant death in the family. Death came and went, but the pear tree remained. Mother died, a year ago – and? There's never a lack of mothers dying. Their death works well in a book or a movie; everything is upside down when a mother dies. There's plenty to write about. When the mother dies, the family is in shambles, but when the father dies, everyone rebounds and makes a fresh start. We can do it, they say, and they pick up the slack for the one who is no longer there. I always had the feeling that life would turn in an instant, and I would have to be ready. Everything was on me, but you wouldn't have heard me curse fate.

"It's such a loss for them," some women on the street said as we passed by. We kept looking straight ahead, and none of us kicked the wall when we made it home, or collapsed on the bed in helpless sobs. Each of us only did that in private. But it had been a year. I knew we were not completely over it, but sour faces did not sit well with me, especially not Valéria's. I hoped she was not the type whose brain gets deeply scarred by tragic events. I had read that it could take such a person up to ten years to be semi-functional again. I would have broken out in hives if I had to keep looking at her grimaces for the next ten years. To make matters worse, she was always at home, on sick leave. I went out with the dog. We walked around the garden. The stars were coming out, and they were like magnets. The pear tree had very few leaves, but the ones it did were huge. They were satellites. I couldn't grieve anymore. I was done. The rest were more or less fine too. So why was Valéria not?

Alexandra Salmela

Antihero

Where is the world heading? This is a novel about the dream of living in an ideal society. About how it can be fixed. And about how it can all be ruined and why.

The book takes us to Utopia, a country with neither commerce nor private property, established by a figure known as Lodestar, who then ruled with the firm hand of a dictator. Twenty years ago, however, she perished in a mining disaster together with two hundred other people, leaving behind her a son by name of Antti Hero. Through him, Lodestar's political legacy lives on. A journalist, Michele Pol, nicknamed Tzal, is, together with his colleague, Lia, assigned the task of initiating him into the world of journalism. Given that Antti Hero is considered such an important person in the country, however, it is not an easy task. A labour law called Flux has recently come into effect and is arousing conflicting reactions in the inhabitants of Utopia. In a few days an international congress called Ekorast is going to be held in the hated enemy country of KoroNova and Antti Hero is going to be one of the main speakers. Tzal and Lia are tasked with accompanying the young man throughout the whole event. While in Utopia there is general contempt for environmental issues, the people of KoroNova are obsessed with ecology. This creates deep divisions between the two countries which seem to be leading to open conflict. The congress is therefore very important in determining the destiny of both sides.

The novel addresses a number of highly topical themes – the use of disinformation, media manipulation and disillusionment with political elites. The author uses a range of postmodern elements in her work, including a cooking recipe, old legends, scribbles from a notebook, advertising posters and various overlaps of time and place.

“In the story is a river and hills. I am from Bratislava and believe that a person is greatly affected by where they come from. I need flowing water – it is very important to me. Finland however is a country of thousands of lakes. The water is wide and clear there, covering huge areas. But it does not flow.”



Alexandra Salmela (1980)

She studied Theatre Studies in Bratislava and Finnish at Charles University in Prague. Her literary debut was the 2010 novel *27 čiže smrť robí umelca* (27 – Death Makes the Artist), published in Finland where she lives. She then became the first person without Finnish citizenship to win the *Helsingin Sanomat* best debut award, one of the country's most prestigious literary prizes. She has written the children's books *Princezná opica* (The Monkey Princess, 2012) and *Žirafia mama a iné príšery* (The Giraffe's Mother and Other Monsters, 2013) and is coauthor of the bestsellers *Mimi a Líza* (2013) and *Mimi a Líza 2* (2015), based on a children's cartoon series of the same name. She has two children and grows oak saplings in flowerpots.

Translated titles:

HUNGARIAN:

27 avagy halál teszi a művészt
(27-Death Makes the Artist)

Scolar Kiadó, Budapest 2016

Zsiráf mama és más agyament felnottek
(The Giraffe's Mother and Other Monsters)

Scolar Kiadó, Budapest 2016

Alexandra Salmela
Antihrdina

Published by:
Artforum, 2017, 385 p.

ISBN: 978-80-8150-175-3



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Alexandra Salmela

ANTI
hrd
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Artforum

When dirty profiteers had attacked the pure northern land, ripping its innards out and treading its soul into the mud, when the virgin rivers filled with blackened blood and despair crept into the minds of the brave people living there and started weakening their resistance, a hero appeared at the place where water and air met. He was a hero like no other in the whole wide world, the handsomest and strongest of all – and quite the wisest. He knew the secrets of Mother Earth and could speak the language of trees and animals. He had no equal in the whole Universe – his name was Lodestar.

Lodestar stood firm on the burning peak and spoke:

“They say that development is change and change is good and inevitable. But the change they are bringing to us is oppression and death. They say there is no alternative but I can see another path clearly leading to the lap of Mother Nature. They mock us for building castles in the air and tell us to climb back into the trees. But we are realists. We are fighting to achieve the impossible and we will win the fight. This country will become the fairest in the whole world: all people, animals and plants will live together here as one, in deepest reverence for our great Mother. This country will be a bastion in the struggle against global capitalist exploitation. In this land, Utopia will become reality.”

And Lodestar led the cheering crowds into battle. Every day his ranks swelled with eager new recruits: the enslaved threw off the yoke of oppression, the deceived saw through all the lies they had been told, the silenced dared to speak again and the crippled leapt to their feet so that they could follow him. The thoughts of ecosocialism became their bread, fellows-in-arms their new family. And all their love and devotion went to their darling new leader, Lodestar the Great. He was stern and uncompromising, at the same time as demanding more of himself than of anybody. He believed in serving as an example, living an ascetic life and working from before dawn and till after dusk. “I will have time to rest after my death,” he would say.

The war against Moloch was a cruel one. Finally Lodestar met with the predators in front of the cursed three-chambered mine. He wove a whip from the beams of the blistering sun then touched the frozen ground with it. The three-tiered giant was roused from his sleep. Uranus then swept all the fat bloodsuckers and their lackies into his foaming poisonous waves, Chronos opened his mouth wide and Pluto swallowed everything down into his bottomless pits. Lodestar then healed the festering wound with his breath and made the earth whole again.

Thus did Lodestar rid the country of parasites and name it Utopia.

Martin M. Šimečka

Among the Slovaks

*Can you love a country
that has rejected you only
because you want to live
your life as a free man?*

This collection of essays by one of the most distinctive Slovak commentators, Martin M. Šimečka, offers incisive insights into the social and political life of independent Slovakia and its modern identity. The role of an “enemy of the state”, forced upon him by the powers-that-be, both under communism and in the early days of Slovakia’s independence, provides him with a unique perspective on the country as a whole and on key issues, such as coming to terms with the legacy of totalitarianism, and more recent challenges such as the migration crisis and the role of Slovakia in the Euro-Atlantic community. Martin M. Šimečka is a rebel as well as being a comforter, provocateur and thinker, questioner and narrator but, first and foremost, he is a genuine intellectual of the kind that is rare in Central Europe.

“To be born a foreigner in your homeland is an existential paradox you can overcome only by taking possession of this homeland emotionally and intellectually, in other words, by devoting your entire life to trying to understand it.”



PHOTO © TOMAŠ BENEDIKOVÍČ

Martin M. Šimečka (1957)

Writer and journalist Martin M. Šimečka (1957) was a key figure in Slovakia's unofficial culture before the Velvet Revolution of 1989. As the son of a prominent dissident he had to do manual labour while publishing his texts in *samizdat*. In 1990 he co-founded the publishing house Archa. His works of fiction, the novella *Žabí rok* (Year of the Frog, 1983) and collection *Džin* (Genie, 1987) were translated into several languages but he is primarily known for his journalism. His articles, published by numerous papers and journals in Slovakia and abroad, focus mainly on the political and cultural situation in Slovakia. He has held a number of top positions in daily and weekly press media: he was editor-in-chief of the Slovak weekly *Domino fórum* and the daily *SME*, as well as of the Czech weekly *Respekt*. Currently he serves on the editorial board of the independent Slovak daily *Denník N*.

Translated titles:

ENGLISH:

The Year of the Frog
(Žabí rok)

Touchstone, New York 1996

HUNGARIAN:

Dzsinn
(Genie)

Kalligram, Budapest 1993

MACEDONIAN:

ЏИН
(Genie)

Antolog, Skopje 2014

Martin M. Šimečka
Medzi Slovákmí

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N Press, Bratislava 2017, 160 p.

ISBN: 978-80-9723-943-5



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MEDZI

Martin M. Šimečka

SLOVÁKMI

STRUČNÉ DEJINY ĽAHOSTAJNOSTI OD DUBČEKA K FICOVI
ALEBO AKO SOM SA STAL VLASTENCOM



There are many self-obsessed nations that constantly scrutinise their own character, their own quarrels and traumas, endlessly reinterpreting their history in the hope of discovering the reason for their existence and destiny. Our neighbours, the Czechs, the Hungarians, as well as the Poles, are virtuosos of self-obsession, making the Slovaks appear like masters of detachment by comparison, although that might be just another way of expressing their indifference to their own history and destiny.

It is, of course, quite possible that there is within Slovak society some silent, unspoken agreement that I have yet to discover because I am not really a part of it. Although I was born in this country and have lived here most of my life, all my family (apart from my Slovak wife and children) live in the Czech Republic. I have always envied my classmates their summer holidays with their grandparents in the villages of Slovakia, while I spent mine in Brno. To this day I suspect that it was in those villages that my classmates acquired a cultural code I will never be able to crack.

To be born a foreigner in your homeland is an existential paradox you can overcome only by taking possession of this homeland emotionally and intellectually: in other words, by devoting your entire life to trying to understand it. In this respect I am not in any way exceptional: it is a fate embraced by others, for example many ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

Of course, rejecting one's homeland is also a possibility. When I was fifteen and proudly brought home my first identity card, my Czech mother took a careful look at it and discovered I had been registered as a Slovak national. It came as a shock to her but it was something I took for granted. However, it was also something I had to rethink twenty years later, when Czechoslovakia was splitting up. Since my parents were Czech, the laws in force at the time automatically made me a Czech citizen. I went to the register office to ask for Slovak nationality instead.

It was a strange experience. I had the reputation of being a traitor to the Slovak nation because I had publicly opposed the creation of the Slovak Republic as a result of Czechoslovakia's break-up. Applying for Slovak nationality seemed like sheer madness, yet I knew that if I wanted to go on living in Slovakia and share my thoughts on the country with the public, I could not leave a back-door open. The lady at the register office was moved to tears.

Normalisation, Slovak style

When I first realised that society, the state and the regime with all their history really exist, I was eleven years old. With boys from my block I was playing soldiers on a building site where the foundations for new prefab buildings were to be laid.

Arpád Soltész

The Swine

This disturbing novel, set in the world of organised crime, politics, business and media, exposes the Mafia-style methods of the state.

A teenage girl vanishes from a resocialisation centre for young addicts, but no one misses her. The all-powerful Chairman controls everyone and everything except his own decisions. A young neo-Nazi disappears in a forest, never to be found again. A rejected provincial Mafia moll insinuates herself into the most lucrative bed in the country. Some inhabitants of a small picturesque country under small-but-perfectly-formed high mountains keep disappearing, while others climb to the top of the greasy pole. These two phenomena are often interconnected.

"If we can enjoy a very pleasant life in this country today, I think that we, journalists, can take some credit for it. I feel that being a part of the West is worth fighting for. Regardless of whether people will pat me on the back or spit on me. That has nothing to do with it. Let the readers vent their hatred, at least I know it's given them some food for thought."



Arpád Soltész (1969)

He has come face to face with many incredible and brutal stories in his work as an investigative journalist. He has put this experience to use in works of fiction inspired by real life. One of the most renowned journalists in Slovakia to have covered the Mafia, politics and privatisation in the 1990s, he has worked for a number of media and currently serves as political commentator with TV JOJ. His novel *Flesh* (Mäso, Ikar 2017) on the Mafia methods employed by the authorities in eastern Slovakia was a popular success and received several awards.

Arpád Soltész
Sviňa

Published by:
IKAR, 2018, XY p.

ISBN: 978-80-551-6533-2



Translation Rights:

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Sviňa

ARPÁD SOLTÉSZ

Nada

Feťácky klamú

Bolelo ju všetko. Pokúšala sa rozpomenúť si, ako sa dostala do postele. V hlave chaotické útržky obrazov, ako keď sa človek prebudí z nočnej mory, vystrašený, ale nepamätá si, čo sa mu snívalo. Chodba s dverami po oboch stranách. Okrúhla posteľ, vidí na nej svoje nahé telo a bledú tvár, ako keby sa ocitla mimo svojho tela. Zrakadlo na strope. Niečo ho prekryje. Bolesť. Stále ju cítila, po celom tele. Znova zaspala.

Po nočných výletoch mali dievčatá voľno. Nechali ich spať. Keď sa Nada niekedy po obede definitívne zobudila, Broňa už nebola v nocľahárni. Šla sa osprchovať, bolel ju každý krok. Vyzliekla sa. Pohľad jej padol na dopraskané zrkadlo nad radom umývadiel. Vtedy dostala hysák.

Na prsiach, na bruchu, na stehnách, všade po tele mala žlté a modrofialové škvrny, v ktorých sa dali zreteľne rozpoznať odtlačky ľudských zubov.

Pokračovanie — s. 32

Lepeňák

Mafiánsky žargón

... Mňa môže odvolať len minister!“

Iba naňho kuká a nechápe, jak to mohol taký fas

bil v jame. Pokrčí plecami, že to nezávisí od neho.

„Už len dajakých tridsať čísel, pán Potočný, a budeme hotoví,“ oznámi mu



tak vysoko dotiahnuť. Bo však to je vážny človek. Pán prednosta. Veľkopodnikateľ. Čistý debil.

„Dokedy tu ešte budeme hrať to divadlo, čo?“ Hodí lopatu do jamy a začne sa z nej štverať.

Lepeňák naňho namieri, palcom uvoľní poistku a pokrúti hlavou. Postaví sa, aby lepšie videl do výkopu. Možno by to už mohlo stačiť. Z otvoreného okna pajera Jožo Ráž odkazuje smrtke na Pražskom orloji, že o ňu vôbec nestojí. Lepeňákoví lezie na nervy viac ako de-

vecným tónom a naraz si napchá do úst posledné dve sústa.

... pozývam vás všetkých na pivo...

Odrhovačka s idiotským textom hučí na celý národný park. Papaláš rezignovane mávne rukou, s pohrdavým výrazom na tvári sa otočí a zohne sa po lopatu.

... kašlem na smrť, verím na život...

Potočnému sa podlomia kolená a zloží sa do výkopu. Výstrel nezačul. Čistá rana do hlavy.

Pokračovanie — s. 176

Potočný is struggling with the shovel. He didn't study for a degree and become a big shot just to get his hands dirty, did he? He's up to his waist in a pit, whingeing. His leather loafers are ruined, his trousers wet through and covered in mud up to the knees. He's hung his jacket on a branch. He is working in the beam of the Shogun's headlights. He's taking ages. There's more whingeing than slogging.

"You won't get away with this," he grumbles like some old tractor. "I'm calling the minister first thing in the morning and then you'll see," he goes on, shovelling a small quantity of clay out of the pit. Too small, too damned small. He's obviously trying to fling it onto the uprooted tree but it's out of the shovel's reach. The other guys are lounging in the car, smoking the big shot's gold-filter black Sobranie, drinking beer from cans and arguing about which cassette to put on – the 50-year old Slovak band Elán or some new German hit. The other man sits on the tree trunk tucking into his sandwich. His girlfriend always makes him a sandwich when he goes on the night shift. She thinks that a guy who works in a fridge-making factory makes fridges. And that the café is bound to be closed at night. He doesn't explain. He doesn't care what the chick thinks. A chick is meant to be a looker not a thinker. The sandwich isn't bad – a big dollop of paté, cheese, salami – the works. Would be a shame to waste it. He's dangling a G9 in his other hand, casually. He knows there won't be a problem. The big shot got it into his head that they're trying to put the frighteners on him to make him sign. What for? Gaštan has a chick in the firm, she can sign for anyone. He also has a notary public who will certify anything. He doesn't explain this to the big shot. They're easier to deal with when they don't know.

"You think you're gonna make me shit myself, you louts?!"

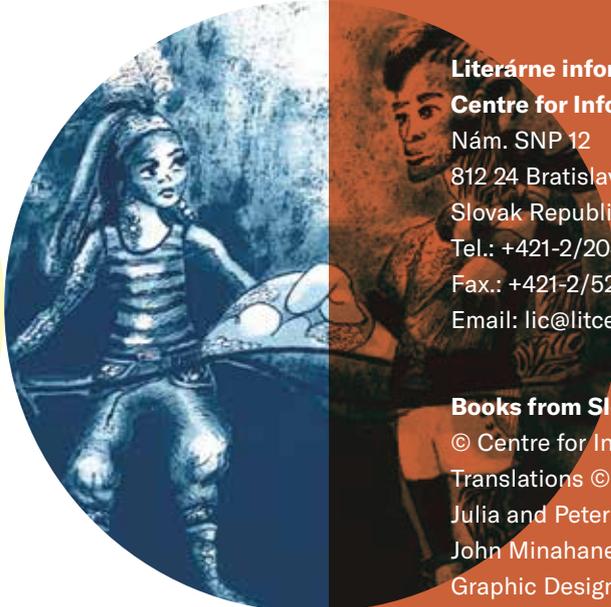
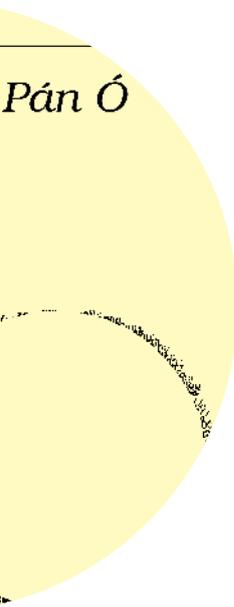
The man keeps on chewing instead of answering and shakes his head impatiently, just get on with it. It's getting chilly. A drop of lemonade would be nice, to help the bread go down. There's only beer in the car and he never drinks at work. On principle.

"Who do those mafia bosses of yours think they are? Your boss thinks he can take me down? Only the minister can sack me!"

The man looks at him and can't figure out how this dickhead could have got this far. He's not just anyone. A department head. A tycoon. What a moron.

"How much longer will this charade go on?" Potočný flings the shovel into the ditch and starts to climb out.

The man points the gun at him, flips the catch with his finger and shakes his head. He stands up to get a better view of the pit. It might just do. The Elán song blasting out of the Shogun annoys the man even more than the dickhead in the pit. He shrugs: it's not his decision.



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**MEDZI
SLOVÁKMI**

Martin M. Šimečka

STRUČNÉ DEJINY LAHOSTAJNOSTI OD DUBČEKA K FICOVÍ
ALEBO AKO SOM SA STAL VLASTENCOM

