

# Geist

Vol. 1. Nr. 1. Winter 2021.

Art and Literature  
Kunst und Literatur  
Art et Littérature



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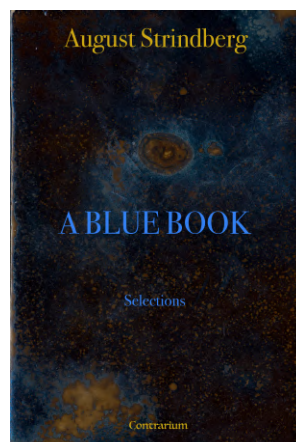
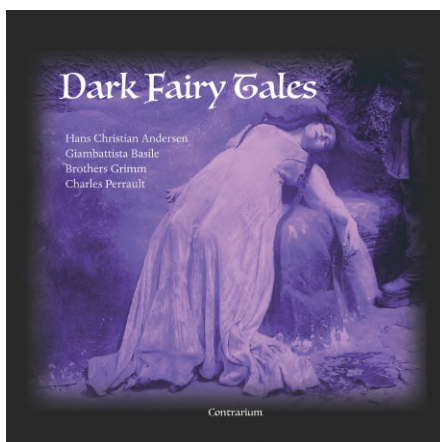
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Back cover image: Young woman dressed as angel in religious procession in Palermo, Italy, 2019. Photo: T. Creus.

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# No More Mister Nice Guy

Story: Cologero Salvo  
Photos: Verena Russell



*Try as I might, I never made my wife happy. So I made it my task to learn how to please a woman. I then was able to please a dozen women, although it never made me happy. So I became an itinerant horse trader. ~ Mullah Nasruddin*

**I WAS SURPRISED TO READ** the email. Although he was my college roommate, I hadn't heard from Chad in some 20 years. From mutual friends, now and then, I learned he had become an actuary, gotten married, yada yada. You know how it goes, once the routine starts, it develops a life of its own. Nevertheless, it never sounded like the Chad I knew. I suppose it had to be that way; the path he used to be on could only lead to death, addiction, or a long imprisonment. I hoped he wouldn't bore me with some maudlin conversion story, or worse, try to sell me an insurance policy.

I became an entomologist, specializing in entomophagy. I got a good gig at a state university in the South. The place revolved around football. Not much for high culture, but in my case, that did not extend much beyond the Grateful Dead and Netflix comedies anyway. I was compensated with many international trips; that was plenty of culture. As a gag gift on one birthday, my wife gave me a poster that read, "It's the little things that count," which I hung on the wall behind my desk. Hmm ... I assume she meant my professional interests. She's been a great companion all these years even though she never learned how to prepare my bug recipes.

I met up with Chad at the cigar bar he suggested, since we both happened to be in Boston at the same time. He was smoking a fake Cohiba and a glass of scotch straight up. I opted for a glass of red wine. The odd thing about catching up with an old buddy is that the years don't count. It's as though you just saw him last Tuesday and there is no awkwardness. You assume he has been the same person during the long gap, and any changes are no more than the superficial ripples on a much deeper pond.

We did the long time no see greeting and began to relax. I asked about his family. He hesitated, but then answered, "My wife ran off with a professional drag car racer two years ago."

"Wow, what are the odds of that?"

"Hold on a second, I can pull that up for you," he said as he reached for his cell phone.

"Whoa, dude, the question was rhetorical. What have you been doing since then?"

"I decided I needed a complete personality makeover. So I bought a small condo in the Art Deco section of Miami Beach. Then I started a consultancy, extending my actuarial work with data science. I was basically an electronic gumshoe."

"You were always good at math."

He seemed irritated by that remark. "They are totally different. Math is based on logic and certainty. Once a proof is found, it is true from the beginning of the world until the end of time. On the other hand, an actuary deals with uncertainty, risk, doubt, the unknown, the improbable. I am always looking for what is the worst that can happen."

"And I'm sure it does," I conceded. "But what does that have to do with a makeover?"

"I did the research and drew some conclusions."

I'm sure he did; once Chad got an idea in his head, he became obsessed. Whether it was contract bridge, a political

movement, or the best fried rice in Chinatown, he read everything about it. We would go to Chinatown on weekends, usually around 2 or 3 AM when the strippers, hookers, and sailors were winding down. One time, I remember, there was an insect in his fried rice. When he complained to the waiter, the waiter reassured him, "You lucky! Now fried rice is free." I always wondered if that motivated his career. Any deviations from certainty or predictability disturbed him. I suppose he needed a way to measure that

He elaborated on his plan. "I think I was too nice to my ex. I brought home the bacon, mowed the lawn, played with the kids. My party days were over, I was thinking. But she had known me then, so she was expecting an ongoing party. I gave her a generous allowance, so she could stay at home, play tennis at the country club, hang out by the pool. I assumed that was a good bargain."

One time, I remember, there was an insect in his fried rice. When he complained to the waiter, the waiter reassured him, "You lucky! Now fried rice is free."

"To be honest," he continued, "I really had no idea what women did when the party was over. I would just leave and not even give it a thought. I was poorly prepared for all that togetherness."

"Ok, cut to the chase. If nothing worked, what changes did you make?"

"Obviously, I did the research, evaluated the statistics, calculated correlations and moved on from there. The conclusion I reached was that a transformation of all values was necessary. I had to become a different personality; it turned out to be an experiment on the malleability of personality."

I started to get curious. Insect behaviour is predictable and, I suppose, in a way, that I came to regard humans as just more advanced "bug men". That doesn't mean I am ready to turn cannibal. I let him continue.

"The easy stuff came first. I worked out, watched my diet, bought new clothes, took dance lessons. Heck, I even took acting lessons to learn how to play my roles consciously!"

"That's probably a good and healthy lifestyle," I replied. "How did all that work out for you?"

"Actually, the physical was the easy part. The difficult part was to change my mindset. I read the game and PUA blogs, and realized I had to be more like a bad boy."

"That just doesn't sound like you. Could you really do that?"

"Trust me, I was determined. Actuaries play it safe, drag racers don't. Yet I understood the statistics about who was getting the girls. I just needed to follow the numbers."

I could see this would be a longer night than expected. So we took a break to order some sandwiches. He flirted with the bartender, which I had never seen him do before. To my surprise, she even flirted back. He ate the meat but not the fries. I prodded him to continue the story.

"I approached it like a marketing expert. I figured that self-help meetings, art exhibits, dance classes, beach cleanup projects, and so on that would likely draw compatible women. I kept notebooks and analysed the data. The conclusion I reached was that out of 10 or 12 in my target demographic, at least one would be attracted to me."



"That sounds like how I study insects," I interrupted.

"You really seem obsessed with bugs," he responded huffily.

"No more than you are with women." At least he wasn't watching porn, so I apologized for the interruption. "So after you found 'em, did you keep 'em or throw them back into the sea?"

"It turned out to be too easy. The hints went from subtle to overt. They would ask me about a car problem, or what an art piece meant, or they would want to practice a particular salsa move. I got the point. Others would just ask me out, for coffee, dinner, upcoming parties, concerts, skybox seats at football games. One even sent me flowers and chocolates."

"Seems like your social life became quite active." Guys don't often speak so intimately, so I wondered if he was trying to get something off his chest. "Go on," I encouraged him.

"That's nothing. It gets better. I was invited by a state department bigwig to stay at her place in a Caribbean island. She needed a date for the Marine Ball at the embassy. I had to pass up similar invitations with US destinations. But the best invitation was to stay 10 days at a woman's flat in Paris near the Arc de Triomphe, after I had just met her passing through Florida to visit relatives."

"And you didn't even have to buy a race car. How, then, did they know you were a bad boy?"

"It's a balance. You can't show puppy like enthusiasm, yet you need to seem safe enough not to strangle them as they sleep. They need to think they are winning, but are not."

I wanted specific examples, so I pushed for details.

"I was meeting a psychologist in Palm Beach for a cocktail, actually more like a blind date. She tried to test me from the start. First of all, she was 45 minutes late, so I waited by the beach. I was silent and aloof when she finally arrived. This disconcerted her and she asked why. I told her I had been meditating and was still in that frame of mind. That actually pleased her. Then instead of a glass of wine, she began ordering champagne splits. At \$25 a bottle, I wasn't happy but didn't show it.

She was attractive, intelligent, and financially independent; my target demographic so I stuck with it."

Then she wanted proof of who I was. I pulled out my wallet to show my driver's license; I think she wanted to see if I had any credit cards. She objected that anyone could get a driver's license. So I showed her a concealed weapon permit. That reassured her that I am not a felon yet could still be dangerous. Things loosened up between us. It was game and set, and I knew I could get to match point with a little care."

I had the impression he could have gone on for an hour longer, but I had someone to go home to. "No offense, Chad, I'm sure you met some fascinating people. But it seems pointless considering all the effort you put into it. Does it have a happy ending, or an ending at all?"

"I did get shook up. I met Kari at cocktail party.

She was the archetype of the Norwegian blonde, tall and fit from daily kayaking. She was interested in digging up the finances of ex-husband, so I offered my data sleuthing services. She invited me to a steak dinner the following night at her home at the end of a cul-de-

sac in the nicest section of the island, where she lived with her young son. I brought him handmade chocolates, since chocolate was his favourite desert.

"That's when I fell out of my new character. She had been married to a real bad boy, so my pose was inauthentic to her. She left home at 18, but did not say why. Most women talk, but not her. I've been surprised many times about what secretly goes on in many of the houses of middle America. They are not songs of innocence.

"Pierre was older and homely. She resisted his advances but eventually yielded to his persistence. After all, she was working as a make-up artist for a cable news channel and he promised her a much better lifestyle. As an aside, she was with his girlfriend watching a news host. Unexpectedly, the host announced on air his engagement to someone else, to the girlfriend's shock. Only a real bad boy could do that.

"I heard all the stories, many more than I can, or should, tell tonight.

"You really seem obsessed with bugs," he responded huffily.  
"No more than you are with women."



"For example, he said his mother escaped from the Nazis by hiding in a French forest beneath some murdered Jews. I checked with a Holocaust expert in Israel; he had never heard of that story.

"Curiously, despite how he eventually mistreated her, she remained oddly proud of Pierre. His business activities all sounded to me like scams or con games. She claimed proudly that he could sell snow to an Eskimo. I tried to explain to her that only the gullible or the greedy would fall for such deals. Nevertheless, she tried to push her son into acting like him by being aggressive with food vendors. I'm sure the lifestyle was seductive; a large house, money, and connections to prominent politicians.

"That all ended when a federal SWAT team raided their house and arrested Pierre. He was indicted for stock fraud and money laundering — actually a Byzantine tale with international connections, worthy of a James Bond movie. I read through all the pleadings from the federal courts, hoping to see where he was hiding money.

"He got a reduced sentence by squealing on his partners, while Kari dutifully waited for him, in much diminished financial circumstances. Presumably, his assets were seized but he seemed financially secure after his release.

"He sent her to Florida, he said to protect her. Initially, he flew down from New York every weekend, then monthly. He convinced her to get a divorce, allegedly in order to protect her assets from the feds. It was not a real divorce, he assured her, but a matter of convenience. Then he stopped visiting altogether. I finally tracked him down. He had remarried and started a new family, just as she suspected."

I was rather shocked that my bookish roommate could have become involved with people like that. I was sure that he left a lot out of the story. "That sounds like a bad TV cop show. Was that the end of your involvement?"

"I did offer to write a screenplay. That might have happened if things did not get cut short."

"What does that mean?" I was perplexed.

"Our relationship got personal," he explained.





"We could talk. She called me a breath of fresh air. Obviously, she did not need anyone to help her financially. Just someone who was direct and able to share feelings, and so on. I've heard that before, but she was laid back and I had nothing better going on. She was hoping to meet someone like me, but probably, as it turned out, not actually me."

He ordered another Scotch, although I was hoping this would not take too much longer.

"We went out for a while. Polo matches, dinners, but mostly quiet nights at her home. Her son said I was one of the best grownup friends he had met. I sent her a thank you card. In an email she thanked me, saying how great it was to receive such a nice card from a nice caring person.

That should have been a warning to me. It was against everything I had been training for. A couple of weeks later, she was really cold at her house, so I decided to leave early. She followed me out to my car."

"Was that it?" I asked. "Tell me what happened next."

"Since she prized directness and honesty, I asked her bluntly if I should call her anymore."

"Did she answer, or talk about her feelings?" I wondered.

"Are you kidding? She went on and on about how desperately she wanted to be with a nice reliable guy. But when she found me, it wasn't working for her. Her friends couldn't figure it out. She said she had to go back to psychotherapy to see what was wrong with her. But I could have told her that for free."

"So you took that for a No, I presume?"

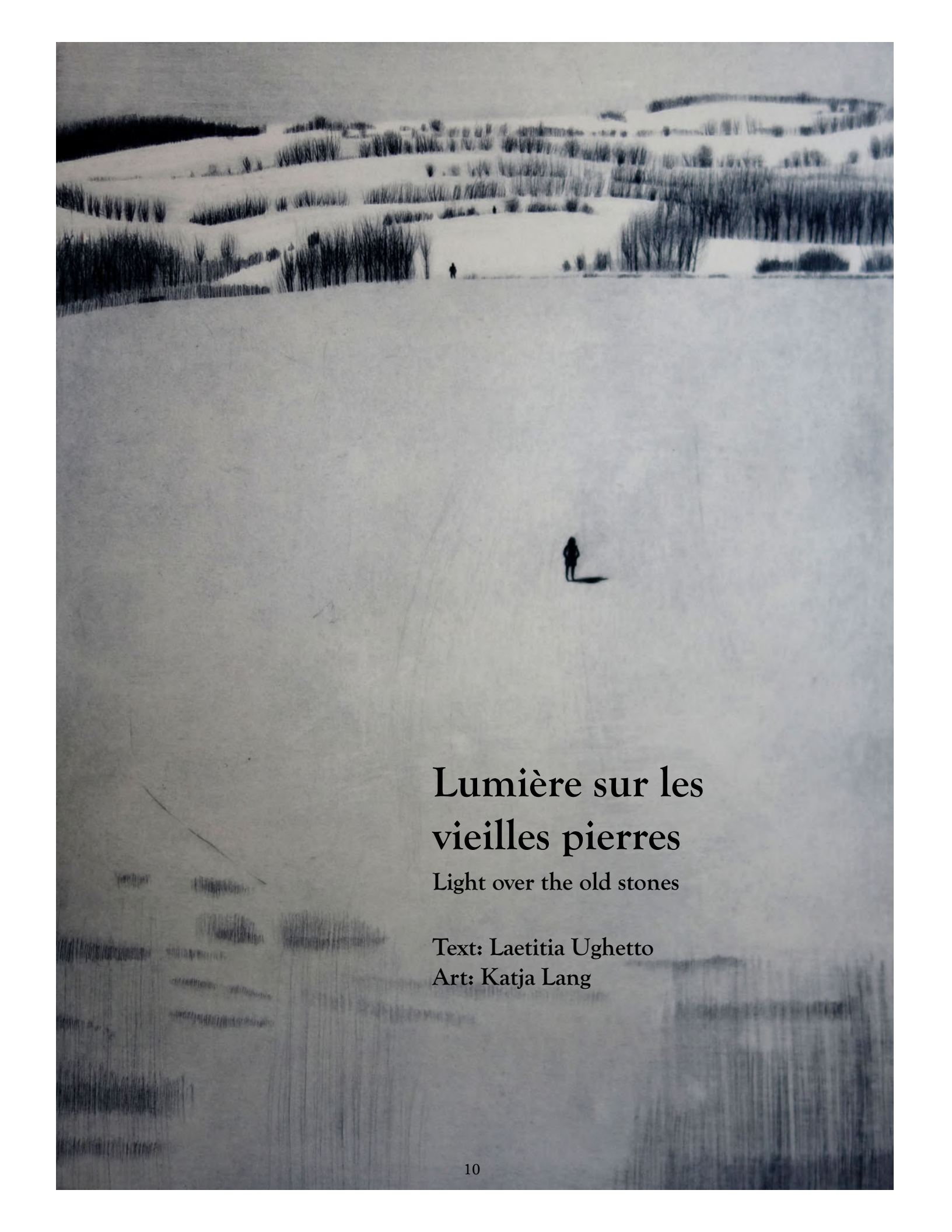
"I explained to her: Kari, I just wanted a Yes or No answer, not a story. Then I got in the car and drove away."

"So you've been a nice guy all along?"

"Yeah. What are the odds of that?"



Cologero Salvo writes at [gornahoor.net](http://gornahoor.net).  
Verena Russell is an artist living in Chemnitz.



# Lumière sur les vieilles pierres

Light over the old stones

Text: Laetitia Ughetto

Art: Katja Lang



**ELLE EST PETITE**, dure et moussue, mais avec les autres, ensemble, elles font cette grange.

De loin, elle est invisible, mais de près, lorsque le soleil l'illumine, elle parle.

Les cristaux, les grains et les couleurs, la chaleur qu'elle donne après l'avoir stockée nous parlent. Elle rappelle qu'il y a eu d'autres murs et granges auparavant et qu'il y en aura encore, mais que le plus important est de la toucher et de l'écouter maintenant pour en faire un souvenir. Cette pierre est un souvenir pour de nombreuses personnes, qui pensent à leur âne qu'ils amenaient là il y a bien longtemps peut-être, ou au temps des foin, avec le travail intense mais aussi les fêtes d'été.

La pierre et la grange sont toujours là, elles ont certainement laissé leur empreinte auprès de plusieurs générations, mais tous ces gens, est-ce qu'ils le savent ?

Est-ce qu'ils savent que ce petit moment, un rayon de soleil, la promenade sur le chemin, et les vieilles pierres, il ne faut pas se contenter d'en profiter passivement comme lorsqu'on était enfant puis le garder en mémoire comme un bonbon, l'un acidulé, l'autre doux, rose ou orange. Non, il faut en profiter en conscience pour construire l'avenir dessus.

Si une grange parle, alors elle a une âme, une âme transmise par nous tous, petite bulle après petite bulle. Cette âme est peut-être aussi dans l'arbre qui nous a regardé passer toute notre enfance, et qui paraît soudain petit. Petit mais plein de souvenirs.

Toutes les bulles d'âme se touchent peut-être même. Chaque sourire se multiplie et se reflète chez d'autres, chaque colère se répand comme une vague.

Alors il faut profiter du moment présent et garder en tête qu'on envoie des petites bulles. Nous sommes les architectes, et la grange en est témoin.

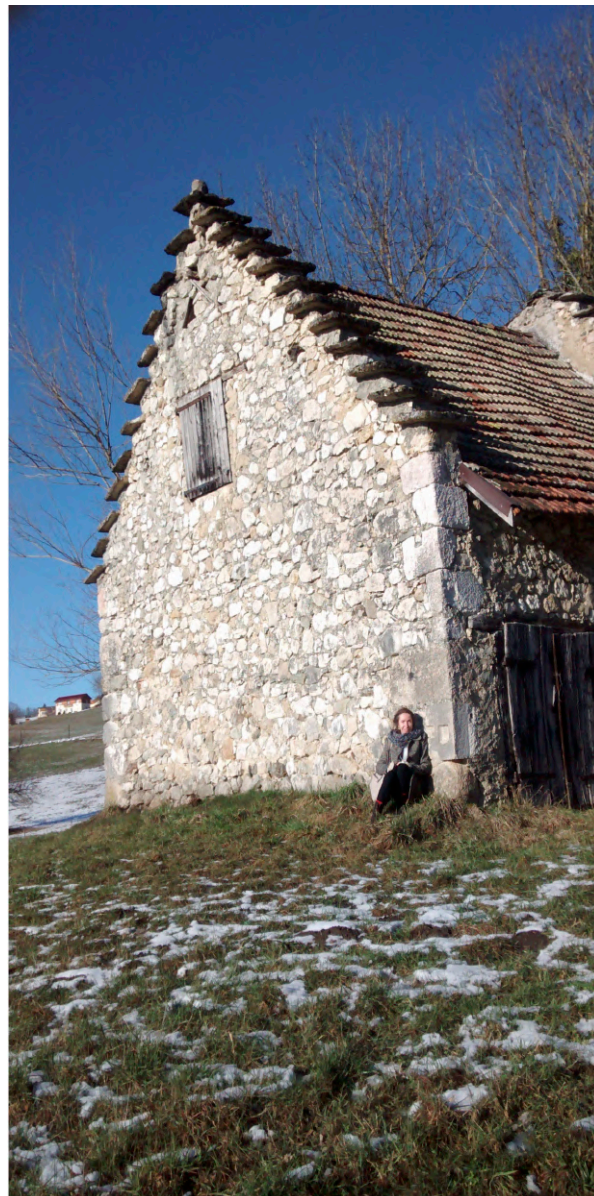
**SHE'S SMALL** and tough and mossy, but with the others together they make this barn.

From a distance she is invisible, but up close, when the sun shines on her, she speaks.

The crystals, the grains and the colours, the heat that it gives after having stored it speaks to us. She recalls that there were other walls and barns before and that there will be more, but the most important thing is to touch and listen to her now to make a memory of her. This stone is a memory for many people, who think of their donkey that they brought there maybe a long time ago, or in harvest time, with the intense work but also the summer festivals. The stone and the barn are still there, they certainly left their mark on several generations, but do all these people know that?

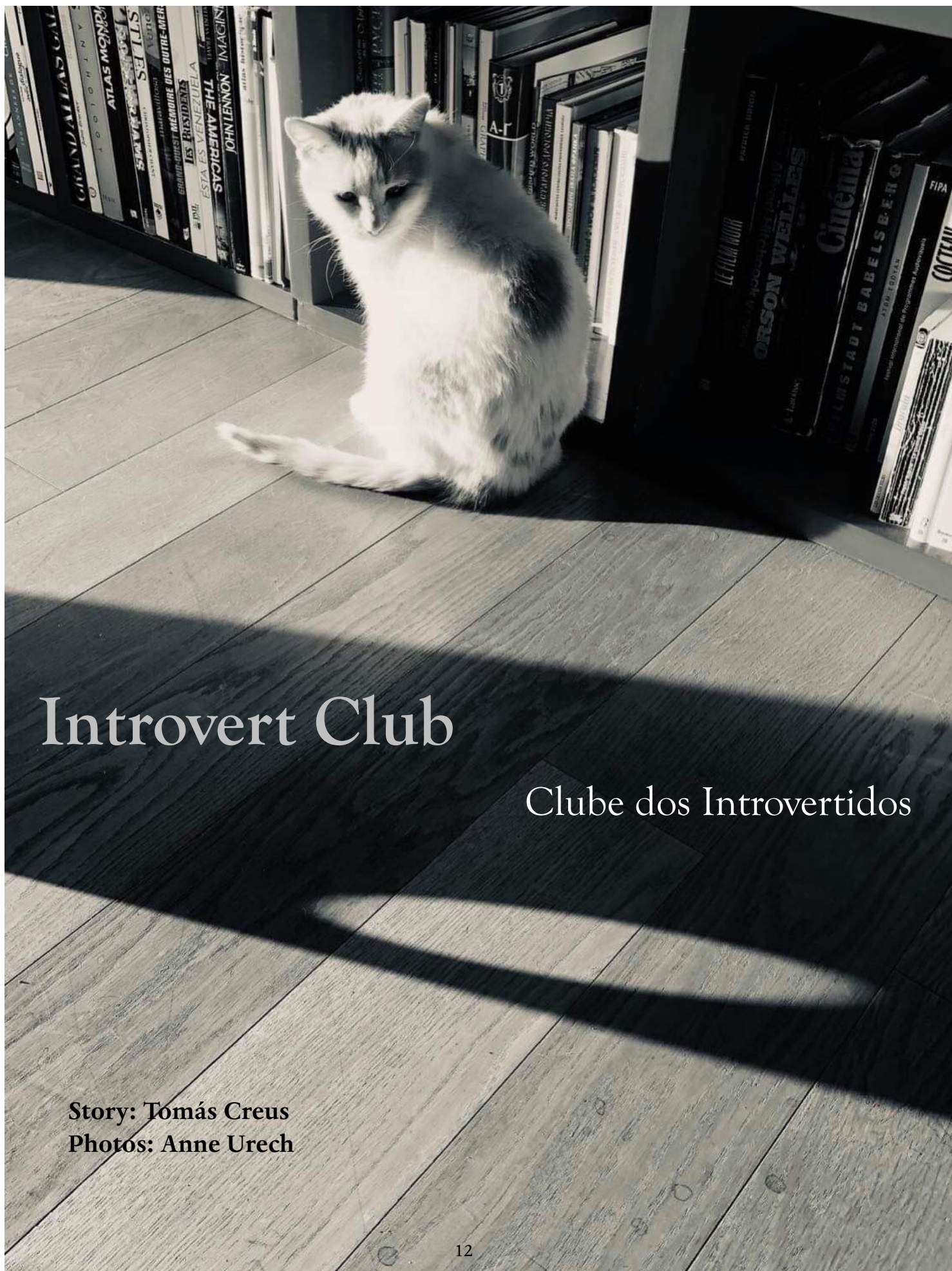
Do they know that this little moment, a ray of sunshine, the walk on the path, and the old stones, we must not be content to passively enjoy it as when we were a child and then keep it in memory like a candy, one tart, the other sweet, pink or orange. No, we must take advantage of it consciously to build our future with it.

If a barn speaks, then it has a soul, a soul transmitted by all of us, little bubble after little bubble. This soul is perhaps also in the tree which has watched us pass all our childhood, and which suddenly seems so small. Small but full of memories. All the soul bubbles may even touch each other. Each smile multiplies and is reflected in others, each anger spreads like a wave. So you have to take advantage of the present moment and keep in mind that you are sending little bubbles. We are the architects, and the barn is a witness.



Laetitia Ughetto is a French writer and translator living in Montreal, Canada. Katja Lang is an artist from Berlin. <http://katja-lang.com/>





# Introvert Club

Clube dos Introvertidos

Story: Tomás Creus  
Photos: Anne Urech



**I DON'T REMEMBER** who had the idea first, but it had to be either me, or Max. Or maybe we both had the same idea at the same time and it just took a long time to tell it to each other and then even more to put it in practice. But in retrospect it didn't seem an oxymoron or a bad joke as it seems now, it was actually a sort of an obvious thing. I mean, we were all introverts and we wanted to meet people, right? To make friends, perhaps even to find a girlfriend? So why not create a club at the university for people just like us, where we would all feel more at ease with each other?

But of course, as it's usual in those cases, theory was one thing, and practice was another. The first problem was to convince introverts to actually get up from their couch and go somewhere, and the second was -- what would people actually do in the club?

Well, we didn't think that far ahead at the time. We just reserved a room at the university library and put up signs and notes

in some bulletin boards. Max even created a website or something to that effect, but I don't know how many people saw it: this was in the early 1990s and the web was in its pre-infancy then, there was no social media, I think even cat videos didn't exist yet.

The first meeting was a failure. Only two other people came, but hardly anyone said a word, and even we were at a loss to explain what we wanted. So we were four people sitting there, all social-phobic introverts, and each was embarrassed to be the first to say something, and the guests in particular felt embarrassed to ask what was going on or even to just get up and leave, so we were all stuck in that uncomfortable situation, looking at each other not knowing exactly what to do. We were saved only because five minutes later there was a fire drill and we were all forced to get out of the building.

"Max, this is not working," I said.

So we decided that we needed some rules.

"First rule of Introvert Club is: you don't talk at Introvert Club."

Max wrote it down.

That seemed wise. But then how would people communicate?

**NÃO LEMBRO** quem teve a ideia primeiro, mas só pode ter sido o Max ou eu. Ou talvez nós dois tivéssemos a mesma idéia ao mesmo tempo e só levou um bocadinho de tempo para um comunicá-la ao outro, e ainda mais para colocá-la em prática. Mas, em retrospecto, não parecia um oxímoro ou uma piada de mau gosto como parece agora, era até uma coisa meio óbvia. Quer dizer, éramos todos introvertidos e queríamos conhecer pessoas, certo? Para fazer amigos, talvez até conseguir uma namorada? Então, por que não criar um clube na universidade para que as pessoas como nós pudessem se sentir mais à vontade uns com os outros?

Mas é claro, como é normal nesses e em outros casos, a teoria era uma coisa e a prática era outra. O primeiro problema era convencer os introvertidos a realmente se levantar do sofá e ir a algum lugar, e o segundo era -- o que as pessoas realmente fariam no clube?

Bem, não pensamos muito nisso na hora. Apenas reservamos uma sala na biblioteca da universidade e colocamos

anúncios com a notícia em alguns murais de avisos. Max ainda criou um site ou algo parecido, mas eu não sei quantas pessoas viram: isto que conto aconteceu no início dos anos 1990 e a web estava em sua pré-infância, não existia nenhuma mídia social, e eu acho que até mesmo os memes e vídeos de gatos sequer existiam.

O primeiro encontro foi um completo fracasso. Só duas outras pessoas apareceram, mas ninguém deu um pio, e até mesmo nós ficamos sem saber explicar direito o que queríamos. Éramos quatro pessoas sentadas ali, todos introvertidos fóbicos sociais, e ninguém queria ser o primeiro a dizer alguma coisa, os convidados não queriam perguntar o que estava acontecendo mas também tinham vergonha de simplesmente se levantar e ir embora, e por isso ficamos todos presos naquela situação desconfortável, olhando um para o outro sem saber exatamente o que fazer. Fomos salvos apenas porque cinco minutos depois houve um falso alarme de incêndio e todos foram forçados a sair do prédio

"Max, isso não está funcionando," eu falei. Então decidimos que precisávamos de algumas regras.

"A primeira regra do Clube dos Introvertidos é: você não fala no Clube dos Introvertidos."

Max anotou. Isso parecia sensato. Mas então como as pessoas se comunicariam?

By writing, of course. There would be little pieces of paper where you could write notes, and also a blackboard. If you wanted to say something or make an announcement for everybody, you'd write it on the board. If you wanted to write something for just one person, then you would write a note, putting the name of the person on it. It could even be anonymous, if you didn't want to sign your name or deliver it to the person directly, you could just put it in a basket where eventually it would be read. It was a great system, advanced for the times: but we could already then imagine that some time in the future, not many years later, whole groups of people would communicate exclusively by messages, only perhaps not on paper but on some weird pocket-sized electronic device. But since such devices didn't exist yet, we did what we could.

Also, people had other things to do that just talking, or, in that case, writing to each other. There were games – chess, backgammon, cards, - and records, and books, lots of books. You could also bring your own book from home. This made people relax. There was no obligation to talk, to socialize, to do anything really – just be there and spend time with other people, even in complete silence if you wanted.

And so the thing started to work, and we ended up being kind of successful. I mean, some weeks we had 10, 12 people coming, that wasn't bad at all. Even 3 girls who became regulars! That was also not a bad thing, not a bad thing at all.

The girls were perhaps not the greatest beauties, but at least two of them were cute in a nerdy kind of way. But I wasn't interested in them. And the reason was that I was already in love with someone else: the bubbly, ditzy girl who worked at the library and who each week came and opened for us the door of the meeting room. She was blonde, she had blue eyes, and she was an extrovert. Her name was Wanda. She laughed when I told her the name of our club. "Really?" she said, "That's funny. What do you do there?"



Ora, escrevendo, é claro. Haveria pequenos blocos de papel onde você poderia fazer anotações e também um quadro-negro. Se você quisesse dizer algo ou fazer um anúncio para todos, você escrevia no quadro. Se você queria escrever algo para apenas uma pessoa, então você escrevia uma nota e entregava à pessoa. Poderia até ser um bilhete anônimo, se você não quisesse assinar seu nome ou entregá-lo diretamente. Era só colocá-lo na urna de mensagens onde eventualmente seria lido. Era um ótimo sistema, avançado para a época: mas já podíamos imaginar que em algum tempo no futuro, não muitos anos depois, grupos inteiros de pessoas se comunicariam exclusivamente por mensagens, só talvez não no papel, mas que sabe com algum dispositivo eletrônico portátil inteligente. Mas como esses dispositivos ainda não existiam, fizemos o que podíamos.

Além disso, as pessoas tinham outras coisas para fazer que apenas conversar ou, nesse caso, escrever umas para as outras. Havia jogos de tabuleiro - xadrez, gamão, cartas - e discos. E livros, muitos livros. Você também pode trazer seu próprio livro de casa. Isso fez as pessoas relaxarem. Não havia obrigação nenhuma de conversar, de socializar, de realmente fazer qualquer coisa - apenas estar lá e passar um tempo com outras pessoas, mesmo em completo silêncio, se quisesse.

Assim a coisa começou a funcionar, e acabamos até tendo certo sucesso. Quer dizer, algumas semanas tínhamos 10, 12 pessoas vindo, não era nada ruim. Houve até três garotas que se tornaram visitantes regulares! Isso também não era nem um pouco ruim. As garotas talvez não fossem modelos, mas pelo menos duas delas eram bonitas naquele estilo de beleza nerd. Mas eu não estava interessado nelas. E a razão era que eu já estava apaixonado por outra pessoa: a sorridente e alegre garota que trabalhava na biblioteca e que a cada semana vinha e abria a porta da sala de reuniões para nós. Ela era loira, tinha olhos azuis e era extrovertida. Seu nome era Wanda.



"We meet, we talk... Well, kind of. We play games, we read. Some times we listen to music. But with headphones, because it is the library."

I didn't talk much with Wanda. Even if I hadn't been shy, there wasn't much time in the short walk from the desk to the meeting room. But I guess it was a bit obvious that I liked her, just by the way I looked at her. At least Marie noticed it pretty soon.

Marie was one of those nerdy girls who had become a regular at the club. She was no Wanda, but she wasn't bad looking either: she had a pretty face with vivacious green eyes covered by round glasses, short reddish-brown hair covered by a French beret, and she used to dress in mismatched colours; perhaps she has colour-blind. I never asked. Despite the name and the beret, she wasn't really French, she just liked to pretend that she was. She said *bonjour* and *ça va*, and talked all the time about Godard, Rimbaud, Artaud, Breton, Truffaut, Bresson and Malle. Anyway, one day after Wanda opened the door and left, and I was looking at her as she walked away, I got a note from Marie.

"You fancy her, don't you?", she wrote.

"What? Why are you saying that?", I wrote back.

"Come on, you'd have to be a moron not to notice it, really. But beware. She's not your type."

"Why?"

"She's an extrovert. She's not the kind of girl that would be interested in someone like you, *désolé*."

I had to look at her then. What did she care? Was she jealous? Was she into me somehow? I couldn't ask that directly, but it bothered me that she was already saying I had no chance with Wanda. Why not? Of course I knew it was unlikely, but sometimes miracles could happen, or so I hoped. Besides, I was 19 years old, and I was in love, and when you're in love you don't think straight.

"Well that's what you think", I wrote back. And I didn't write to her again that day.

A few weeks later Wanda invited me to a party. Well, not really. When I say it this way it seems as if she had invited me personally, me and only me, but what happened was that they were celebrating some kind of party at her dorm and inviting basically everyone at the university, and so one day as she opened the door for the club she casually mentioned it and said, "you guys all are invited to come too, if you want." But she looked at me as she said it, and so, to me, maybe it felt more personal than it really was. Remember, I was 19, I was dumb, I was in love.

Ela riu quando eu disse a ela o nome do nosso clube. "Mesmo?" ela disse. "Isso é engraçado. O que vocês fazem aí?"

"Nós nos encontramos, conversamos... Bom, mais ou menos. Nós jogamos jogos, lemos. Algumas vezes ouvimos música. Mas sempre com fones de ouvido, porque é a biblioteca."

Eu não falava muito com Wanda. Mesmo que eu não fosse tímido, não havia muito tempo na curta caminhada da mesa até a sala de reuniões. Mas acho que era um pouco óbvio que eu gostava dela, só pelo jeito que olhava para ela. Pelo menos Marie percebeu isso logo. Marie era uma daquelas garotas nerds que se tornaram frequentadoras regulares do clube. Ela não era como Wanda, mas não era nem um pouco feia: tinha um rosto bonito com olhos verdes vivazes cobertos por óculos redondos, e um cabelo castanho avermelhado curto coberto por uma boina francesa. Ela costumava se vestir sempre com cores incompatíveis. Talvez fosse daltônica. Nunca perguntei. Apesar do nome e da boina, ela não era realmente francesa, apenas gostava de fingir que era. Ela dizia *bonjour* e *ça va*, e falava o tempo todo sobre Godard, Rimbaud, Artaud, Breton, Truffaut, Bresson e Malle. De qualquer forma, um dia depois que Wanda abriu a porta e saiu, e eu estava olhando para ela enquanto ela se afastava, recebi um bilhete de Marie.

"Você gosta dela, não é?", ela escreveu.

"O quê? Por que está dizendo isso?", escrevi.

"Vamos, você teria que ser um idiota para não notar, realmente. Mas cuidado. Ela não é o seu tipo."

"Por quê?"

"Ela é extrovertida. Ela não é o tipo de garota que se interessaria por alguém como você. *Désolé*." Eu tive que olhar para ela então. Por que ela se importaria? Ela estava com ciúmes? Ela estava a fim de mim de alguma forma? Eu não poderia perguntar isso diretamente, mas me incomodou que ela já estivesse dizendo que eu não tinha nenhuma chance com Wanda. Ué, por que não? Claro que eu sabia que era improvável, mas às vezes milagres aconteciam, ou pelo menos era o que eu esperava. Além disso, eu tinha 19 anos e estava apaixonado, e quando você está apaixonado não pensa direito.

"Bom, essa é só sua opinião", escrevi de volta. E não escrevi para ela novamente naquele dia.

Algumas semanas depois, Wanda me convidou para uma festa.



"You're not going to that stupid party, are you?" Marie wrote.

"Sure," I wrote. "Why not?"

"*Mon Dieu*", she wrote. And then: "I'm worried about you, that's all. I wouldn't want you to get hurt."

Didn't want me to get hurt? Why wouldn't she want me to get hurt? And *why would I* get hurt? It was just a party.

Of course, I was very naive at that time and I still didn't know yet the full extent to which extroverts and introverts were different tribes, you might even say different races divided by thousands of years of evolution, and that we were at bottom mortal enemies destined to forever misunderstand and despise each other in ever-growing cycles of frustration and despair.

Bom, não exatamente. Quando eu digo desta forma parece como se ela tivesse me convidado pessoalmente, a mim e somente a mim, mas o que aconteceu foi que estavam organizando um tipo de festa coletiva nos seus dormitórios e convidando quase todo mundo na universidade, e assim um dia, quando ela abriu a porta para a sala, ela casualmente mencionou isso e disse: "Vocês estão todos convidados a vir também, se quiserem." Mas ela olhou para mim enquanto falava, então, talvez pareceu algo mais pessoal do que realmente era. Lembre, eu tinha 19 anos, eu era um idiota, eu estava apaixonado.

"Você não vai para aquela festa ridícula, vai?" Marie escreveu.

"Claro", escrevi de volta. "Por que não?"

"*Mon Dieu*", escreveu ela. E então: "Estou preocupado com você, só isso. Eu não quero que você se machuque."

Não queria que eu me machucasse? Por que ela não queria que eu me machucasse? E por que eu me machucaria? Era só uma festa, nossa.



Whatever, I thought. I went to the party. I was going to go with Max, but he backed off at the last minute. Said he had another appointment: weird. Better this way, I thought, because at the time I suspected that maybe he was a bit interested in Wanda too, and I felt jealous, because he was a bit more good-looking and a bit less introvert than I was. But soon I realized that without him it was so much harder to go. Without Max, or anyone else that I knew by my side there, I would be a total stranger, and how would I even approach her?

I went all the same, of course. Alone. And what I did there was what I usually did in those occasions: I got drunk. Alcohol helped me loosen up and be less fearful of conversation with strangers. But I had to be careful. There was a delicate balance between that slight buzz that made you feel a bit more sociable and daring, and that moment when you start seeing double and your tongue slurs and people think you're obnoxious and then you just fall on a sofa and fall asleep or want to cry.

The place was so crowded that I couldn't even find her at first. I saw her finally after my third margarita. I said hi. She said hi. "You came", she said, and I could detect in her voice a certain surprise. "And the others?"

"Max is somewhere around", I lied. I didn't want her to think that I had come all by myself, just for her sake.

"Cool," she said. "Well, have fun."

And that was it.

I mean, really?

All that mental effort to go to her damn party and she was so cold? I dawned my fourth margarita, then a beer, then two tequila shots. Then another tequila shot on top of the other two. I just didn't know what to do at that point, I didn't know anyone at that place that I could talk to and wasn't sure anymore I should even had come at all.

My head started spinning. I sat down. The strobe lights made me feel dizzy. I thought vaguely of walking back home, but I wasn't even sure anymore what direction that was.

Then I saw her. Leaning on the back wall. Sipping a daiquiri or some other fancy drink. All alone.

Wanda, I wonder what you wonder, I wondered.

I got up and walked, or rather stumbled towards her, vaguely feeling that a defining moment in my life was coming and that I couldn't lose that chance.

Claro, eu era muito ingênuo naquela época e ainda não sabia até que ponto extrovertidos e introvertidos eram tribos diferentes, pode-se até dizer que raças diferentes divididas por milhares de anos de evolução, e que no fundo eramos inimigos mortais destinados a não se entenderem e se desprezarem para sempre em ciclos crescentes de desespero e frustração.

Tanto faz, pensei. E fui para a festa. Eu ia ir com o Max, mas ele recuou no último minuto. Disse que tinha outro compromisso. Estranho. Mas melhor assim, pensei, porque na época eu suspeitava que talvez ele estivesse também um pouco interessado na Wanda, e tive ciúmes, porque ele era um pouco mais boa-pinta um pouco menos introvertido do que eu. Mas logo percebi que sem ele ficava muito mais difícil ir. Sem Max, ou qualquer outra pessoa conhecida do meu lado lá, eu seria um completo estranho, e como eu iria me aproximar dela?

Fui mesmo assim, é claro. Sozinho. E o que eu fiz lá foi o que costumava fazer nessas ocasiões: fiquei bêbado. O álcool me ajudava a me soltar e a ter menos medo de conversar com estranhos. Mas eu precisava ter cuidado. Havia um equilíbrio delicado entre aquele leve zumbido que faz você se sentir um pouco mais sociável e ousado, e aquele momento em que você começa a ter uma visão dupla e sua língua fica enrolada e as pessoas pensam que você é desagradável e você simplesmente cai no sofá e adormece ou quer chorar.

O lugar estava tão lotado que nem consegui ver Wanda no início. Eu a encontrei finalmente após minha terceira margarita. Eu disse oi. Ela disse oi. "Você veio", ela disse, e pude perceber em sua voz uma certa surpresa. "E os outros?"

"Max está por aí", menti. Eu não queria que ela pensasse que eu tinha vindo sozinho, apenas por causa dela.

"Legal," ela disse. "Bem, divirta-se."

E foi isso.

Quer dizer, era só isso mesmo? Todo aquele esforço mental para ir à sua maldita festa e ela era tão fria assim? Bebi de um gole minha quarta margarita, depois uma cerveja, depois duas doses de tequila. Em seguida, outra dose de tequila por cima das outras duas. Eu simplesmente não sabia o que fazer naquele ponto, não conhecia ninguém naquele lugar com quem pudesse conversar com e não tinha mais certeza se deveria mesmo ter vindo.

I leaned by her side.

“Hi”, I said.

“Hey there”, she said.

Talking sure was harder than writing notes. But the tequilas helped a bit.

“Cool party”, I said.

“Yeah”, she said.

Then I thought a bit about what to say next. She was still leaning there, waiting. Waiting for my next words. Her lips moved silently just mimicking the chorus of the song that was playing. I looked ahead, still carefully thinking what to say next, because it couldn't be something too stupid, but I also had to be fast. Maybe I should ask her something? Maybe I should talk about her?

I turned again.

Well, when I turned around again in her general direction, she wasn't alone anymore, but she was making out with someone. Hugging and kissing like there's no tomorrow. I don't even know how he got there because from my point of view it was as if the guy had just materialized from one second to another. And he was ugly. I could have imagined her with a tall athletic handsome guy, but this guy... I mean he looked as if the dark lord Cthulhu had had a child with Asenath Derby, if you know what I mean, and an ugly child at that. And I could see and almost hear his tongue and lips moving around her mouth like Cthulhu's tentacles.

I was overcome with nausea; I couldn't stop myself; I threw up. I threw up in an instant all four margaritas and three beers and three or six tequila shots (I had lost count) and whatever else I had in my stomach at the time. And not on the floor, either, but straight ahead, in their direction, really on top of the kissing couple. It wasn't on purpose, I swear. I just didn't have time to point anywhere else. But perhaps it was, unconsciously, and I'm thinking this now but I'm sure I did not think it at the time, a form of reaction against that and all other disappointments and heartbreaks that life would put in my way; and particularly against those nice, easygoing, happy extrovert people who were always just so pretty and successful while for us even trying to be normal was a lot of hard work.

Minha cabeça começou a girar. Sentei. As luzes estroboscópicas me deixaram tonto. Pensei vagamente em voltar para casa, mas não tinha mais certeza de em que direção ficava.

Então eu a vi. Apoiada na parede do fundo. Bebericando um daiquiri ou alguma outra bebida chique. Sozinha.

Wanda, eu me pergunto o que você está pensando, pensei.

Levantei-me e caminhei, ou melhor, tropecei em sua direção, sentindo vagamente que um momento decisivo em minha vida estava chegando e que eu não poderia perder essa chance. Apoiei-me ao lado dela.

“Oi”, eu disse.

“Olá”, disse ela.

Falar com certeza era mais difícil do que escrever notas. Mas as tequilas ajudaram um pouco.

“Festa bacana”, eu disse.

“Sim”, ela disse.

Então pensei um pouco sobre o que dizer a seguir. Ela ainda estava apoiada lá, esperando. Esperando minhas próximas palavras. Seus lábios se moviam silenciosamente apenas imitando o refrão da música que estava tocando. Olhei para a frente, ainda pensando cuidadosamente no que dizer a seguir, porque não poderia ser algo muito estúpido, mas também tinha que ser rápido. Talvez devia perguntar alguma coisa? Talvez só elogiar algo dela? Eu me virei novamente.

E depois...

Bem, quando me virei novamente em sua direção, ela não estava mais sozinha, mas estava beijando alguém. Abraçando e beijando como se não houvesse amanhã. Nem sei como o sujeito chegou ali, porque do meu ponto de vista foi como se o cara tivesse acabado de se materializar de um segundo para o outro. E ele era feio. Eu poderia tê-la imaginado com um cara alto e bonito, musculoso, mas esse cara... quero dizer, ele parecia como se o Lorde das Trevas Cthulhu tivesse tido um filho com Asenath Derby, se você sabe o que quero dizer. E eu podia ver e quase ouvir sua língua se movendo dentro da boca de Wanda como os maléficos tentáculos de Cthulhu.



And the next thing I saw was her screaming, all covered in a disgusting yellowish-orange substance like the girl in that movie, Carrie, only it was human vomit instead of pig's blood. And she didn't have any paranormal powers, either, but she had the Cthulhu-guy by her side who was sure I had done it on purpose and started punching and kicking me hard. I don't know if it was from the beating or from the alcohol, but I just blacked out.

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I don't remember how I got home. Did I walk? Did someone carry me? I found myself in my bed the next morning with a black eye and pain all over my body, and the worst hangover I had ever felt in my still short life. But, somehow, alive.



Fui dominado pela náusea; não pude me conter; vomitei. Vomitei em um instante todas as quatro margaritas e três cervejas e três ou seis copos de tequila (eu havia perdido a conta) e tudo o mais que eu tinha no estômago na hora. E não foi no chão, mas diretamente em sua direção, realmente em cima do casal se beijando. Não foi de propósito, juro. Eu simplesmente não tive tempo para apontar para outro lugar. Mas talvez tenha sido, inconscientemente - e estou pensando nisso só agora, mas tenho certeza de que não pensei isso na hora - uma forma de reação contra esta e todas as outras decepções e tristezas que a vida colocaria em meu caminho; e particularmente contra aquelas pessoas extrovertidas agradáveis, descontraídas e felizes que sempre foram tão bonitas e bem-sucedidas, enquanto para nós, até mesmo tentar ser normais dava muito trabalho.

E a próxima coisa que vi foi ela gritando, toda coberta por uma substância laranja amarelada nojenta, como a garota naquele filme, Carrie, só que era vômito humano em vez de sangue de porco. E ela não tinha poderes paranormais como Carrie, mas tinha o sujeito com cara de Cthulhu ao seu lado, o qual tinha certeza de que eu tinha feito isso de propósito e começou a me socar e me chutar com força. Não sei se foi pelo espancamento ou pelo álcool, mas eu simplesmente apaguei.

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Não lembro como cheguei em casa. Eu caminhei? Alguém me carregou? Eu me vi na cama na manhã seguinte com um olho roxo e dor por todo o corpo, e a pior ressaca que já tinha sentido em minha ainda curta vida. Mas, de alguma forma, vivo.

Demorou para uma recuperação completa. Não fui ao clube nas duas ou três semanas seguintes. Quando finalmente apareci, o olho roxo ainda estava perceptível, mas um pouco menos, e eu conseguia andar quase sem mancar.

"A festa não foi muito boa, *n'est-ce pas?*", escreveu Marie.

"Prefiro não falar sobre isso", respondi.

Ela estava vestindo uma camisa vermelha e um suéter turquesa; uma saia verde e duas meias, uma azul, uma branca. Seus lábios estavam pintados com batom vermelho. Eu nunca tinha percebido que ela era tão adorável.

"Tem um festival de cinema francês na próxima semana. Você quer ir comigo?", escrevi.

It took time for a full recovery. I didn't go to the club for the next two or three weeks. When I finally went, the black eye was still noticeable, but a bit less so, and I could walk almost without limping.

"It didn't go very well, *n'est-ce pas?*", wrote Marie.

"Let's not talk about that," I wrote back.

She was wearing a red shirt and a turquoise sweater; a green skirt and two socks, one blue, one white. Her lips were red too. I had never noticed that she was so lovely.

"There is a French film festival next week. Do you want to go with me?", I wrote.

She took some time to reply. When she did, it was first with a slightly sad look in my general direction and then a note with that careful, flowery calligraphy of hers: "*Désolé*. I'm already going with someone else."

"Really? Who?"

"Max."

It turns out that Max's mysterious appointment, at the night of the party, had been with Marie. And they had met other times after that, and they were now, for all purposes and appearances, together. The bastard! And he hadn't even told me. But I could understand him; maybe I would have done the same in his place. What could I do? I had bet on another horse, or should I say mare, and I lost.

Anyway, that's how Max and Marie got together. In the end, they were the only couple that came out of our club, and the club, itself, ended shortly after that. People just lost interest. And for us it wasn't so important anymore. From Max's point of view, he had already obtained what he wanted, a girlfriend, and from my point of view, well, I didn't want to go to the library so much and risk meeting Wanda again. So that particular experiment ended, and I can't say that very fortunately, but I guess it was also not a complete waste, because it eventually led to other and greater things, which I may or may not tell some other time.

I didn't see Wanda again since then, but I cannot say that I forever avoided falling in love with extroverts: in fact, it became actually something that I ended up doing again and again with remarkable constancy in my life. I don't really know why. I guess because at bottom we are always a mystery to each other, and extroversion was a mysterious condition to me for a long time; or perhaps it's simply because we tend to only really desire what we can't have. As Marie would say, *c'est la vie, n'est-ce pas?*

Ela demorou a responder. Quando o fez, foi primeiro com um olhar ligeiramente triste na minha direção e depois uma nota com aquela caligrafia cuidadosa e florida dela: "*Désolé*. Já estou indo com outra pessoa."

"Mesmo? Quem?"

"Max."

Descobri depois que o misterioso compromisso de Max, na noite da festa, tinha sido justamente com Marie. E eles se encontraram várias outras vezes depois disso, e eles eram agora, para todos os efeitos e aparências, um casal. O bastardo! E ele nem mesmo me disse nada. Mas eu podia entender; talvez tivesse feito o mesmo no lugar dele. O que eu podia fazer? Apostara em outro cavalo, ou melhor, égua, e perdi.

De qualquer forma, foi assim que Max e Marie ficaram juntos. No fim, eles foram o único casal que surgiu do nosso clube, e o clube em si acabou pouco depois. As pessoas simplesmente perderam o interesse. E para nós não era mais tão importante. Do ponto de vista de Max, ele já tinha obtido o que queria, uma namorada, e do meu ponto de vista, bem, eu não queria ir para a biblioteca tantas vezes e arriscar ver Wanda novamente. Então aquele experimento em particular terminou, e se não posso dizer que tenha sido um sucesso estrondoso, acho que também não foi um desperdício completo, porque acabou levando a outras coisas maiores, que contarei ou não em outra ocasião.

Nunca mais vi Wanda desde então, mas não posso dizer que evitei para sempre me apaixonar por extrovertidos: na verdade, tornou-se algo que acabei fazendo repetidas vezes com notável constância em minha vida. Eu realmente não sei o motivo. Acho que porque, no fundo, sempre somos um mistério uns para os outros, e a extroversão foi uma condição misteriosa para mim por muito tempo; ou talvez seja simplesmente porque tendemos a desejar apenas aquilo que não podemos ter. Como diria Marie, *c'est la vie, n'est-ce pas?*

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# Quarentena

José Torero

Ele começou a matar durante a pandemia. Talvez para se vingar da natureza, talvez porque fosse sua natureza. As primeiras vítimas foram as formigas. Gostava de amassá-las com o polegar. Mas também era divertido encontrá-las aglomeradas em volta de um pedaço de bolo. Aí batia com o punho fechado sobre a multidão e acabava com todas de uma vez. Passou às moscas usando sua raquete elétrica. Adorava o barulho do choque e a fumacinha do animal queimado. As baratas eram pisadas até que deixavam marcas gosmentas no chão. E uma vez teve a sorte de ver uma lagartixa na privada. Não teve dúvida e apertou a descarga o mais rápido que pôde. Sentiu uma alegria contagiante ao vê-la ser engolida pela água. Um dia acordou transformado em inseto. Quando o porteiro veio trazer a correspondência, não teve a menor chance.



Art: Sara M. T. Richter

## José Torero

## Quarantine

He started killing during the pandemic. Maybe to get revenge on nature, maybe because it was his nature. The first victims were ants. He liked to crush them with his thumb. But it was also fun to find them crowded around a piece of cake. Then he banged his fist on the crowd and finished them all at once. He killed the flies using his electric racket. He loved the buzzing sound and the smoke from the burned animal. Cockroaches were trampled until they left gooeey marks on the floor. And once he was lucky to see a gecko in the toilet. He had no doubt and hit the flush as fast as he could. He felt contagious joy when he saw it being swallowed by water. One day he woke up and found himself transformed into an insect. When the doorman came to bring the mail, he didn't stand a chance.

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# minicontos

# ministories

Caco Belmonte

## DIÁLOGO

"Nunca conheci um escritor underground".

"Eu conheço um."

"Sério?"

"Sim, mora no primeiro andar do prédio construído abaixo do nível da calçada. A casa dele é um antro."

"Muita droga e putaria?"

"Não, umidade bárbara ali dentro, não entra sol e as paredes estão mofadas."

## O MANSO

A criança escutou o pai discutir em altos brados com o vizinho na garagem, quase chegaram às vias de fato, não fosse a intervenção de outros condôminos. No elevador a menina de quatro anos perguntou: "Pai, o que é corno manso?" E ele, furibundo: "Não sei, vamos perguntar a tua mãe".

## A HUMANIDADE RESISTIRÁ

Uma raça alienígena, mancomunada com seus prepostos humanos poderosos, contamina a população do planeta Terra com um vírus que obriga todos ao confinamento em suas casas. Uma vez confinados, torna-se mais fácil o ataque por armas ultrassônicas que farão vibrar e ruir as estruturas de concreto e ferro. Os que sobreviverem serão caçados e escravizados, até que uma outra raça alienígena venha em nosso socorro, dez anos depois.

## DIÁLOGOS DO VOVÔ NO CARRO

- Vô, depois da vida, qual é a maior riqueza que recebemos?

- A morte.

## O URSO FÊMEA

O primeiro disparo Olavo erra, só tem dois cartuchos na espingarda e o segundo falha. Nervoso, tenta recarregar e as mãos tremem, ele não consegue, deixa cair a munição. É o tempo que mamãe urso acossada precisa para correr e liquidar a fatura em segundos. Fim da caçada.

## DIALOG

"I never met an underground writer".

"I know one."

"For real?"

"Yes, he lives on the basement floor of the building, below the level of the sidewalk. His house is a den."

"Lots of drugs and whoring?"

"No, lots of humidity inside. There is no sunlight and the walls are moldy."

## THE CUCKOLD

The child heard her father argue loudly with a neighbour in the garage, they almost came to blows, were it not for the intervention of other tenants. In the elevator the four-year-old girl asked, "Dad, what is a cuckold?" And he, furious: "I don't know, let's ask your mom!"

## HUMANITY WILL RESIST

An alien race, in agreement with powerful human representatives, infects the population of the Earth with a virus that forces everyone to be confined in their homes. Once confined, it is easier to attack them with ultrasonic weapons that by vibration make crumble concrete and iron structures. Those who survive are hunted and enslaved, until another alien race comes to our rescue, ten years later.

## DIALOG WITH GRANDPA IN THE CAR

- Grandpa, after life, what is the greatest gift that we receive?

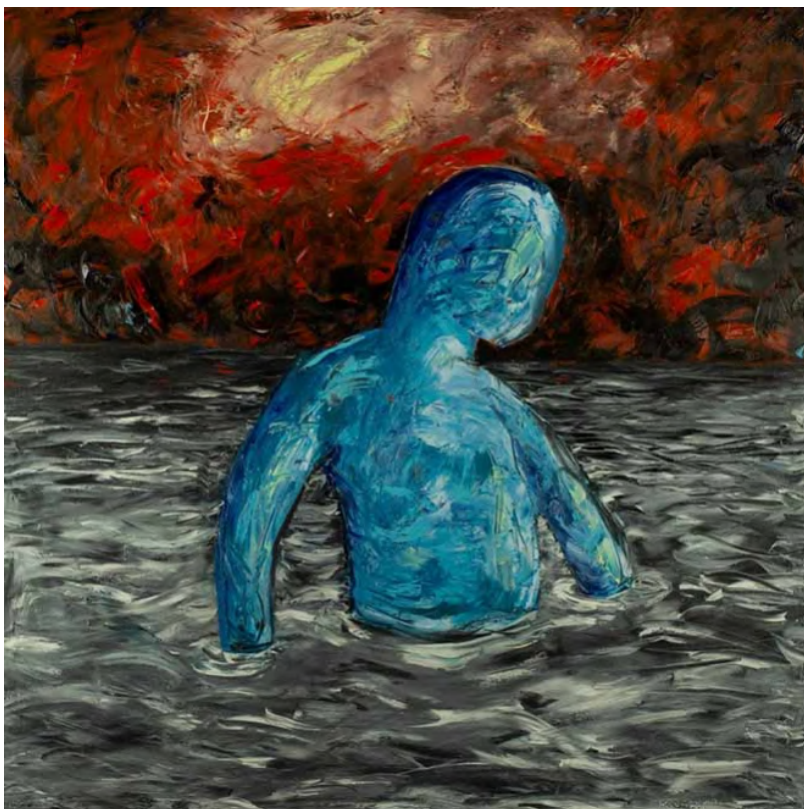
- Death.

## THE FEMALE BEAR

Olavo misses the first shot, there are only two cartridges in the shotgun and the second shot fails. Nervous, he tries to reload but his hands shake, he drops the ammo. It's the time it takes for Mom Bear to come and settle the issue in seconds. Hunt over.

Caco Belmonte is a writer and journalist. His blog is at <https://cacobelmonte.wordpress.com/>





Gelson Radaelli, da mostra “No espelho não sou eu”

Não lembro a última vez que vi o Radaelli. Quando visitei Porto Alegre pela última vez, em outubro de 2019, fiquei apenas uma semana e não tive tempo sequer de passar pelo Atelier das Massas, o ótimo restaurante que ele tinha no centro da cidade. Se soubesse que pouco depois uma “pandemia” teria impedido viagens e fechado restaurantes por meses, provavelmente teria ido.

Nunca tive tanto contato com Gelson, mas meu irmão era seu amigo de longa data, e por muitos anos tivemos um quadro seu na parede da casa da família em Ipanema.

[Gelson Radaelli](#) (1960-2020) faleceu no final de 2020 de um ataque cardíaco. Tinha acabado de apresentar ao público uma nova exposição de seus mais recentes quadros. Não sou crítico de arte, mas é inegável que foi um dos mais importantes pintores da sua geração e influenciou uma série de outros artistas. Partiu cedo demais. Que descanse em paz. (T.C.)

## In memoriam Gelson Radaelli

Paintings from his last exhibition (Bolsa de Arte)



I don't remember the last time I saw Radaelli. When I last visited Porto Alegre, in October 2019, I stayed just a week and didn't even have time to stop by Atelier das Massas, the excellent restaurant that he had downtown. If I knew that shortly afterwards a “pandemic” would have prevented travel and would close all restaurants for months, I probably would have gone.

I never had so much contact with Gelson, but my brother was his longtime friend, and for many years we had one of his paintings hanging on the wall of our family home in Ipanema.

[Gelson Radaelli](#) (1960-2020) died in November 2020 of a heart attack. He had just presented a new exhibition of his most recent paintings to the public. I am not an art critic, but it is undeniable that he was one of the most important painters of his generation and influenced a large number of other artists. He left us way too soon. May he rest in peace. (T.C.)

# Später Herbst

**Text: Jan Oechsner**

Klagen zürnen leis  
den Seinen,  
lassen einen Himmel  
leiden.

Der krumme Greis  
will weinen,  
niemals mehr  
den Niesel meiden.

An kaltem Gleis  
der Bach,  
kein Trost  
kann Nebel schneiden.

Im Windeseis,  
da stirbt  
ein fernes Lied  
der Weiden.

# Late Autumn

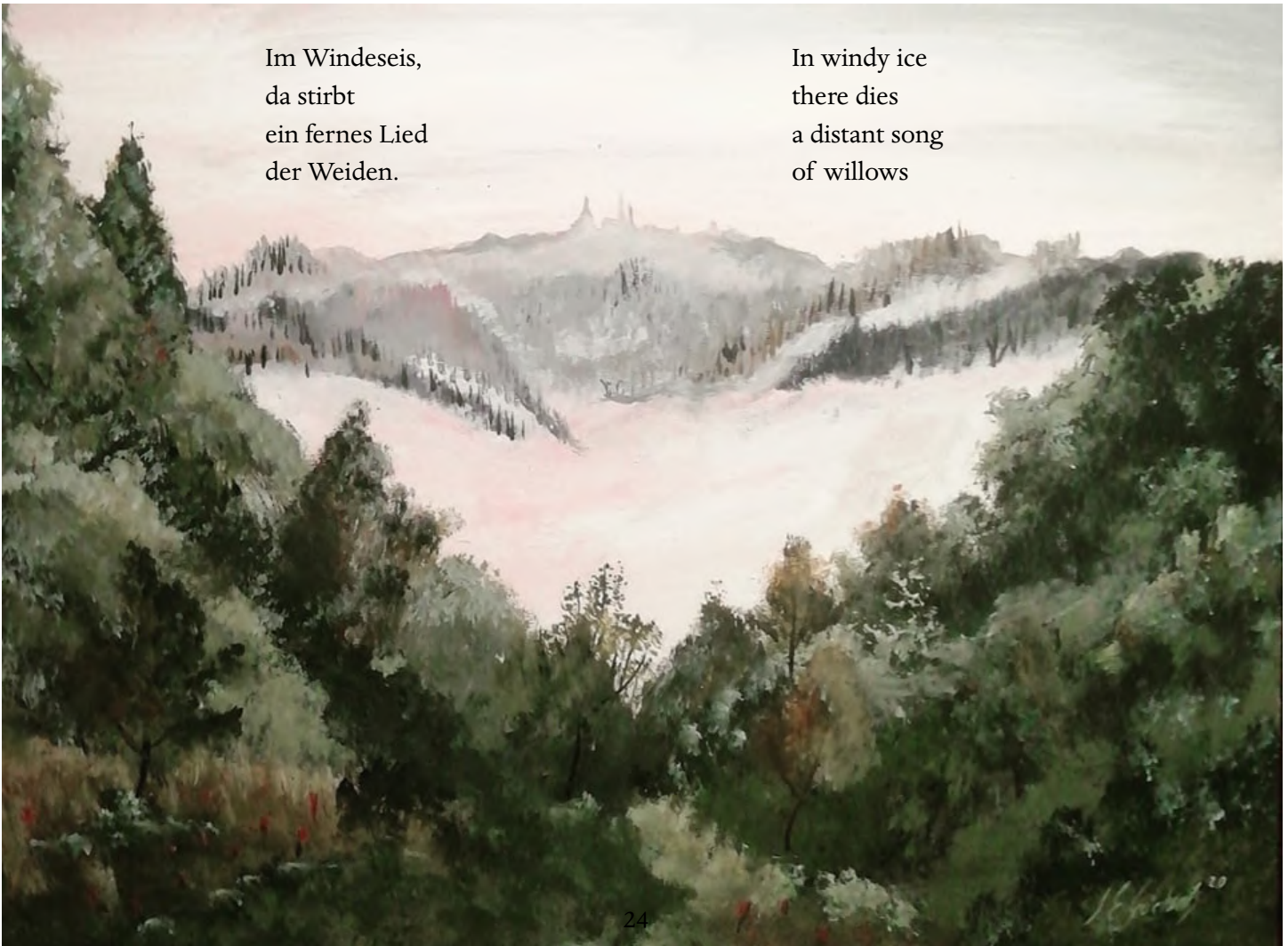
**Art: Sarah Göckeritz**

Laments seething quietly  
on their own,  
leave a Heaven  
suffering.

The crooked old man  
wants to cry  
he'll no longer avoid  
the drizzling rain.

On cold rails  
the brook,  
no comfort can  
cut through the fog.

In windy ice  
there dies  
a distant song  
of willows





# Löwenzahn Dandelion

**Text:** Wolfram Ette

**Art:** Sarah Göckeritz

wo die häuser standen wo  
gearbeitet wurde wo man lebte  
kochte produzierte kinder machte  
grosszog und sich hasste wo man  
die arbeitstage hinter sich brachte  
und müdigkeit von stunde zu stunde  
karrte und man entweder schrie oder in  
stumpfsinn sank der vom schmerz  
nicht unterbrochen wurde WIEDER  
EIN TAG KAPUTT WIEDER EIN  
TAG KAPUTT WIEDER EIN TAG  
KAPUTT WIEDER EIN TAG KAPUTT  
und der mann war schlecht gelaunt  
wenn er nach hause kam  
und die frau war kiebig und  
wenn man gespart hatte konnte  
man sich was leisten bis  
die unwiderrufliche abrißbirne  
des krieges des fortschritts alles  
dem erdboden gleich machte

steht löwenzahn  
erst das gelbe herz  
dann die pustebume  
der toten seelen  
dann ihr stumpf.



where the houses stood where  
one worked where one lived  
cooked produced made babies  
raised them and hated each other where  
one would get through the working days  
and drag tiredness from hour to hour  
and either scream or  
sink into numbness which  
was not interrupted by pain ANOTHER  
DAY BROKEN ANOTHER DAY  
BROKEN ANOTHER DAY  
BROKEN ANOTHER DAY BROKEN  
and the man was moody  
when he came home  
and the woman was miserly and  
when you had savings you could  
afford something until  
the irrevocable wrecking ball  
of war of progress levelled  
everything to the ground

the dandelion stands  
first the yellow heart  
then the seed head  
the dead souls  
then its stump

Jan Oechsner is a poet and filmmaker. His site is found at  
<https://www.janoechsner.de/>

Wolfram Ette is a professor and writer. He blogs at  
<https://wolframettetexte.wordpress.com/>

Sarah Göckeritz is a painter living in the Erzgebirge. Her  
work can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/OctopusProjekt16>

# Si è abolito l'amore

# Love has been abolished

Giorgio Agamben

Si è abolito l'amore  
in nome della salute  
poi si abolirà la salute.

Si è abolita la libertà  
in nome della medicina  
poi si abolirà la medicina.

Si è abolito Dio  
in nome della ragione  
poi si abolirà la ragione.

Si è abolito l'uomo  
in nome della vita  
poi si abolirà la vita.

Si è abolita la verità  
in nome dell'informazione  
ma non si abolirà l'informazione.

Si è abolita la costituzione  
in nome dell'emergenza  
ma non si abolirà l'emergenza.

Love has been abolished  
in the name of health  
and then health will be abolished.

Freedom has been abolished  
in the name of medicine,  
then medicine will be abolished.

God has been abolished  
in the name of reason,  
then reason will be abolished.

Man has been abolished  
in the name of life,  
then life will be abolished.

Truth has been abolished  
in the name of information,  
but information will not be abolished.

The constitution was abolished  
in the name of the emergency,  
but the emergency will not be abolished.

Giorgio Agamben is an important Italian philosopher who was critical of the global reaction to the corona pandemic. This is just an excerpt of a text taken from his blog that we reproduce here as a quotation. His full blog can be seen at <https://www.quodlibet.it/una-voce-giorgio-agamben>





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Mariella Cusumano is an illustrator. She lives in Palermo, Italy and has illustrated several books.  
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