

omannaliew with a view



romania with a view

About the Romanian Cultural Institute

The main objective of the Romanian Cultural Institute, a public body founded in 2003, is to raise the profile of important Romanian cultural works around the world. It tries to achieve this primarily by spreading information and carrying out cultural projects involving Romanian artists.

At the same time, the Romanian Cultural Institute represents a channel of communication between Romanian cultural products and foreign audiences. Cultural export is facilitated primarily by the institute's 17 branches outside of Romania, from Berlin, Brussels, Budapest (and the subsidiary in Szeged), Istanbul, Kishinev, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Venice, and Vienna. Their mission is to organize high-impact events, to adapt their offerings to the characteristics of foreign audiences, and to maintain a balance between a sense of identity and international openness.

The Romanian Cultural Institute maintains a close relationship with Romanians living outside of Romania. It aims to preserve their cultural identity and enhance their standing in the countries in which they live.

The National Book Centre, in operation since 2007, is an institution within the framework of the Romanian Cultural Institute. It supports the translation and promotion of Romanian literature through programs such as TPS – Translation and Publication Support Program, 20 Authors, Publishing Romania, and its scholarships for professional translators as well as translators in training. The National Book Centre organizes Romanian participation at international book fairs, meetings with foreign publishers, and meetings between authors and translators. It also ensures the presence of Romanian writers at international cultural events.

Ştefan AGOPIAN

Tache de catifea
Tache de Velvet



One of the most original and refined Romanian prose-writers of recent decades, **Ştefan AGOPIAN** was born in 1947, in Bucharest. At the end of the 1960s, he abandoned his studies at the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry to pursue a literary career. For a time he worked as a page layout designer for the literary press, and since 1990 he has devoted himself to journalism. He is currently an editor for the Academia Caṭavencu satirical weekly. Combining Balkan aestheticism, magic realism, the oneiric, and postmodernism, his "meta-historical" fictions—the majority published in the 1980s, but some having been conceived long before that—represent a triumph of the anti-realist imagination and a fantastical rehabilitation of pre-modern narrative.

Tache de catifea / Tache de Velvet, novel, definitive edition Polirom, Jassy, 2004

Information on Literary Rights: Ştefan Agopian e-mail: ago cri@yahoo.com

A fictional jewel by a prose writer who is a fantastical aesthete, akin to Milorad Pavić. The plot of this faux historical novel—in fact a meta-novel narrated at a point in the future from the perspective of a dead man—unfolds in the Wallachia of the 1820s, at the margins of the revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu. It is not history that is at the centre of the book, but rather its avoidance, the deferral of action and the abolition of becoming. Social reality gives way to imaginative, oneiric and esoteric unreality, elaborated with baroque refinement and surreal strangeness. Idleness, reverie, musing, and culinary and erotic voluptuousness define this universe peopled by petty demons, one emblematic of the oriental and Balkan spirit, where, as if in a dream, the "adventures" of the fantastical trio made up of Tache, the boyar Lăpai and the Dwarf unfold.

Selected bibliography:

Ziua mîniei (The Day of Rage), novel, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1979

Tache de catifea (Tache de Velvet), novel, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1981; definitive edition Polirom, Jassy, 2004

Tobit, novel, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1983

Cartea întîmplărilor (The Book of Occurrences), short prose, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1984

Sara, novel, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1987

Însemnări din Sodoma (Notes from Sodom), short prose, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1993

Republica pe eşafod (The Republic on the Scaffold), theatre, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2000

Fric, novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2003

Morning lighted upon us, serene, tepid and pale blue with a cloud at the edge, like a dead butterfly in the air. An unquiet, eternal, red sun, leaning on our somnolent gaze, heaved itself over the world. And when I should no longer have ever believed it, a crooked, back-to-front telescope emerged from our unskilled hands, the Dwarf's and mine.

"If you want to look somewhere with this telescope, the first thing you must do is to decide where it is you want to look, and after that, once you have decided, you must point the telescope in the opposite direction, and looking through one end, if you are lucky, you might just see what it is you fancy."

These are words that were said by no man. But is it not so that each of us might have said them, the boyar Lăpai or the Dwarf or I, once the telescope was ready? And now it stands before us on its tripod, as curved as a Turkish sword and as proud and sleek as any sword of the Ottoman Empire.

Somnolent and happy, the Dwarf and I sat down on our chairs, the boyar Lăpai, too, somnolently calling for drowsily scented coffee, and the servants gazed in trepidation at the delicate and indecent object that had emerged from our hands.

We drank our coffee in silence and contemplation and a fleeting warmth thawed our bodies. We sensed sleep like a languor at the tips of our fingernails, and thence it seeped through our fingers like slender, pellucid tubes. The Dwarf called what was to follow the battle between coffee and sleep. The warm vapour of the coffee percolated through our weary pores, and its bitter-sweet liquid, albeit first sweet, then bitter, fluttered rustling like a huge bird between the roof of the mouth and the tongue, hot-warm, bitter-sweet and fluid, a bird gliding into our guts. And I was thinking:

"Whoop for joy and praise Pandoros in this wise: Behold, thy guts are struck. Now it is over, I reck, Soon thou wilt be no more and thy death will be my glory."

All three of us were standing around the telescope, waiting for something that was not to happen, who knows what. And another time the Dwarf would call the standing and the waiting of that morning the battle between coffee and sleep, and I would say that the whole year and everything else that had come to pass might be called the same, which is to say our slow-witted and contemptible waiting, and then I said, as a contemplation upon the thoughts of that time:

"The spear between the shoulder blades bursts through the chest,

The warrior topples with a crash, his bronze jingling."

And the Dwarf grinned and by way of reply said:

"And through the girdle he pierces the wretch in the belly.

Of a sudden, the warrior topples with a crash, his bronze jingling."

And the boyar Lăpai, toward the end of the wassail, having taken another draught:

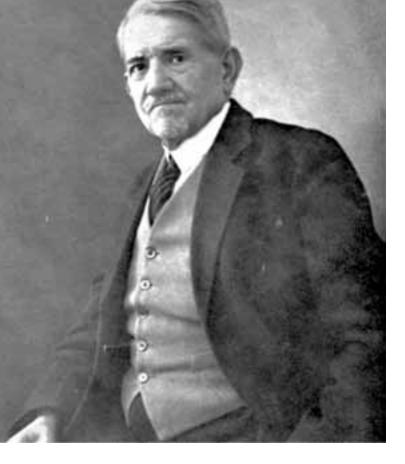
"Instead of him it was Kreatos that the spear struck in the heart,

Son of Amphiloch, grandson of Aktor, who had rushed into the fray,

He toppled to the ground with a crash, his bronze jingling."

And they were smiling, drunk, happy, the wassail having ended.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth



Constantin BACALBAŞA

Dictatura gastronomică. 1501 feluri de mîncare

Gastronomic Dictatorship. 1501 Dishes

Constantin Bacalbaşa (1856, Brăila – 1935, Bucharest) was a journalist, memoirist, politician, and scion of a well-known family of Romanian writers and journalists from Macedonia. He founded a number of newspapers (*Țara*, *Patriotul*, *Românimea*) and was president of the Romanian Society of Journalists (1919). He is remembered by posterity above all for his memoirs of old Bucharest and the gastronomy books he published towards the end of his life.

Constantin Bacalbaşa, *Dictatura gastronomică*. 1501 feluri de mîncare/Gastronomic Dictatorship. 1501 Dishes, Editura Cartex, Bucharest, 2009

The history of Romanian gastronomy is dominated by

Out-of-copyright work

a number of classic titles, including 200 Tested Recipes, Cakes and Other Domestic Matters (1841) by Mihail Kogălniceanu and C. Negruzzi, 1501 Dishes (1935) by Constantin Bacalbaşa, called "the most spectacular cookbook of inter-war Romania", and Gastronomica by Păstorel Teodoreanu (1937). The present volume brings together a selection of interwar culinary masterpieces from the cookbooks of Constantin Bacalbaşa and Păstorel Teodoreanu: recipes created by members of the Bacalbaşa and Teodoreanu families, as well as dishes characteristic of the Romanian provinces (in particular Moldavia, a veritable gastronomic paradise), all of them imbued with the rich flavours of succulent literary language.

Selected bibliography:

Capitala sub ocupația dușmanului (The Capital under Enemy Occupation), Editura Alcalay & Calafeteanu, Brăila, 1921

Bucureștii de altădată (Bucharest of Yore), 4 vols., Editura Universul, Bucharest, 1927-1932

Dictatura gastronomică. 1501 de feluri de mîncare (Gastronomic Dictatorship. 1501 Dishes), Editura Cartex, Bucharest, 2009

Family peaches (a favourite recipe of the Bacalbaşa family, created by Ecaterina Bacalbaşa, the wife of Constantin Bacalbaşa)

Wash the peaches, cut them into halves and boil them in syrup for a little, adding vanilla essence. Take a pudding mould, grease the inside with butter, and sprinkle the base and sides with finely chopped almonds. Place a sheet of sweet dough in the bottom, then make layers of drained rice pudding flavoured with Kirsch, apricot jam, rice again, then peaches, apricots and rice. Finally, top it off with a sheet of dough, making a hole in the middle to allow the steam to escape. Place the pudding mould in a medium oven for thirty-five to forty minutes. Serve with apricot syrup and Kirsch.

Mussolini Soup

I have dubbed it this because it is an Italian soup.

In a cooking pot, brown 200 g of diced smoked bacon in butter, then add some finely chopped onion and a slender stick of leek. After a few minutes, add two cloves of crushed garlic and two tomatoes, without the seeds or skins. Leave it to bubble for ten minutes, then add some carrot, or baby carrots, two beetroots, a peeled and chopped courgette, and a handful of white beans, left to soak overnight. Add salt and a little pepper and bring to the boil. Add two or three litres of water, depending on the number of guests. The water should already be simmering when you pour it in. Add more salt and pepper, if required.

Once it has simmered for half an hour, add two tablespoons of peas and 50 g of rice or dumplings to the soup. When the soup is almost ready, crush up together in a mortar some grated bacon fat, a clove of garlic, and some powdered thyme. Toss the mixture into the soup and let it simmer for another 4-5 minutes. Serve with grated cheese.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

Ştefan BAŞTOVOI

Rabbits Don't Die



Stefan BAŞTOVOI was born in 1976, in Kishinev. His father was a philosophy professor and propagandist of scientific atheism. Before becoming an Orthodox monk, Ştefan Baştovoi was rooted in his father's thinking. After graduating from the Octav Băncilă Art High School in Jassy, he was committed to the Socola Psychiatric Hospital, where he wrote the cycle A Diazepam for God, which established him as a poet. From 1992, he published poetry, short stories, essays and articles in leading literary magazines in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Between 1996 and 1998 he was enrolled in the Philosophy Faculty of the Western University in Timişoara, but abandoned his studies. In 1999, he received the tonsure and accepted Savatie as his monastic name. On 28 October 2000, he was ordained monk deacon and on 4 August 2002 monk priest. He now lives in the Nativity of the Lord Monastery in the Edinet and Briceni Eparchy, in the Republic of Moldova. He runs the Cathisma publishing house and Orthodox magazine Ekklesia. He teaches iconography at the Kishinev Theological Seminary, which is based at the New Neamt Monastery. He has published a number of books which bring "postmodern" laicism into dialogue with Orthodox spirituality.

Ştefan BAŞTOVOI, *Iepurii nu mor/Rabbits Don't Die*, novel, second edition, Polirom, Jassy, 2007

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

Written with deceptive, fluid simplicity, Rabbits Don't Die is a novel of Soviet childhood and the innocence of pioneer life "between the third and fourth grade", a monogram of the Soviet imagination as seen through the eyes of Sasha, a kind of Moldovan Holden Caulfield. The novel is an unusual blend of classic Russian prose. Salinger, poetic surrealism, and the absurd à la Eugène Ionesco, with a narrative formula that does not shatter myths, but rather adopts the interiorised, credulous innocence of the child. The adoption of this innocence is in fact Faith: not faith in God, but in the literal meaning of propaganda, in the icon of the benevolent Lenin, in the Soviet Union and in its struggle against the powers of capitalist Evil. On the other hand, the slogans are constantly undermined by the natural world, with comic or grotesque effects. Another, symbolic level of the narrative, one redolent of Tarkovsky, brings Sasha's village and its natural "geography" to the fore: walnut orchards, ponds, hills from which the sky can be seen upside-down, dry leaf-choked gullies, and a forest where the child seeks God and hides from man. The forest ("Mother Nature") thereby becomes a space with sacral connotations, opposed to the "new world" and the aggression of exteriority.

Selected bibliography:

Elefantul promis (The Promised Elephant), poems, Editura Arc, Kishinev, 1996

Cartea războiului (The Book of War), poems, Editura Marineasa, Timișoara, 1997

Peştele pescar (o poveste) [The Fisherman Fish (A Tale)], poems, Editura Marineasa, Timişoara, 1998

Casa timpului (The House of Time), poems, 1999

Iepurii nu mor (Rabbits Don't Die), novel, second edition, Polirom, Jassy, 2007

Nebunul (The Madman), novel, Editura Cathisma, Bucharest, 2006

The whole school would go to the rally. We'd all chip in and buy balloons. You could get them for three, five and ten kopeks. And there were these loooong, wavy balloons that wound up with a tit, which looked like something smutty that would crack us boys up, to say nothing of the girls. There were smaller balloons too, the round kind. Those were probabaly the best because they looked like footballs and you could play with them.

But the ten kopek balloons were best of all because they were bigger and oval. Though I reckon there were balloons that cost a whole lot more because I'd seen some that were even bigger. But I have no idea where they sold them. We had a notion that they only sold them to Vera Ivanovna's daughter since she was the only one with balloons that big. When we refused to chip in, the teacher would say: "Okay, then we'll only buy long balloons, and then we'll see how you like that!"—and of course we felt stupid about having to march with them dirty looking balloons.

The wind was swaying the placards and flags. We could see the sky and the drifting clouds above us through the balloons. Long Live the Great October Revolution! May the cause of the Communist Party of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics be fulfilled in out lifetime!

Our neckerchiefs and collars fluttered. Our hands got sweaty clenching the placards and the bunches of flowers. Hearts were throbbing. For Peace and Disarmament! Let the cute little Dove of Peace rise over the world! Death to the black crow of capitalism!

Translated by Jean Harris



Daniel BĂNULESCU

Fugi din viața ta, revoltătoare și slută, în cartea mea

Flee from Your Revolting, Hideous Life and into My Book

Daniel BĂNULESCU was born in 1960, in Bucharest. Although a graduate of the Oil and Gas Institute in Ploiești, he has worked only as a journalist and writer. One of the new generation of writers that emerged in the early 1990s, he had established his reputation by the end of the decade, as part of the Universitas literary cenacle in Bucharest. He is the author of a number of collections of poetry, novels and plays, in which the demonic and fantastical blend with raw hyperrealism. In a grotesque and satirical key, his texts give expression to the megalomaniacal, psychotic, apocalyptic mindset of a Romania at the border between the Ceauşescu era and the post-revolution period. His work has been translated into German, English, French, Slovenian, Serbian, Dutch and Italian.

Daniel BĂNULESCU, Fugi din viața ta, revoltătoare și slută, în cartea mea /Flee from Your Revolting, Hideous Life and into My Book, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2009

> Information on Literary Rights: Cartea Românească, Mădălina Ghiu, e-mail: ecr@cartearomaneasca.ro

Selected bibliography:

Te voi iubi pînă la sfîrșitul patului (I'll Love You to the End of the Bed), poetry, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1993

Te pup în fund, Conducător iubit! (I Kiss Your Arse, Beloved Leader!), Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 1994

Balada lui Daniel Bănulescu (The Ballad of Daniel Bănulescu), poetry, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1997

Cei şapte regi ai oraşului Bucureşti (The Seven Kings of Bucharest City), novel, Editura Nemira, Bucureşti,1998

Daniel, al rugăciunii (Daniel, Of the Prayer), poetry, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, Bucharest, 2002

Cine a cîştigat războiul mondial al religiilor? (Who Won the World War of Religions?), theatre, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, Bucharest, 2005

Cel mai bun roman al tuturor timpurilor (The Best Novel of All Time), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2008

Fugi din viața ta, revoltătoare și slută, în cartea mea (Flee from Your Revolting, Hideous Life and into My Book), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2009

The first volume of a tetralogy about Romania in the final years of the Ceauşescu regime, this novel is a radical rewrite of the satirical novel *I Kiss Your Arse, Beloved Leader!* (1994). The grotesque, caricature, paranoia, the religious and artistic underground, period rumours and anecdotes, demonism à la Bulgakov, and hyper-realism combine in a disturbing, gripping narrative, with a vernacular and picaresque dimension. Two hidden worlds clash: the criminal underworld and the world of the secret police at the highest echelons of power. The central characters are "Haselwort"—a brilliant young burglar who is conspiring to assassinate the dictator—the Beloved Leader himself, and student Daniel Bănulescu, who is dreaming of writing a Book of Books about the life of Ceauşescu.

On the afternoon of 17 March, just as the presidential motorcade was proceeding along Oneşti Street and about to sweep down Magheru Boulevard at high speed, in the very moment when the plain-clothes agents were ordering passers-by to kneel, so that they might marvel at the resplendent procession of the Helmsman, a sturdy, ginger dog, with an expression of nonchalant bravura stamped on its face, eluded the grasp of the People's Militia, broke through the protective cordon and raced towards the car of the Beloved Leader himself.

Unselfconsciously, the mutt was trotting alongside the front passenger seat carrying the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. It was swathed in a piece of sheet, fastened around its belly with four thick pieces of elastic.

On the left side of the sheet was written in large, red felt-tip letters: DOWN WITH CEAUSESCU!

On the right side of the mobile manifesto was written: DOWN WITH THE IGNORAMUS!

The canine protestor was running at the same speed as the presidential car.

Its left side could be read by Nicolae Ceausescu.

Its right side could be spelled out by all the citizens kneeling on the pavement outside the Scala pastry shop and the Patria Cinema.

 $"Let's \ shoot \ it \ like \ the \ dog \ it \ is!" be wildered \ militiamen \ were \ saying, to \ embolden \ each \ other.$

Nicolae Ceausescu placed his left hand on the steering wheel, forcing the driver to bring the limousine to a stop in the gap between the Vineyard Restaurant and the Little Garden open-air café.

Then the President twisted around to his right and opened the rear door. Like phantoms, two bear-sized black Labradors leapt from the back seat onto the asphalt. In less than ten seconds they had cornered the anticommunist dog. The first Labrador's incisors ripped out the jugular. The second started gobbling up the entrails, having plunged its muzzle through the sheet as if it were a cobweb.

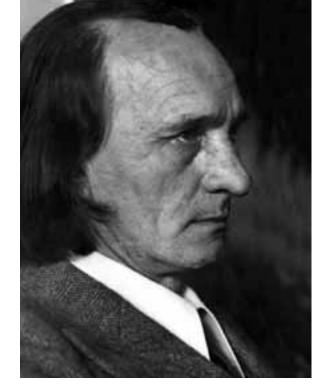
"Raven, Sharon, drop it! Come!" called out the short man in a husky voice.

The beasts abandoned the bloody carcass of the audacious mutt on the asphalt and resumed their places on the back seat of the limousine. Behind them, the crowd on both sides of the boulevard burst into sincere, unchoreographed applause.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

Ştefan BĂNULESCU

Cartea Milionarului
The Book
of the Millionaire



Stefan BĂNULESCU (1926-1998) is one of the most important post-war Romanian prose writers, a member of the generation that came to the fore in the years of the post-Stalinist "thaw" (1965-1968). His small body of enigmatic, dense work has, in time, gained in prestige and fascination. Likened to Faulkner and representatives of south-American magic realism, this refined and crepuscular writer of the vestiges of a moribund Orient — one vanquished by western civilisation and devastated by the Second World War and Stalinism — can be placed in the lineage of a native Romanian tradition of storytelling whose illustrious proponents include Mihail Sadoveanu, Mateiu Caragiale and Panait Istrati, and who also draws on the powerful folkloric heritage of the Danube Plain.

Ştefan BĂNULESCU, Cartea Milionarului/ The Book of the Millionaire, Editura Albatros & Universal Dalsi, Bucharest, 1996, third, definitive edition

Information on Literary Rights:
Mrs Sultana Bănulescu

Selected bibliography:

Iarna bărbaților (The Men's Winter), novellas, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1965

Cîntece de cîmpie (Songs of the Plain), Editura pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1968

Scrisori provinciale (Provincial Letters), essays, Editura Albatros, Bucharest, 1976

Cartea Milionarului (The Book of the Millionaire), novel, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1977

Scrisori din provincia de Sud-Est sau O bătălie cu povestiri (Letters from the South-East Province or A Battle of Tales), Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 1994

Un regat imaginar (An Imaginary Kingdom), novellas and short stories, Editura ALLFA, Bucharest, 1997

Elegii la sfîrşit de secol (End-of-Century Elegies), memoirs, Editura ALLFA, Bucharest, 1998 One of the strangest and most fascinating novels of Romanian modernity, the only published volume of a planned trilogy (The Book of the Metopolis), The Book of the Millionaire is a Balkan-Byzantine version of an imaginary province, like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha or Marquez's Macondo. This fantastical monograph, with a geography and history whose dates are permanently elusive, is fleshed out on the frame of a labyrinthine oriental tale, whose initiatory substratum is accompanied by a discreet parodic note. Menaced by mercantile modernisation, the Old Regime of the Bărăgan Plain and Lower Danube is experiencing a "twilight of the gods", with the disappearance (or concealment) of the last vestiges of Byzantium. All things are dual, and appearances conceal a subterranean, all-dissolving dimension. This fantastical and, after a certain point, meta-fictional dimension makes Stefan Bănulescu a writer akin to Borges and Ernst Jünger, who refines, in a sapiential but also ironic key, the tradition of Panait Istrati.

Metopolis is a city that's living out its final years. To feel and live out its decline doesn't mean that you identify with the place — the Surveyor once said to quiet his conscience. The dynamite detonations set off by General Glaad below the city in his search for veins of red marble could be heard in broad daylight, while "the commerce of years" unfolded above in the city where Bazacopol and Havaet carried on their competition with the woman known as the Red Mare, although slowly, without any noise, everything embarked upon in the safety of some humanitarian ideas, which is a secret to no one and doesn't frighten the inhabitants the way Glaad's explosives do.

General Marosin had tried to explain to me in *The Island of* Horses that the end doesn't belong only to the present. It would have begun many years ago with the gradual depopulation of *Metopolis*, before the coming of Glaad's wheels and the invasion of the hats of the straw merchants, even before the boots of the Red Mare, maybe around the time when Constantin I the Lost was barely a child and Polider had yet to acquired fame as a demiurge. The depopulation of *Metopolis* would have been produced as the hills around were eaten, crumbled and destroyed by parasites, each in turn, while the means of existence became ever more scarce. Gradually nothing remained in Metopolis nor would remain there, except old people ("I am an old general myself, Marosin told me, held captive in Metopolis, spending my captivity in the hands of the old Metopolisian relatives who, over the years, captured my farm, some relatives being even older than I am on account of my end, which delays coming. You yourself, Millionaire, are an old man left to survive somewhere among the distant and crumbling hills around Metopolis.

Millionaire, have you ever looked at the houses in the amphitheater of Metopolis and asked yourself who lives in them? A great number of old people—old women mainly, and the bulk of them poor. "The commerce of years" hunts these women down, their small wealth is bought out at a miserable price, payable in installments during the time they have left to live."

Translated by Jean Harris



Matei CĂLINESCU

Viața și opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter
The Life and Opinions
of Zacharias Lichter

Matei CĂLINESCU (15 June 1934, Bucharest – 24 June 2009, Bloomington, Indiana, USA). He graduated with a Degree in English from the Philology Faculty of Bucharest University in 1957, and subsequently lectured there in the Department of Universal and Comparative Literature. Between 1964 and 1973, he published a number of collections of criticism, literary theory and essays, as well as slim volumes of poems and a short novel that was to gain a cult following in the post-Stalinist period. He left Romania in 1973 after being awarded a Fulbright scholarship, and decided to remain in the United States. In 1979, he became Professor and later Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA, where he also headed a Centre for Romanian Studies, the only one of its kind in the United States. Thanks to the works he published in the United States, he gained a reputation as one of the most important contemporary theoreticians of modernity and reading. Up until 1989, he was active in Romanian emigration circles as an opponent of totalitarianism. In 2000, he moved back to Romania, where he continued to publish works of criticism, memoirs, prose, and essays.

Selected bibliography:

Titanul și geniul în poezia lui Eminescu (The Titan and the Genius in the Poetry of Eminescu), critical study, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1964

Conceptul modern de poezie: de la romantism la avangardă (The Modern Concept of Poetry: From Romanticism to the Avant-Garde), critical study, Editura Univers, Bucharest, 1972

Fragmentarium, essay, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1973 Viața și opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter (The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter), novel, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1969

Cinci fețe ale modernității: Modernism, Avangarda, Decadența, Kitschul și Postmodernismul (Five Facets of Modernity: Modernism, the Avant Garde, Decadence, Kitsch and Postmodernism), critical study, Editura Univers, Bucharest, 1996

Despre Ioan P. Culianu şi Mircea Eliade. Amintiri, lecturi, reflecții (On Ioan P. Culianu and Mircea Eliade. Memories, Readings, Reflections), essay, Polirom, Jassy, 2002

Tu: elegii și invenții (Thou: Elegies and Inventions), poems, Polirom, Jassy, 2003

Portretul lui M (Portrait of M), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2003 Amintiri în dialog (Memoirs in Dialogue) [in collaboration with Ion Vianu], memoirs, Polirom, Jassy, 2005

Un fel de jurnal (1973-1981) (A Kind of Diary), Polirom, Jassy, 2006

Eugene Ionesco: Teme identitare și existențiale (Themes of Identity and Existence), critical study, Editura Junimea, Jassy, 2006

Mateiu I. Caragiale: recitiri (Mateiu I. Caragiale: Re-readings), essay, Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj, 2007 A citi, a reciti. Către o poetică a (re)lecturii - cu un capitol inedit despre Mateiu Caragiale (To Read, to Re-read. Towards a Poetics of (Re)Reading—with an unpublished chapter on Mateiu Caragiale), critical study, Polirom, Jassy, 2007

Matei CÅLINESCU, Viața și opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter/The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter, definitive edition, Editura Polirom, Jassy, 2004

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

Published shortly before the author emigrated to the United States of America, The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter was one of the cult books of post-Stalinist Romania. This short, hard to categorise book, situated at the boundary between novel, biographical essay and metaphysical treatise, has at its centre a paradoxical character, a combination of illumined prophet and vagabond clown, of the sublime and the consciously ridiculous, of madness and wisdom. Zacharias Lichter is in fact an exemplary anti-hero, who manages to offer — unwittingly — a model for existence at the margins of society and implicitly a means of escape from an oppressive, totalitarian world. Matei Călinescu's book portrays this anti-hero from various angles, expounding his philosophy of life, and general, essayistic and descriptive passages alternate subtly with the "poems" attributed to Lichter. Almost forty years since the book's publication, the eccentric nobility of the main character and the narrative continues to exert its fascination.

Zacharias Lichter once confessed: "I'm a temperamentally anxious obsessive, even a coward. A wave of physiological terror hurls me into pure dementia under circumstances that wouldn't make a normal person bat an eye. Take stray dogs, for example, creatures in whose eyes infinite meekness shines. I've heard those tragic mutts are sometimes capable of suicidal gestures, but all I have to do is run into a few and they unleash immense, uncontrollable violence in me and, occasionally, paralyzing terror. I let out a howl, I break into a run like a man possessed, to the stupefaction of passers-by or, before realizing it, I stand stock-still, mesmerized, in a catatonic state. I once froze that way in the middle of a street for the better part of an hour. It was a hot, dry summer with a smell of burned asphalt, and the dog kept sideling up to me, wagging its tail, sniffing me all over, while I couldn't making the tiniest gesture let alone come out with a sound."

If Lichter hadn't been leading an exclusively urban existence, this superlative dog phobia would certainly have blossomed to cover other animals one sees around Romania—oxen or water buffalo, goats, rams. His hyperbolic imagination would have discovered the symbols of terrifying, potential aggression in them since even here in the city he's subject to full blown fear that magnifies various insects, wasps, bumblebees, honeybees and beetles by countless diopters. In nighttime parks, moths and bats have a way of bumping into our brilliant philosopher's dome, and as far as he's concerned the whole pack of nightmare spooks—with menacing cyclopean eyes, with huge whirring wings—stands ready to plunge venomous stingers into his body or smear him with pollens of poisonous kinds.

Translated by Jean Harris

Petru CIMPOEŞU

Simion Liftnicul.
Roman cu îngeri și moldoveni
Simeon the Liftite.
Novel with Angels
and Moldavians



Petru Cimpoeşu was born in 1952, in Vaslui. For a long time he worked as an engineer in the petroleum sector, and since 1990 he has occupied various cultural administrative posts in Moldavia. He is among the most popular Romanian writers to have emerged in the 1980s. His reputation was confirmed by the novel Simeon the Liftite, already translated into a number of languages. The prose of this born storyteller, with its satirical and parodic elements, combines everyday realism with the fantastical, the metaphysical with the ironical, in a postmodern formula that is complex and attractive. He has published a number of collections of short stories and novels, all of which have won critical acclaim.

Petru CIMPOEŞU, Simion Liftnicul. Roman cu îngeri şi moldoveni/Simeon the Liftite. Novel with Angels and Moldavians, Editura Compania, Bucharest, 2001

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

Selected bibliography:

Amintiri din provincie (Provincial Memoirs), prose, Editura Junimea, Jassy, 1983

Firesc (Natural), novel, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1985

Erou fără voie (Unwilling Hero), novel, Editura Plumb, Bacău, 1994

Un regat pentru o muscă (A Kingdom for a Fly), Editura Axa, Botoșani, 1995

Povestea marelui brigand (The Tale of the Great Brigand), novel, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 2000

Simion Liftnicul. Roman cu îngeri și moldoveni (Simeon the Liftite. Novel with Angels and Moldavians), Editura Compania, Bucharest, 2001

Christina Domestica și Vînătorii de suflete (Christina the Domestic and the Soul-Hunters), novel, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005

Nouă proze vechi. Ficțiuni ilicite (Nine Old Prose Pieces. Illicit Fictions), short prose, Polirom, Jassy, 2008

Forthcoming: *Simeon the Liftik. Novel with Angels and Moldavians*. Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth. Plymouth University Press, 2010

This novel offers a memorable image of post-communist Romania, through the prism of life in a small-town Moldavian tenement block. Transforming the anecdotal and social satire into an ingenious parabolic narrative, one brimming with cheerful verve and humour, Cimpoeşu depicts a human fauna that is disconcerting in its diversity and vivid colour. The post-1989 messianic hopes of little people wracked by everyday cares, nostalgic for the stability of life under Ceauşescu and bewildered by a freedom for which they are unready, find their symbolic analogue in Simeon, a lift-dwelling miracle worker whose identity alludes to the ascetic "stylites" of early Christianity. A fabulous book, an irresistible metaphysical parody, and an ironic meditation on Romanian identity in a world adrift.

On the day when God took His supreme decision, Romania was in a dire state. Two years had passed since the revolution. But nothing. The newspapers reported that unemployment was rising continually, inflation likewise. GDP and productivity, by contrast, were falling at a dizzying rate. The standard of living likewise. What was to be done? The country's rulers did not know. They were too busy bickering. The government reeled around in a state of inebriation. In any case, Mr Elefterie had long ago observed that God, in order to chastise the Romanian people for their sins, did not need to rain fire and brimstone down on them, or toads, or plagues of locusts, or who knows what other plagues, like in Egypt. It was enough for him to have lumbered them with idiot rulers. In the meantime, however, things had changed, and God decided to help the nation overcome the hardships of economic transition. Urgent measures had to be taken. He did not have to give them oil, like He gave the Arabs (it's as if it's a done deed—dig under an Arab and you'll strike oil). Or inventions, like He gave the Japanese. Or automobiles, like He gave the Americans. No, what He had to give the Romanians was money, and forthwith. It was simpler that way. With money you can buy anything. And so God decided to send Ion Stoica down to earth. Properly speaking, He had sent him quite a while previously, during the communist dictatorship, but it was not until now that He laid down for him the task of solving the problem. Unfortunately, Mr Elefterie didn't believe in this miracle at first, even though everybody was talking about it, and when he did believe, it was too late. As he himself was to say a few years later:

"Christian nation, my foot! What nation, what Christianity? If this were a Christian nation every man jack wouldn't have rushed to put his money in that Ion Stoica pyramid scheme. They'd each have minded their own business, they'd each have seen to their own misfortunes."

But this will not come to pass until a few years later, on the third day of the month of October, when, because the lift will have got stuck, Mr Elifterie will have to climb the stairs to his bedsit on the fifth floor. A day earlier, his neighbour from the same floor, Mrs Vavila, will have pasted onto the walls of the landing all kinds of photographs in the form of icons, cut out of various magazines and showing Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Mother of God, and this will give occasion to the above critical observation.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth



Radu COSAŞU

Supraviețuirile. Logica
Survivals. Logic

Prose writer, reporter, screenwriter, sports journalist and film buff, Radu COSAŞU — one of Romania's best loved contemporary writers — was born in 1930, in Bacău, the son of petit bourgeois Jewish parents. At the age of two, he became a lifelong native of Bucharest. As a young man, his anti-fascism led him to become a victim of the communist utopia he had enthusiastically served in his youthful writings and from which he parted, laughing, by means of assiduous self-critical and self-examining "therapy" in more than twenty books. His most important work remains the cycle of novellas collected in six volumes under the title Survivals, published between 1973 and 1989 and resumed, in a chronological montage, after 2000. He has worked as an editor for *Cinema*, and in 1993 he was the co-founder of the *Dilema* cultural weekly, where he has a column called "From the life of a centrist extremist". He has won numerous major prizes for his work, which since 1989 has given rise to a literary movement and is highly regarded among younger generations of writers and readers.

Radu COSAŞU, Supravieţuirile/Survivals (anthology). Logica /Logic, Editura Fundației Pro, Bucharest, 2004

Information on Literary Rights: Radu Cosașu

Selected bibliography:

Maimuțele personale (Personal Monkeys), novel, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1968 Supraviețuiri (Survivals):

- Rămăşițele mic-burgheze (Petit-bourgeois Residues), Editura Pro, Bucharest, 2002
- Armata mea de cavalerie (My Cavalry Army), Editura Pro, Bucharest, 2003
- Logica, (Logic), Editura Pro, Bucharest, 2004
- Pe vremea cînd nu mă gîndeam la moarte (Back when I didn't think about Death), Editura Pro, Bucharest, 2005
- *Gărgăunii (The Hornets)*, Editura Pro, Bucharest, 2006
- În jungla unui bloc de gheață (In the Jungle of a Block of Ice), Polirom, Jassy, 2007

Mătușile din Tel-Aviv (The Aunts from Tel Aviv), Editura Impex, Bucharest, 1993

O supraviețuire cu Oscar (A Survival with Oscar), Editura Hasefer, Bucharest, 1997

Autodenunțuri și precizări (Self-Denunciations and Clarifications), Editura Hasefer, Bucharest, 2001

Conceived in an unconventional manner as an autobiographical jigsaw puzzle made up of pieces of varying shapes and sizes, Survivals is a narrative project unique in Romanian literature of the communist years: the tender, self-critical and self-ironic confessions of a young petit bourgeois, anti-fascist Bucharest Jew who became a militant communist after 1945, but who as he grew older shed his youthful revolutionary zeal, which he humorously exposes in all its vanity. The anti-hero Oscar Rohrlich, whose "sentimental education" is traced in these autobiographical pages, has the enthusiasm, naivety, and gaffe-prone awkwardness of a Chaplin of the class struggle. Cosașu's "Proustian", "self-fictionalising" prose has something of the political irony of a Kundera, while its Mozartian frivolity is nothing more than a human-all-too-human means of exorcising an ideological Utopia that contaminated all: reading, feelings, gestures. The political and literary world of the 1940s and 50s is thereby resurrected and analysed with the charm of a witty, virtuoso writer.

In Piaţa Romană I climbed down the all too well-known stairs of the WC. The place was deserted at that hour of the night. (...) A deep breath brought the "realism" of coal-tar disinfectant to my nostrils. I seemed impure to myself, ideologically suspect, suspicious as a hemorrhage on the tiles of a pisoir. My eyeglasses were still in one piece, which calmed me down to a certain extent. Leaving that subterranean space before climbing the stairs to the lights of the boulevard, I heard to my left the difficult, violent snore of the woman who cared for the place who was sleeping on a chair at the women's entrance. Only a person overwhelmed by tremendous, useless labor could sleep that way.(...)

The next day, at the first Congress of Young Writers, Bichiş, who was running the show in his capacity as secretary of the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth called me to the floor and I found myself at the microphone with the writer Camil Petrescu before me. Constantly staring at the little microphone of his ear hearing aid, I begged forgiveness of the poet whom I had denounced in '52 for "intimism". I protested against the censorship which, instead of cutting out models for us cut out our brains. I sited the young Marx who saw a fundamental vice in censorship. I invoked our right to error "since we do not work in concrete", and I closed with a call to battle against "communist lies"—as Lenin himself had called then in 1923 before his death—the greatest danger for the party press since the Revolution.

In a word, I committed political suicide with certain success, as witnessed by the countless congratulations I received all night at the "Dinner" where I drank till late with the writers Labiş, Mandric, Raicu, Țic and Mazilu when Sami Buză, the saxophonist, told us that "he couldn't go on anymore," that he'd play us again in closing "Sweet Little Girls like the Ones in Bucharest" and that we should go to bed. Even he knew what I'd said, for there was no other way of explaining why, at two in the morning, in his final improvisation, a jazz version of "Sweet Little Girls" he introduced several phrases from "Arise Ye Prisoners of Want" in combination with "allons enfants".

Translated by Jean Harris

Florin LĂZĂRESCU

Our Special Correspondent

Florin LĂZĂRESCU was born on 28 March 1974, in the village of Doroscani, Jassy. He has published two novels and four collections of short prose, which have propelled him to the forefront of the new Romanian prose. His texts are remarkable for their ludic verve, freshness and sense of the spoken word, oscillating between existential minimalism and metaphysical vision. His work is included in the anthologies Ozone Friendly: Jassy — Literary Reconfigurations (Jassy, 2002), Respiro: Short Prose, 2000-2002 (Cluj, 2003) and The Book of Grandparents (Bucharest, 2007). He is a screenwriter and journalist, a member of the editorial board of the Jassy Suplimentul de cultură weekly. Together with Lucian Dan Teodorovici he writes for Animated Planet Show, a satirical cartoon series conceived by the Divertis troupe. In 2005, he won the National Cinematography Centre competition with the short film The Tube with a Hat, directed by Radu Jude. His novel Our Special Correspondent has been translated into French, German, Italian, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Slovenian and won second prize in the Grand Awards for East-European Literature (Frankfurt, 2006).



Florin LĂZĂRESCU, Trimisul nostru special/ Our Special Correspondent, Polirom, Jassy, 2005

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

Florin Lăzărescu's short, dense novel provides a kaleidoscopic image of post-communist Romania, a used up, stage-set world, at the same time capturing its "roots". Fantastical, tragic and absurd stories are seamlessly interwoven with sensational reportage about terrorists, in a mystical and at the same time parodic narrative. At the centre of the book is a young man by the name of Antonie, who evolves spectacularly from the condition of noble savage, raised in a natural wilderness, to the status of special reporter. A postmodern game and at the same time a narrative full of biblical parables, *Our Special Correspondent* is a subtle meditation on fiction itself, on the narrative foundations of existence. Florin Lăzărescu manages to speak of "essential" things in a discourse of disconcerting freshness, in a novel that strikes a wonderful balance between colloquial humour and enigmatic gravitas.

Selected bibliography:

Cuiburi de vâsc (Mistletoe Nests), short stories, Editura Outopos, Jassy, 2000

Şase moduri de a-ți aminti un cal (*Six Ways of Remembering a Horse*), short stories, Editura Liternet, www.liternet.ro, 2003

Ce se știe despre ursul panda (What there is to Know about the Panda Bear), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2003

Trimisul nostru special (Our Special Correspondent), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2005

Pas question de Dracula, (co-author, along with Dan Lungu and Lucian Dan Teodorovici), Non Lieu, Paris, 2007

Lampa cu căciulă (The Tube with a Hat), short stories, Polirom, Jassy, 2009

Almost a year ago, Antonie had the idea to start his own newspaper; a newspaper that he would write himself, from the first to the last page. He'd already done the pagination. He'd thought out the sections as well: editorial, politics, news in brief, sports, culture, investigations, interviews, events, classified ads, weather, etc. The idea was fairly simple: each century in the history of humanity was to be captured as if it had happened in one single day. When carried out, though, it turned out not to be all that simple.

Antonie had surrounded himself with the essential books on the history of humanity. He had to select from them what was relevant. To simplify things, he'd decided to dedicate a single issue to the entire period preceding the Christian Era. What he'd managed to structure up to that point looked as follows:

THE UNIVERSE OF TODAY

"Know yourself!"

Independent publication

Day one

Latest news: Homo erectus, the first creature with modern limbs!

The inquiry of the day: Who's hushing up the "Extinction of the dinosaurs" case

Legislation: Representative Moses is putting forth a new package of laws

Statement of the day: "Everything flows!"

Report from our special correspondent: The Fall of Troy!

Society: The latest gossip about Cleopatra's nose

Sports: The Marathon – a new race introduced in the Olympic Games

An interview with political analyst Plato: "The statesman is not a tender of individuals – not like the driver or groom of a single ox or horse; he is rather to be compared with the keeper of a drove of horses or oxen."

In brief: The first two Chinese have been born. Judging by how frail they are, we do not think they will last very long.

Deaths: Enkidu, my friend with whom I used to hunt lions, has died...

Investigations: The Rig-Veda class – the complete list of the 3,333 gods of Hinduism.

Ads: PYRAMID PLC executes sturdy tombs. Complete services. Home embalming. Free transport.

Classifieds: Camel lost in the Sahara area, around 4th century BCE. Particulars: hump slightly tilting towards the right. Recompense guaranteed!

Competition: Find your prophet and bet on the End of the World!

Translated by Dana Crăciun



Dan LUNGU

Cum să uiți o femeie How to Forget a Woman

Dan LUNGU was born in 1969, in Botosani. He teaches sociology at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Jassy and is one of the most popular and widely translated Romanian writers of the new generation. He made his debut as a poet, but later dedicated himself to prose, drama, and sociological studies. In 1996, he founded Club 8 literary group in Jassy, and between 2001 and 2002 he was editor-in-chief of Timpul magazine, published in Jassy. Along with Radu Pavel Gheo, he has edited the anthologies Women Fellow Travellers: The Female Experience under Communism (2008) and Revolution '89 Street (2009). His plays Knife to the Bone, Ground-floor Wedding and The Hungry Huntress have been staged by theatres in Romania. A member of the Romanian Writers' Union, he has been awarded numerous literary prizes. His books have been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Polish, Slovenian, Hungarian and Bulgarian. Inspired by a real-life story, his novel I'm a Communist Biddy! is currently in production as a feature film. Whether prose, sociology, oral history or theatre, Dan Lungu's books—written with virtuosity, humour and sharp social and human observation—form a highly original jigsaw-puzzle image of the Romania of recent decades.

Dan LUNGU, Cum să uiți o femeie/How to Forget a Woman, Polirom, Jassy, 2009

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

This complex and fast-paced novel of love, alienation, and religious belief develops along two converging lines, while also integrating an unusual, female point of view. The first part, written in the first person, introduces us to a young journalist, Andi, who has been inexplicably abandoned by his girlfriend, Marga, and is trying to piece together everything he knows about his mysterious lost love. In the second part, written in the third person, we meet Andi at a later time. He is now staying in the home of a Seventh Day Adventist minister, who introduces him into his community. These two narrative threads bring face to face two wholly divergent worlds and lifestyles: the world of the daily press, which is one of ephemera and existential purposelessness, and the community of Adventists, who reject the (post-)modern present to live by the rules of two thousand years ago. Finally, Marga's part in the musical score adds an additional note of enigmatic charm. The deftly maintained narrative tension, the compositional subtlety — not lacking in fine humour and the authenticity of the exploration of apparently incompatible ways of life come together to make Dan Lungu's latest novel an indisputable literary success.

Selected bibliography:

Cheta la flegmă (Whip-round for Phlegm), short stories, Editura Outopos, Jassy, 1999

Construcția identității într-o societate totalitară (The Construction of Identity in a Totalitarian Society), sociological study, Editura Junimea, Jassy, 2003

Proză cu amănuntul (Retail Prose), short stories, Polirom, Jassy, 2003

Raiul găinilor (fals roman de zvonuri și mistere) [Hens' Heaven (Faux Novel of Rumours and Mysteries)], novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2004

Băieți de gașcă (Lads in the Gang), short stories, Polirom, Jassy, 2005

Sunt o babă comunistă! (I'm a Communist Biddy!), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2007

Cum să uiți o femeie (How to Forget a Woman), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2009

He could have gone out for a walk, but he was feeling quite tired. He flung himself on the bed in the adjoining room and began leafing through an old newspaper. He found it strange that events which had taken place only a few weeks previously, plastered across the front pages with sensational headlines, were now stale or completely forgotten. It was as if they had never happened, as if they no longer had any significant impact on the present. As a rule, the newspapers ended up in the dustbin within two days, or else they were put to some practical use: spread on the parquet when the walls were being painted or packed between fragile objects during a move. It was as if the history they were living was disposable. After digesting it for twenty-four hours, the memory excretes it in the form of paper pellets. Every day, the world is born anew. In fuggy, smoke-filled rooms the editors-inchief—frowning gods surrounded by hosts of angels worn out by chasing stories and tobacco, with bags around their eyes as big as manholes—created the world in twenty-four hours. In the morning, in front of a cup of coffee, smoking a cigarette, sitting on balconies or in offices, skiving, filled with curiosity, people took cognisance of the world in which they lived. The more numerous the miracles the more plenteous the sighs of delight, and the bigger the print run.

The people alongside lived in another dimension. They were better informed about what happened two thousand years ago than what was yesterday. They knew every deed of Christ, every word. For them, Habakkuk was more familiar than the chairman of the county council, the tax collector in the Gospels more immediate than the commandant of the Frontier Police. (...) People live in different worlds, he told himself. For some, everything is in the newspaper, for others everything is in the Bible. And in between there is a separate category of lunatics who only believe in books. They are in different wards, but all under the roof of the same madhouse. Each complains in secret, whispering in corners, that the others are insane. Now and then they meet in the inner courtyard, having a quiet stroll or huddled together, when suddenly the ambulance siren frightens the life out of them.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

Ioana PÂRVULESCU

Viața începe vineri Life Begins on Friday

Ioana PÂRVULESCU was born in 1960, in Braşov. She is currently an editor for the România literară weekly, the co-ordinator of Humanitas publishing house's "Bedside-table Book" collection of prose, and a university professor in the Literature Faculty of Bucharest University, where she has taught Romanian literary history for almost two decades. In the 1980s, she took part in student literary cenacles held in the Philology Faculty and collaborated on a multi-author novel, which has remained unpublished. She has a long career as a literary critic and essayist in the cultural press. She made her literary debut in 1990, with a collection of poems, but has made a name for herself with her many volumes of essays on literary-historical subjects, which are open to the history of mentalities and private life, well documented, and written in an unmistakable "critical-fictional" manner highly appreciated by readers. She has written school textbooks and translated works by Angelus Silesius and Maurice Nadeau. She has written a number of novels, but did not choose to publish any until 2009.



Ioana PÂRVULESCU, Viața începe vineri Life Begins on Friday, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2009

> Information on Literary Rights: Humanitas, Gabriela Niculae, e-mail: gabriela.niculae@humanitas.ro

Selected bibliography:

Lenevind într-un ochi (Idling in an Eye), poems, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1990

Alfabetul doamnelor (The Ladies' Alphabet), literary criticism, Editura Crater, Bucharest, 1999

Prejudecăți literare (Literary Prejudices), literary criticism and theory, Editura Univers, "Excellens", Bucharest, 1999

Întoarcere în Bucureștiul interbelic (Return to Inter-war Bucharest), essay, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2003

În intimitatea secolului 19 (In the Intimacy of the Nineteenth Century), Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005

De ce te iubesc. Paradoxurile iubirii în poezia lumii (Why I Love Thee. Paradoxes of Love in the World's Poetry), anthology, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2006

În țara Miticilor. De şapte ori Caragiale (In the Land of the Miticăs. Seven Times Caragiale), Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007

Întoarcere în secolul XXI (Return to the Twenty-first Century), Humanitas, Bucharest, 2009

Viața începe vineri (Life Begins on Friday), novel, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2009 A malicious "retro" fiction about Bucharest high society of the year 1897, in which the mystery of a detective yarn intertwines with a charming historical reconstruction of the fin-de-siècle atmosphere of the Romanian capital. Orchestrated with panache, ingeniousness and suspense, the action of the book unfolds over thirteen days, from Friday, 19 December until the end of the year, and captures in its threads the world of the epoch: the press and politics, the aristocracy and native petit bourgeoisie, as well as the European context. Across the pages of the novel process a multitude of characters as if cut out of a period film. The fine irony, sophisticated playfulness and classical rigour of the writing, the watchmaker's precision of the composition, and the complicit voluptuousness in which old-fashioned codes are recycled make this (meta-)novel by Ioana Pârvulescu—an authority on the period—an exceptional literary achievement.

"Since the overwhelming honour of opening the first window upon the future has been bestowed upon me," said the host, "here's what I see: in a year or two, before we turn centuries, the 'iron lady' will be toppled. Or at least so I hope!"

Before midnight of the last day of 1897 or zero hour of the first day of 1898, Marioara had suggested they play a game: everybody was supposed to make a prediction about the future instead of having the usual fortune cookies that people were fed up with. (Marioara did not confess that her cookies had got burnt.) So it was a much better idea to make predictions. They could go as far as they wanted. The idea of a short break before the main course was met with unanimous approval. The 15 adults were joined by Nicu, the 16th participant, because he felt he belonged more with the crowd around the big table than at the kids' table. As he was much-liked by people, he was accepted as a breath of fresh air. So they put down the numbers 1 to 16 on small slips of papers, which they threw in Peppin Mirto's hat, and then drew the order of the interventions. The hat and the chance had decided that Mr. Hristea Livezeanu, the host, would go first, and Dan Creţu last. The others came in between, but a lot of them decided to abstain either because they were shy or because of other, more difficult to understand, reasons.

Procopiu, who was supposed to go second, had already prepared some kind of vague speech about the great future of *The Universe* newspaper, but when he heard Hristea Livezeanu talk about how he wanted the toppling of the "iron lady," i.e., *la tour Eiffel*, he felt it was his duty as a journalist to respond. He stood up, just like the first speaker had done, even though his shoes would have required him to sit as much as possible, and he begged to differ with his esteemed host:

"The Eiffel Tower will endure over the centuries. It will be visited by more and more people. When you say Paris, you will say the Eiffel Tower, when you say the Eiffel Tower, you will say Paris."

Encouraged by Mrs. Livezeanu's smile – for her opinion was always contrary to that of her husband's – he went on:

"It will endure at least for as long as the Statue of Liberty will endure in New York, whose... well, he did the metallic part for that as well. Mr. Gustave Eiffel is a genius of steel work, everybody knows that. It's true that the Panama Canal affair, blown so out of proportions by newspapers, even here, has dented the engineer's reputation a little. However, the times are long past when a writer without any important books, such as Léon Bloy still is, called the tower "a tragic street lamp", and a better writer, though rather eccentric for my taste, monsieur Huysmans, described it – if the ladies here will forgive me – as a suppository full of perforations!"



Doina RUŞTI Zogru

Born in a village in southern Romania, into a family of schoolteachers that suffered greatly under Stalinist repression, Doina RUŞTI graduated from Jassy University with a Degree in Literature in the 1980s and now teaches cinematography at the university level in Bucharest. She is a specialist in symbology and has published a number of works in this field. She is also the author of numerous school textbooks for Romanian language and literature courses. In recent years she has come to the fore as a prolific novelist, whose books have garnered both critical praise and popularity with readers. She has also published fairytales, short stories and novellas, in both magazines and anthologies. Endowed with narrative verve, human authenticity and epic versatility, Doina Rusti explores the "demonism" and traumas of Romanian social identity in prose that blends harsh naturalism and magical realism. Her work has been translated into Bulgarian, French, Spanish, and English.

Doina RUŞTI, Zogru, Polirom, Jassy, 2006

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

The main character of this novel is a ghost named Zogru, a vampire that has been possessing people since the year 1460, during the reign of Vlad the Impaler (alias Dracula), and has traversed the whole of Romanian history down to the present day. The reincarnations of this fantastical hero are numerous and highly colourful: from denizens of the late Middle Ages to figures of the early-nineteenthcentury Phanariot period, and from witnesses of the Stalinist regime to familiar contemporary Romanian writers. The effects that the presence of this likeable ghost produces within the worlds he traverses are quite simply irresistible. The enigmatic Zogru turns history on its head, and the carousel of events he sets in motion combines the fantasy of untrammelled imagination with the meticulous realism of historical fiction. The charm of this captivating novel resides in the naturalness of the narrative voice, the fine humour and the appetite for storytelling.

Selected bibliography:

Dicţionar de teme şi simboluri (Dictionary of Themes and Symbols), Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 2002

Mesajul subliminal în comunicarea actuală (The Subliminal Message in Current Communication), Editura Tritonic, Bucharest, 2005

Dicționar de simboluri din opera lui Mircea Eliade (Dictionary of Symbols in the Work of Mircea Eliade), Editura Tritonic, Bucharest 2005

Bestiarul cantemirian (The Dimitrie Cantemir Bestiary), Editura Universitas XXI, Jassy, 2007

Omulețul roșu (The Little Red Man), novel, Editura Vremea, Bucharest, 2004

Zogru, novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2006

Fantoma din moară (The Ghost in the Mill), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2008

Lizoanca la 11 ani (Lizoanca at Eleven Years Old), novel, Editura Trei, Bucharest, 2009

It's funny how some people believe in the existence of ghosts, even if they've never seen them. Zogru had noticed them the minute he opened his eyes in this world, first as points of light, then as small green globes that ran tirelessly in all directions. From time to time, one of them would explode with the air of a blown fuse that would stretch out like a vertical line of light and take human shape—exactly the form it had in life. It became clear to him that for them this ghostly existence is extremely difficult. Every living person becomes an obstacle, every touch an electrocution. For this reason, avoiding living flesh as much as they can, ghosts float about in protected locations, only to return to their globular form after a while. As for Zogru, he feels their ghostly touch as a scorching caress. He chats with some of them. Only last week, he paid a visit to Comosteni, not so much to assure himself of the existence of a ghost as out of jealousy after Giulia decided to go on an excursion with Andrei Ionescu—to document the ghost's existence, naturally. She was convinced that a spirit from the other world was haunting the family home, where no one had lived for several years. Giulia had felt its presence, and what's more, blinking her eyes like two frost-rimed grapes, she would tell how it transmitted to her an invasive emotion sustained by dread, something like when you have a presentiment that someone is talking about you, or only thinking of you, a kind of mental contact, Andrei Ionescu finished the thought, more all-knowing and annoying than ever as he carefully twirled a lock of hair behind his tender, mushroom-like ear. Zogru listened to him in silence—having slipped inside the woman who waited on their table and who was now awaiting their order—and, standing there in the small room between the kitchen and the back room, he decided suddenly to make a quick run to the spot even before they themselves decided to make their trip together.

Packed inside the form of a benevolent old woman who knew everything, Zogru waited for them right at the entrance to the house: *Miss Giulia, there's a ghost here in your house. It comes out at night and sings in the garden. I've seen it.* (...) He would have said still more if he hadn't arrived in the small salon where the ghost was really staying.

Translated by Jean Harris

Ana Maria SANDU

Omoară-mă!
Kill Me!



Ana Maria SANDU was born in 1974, in Tîrgu Jiu. She graduated from Bucharest University with a Degree in Literature in 1998. As a student, she took part in the Litere cenacle organised by Mircea Cărtărescu. Between 2002 and 2005, she was general secretary of the editorial board of the Observator cultural weekly. She made her debut as a poet, in 1996, and her transition to prose came to fruition a decade later in the novel The Girl from the Oblong House. In recent years, she has participated at numerous literary festivals and book fairs and has given readings from her work in a number of European capitals, including Vienna, Paris and Berlin. Her autobiographically flavoured epic poem From the Recollections of a Chelbasan is due to be published in French translation (Editions Chemin de Fer). A number of excerpts from The Girl from the Oblong *House* have been published in French literary reviews.

Ana Maria SANDU, *Omoară-mă!/Kill Me!*, Polirom, Jassy, 2010

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

A troubling book, written with surgical precision, about fiction's power to create imaginary realities and to generate, by means of deftly maintained confusions, alltoo-real crimes. What might have turned into a love story between two young protagonists, Vali and Ramona, slides into a strange combination of roman policier and horror story, as a result of the female character's confession. We discover from Ramona's testimony that she has murdered her seventy-year-old landlady, after being driven to distraction by the old woman's passionate tales of her own past, accounts hinting of vampirism. Entangled in the web of these tales, which subtly hint at the novels of Dickens, Ramona tries to free herself through murder, with terrifying consequences. Ana Maria Sandu leads her characters into the abysses of a deceptive albeit disconcertingly simple narrative about love and death, about the mystification of identity and the perverse vampirism of storytelling.

Selected bibliography:

Poeme în tranzit (Poems in Transit), Editura Punct, Tîrgu-Jiu, 1996

Din amintirile unui Chelbasan (From the Recollections of a Chelbasan), poem, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2002

Fata din casa vagon (The Girl from the Oblong House), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2006

Omoară-mă! (Kill Me!), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2010

Vali, I would have preferred not to be obliged to write more than fit on the A4 form a man in uniform placed in front of me on my first day in custody:

I the undersigned, Ramona Petrescu, daughter of Constantin and Rodica, born on 21 April 1981, in the town of Brăila, resident at 76 Domenii St., Sector 2, Bucharest, bearer of identity card no. RX 213423, do hereby declare that on the evening of Thursday, 22 September 2006, I lost the use of my reason and murdered Veronica Manea, aged seventy, resident at 76 Domenii St., Bucharest.

I hereby mention that we are unrelated.

For you it would have been too little. For the judge likewise. For me it no longer matters. I have not yet parted from Mrs Manea. It would have been too easy for it to happen like that. We lie in wait for each other in every corner. Only Geo and Ian have remained in that flat. They were stronger than us, more alive, of that there is no doubt. And she took care that we should remain united, that we should not lose each other (...) I haven't been able to sleep since then. That's the most torturous part of it. The last time I managed not to think about anything when I closed my eyes was in your bedsit, with both of us in the same bed.

Your arms didn't take any account of what I had told you, about the dead woman I had left behind at home. Their embrace was genuine. They were warmer than anything else I had felt around me for such a long time. I had forgotten what it was like to feel the breath of a living person on my nape. Geo used to keep me warm. I'm grateful to him for that. But he had been dead for more than two years. Of course, I had passed over that detail and I never reproached him for it. Who cared about it now?

What I needed would have been a commemorative service for the soul of the deceased and a little sack in which someone might collect my bones and remove them from Mrs Manea's house. Someone to wash them thoroughly and marvel at how well they were conserved. But such a ritual takes place only on the seventh anniversary of a person's departure to the world beyond. As for me, I bore it in Mrs Manea's house not even for three whole years.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth



Stelian TĂNASE

Corpuri de iluminat

Dark Bodies

Novelist and public intellectual, script writer, television moderator, professor and former parliamentarian, **Stelian TĂNASE** lives in Bucharest where he writes fiction and teaches at the University of Bucharest. An Academic Professor since 1995, his novel *Câinii lui Pavlov (Pavlov's Dogs)* is due out this spring. With Spanish and Polish novel translations forthcoming, his fiction has appeared in English at *The Observer Translation Project, Exquisite Corpse, The Guardian*. "Misty" is available in *Absinth: 13* (april 2010).

Selected bibliography:

Luxul melancoliei (The Luxury of Melancholy), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1982; second edition, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1993

Sfidarea memoriei (The Defiance of Memory) (with Alexandru Paleologu), DU Style, Iassy, 1996

Revoluția ca eșec. Elite și societate (Revolution as Fiasco), Polirom, Iassy, 1996; 2007

Anatomia mistificării (Anatomy of the Mystification), Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997; 2003

Elite si societate (Elites & Society. Romania under the Rule of Gheorghiu-Dej: 1948-1965), Humanitas, Bucharest, 1998; 2006

Miracolul revoluției (The Miracle of Revolution. A political history of the fall of the communist regimes), Humanitas, Bucharest, 1999

Acasă se vorbește în șoaptă (At Home There's Only Speaking in a Whisper), Compania, Bucharest, 2002

Clienții lu' Tanti Varvara (Auntie Varvara's Clients), Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005

At Home There's Only Speaking in a Whisper. Translated by Sorana Corneanu. Boulder and New York: East European Monographs, 2007

Auntie Varvara's Clients: Clandestines Histories (an Interwar history of Romanian Communism). Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth. Spuyten Duyvil, New York, 2007

Playback, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, Bucharest, 1995; third edition, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008 Corpuri de iluminat (Dark Bodies), fourth edition, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008

Maestro, o melodramă (Maestro: a Melodrama), Polirom, Jassy, 2008

Avangarda românească în arhivele de Siguranță (The Romanian Avant-garde in the Securitate Archives), Polirom, Jassy, 2008

Forthcoming: *Auntie Varvara's Clients: Clandestines Histories* (an Interwar history of Romanian Communism). Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth. Plymouth University Press, 2010

Forthcoming: Clienții lu' Tanti Varvara / Auntie Varvara's Clients. Translation in process by Javier Marina.

Spain: Mira.

Stelian TĂNASE, Corpuri de iluminat/ Dark Bodies, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008

Information on Literary Rights: Humanitas, Gabriela Niculae, e-mail: gabriela.niculae@humanitas.ro

Stelian Tănase's Dark Bodies is a rock/blues novel about unenlightened souls. Sandu, jazz musician and sometime rocker, wakes on Resurrection Night to the sound of a domestic battle that pours through his wall. A fat, panting neighbor full of grotesque friendliness pokes into Sandu's business on orders from Mr. Făinus, apparently a Securitate operative and possibly the devil himself, for this is a novel of Faustian bargains that destroy its main characters, Sandu and Pia. Their story begins in the classic bohemia of beauty and disorder, with poverty and frustration, with the most intriguing woman, the coolest guy. For a while they defy "the pressure and the bulimia of the surrounding reality from the bunker of their unreality immured by love. That's the miracle." It doesn't last. Suddenly the woman has it up to here with poverty, she's pregnant, and on top of that it turns out that the man's artistic commitment is real, and all that stands in the way of the woman's feline nature that stretches out to hunt. An Emma Bovary of the flat blocs, open to seduction and exhausted by unsuccessful adventures, Pia models herself too well on her idol, Marilyn Monroe.

THE APARTMENT: ARTHUR MILLER EMPTIED THE PLACE WHEN HE PACKED IT IN ALL HE LEFT WAS A PORTRAIT OF HER. STARTING NOW, THE CAMERA SEES: WINDOWS IN WHOSE APERTURE THE CURTAINS ARE RAKED BY THE WIND HEADING OUT TO SEA. Marilyn often looked at the walls in the neighborhood—imagining to herself the empty space between her dwelling and the ocean waves. The doors are opened wide, the parquet covered with newspapers, the rooms deserted. She had played a bit at love, as she usually did with one guy or another, but she counted on her husband's fidelity. He was only the most intelligent American man, one hundred percent brains. That's why she married him. Oh yes, I was happy for a while with him! she tells her confidant one evening. Why? He was grave and serious, and he only thought deep thoughts. And all the big shots from the theater were after him. There were all kind of high falutin' articles about him in those magazines, you can imagine, where there are no nude photographs, and not a single ad. He was somebody, but he couldn't understand—with all his brains—that I can't belong to one man alone, that I like to play. I went to bed with all the men who were sweet on me. I felt they wanted me, that they need me to be happy—happy themselves, that is. Why should I refuse them?—I'm not a bad person, and I know very well, my body's all I got. It's so sweet to improvise, like that black guy at the Minton Club in Harlem where some character brought me. You find yourself somewhere one evening and you notice that some guy's giving you the eye for a while. You let him know that you noticed and he smiles back, kind of embarrassed, and you say to yourself: what if things had turned out some other way...

Translated by Jean Harris

Al. O. TEODOREANU (Păstorel)

Gastronomica



Alexandru O. TEODOREANU (Păstorel) (1894, Jassy – 1964, Bucharest). Romanian writer, journalist and lawyer, brother of novelist and lawyer Ionel Teodoreanu, author, between the two wars, of a number of collections of poems and humoristic and satirical prose, celebrated epigrammatist and, not least, oenologist and gastronome, with a reputation as a bon viveur. Because of his irreverent epigrams against the Stalinist regime, which circulated by word of mouth, he became a victim of state political persecution. He translated from Hašek, Gogol, Anatole France and Prosper Merimée.

Al. O. Teodoreanu (Păstorel), Gastronomice/Gastronomica, Editura Vremea, Bucharest, 2000

Out-of-copyright work

The history of Romanian gastronomy is dominated by a number of classic titles, including 200 Tested Recipes, Cakes and Other Domestic Matters (1841) by Mihail Kogălniceanu and C. Negruzzi, 1501 Dishes (1935) by Constantin Bacalbaşa, called "the most spectacular cookbook of inter-war Romania", and Gastronomica by Păstorel Teodoreanu (1937). The present volume brings together a selection of interwar culinary masterpieces from the cookbooks of Constantin Bacalbaşa and Păstorel Teodoreanu: recipes created by members of the Bacalbaşa and Teodoreanu families, as well as dishes characteristic of the Romanian provinces (in particular Moldavia, a veritable gastronomic paradise), all of them imbued with the rich flavours of succulent literary language.

Selected bibliography:

Hronicul măscăriciului Vălătuc (Chronicle of Vălătuc the Jester), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, novel, 1928; Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007

Strofe cu pelin de mai pentru/contra Iorga Neculai, cu o scrisoare inedită de la Dante Alighieri (Strophes with May Wormwood pro/contra Iorga Neculai, with an Unpublished Letter of Dante Alighieri), epigrams, 1931

Un porc de cîne (A Pig-Dog), skits and stories, Editura Porus, Bucharest, 1933

Tămîie și otravă (Incense and Poison), journalism, 2 vols., Editura Junimea, Jassy, 1934, 1935

Vin şi apă (Wine and Water), epigrams, Editura Cultura Națională, Bucharest, 1936

Caiet (Notebook), poems, 1938

Moldavian meatballs (Păstorel recipe)

Excerpt

As far as the meat goes, there are no restrictions: you can make fried meatballs from beef, lamb, or poultry (hen, duck, goose breast, and even turkey, whatever you see fit). A time-honoured meatball, however, is made only from beef or (better still) veal, and you will mix this with pork, otherwise not at all. And this is how:

Feed the meat through the grinder twice. The second time add breadcrumbs soaked in milk, salt, pepper, dill, and finely chopped parsley fried in butter. Once you have extracted the minced meat from the grinder, add the necessary number of eggs (two per half kilogram of meat). Rub the bottom of the pan in which you will be mixing the mince with a knob of fresh butter the size of a duck's egg. You can also mix in a grated potato (ad libitum). Once the mince has been mixed thoroughly, sprinkle a wooden chopping board, on which you will be shaping the meatballs, with *posmag* (dried, ground breadcrumbs or coarse maize flour, in case you have forgotten what they call it in Vaslui). Take a spoonful of mince and roll it into a spherical form. After that, squash it with a broad knife, until the sphere is reduced to the width of a chubby index finger. Then tap the minced meat laterally, until it acquires the shape known in geometry as a circular sector, which is the final form, taking care to round off the top a little by nipping it. When the butter starts to sizzle, place the meatballs in the pan and fry them on both sides until they brown as much as required. Once they have browned, remove them with a slotted spoon and arrange them (while still hot) on the plate for serving. The whole knack of it is for the meatball to be well browned on the outside and juicy on the inside. The classic garnish is mashed potato, or boiled new potatoes with butter, if they are in season.

A Moldavian meatball should be no longer than a playing card in length, three normal fingers in width, and a bantam-weight boxer's finger in thickness.

Fry spryly and bon appétit!



Cristian TEODORESCU

Medgidia, orașul de apoi Megidia, the Town at the End of the World

Cristian TEODORESCU was born in 1954, in Medgidia, a town in the Dobrudja region. He graduated from the Philology Faculty of Bucharest University in 1980. He participated in the Junimea cenacle for prose writers, organised by critic and university professor Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu. In 1983, he made his publishing debut in an anthology of short prose titled *Desant '83*. He quickly made a name for himself as one of the best short story writers of the '80s Generation. His work features a micro-realism of the everyday, with subtle experimental touches, focussing in particular on exploration of society's margins. Since 1990, he has worked as a journalist for the radio and daily newspapers, and he writes columns for important weeklies, including România literară. He is currently the editor of the Academic Catavencu satirical weekly and editorial director of the Romanian edition of The New York Times Book Review. Translations of his short stories have been included in anthologies published in Holland, Russia and the U.S. He has won numerous prestigious literary prizes.

Cristian TEODORESCU, Medgidia, orașul de apoi/Megidia, the Town at the End of the World, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2009

Information on Literary Rights: Cartea Românească, Mădălina Ghiu, e-mail: ecr@cartearomaneasca.ro

A book in which the world of Medgidia, a small town in the Dobrudja region, is reconstructed in a monograph that captures the full madness of history between the Iron Guard dictatorship of 1940 and the final triumph of Stalinism. Drawing on real lives, the volume consists of very short, modular chapters, but its experimental structure throws into relief a classical prose that is woven with imperturbable calm. The prologue informs us that the novel can be read in any order. The various sequences are, however, structured within a coherent chronological montage, in which a host of individual, interconnected lives are profiled against the backdrop of local and broader history. Colourful, authentic and picturesque, the book presents us with the multi-ethnic mosaic of the south. Viewed from the tavern of Ştefan Teodorescu, the author's grandfather, Medgidia appears as both an autonomous world and as a crossroads leading to Dobrudja, Romania and Europe, a place where people come to settle and whence they vanish one by one after the coming of the new regime: some die in accidents or commit suicide, others fall at the front, are sent to prison or flee. Gradually, the feeling of apocalyptic doom becomes overwhelming, as the old merchant milieu disintegrates, faithfully recorded by the narrative memory of a "town at the end of the world."

Selected bibliography:

Maestrul de lumini (The Lighting Technician), short prose, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1983

Tainele inimei (The Heart's Secrets), novel, Editura Cartea Românească, 1988

Faust repovestit băieților mei, Petre și Matei (Faust retold for My Sons, Petre and Matei), children's literature, Editura Alex, Bucharest, 1991

Povestiri din lumea nouă (Tales from the New World), short prose, Editura Rao, Bucharest, 1996

Îngerul de la benzinărie (The Petrol Station Angel), Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2002

Medgidia, orașul de apoi (Medgidia, the Town at the End of the World), Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2009

Fănică Teodorescu counted off two years, eight months and five days before they released him from prison. (...) Before dawn, after he alighted from the slow train in Medgidia, he paused on the platform, disoriented. The buffet was gone! Then he discovered that the Militia had ensconced themselves in the first-class section of the buffet and fitted bars on the windows, and all that remained of the bar was closed at night... (...) The house was dark. The dog came to meet him at the gate, sniffing him warily, but without barking. The front door was unlocked. Fănică stripped down to his bare skin in the darkness of the vestibule, then went into the long hall and stretched out on the couch where he had used to sleep when he came back from the establishment up on the hill. The smell of the couch cover was the same. For the first time in almost three years Fănică slipped into untroubled slumber. He awoke a day later, shaken out of his sleep by Virginia, who was fearful lest he be carrying some disease from prison and so she had called out the doctor to examine him.

When he went into town, wearing his best everyday suit, which hung rather loosely on him, Fănică Theodorescu saw that the horse-drawn cabs from the station were gone. There was no longer anyone to ride in them. The ground floor of the Trajan Hotel was now a railwaymen's club, and on the upper floor, where Haikis once lived and worked, there had appeared some state railway offices and a trade union headquarters. The only shops on the main street that had not been nationalised were the watchmaker's workshop owned by Zizi père and the atelier of the milliner, who had lost almost all her clientele for made-to-measure dresses. State Security had taken up residence in the judge's house, and in the yard, instead of the Buick, there was a jeep painted a sombre green. The establishment up on the hill, abandoned after the trade plied by Sorica's girls was banned, had now become a ghostly hotel, with broken windows. (...) In the Turkish quarter, things seemed unchanged. (...) The imam still went to the mosque on Fridays to preach, but he seemed a shadow of his own shadow, and the muezzin called the faithful to prayer with ever more strident cries, as if he wanted to proclaim not only the beginning but also the end of prayer.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

Varujan VOSGANIAN

Cartea şoaptelor
The Book of Whispers

Varujan VOSGANIAN was born on 25 July 1958, in Craiova, to an Armenian family. After completing college in Focșani, he graduated from the Trade Faculty of the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies in 1982 and the Mathematics Faculty of Bucharest University in 1991. He was awarded a Doctorate in Economics by the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies in 1998. He is a university professor in the Faculty of International Relations. In 1990, he entered politics and was a founder of the Union of the Armenians of Romania, of which he continues to be the president. He has been a member of parliament and minister in a number of governments. He is a member of a number of important bodies for economic and domestic and international political affairs. As well as his literary work, he has published numerous works on economics and politics, and has received a number of prestigious awards. He is currently a senator for and vice-president of the National Liberal Party, and since 2004 he has been vice-president of the Union of Romanian Writers. His work has been translated into English, Spanish, Russian and Armenian.



Varujan VOSGANIAN, Cartea şoaptelor/The Book of Whispers, Polirom, Jassy, 2009

Information on Literary Rights: Polirom, Lucia Dos, e-mail: lucia.dos@polirom.ro

Setting out from the author's personal and family memory, The Book of Whispers is a novel that condenses the tragic experience and destiny of a nation. Kaleidoscopic and all-encompassing, the narrative is continuously self-reflexive, and draws upon the

powerful Romanian prose works to have been

published since the fall of communism and perhaps the

most valuable fictional recuperation of the memory and

modern history of the Armenians.

novelist's other personas of lyric poet, 'oriental' storyteller, political historian and community leader, absorbing dozens of real-life stories with origins in the recent history of the Armenians Romania "adopted" Selected bibliography: after the great exodus that followed the massacres of 1915, and whom communism once more scattered to the four corners of the world. A combination of memoir and epic, of documentary history and magical-realist storytelling, the narrative structure is both ingenious and paradoxical: almost all the characters are fully identified with their real-life models. One of the most

Contradicțiile tranziției la o economie de piață (Contradictions of Transition to a Market Economy), Editura Expert, Bucharest, 1994

Reforma piețelor financiare din România (Reform of Romania's Financial Markets), Polirom, Jassy, 1999

Şamanul Albastru (The Blue Shaman), poems, Editura Ararat, Bucharest, 1994

Statuia Comandorului (The Statue of the Commander), prose, Editura Ararat, Bucharest, 1994

Ochiul alb al reginei (The Queen's White Eye), poems, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2001

Iisus cu o mie de brațe (Thousand-Armed Jesus), poems, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 2004

Cartea soaptelor (The Book of Whispers), novel, Polirom, Jassy, 2009

Dreapta Românească. Tradiție și Modernitate (The Romanian Right. Tradition and Modernity), politics, Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 2001

I arranged them in order of birth. But it is not thereby that people are told apart: all people are born and each brings a fresh numbering. Then I came to an understanding with grandfather Garabet, and I arranged them in order of death. People are told apart not by how they are born but by how they die. First came Lenin, surrounded by red flags. Lenin was the messenger of old man Hrant from Constantia, who wrote us that he had been released from prison camp, but because he possessed neither papers nor the strength to make the return journey all the way from the Taimyr Peninsula, he had decided to end his days in the Soviet Union. Then Simon Bolivar, who kept vigil over the spent body of grandfather Garabet's sister, buried in Buenos Aires not far from the monument erected to the glory of Ohanes Tsetsian, Kossuth's general, who after the defeat of 1849 went from Transylvania all the way to Argentina, where he founded the Military Academy. In the time following their deaths, it was easy to fix the order of those in my family. But what of the living? With the intransigence and candour of a child, I decided their fate. And so this is their group photograph, after a whole century of wandering, after two world wars and so many exoduses. They pass from the random pages of history into the thick leaves of the stamp album, which are like the sepia plates of a daguerreotype. Marks of my nation, for which the earth has always been round, boundless. Wearing strange faces, to match the strange roads that stretched beneath the soles of their feet, like thick Ispahan carpets. (...) "Smile!" I tell them. They obey the command of that child. They stiffen, solemn and awkward. For, of all the things to which history might accustom them, the hardest of all is for them to learn how to smile.

What do they all have in common, these postage-stamp queens, emperors, and generals, whether on horseback or planting their spurs in freshly conquered, and thus blood-soaked, earth? How is it that can they coalesce to form my family photograph? What is it that connects all the powdered faces and crowned heads, stern and satisfied, on these stamps? What is the mark that the photographer of long ago—the one who took a picture of my family in the village of Zakar in Anatolia, a few days before the massacre and dispersal—perhaps retouched in puzzlement? That mark is the postmark.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

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