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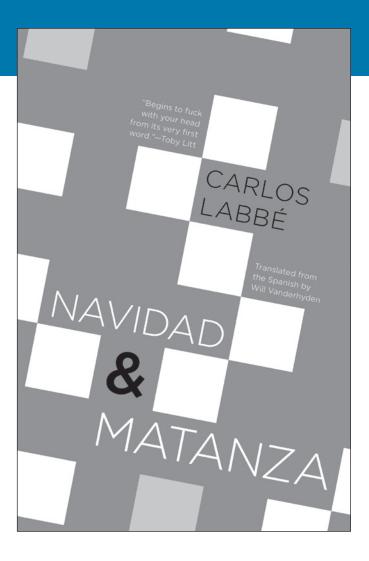
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> > (World English)



NAVIDAD & MATANZA CARLOS LABBÉ

Trans. from the the Spanish by Will Vanderhyden

It's the summer of 1999 when the two children of wealthy video game executive Jose Francisco Vivar, Alicia and Bruno, go missing in the beach town of Matanza. Long after their disappearance, the people of Matanza and the adjacent town of Navidad

consistently report sightings of Bruno—on the beach, in bars, gambling—while reports on Alicia, however, are next to none. And every clue keeps circling back to a man named Boris Real . . .

At least that's how the story—or one of many stories, rather—goes. All of them are told by a journalist narrator, who recounts the mysterious case of the Vivar family from an underground laboratory where he and six other "subjects" have taken up a novel-game, writing and exchanging chapters over email, all while waiting for the fear-inducing drug hadón to take its effect, and their uncertain fates.

A literary descendent of Roberto Bolaño and Andrés Neuman, Carlos Labbé's *Navidad & Matanza* is a work of metafiction that not only challenges our perceptions of facts and observations, and of identity and reality, but also of basic human trust.

"Carlos Labbé's [Navidad & Matanza] begins to fuck with your head from its very first word—moving through journalese, financial reporting, whodunit, Joseph Conrad, Raymond Chandler, Nabokov to David Lynch."

—Toby Litt

Carlos Labbé, one of *Granta's* "Best Young Spanish-Language Novelists," was born in Chile and is the author of six novels and a collection of short stories. In addition to his writings, he is a musician and has released three albums. He is a co-editor at Sangria, a publishing house based in Santiago and Brooklyn. He also writes literary essays, most notably on Juan Carlos Onetti, Diamela Eltit, and Roberto Bolaño—three writers whose influence can be seen in Navidad & Matanza.

Will Vanderhyden is a translator of Spanish and Latin American fiction. He recently graduated from the MALTS (Masters of Arts in Literary Translation) program at the University of Rochester. He has also translated fiction by Edgardo Cozarinsky, Alfredo Bryce Echenique, Juan Marsé, among others.

FROM NAVIDAD & MATANZA CARLOS LABBÉ

To this day, police investigators have continued to add sightings of Bruno Vivar to the case file of the disappeared Navidad siblings. Every summer since the disappearance, a dozen witnesses from different areas of the central coast have reported seeing a young man fitting his description: striped T-shirt in various combinations of primary colors; shorts or bathing trunks; leather sandals; extremely thin, hairless legs; disheveled, raggedly-cut hair, sometimes brown, sometimes dyed red. As if the last image his parents had of him remained burned on the retinas of so many people who never knew him (the press coverage was as intense as it was brief), they always see Bruno Vivar lying on the sand, face down on his towel, staring out to sea, looking disdainfully through some photographs, or swimming in silence. Of course, other accounts add specific and equally disturbing details: drinking in hotel bars, beer from cans or double shots of whiskey which he pays for with a credit card issued in the United States, while with the other hand he caresses a die which he spins like a top on the lacquered surface of the bar; sitting on a terrace at noon, noisily eating French fries; reading, in the dining hall, a letter delivered to the hotel weeks before: rolling the die and then writing another letter never sent by local mail.

This information comes from diverse sources: guards, waiters, clerks, receptionists, and janitors, who, at the time, also hoped to put



together the case's missing pieces, but who only succeeded in helping

the police declare unverifiable the possibilities of homicide or kidnapping. It has been tacitly assumed that Bruno Vivar—a legal adult—simply abandoned his family without warning, which is not a crime in Chile.

The most perplexing question is why the name of Alicia Vivar, the fourteen-year-old girl, appears only twice in the case file. Especially after reviewing in detail the reports of repeated sightings of her brother, Bruno. Because Bruno has never once reappeared alone. The accounts agree that he arrives at hotel parking lots in a variety of expensive cars always driven by a man whose smile also appears in police archives, although in another section: Boris Real.

Boris Real became known in Chile in 1984 as the young Chilean executive who, representing a group of Swiss investors wanting to buy Petrohue Bank, ended up in the Capuchinos jail as a result of an antimonopoly suit filed by the Superintendent of Banks, when it was confirmed that the Swiss were linked to an Australian investment group that had acquired the Atacama Bank and, also to a Spanish-Norwegian group that acquired De Los Lagos Bank and Antonio Varas Bank. He was tried as the representative of the inscrutable international consortium that attempted to acquire fifty-one

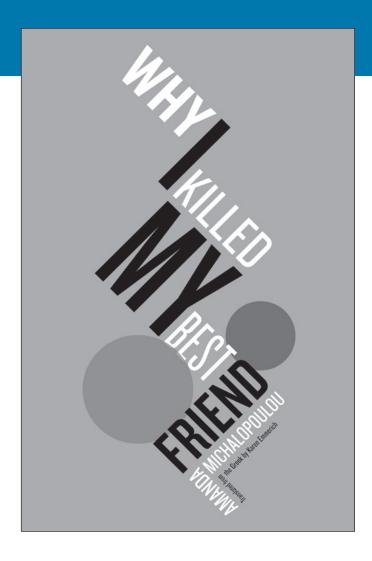
percent of Chilean banks, a move that, it is noted, could have had consequences for our country beyond the strictly financial. The group in question immediately withdrew from the country, leaving no discernible trace. At least until the summer of 1999. Of course. Boris Real was not that man's actual name. It was the alias of Francisco Virditti (41) who admitted to having headed a group of six shareholders motivated by "nothing more than the legitimate game of the market," he stated in the only interview he's ever given.

[. . .]

A check of the witnesses in the Civil Register reveals that the given name of the executive who was present at the moment of death is Boris Real Yañez (48) and there is no request for a change of name associated with his identity. Perhaps it was another Boris Real; perhaps Francisco Virditti was the real pseudonym. Nevertheless, another newspaper photograph, which shows Real speaking about his dear friend, reveals the face of the same businessman who declared himself innocent in front of the Superintendent of Banks in 1984. In a press conference on the 16th of May 1995, congressman Nelson Avila denounced the possibility of a secret murder plot when the autopsy results for undersecretary Martínez Salas suggested traces of poison in his system. Public shock lasted two days. As so often happens, there was talk of political crisis, but no particular individual was implicated. Soon everything

was forgotten. Boris Real was subpoenaed in his Vitacura residence before returning to anonymity. Various accounts report that he made a statement to Irma Sepulveda, the judge in charge of the trial investigating the death of Martinez Salas. Today it's almost impossible to find Boris Real; he has no known residence and his name doesn't appear in any public record. Approached by the press in the days following his children's disappearance, Jose Francisco Vivar stated that he was no longer in contact with his friend

Even more disturbing, one evening in July of 1997, with my own eyes I saw Vivar, Boris Real, and congressman Nelson Avila walking on the beach in Cachagua. They were accompanied by their respective children. Of course I urged my companion to surreptitiously eavesdrop with me. The situation only became relevant for me after I started investigating the incidents in Navidad and Matanza: Boris Real was walking hand in hand with little Alicia Vivar, then a girl of twelve. They were walking a slight distance behind the rest of the group. She asked him to go with her to the rocks to look for seashells. She didn't address him formally or call him uncle, just Boris. Then they talked about the reddish color of the clouds at that time of day and she asked him how long it would be until the end of the world.



MAY 20, 2014

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> > (World English)

WHY I KILLED MY BEST FRIEND AMANDA MICHALOPOULOU

Trans. from the the Greek by Karen Emmerich

In Amanda Michalopoulou's Why I Killed My Best Friend, a young girl named Maria is lifted from her beloved Africa and relocated to her native Greece. She struggles with the transition, hating everything about Athens: the food, the air, the school, her classmates, the

language. Just as she resigns herself to misery, Anna arrives. Though Anna's refined, Parisian upbringing is the exact opposite of Maria's, the two girls instantly bond over their common foreignness, becoming inseperable in their relationship as each other's best friend, but also as each other's fiercest competition—be it in relation to boys, talents, future aspirations, or political beliefs.

From Maria and Anna's grade school days in '70s, post-dictatorship Greece, to their adult lives in the present, Michalopoulou charts the ups, downs, and fallings-out of the powerful self-destructive bond only true best friends can have. Simply and beautifully written, Why I Killed My Best Friend is a novel that ultimately compares and explores friendship as a political system of totalitarianism and democracy.

"Flawlessly translated, Amanda Michalopolou's WIKMBF uses the backdrop of Greek politics, radical protests, and the art world to explore the dangers and joys that come with BFFs. Or, as the narrator puts it, 'odiodsamato,' which translates roughly as 'frienemies.'"

—Gary Shteyngart

"What typifies Michalopoulou's novels is their artful structure, the stories within stories . . . an intense, introspective, sometimes obsessive, female protagonist . . . and an unreliable narrative that is constantly being undercut, reworked, tilted at a different angle."

-Vivienne Nilan

Amanda Michalopoulou is the author of five novels, two short story collections, and a successful series of children's books. One of Greece's leading contemporary writers, Michalopoulou has won the country's highest literary awards, including the Revmata Prize and the Diavazo Award. Her story collection, I'd Like, was longlisted for the Best Translated Book Award.

Karen Emmerich is a translator of Modern Greek poetry and prose. Her recent translations include volumes by Yannis Ritsos, Margarita Karapanou, Ersi Sotiropoulos, and Miltos Sachtouris. She has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Columbia University and is on the faculty of the University of Oregon.

FROM WHY I KILLED MY BEST FRIEND AMANDA MICHALOPOULOU

otini and Martha are always singing a song by the child star Manos: You don't live in my time, Mom, you don't live in my time, Dad . . . I like it a lot but I also know it would annoy Anna. In fact we do all kinds of things that Anna wouldn't like. We watch Little House on the Prairie and wear cherry lip gloss during our beauty contests. There are three titles, one for each of us: Miss Beauty, Miss Inner Beauty, and Miss Youth. Fotini always ends up being Miss Youth because she's the youngest. Martha likes being Miss Beauty, and I'm happy with Miss Inner Beauty, so it works out just fine for us all.

"Girls, the festival is starting!" Kyria Pavlina calls. Martha and I abandon our beauty pageant in the middle and run to the television. Fotini comes, too, since her punishment is over. We're rooting for a girl, Roula, who sings in the commercial for Roli cleaning powder. Please tell me, Dad, is love good or bad? Today he gave me my first kiss, and I cried with bliss . . . Her father gives his approval and Roula gets as excited as Eliza Doolittle: Well, then, I'll say it, I love a boy, I love him and I want him tons!

This summer I'm in love with Angelos. He's very serious and wants to be a nuclear physicist. We only see him in the morning when he wakes up and at night before he goes to bed. The whole rest of the day he's out roaming around with his friends. I've lost all interest in tanks and submarines. No more lies. Mom has gone to help Dad empty out

the house in Ikeja. She left me behind, with Aunt Amalia.

Next fall Gwendolyn will be telling her proverbs to other

I keep whistling the tune to "Please Tell Me, Dad," but Anna covers her ears when she hears it. Of course I don't tell her about the beauty pageants.

"Aegina ruined you," she says, raising an eyebrow, the one with the white streak.

"Why?"

"It made you dumb."

I look down at my shoes. She's right, after all.

"But maybe it's not your fault, it's those girls, what were their names again? Fotini and Martha."

Anna lectures me about how the Socialist Party in Sweden lost power after forty-four years and how the Workers' Party in Great Britain is weaker than ever before, as if I were to blame. She tells me that in Paris she made some important decisions, when she grows up she wants to be like Gisèle Halimi, Sartre, and de Beauvoir's lawyer who risked imprisonment for supporting the Algerian National Liberation Front. I understand barely half of what she says, but I keep nodding my head. She's determined to bring me back to the proper path, and tells me about Patty Hearst, who disowned her rich father and

started robbing banks, and sixteen-year-old Nadia Coma neci, the human rubber band from the Montreal Olympics. We braid our hair to look like Coma neci, put on our gym clothes, roll aside the portable table in the living room and practice our splits. Next is modern dance. Anna always chooses the theme. Our choreographies have names like "Long Live the Revolution" or "The Students" or "A Carnation on the Polytechnic Memorial." The dances are full of pas de chat and when we start to sweat, we lie down on the rug and stare at the ceiling.

"A perfect score!" Anna tells me. "You're not dumb anymore."

I hug her and we roll like barrels into the hall, splitting our sides with laughter.

[. . .]

This fall we have a man for a teacher, Kyrios Stavros. He's short and wears silk vests that barely contain his big belly. The fifth-grade reader is called *The High Mountains* and Kyrios Stavros says we're going to like it a lot because it's full of adventures. My biggest adventure, though, is the week when Anna stays home because she has the mumps. Angeliki keeps saying "teapot" over and over until it sounds like "potty," and Petros picks his nose, chases me down, and wipes his snot on my legs.

"When are you coming back to school?" I ask Anna over the phone.

"Not until my cheeks aren't swollen anymore."

"Anna, you have to come back. It's awful without you!"

I tell her about the things the other kids do to me during recess and Anna plots our revenge: we'll handcuff them to the fence and tickle them, we'll spit in their food.

Since she's been sick in bed, Anna finished the entire fifth-grade reader. She says it's almost as good as *Petros's War* or *Wildcat Under Glass*.

"What are they?"

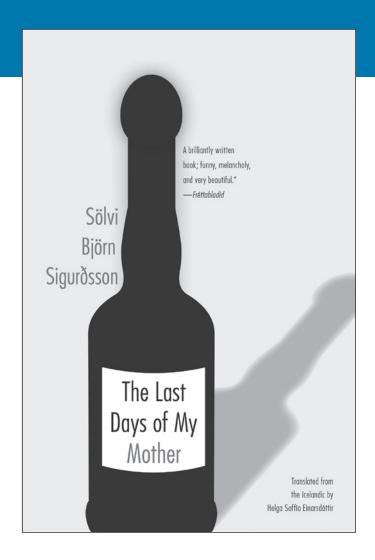
"You mean you've never heard of Alki Zei? Merde!"

I make Mom buy me all of Alki Zei's books and I read them at night in bed. Anna's right. They're wonderful, especially Wildcat Under Glass, with the two sisters who say ve-ha, ve-sa when they want to show whether they're very happy or very sad.

"Ve-ha? Ve-sa?" I ask Anna over the phone, so she'll know I read *Wildcat Under Glass*

"Ve-sa, because I have the mumps."

I puff up my cheeks, trying to imagine what it would be like to have the mumps. Sometimes I'd like to be Anna, for better or for worse.



AUGUST 20, 2014

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> > (World English)



THE LAST DAYS OF MY MOTHER SÖLVI BJÖRN SIGURÐSSON

Trans. from the Icelandic by Helga Soffía Einarsdóttir

Thirty-seven years old, freshly broken up with his girlfriend, unemployed and vaguely depressed, Hermann has problems of his own. Now, his mother, who is rambunctious, rapier-tongued, frequently intoxicated and, until now impervious to change, has can-

cer. The doctor's prognosis sounds pretty final, but after a bit of online research, Hermann decides to accompany his mother to an unconventional treatment center in the Netherlands.

Mother and son set out on their trip to Amsterdam, embarking on a schnapps-and-pint-fuelled picaresque that is by turns wickedly funny, tragic, and profound. Although the mother's final destination is never really in doubt, the trip presents the duo with a chance to reevaluate life—beginning, middle, and end. Although the trip is lively and entertaining, it will also put severe strain on the bond between mother and son, not to mention their mutual capacity for alcohol.

"A pure pleasure. Sölvi has proven without a doubt that he's our most promising writer."

-Viðskiptablaðið (Business Weekly)

"A darkly humorous work, but also very sad—a mortal struggle, where the joy of life grapples with the fear of death, and often there is no way of knowing which of the two is on top. The final chapter is, in one word, thrilling. Sölvi has established himself among the most noteworthy of Icelandic writers. Conclusion: ****. A brilliantly written book; funny, melancholy, and very beautiful."

-Bergsteinn Sigurðsson, Fréttabladid

Sölvi Björn Sigurðsson is the author of three books of poetry, as well as three novels. Most recently, *The Icelandic Water Book* was published in the fall of 2013. A translator of classical poetry, he has also received distinguished nominations for his translation of Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell.* His *Diabolical Comedy*, a modern take on *The Divine Comedy*, has been translated into Finnish, Swedish, and Danish.

Helga Soffía Einarsdóttir grew up in Tanzania, and has since lived in Copenhagen, Barcelona, and Edinburgh. She has an MA in Translation Studies from the University of Iceland and has worked as a freelance translator and proofreader. Her translations (into Icelandic), include works by Zadie Smith, Alexander McCall Smith, and Lemony Snicket.

FROM THE LAST DAYS OF MY MOTHER SÖLVI BJÖRN SIGURÐSSON

∧ y life had not always been like this. lust a few months earlier I had been living with a woman who'd have sex with me with the lights on, found comfort in a double bed and a dishwasher, still confident that the future would roll out at least a slightly discolored red carpet. But Fortune turned her back on me. Love kicked me in the nuts. Over the course of a single disastrous week in January, a seven-year relationship went down the drain. I found myself lying stark naked in a hotel room in Dublin, blinded by toxic levels of alcohol and in total ignorance of who lay next to me. My intoxication was such that I had difficulty telling the gender of the person and didn't realize until I was alone again that whoever it was had been sexually stimulated by beating me with a furry animal. The experience was unpleasant, but necessary for my personal growth. I was slowly coming to the understanding that the various doubts I'd harbored about my relationship had been based on misunderstanding. I had squandered my happiness. The lesson was terrible and all I could do was head back home.

The grey spring of 2008 hung over Iceland like rotten debris from the murky depths of history, threatening financial devastation, sleep deprivation. And then Mother was diagnosed with cancer.

I had accompanied her to the hospital, under a month before we embarked on our journey. She wore a red, fitted wool twopiece, as if she believed that the better she



looked the harder it would be for the doctor to deliver bad news with any

conviction. A woman who looked this dapper at her age could hardly be at death's door.

The doctor, however, was grave. He held a pen up to his chin and gave the desk a small tap before he spoke. The test results were back and as we could see on the x-rays, the grey area on the shinbone was growing. "We're convinced that what we have here is sarcoma of the connective tissue." Mother gave the doctor a cold stare and waited for him to expand on the subject. "Fibrosarcosis is one type of osteocarcinoma, which is in fact rather rare in patients your age. We do see it in other mammals, cats and dogs in particular, but it's extremely rare to diagnose this disease so late in life."

"Really now. And is there a prize?" Mother asked.

"Pardon me?"

"No. Spare me the circus act, Herr Doctor. You tell me I have a disease that is only found in children and pets, as if I'd won the lottery. It's absurd!"

Mother's impatience was palpable. She would grumble about the medical corps being comprised of sadists who flocked to medical school fascinated by stories of Mengele's ghoulish experiments. To her the nurses were variations of Herta Oberhauser, a Nazi nurse who murdered her victims by

injecting them with kerosene. Mother had played Herta in a controversial play in a small theatre in Montparnasse and so knew what she was talking about. I ignored these rants. After all, the sentiment was not a recent development. Mother had suffered from a phobia of hospitals for as long as I could remember, and made several efforts to cultivate in me a similar distrust of the medical profession. It was wiser, she thought, to follow the example of Great Aunt Edda when you were under the weather: Have a wee dram to ease the pain, and then another just for luck. I pointed out that strong spirits were hardly a cure for cancer and that she had to be a bit more understanding of the hospital staff. And I suppose she tried even though she failed fantastically.

"Maybe I should have gone to the vet, Herr Doctor?"

"No, no, not at all, Mrs. Briem," the doctor stammered. "Cell division in people your age is not very rapid, which means that the disease spreads more slowly."

"Right. And so you will, of course, fix this before that happens."

"Well," the doctor began, breaking into a long speech about matters being slightly more complicated. There certainly were cases where doctors had managed to surgically remove sarcoma in connective tissue, but a very large team of specialists was needed for such an operation. Unfortunately Icelandic hospitals had neither the equipment

nor the manpower for such an undertaking. The operation would have to take place in the United States, but since the procedure was still experimental, it would not fall under the Icelandic Health Care System so Mother would have to pay for it herself.

"There is, however, quite a good chance of getting sponsors for semi-profiled operations of this magnitude. Surgeons may waive their fees, research institutes invest in the operations in exchange for exclusive rights to acquired information ..."

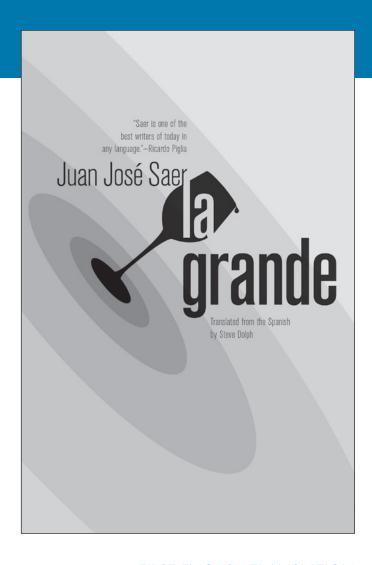
"Ok, all right," I said, my hopes already up. "And how do we do this?"

"I can look into it, make a few inquiries. The fact that this is quite a rare case should work in our favor."

"I don't understand where you're going with this," Mother said. "Do you think I'm some kind of guinea pig? We both know perfectly well that no one is going to pay for this operation. I'm not a celebrity. And what company will put up a fortune for an old hag from Iceland?"

I'd never heard Mother refer to herself as old, and certainly never as a hag, but this seemed to achieve the desired effect: the doctor was suddenly at a loss for words. He stared blankly at her and fiddled with his pen.

"See, I thought that a doctor's job was to help patients," Mother continued, "not to breed false hopes of some American Utopia."



JUNE 17, 2014

\$16.95 (pb) | Novel 443 pgs. | 5.5" x 8.5" 978-1-934824-21-4

\$9.99 (ebook) | 978-1-934824-96-2

(World English)

Also Available

Scars. 14.95 (pb), novel, 978-1934824-22-1 \$9.99 (ebook), 978-1-934824-98-6

The Sixty-Five Years of Washington. 14.95 (pb), novel 978-1934824-20-7 \$9.99 (ebook), 978-1-934824-99-3



LA GRANDE JUAN JOSÉ SAER

Trans. from the Spanish by Steve Dolph

Saer's final novel, *La Grande*, is the grand culmination of his life's work, bringing together themes and characters explored throughout his career, yet presenting them in a way that is beautifully unique, and a wonderful entry-point to his literary world.

Moving between past and present, *La Grande* centers around two related stories: that of Gutiérrez, his sudden departure from Argentina 30 years before, and his equally mysterious return; and that of "precisionism," a literary movement founded by a rather dangerous fraud. Dozens of characters populate these storylines, including Nula, the wine salesman, ladies' man, and part-time philosopher; Lucía, the woman he's lusted after for years; and Tomatis, a journalist whom Saer fans have encountered many times before.

Written in Saer's trademark style, this lyrically gargeous book—which touches on politics, artistic beliefs, illicit love affairs, and everything else that makes up life—ends with one of the greatest lines in all of literature: "With the rain came the fall, and with the fall, the time of the wine."

"Saer is one of the best writers of today in any language."

-Ricardo Piglia

"A cerebral explorer of the problems of narrative in the wake of Joyce and Woolf, of Borges, of Rulfo and Arlt, Saer is also a stunning poet of place."

—The Nation

Juan José Saer (1937–2005), born in Santa Fé, Argentina, was the leading Argentinian writer of the post-Borges generation. In 1968, he moved to Paris and taught literature at the University of Rennes. The author of numerous novels and short-story collections (including *The Sixty-Five Years of Washington, Scars, The One Before, The Clouds,* all being published by Open Letter), Saer was awarded Spain's prestigious Nadal Prize in 1987 for *The Event.*

Steve Dolph is the founding editor of *Calque*, a journal of literature in translation. His translation of Saer's *Scars* was a finalist for the 2012 Best Translated Book Award. He lives in Philadelphia where he spends his summers rooting for the Phillies.

FROM **LA GRANDE**JUAN JOSÉ SAER

Tuesday Water Sounds

Utiérrez, walking ahead, has on a violently yellow waterproof jacket, and Nula, who hesitates at each step, unsure where to place his foot, a red camper made from a silky material with a slick and shiny texture, that in his family dialect (it was a gift from his mother), they jokingly call parachute cloth. The two bright spots moving through the gray-green space resemble satin paper cutouts collaged on a monochromatic wash, the air the most diluted, and the clouds, the earth, and the trees the most concentrated grays.

Nula, because he'd come on business—to deliver three cases of wine, a viognier, two cabernet sauvignon, and four local chorizos ordered the week before—and planned to visit a few other clients that afternoon, had dressed somewhat carefully, and besides the red camper has on a new shirt, a white, lightweight, short-sleeve sweater, freshly ironed pants, and shiny loafers that explain his cautious advance in contrast to the other's inattentive, sure step and constant chatter as he carelessly and noisily sets his muddy rubber boots on the saturated patches of grass bordering the narrow, sandy path or in the sporadic puddles that interrupt it.

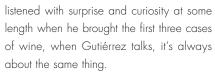
The gray background lends the red and the yellow an almost extravagant, overwrought brilliance that intensifies their presence to the eye in the empty field while paradoxically, somehow, causing

them to lose, to the mind, a good portion of their reality. In the desolate poverty of the landscape, the striking garments, possibly because of their price (the yellow one, although it's European and more expensive, nevertheless looks more worn-out) produce an obvious contrast, or constitute, rather, an anachronism. The excessive presence of singular objects, though they break up the monotonous succession of things, end up, as with their overabundance, impoverishing them

Juan José Saer

grande

Calmly, concentrating on each word, Gutiérrez holds forth with disinterested disdain, half-turning his head over his left shoulder every so often, apparently to remind his company that he's the one being spoken to, although because of the distance that separates them, the open air, the movements that disperse the sounds he utters and, especially, the forceful sound of the boots against the puddles and submerged weeds, in addition to the concentration demanded by the protection of his loafers and pants, Nula can only fish out loose words and scraps of phrases, but in any case getting the general point, even though it's only the third time he's met Gutiérrez and even though their first meeting only lasted two or three minutes. From what he gathered at a previous meeting, as he

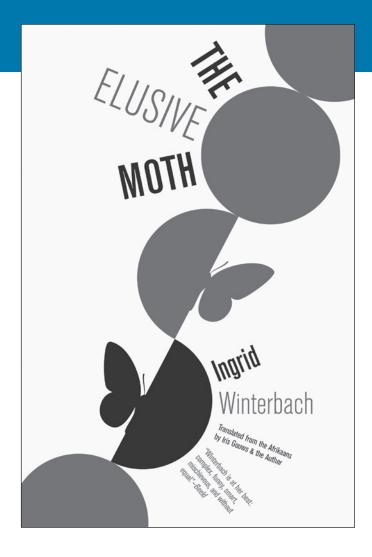


If Nula imagined himself summarizing those monologues in a few words to a third person, they would be more or less the following: They—people from the rich countries he lived in for more than thirty years—have completely lost touch with reality and now slither around in a miserable sensualism and, as a moral consequence, content themselves with the sporadic exercise of beneficence and the contrite formulation of instructive aphorisms. He refers to the rich as the fifth column and the foreign party, and the rest, the masses, he argues, would be willing to trade in their twelve-year-old daughter to a Turkish brothel for a new car. Any government lie suits them fine as long as they don't have to give up their credit cards or do without superfluous possessions. The rich purchase their solutions to everything, as do the poor, but with debt. They are obsessed with convincing themselves that their way of life is the only rational one and, consequently, they are continuously indignant at the individual or collective crimes they commit or tolerate, looking to justify with pedantic shyster sophisms the acts of cowardice that obligate them to shamelessly defend the prison of excessive comfort they've built for themselves, and so on, and so on.

[. . .]

fact twenty-nine and Gutiérrez exactly twice that, which is to say that one is just entering maturity while the other, meanwhile, will soon leave it behind entirely, along with everything else. And although they speak as equals, and even with some ease, they refrain from the familiar tú form, the older man possibly because he left the country before its general use came into fashion in the seventies, and Nula because, as a commercial tactic, he prefers not to use the tú form with clients he didn't know personally before trying to sell them wine. Their use of usted and the difference in their ages doesn't diminish their mutual curiosity, and even though it's only the third time they've met, and though they've yet to reach a real intimacy, their conversation takes place in a decidedly extra-commercial sphere. The curiosity that attracts them isn't spontaneous or inexplicable: to Gutiérrez, although he's as vet unaware of the exact reasons for Nula's interest, the vintner's responses the day they first met seemed unusual for a simple trader, and his parodic attitude when they met again, as he mimed the typical gestures and discourse of a merchant, interspersed with discreet allusions to Aristotle's Problem XXX.1 on poetry, wine, and melancholy, enabled him to glimpse the possibility of a truly neutral conversation, which would be confirmed immediately following the commercial transactions of that second visit.

With regard to their ages, Nula is in



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THE ELUSIVE MOTH INGRID WINTERBACH

Trans. from the Afrikaans by Iris Gouws and the Author

n hopes of winning her father's approval, Karolina Ferreira, an entomologist, goes to a small Free State town to research the survival strategies of a rare moth species. Tormented by memories of her family and plagued by erotic dreams, Karolina spends her

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Ingrid Winterbach is an artist and novelist whose work has won South Africa's M-Net Prize, Old Mutual Literary Prize, the University of Johannesburg Prize for Creative Writing, and the W.A. Hofmeyr Prize. To Hell with Cronjé won the 2004 Hertzog Prize, an honor she shares with the novelists Breyten Breytenbach and Etienne Leroux.

Iris Marguerite Gouws, née Terblanche (1942–1998), was educated in the Free State and North West Province, and studied toward a BA in Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. She was an accomplished painter with a lifelong passionate interest in both art history and literature.

FROM THE ELUSIVE MOTH INGRID WINTERBACH

from a in his marked ur of the

In the afternoon Karolina and Basil drove to a neighbouring town, somewhat larger than Voorspoed, to pick up a parcel for Mr. Quiroga, whose car had broken down. This may be pure coincidence, or it may be preordained, Karolina thought—she had stopped to give a lift to this stranger, and now she was travelling with him along a road she might never have taken if she had been on her own. How extraordinary.

Along the way they came upon the scene of an accident. They saw a stationary car and a pick-up truck on the same side of the road, a few hundred metres apart. Basil indicated that she should pull over. He jumped out and Karolina followed close behind. (If she had been on her own she would have driven by, she would have gone for help.)

The driver of the car lay sprawled to one side, flung clear of his vehicle and halfway down the embankment. The driver of the pick-up truck was slumped forward in his seat. Blood had oozed from his ears and his nose and had dried in thin streaks across his face. His head resembled an urn that had been shattered and patched together again, leaving fine, visible cracks. His eyes were swollen shut, as if he had been crying over something for a long time. He sat motionless, solitary, attentive.

Karolina took in all of this in an instant, in the few moments it took to get to the pick-up truck and to run back to the man on the ground. He was lying on his stomach. The earth beneath him was soaked. Basil turned him over carefully. He wore short trousers; a jet of blood spurted freely, like

a fountain, from a deep gash in his leg. Basil remarked on the colour of the

blood. Bright red, because it was pumping away so fast, he said. The man appeared to be unconscious, but his eyes were half open; he was whimpering. Basil took off his shirt, tore it into strips, tied them tightly round the wound. He took two small phials from a small leather pouch he was carrying. He got Karolina to hold the man's head, tilting the neck back slightly. Carefully he shook a few tiny tablets into the mouth, under the tongue.

"This will stop the heavy bleeding and prevent shock," said Basil.

He examined the man briefly. (A young man.) Found no serious injury. Feel here, he said to Karolina, one hand is burning hot, the other icy cold. The man's body was quite rigid, his arms and legs jerked at regular intervals. They should move him to the car very carefully, said Basil, showing her where to take hold of him. It was very hot, they sweated profusely, sweat ran into Karolina's eyes. They carried the injured man up the steep embankment, moving forward one step at a time; getting him onto the back seat required considerable effort.

Karolina took a last look at the attentive corpse in the pick-up truck. She drove fast; Basil kept a constant watch on the injured man, placing more of the tiny pills under his tongue at regular intervals.

"The guy in the pick-up truck died some time ago," he said, "long before this man was injured."

"What does that mean?" asked Karolina.

"It means it was a very unusual accident," said Basil.

On reaching the town, they dropped the injured man off at the hospital first and reported the accident to the police afterwards.

Only then did they get round to picking up Mr. Quiroga's parcel at a sturdy stone house in Rooibult Street, next door to the Majuba Trading Store. It was almost five o'clock, the streets were crowded, the heat was stifling. Surely that mountain can't be too far from here, said Basil as he got out of the car – Majuba, where the Boers and the English fought their battle. Karolina waited for him in the car, scanned the horizon unenthusiastically, saw no mountain. Right now she couldn't care less what the Boers and the English had been up to in these parts. Her mouth was dry. People hung about noisily outside the Majuba Trading Store, waiting for taxis and lifts.

When Basil returned with the parcel, he suggested that they should find a place to have tea. Karolina accepted gratefully.

She bent her head over her tea.

Basil sat quietly facing her.

"I've been content up to now," she said at last. "I was perfectly content until recently. I could keep everything at a distance. But now, all of a sudden I can no longer do so. I feel caught up in everything. And detached from everything too. So detached, and so caught up. A strange feeling." She spoke more urgently. "I don't know what I've done with my life! I don't know if I can still love someone!" (She started, why speak of love all of a sudden?) "I can't open my hand," she said, opening her hand, her palm facing

upward, "I can't let go."

She broke off suddenly, resting her elbow on the table, covering her mouth with her hand.

"I think of death all the time," she said.
"Whenever I'm not thinking of the moths."

Two men entered the café as she spoke, but Karolina was too upset to notice them immediately.

"Do you dream of great masses of water?" asked Basil.

"Yes." said Karolina.

"Do you dream of insects?"

"Yes," she said.

"Do you cross unfamiliar landscapes in your dreams?"

"Yes." she said.

"What else?" asked Basil.

"Everyone I've ever known seems to be turning up in my dreams lately," said Karolina. "No matter if they're dead or alive."

Basil took a small phial from the leather pouch.

"Take this," he said. "Put it on your tongue."
Karolina stretched her neck forward,
tilted her head back (as she had done with
the injured man that morning) and received
the tiny, sweetish pills on her tongue like a
sacramental wafer.

From the corner of her eye she saw that both men were looking directly at them now.

"Good heavens, Basil!" she whispered when the men resumed their conversation. "It's the lover! It's the man we saw at the cemetery the other day!"

The next time they saw him would be on stage, at the performance of The Jealous Husband the following Saturday night.

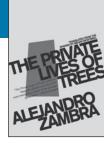
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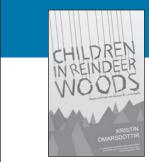
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Full credit allowed if customer supplies copy of original invoice or correct invoice number; otherwise maximum discount applies.

Shortages/Damaged/Defective:

Such claims must be made within 30 days of invoice date.

RETAIL DISCOUNT SCHEDULE

Paperback/Cloth: 1–4 books 25%; 5 or more books 45%.

All customer service matters should be addressed with the distributor.



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