

They can't touch you now

Anne-Marie Reuter

In the sticky, steaming, fuming, red room we are invincible. Nothing less than invincible. We've been around for centuries. Don't expect us to leave any time soon. We swirl, jump, stomp the grounds. These grounds that are ours. Steeped in cows' blood, pigs' intestines and thick, dark oil. The kind they used for the racks that pulled the animals into the slaughterhouse. We wind our bodies around pillars that prevent the roof from collapsing, around metal hooks on heavy iron chains that could easily propel us into the animals' nirvana if we let our stomachs and throats be slit open. But that's not our vocation. We're not martyrs, not like those previous generations they keep telling us about. Those workers who risked their lives underground, who laid the foundation of our country's wealth, of our wealth, without ever being thanked for it enough. We're the new generation of ghosts. We're in love with life and our youth. We're here to give the past a push, celebrate it with our bodies, make it our own, possibly without the red-earth kitsch. We are the new ghosts of Minett.

In Schluechthaus, we dance to the strains of the previous ages. Bruce and Patti are with us, they've seen all of this. Tom and Marianne squat in a corner, deep in conversation despite the noise. Later we'll meet them for a whiskey at the Portuguese café near the theater that's open until five. We'll nod our casual, understated hello to the usual suspects, Bob and Leonard, Allen and Jack. But that's for later when the night swallows its dregs. Meanwhile we dance to throbbing music, to the ashy dust puffs the improvised smoke machine exhales under the improvised wooden-stacks stage. Everything is improvised here, a dreamworld, only it's not a dream. This is real life, it's the late eighties, it's Esch/Alzette, it's the slaughterhouse, where the slaughtering has stopped – that of the animals, we joke. I'm seventeen – have been for centuries, forever young. I'll turn eighteen only when we step onto Mars, take our music to new planets, when the miners will be given their rightful glory, when the bankers will go down to their knees, gasping their respect and gratitude as their own world will be about to vanish. Soon their sons and daughters will put them on trial, treat them with the harshness they deserve. How could they spend all their time thinking about growth? More, more, more. Why was it never enough? And the bankers' children will praise their great-grandparents, less guilty because at least they were still hopeful, because theirs was a beginning, that of the red earth, kitsch or not.

But we'll have to wait. All this is yet to come. Right now, we're stomping around the pillars in the slaughterhouse. We listen to Guesch Patti and watch Etienne unravel on stage. A stylish snake, rotating skinny hips, lascivious E-tienne, E-tienne, propelling his pelvis, gasping, licking, sucking like one of our vampire friends, casting wild, bold, penetrating looks from between the meat hooks that dangle off the ceiling. „He's going to take his clothes off any minute“, Patti shouts into my ear. She takes another drag on the joint and hands it over. „I know“, I say. Later, over the whiskeys, we'll talk about the animals, the miners, the red earth and us, the ghosts of the new generation. Those who worked in the slaughterhouse never danced there. Those who glorify miners were not miners themselves. We'll have to live with that. And we dance some more at the Portuguese café with Patti and Bruce. We scream, we jump, we spin. We're free for the next two hundred years. The world belongs to us.



Illustration: Dan Altmann

About the author

Anne-Marie Reuter spent the first four years of her life in Nordstrooss, Esch/Alzette, and enjoyed playing in Park Laval until the family moved to Bergem, a move that would henceforth disqualify her as a true Minetter. After her school days at Lycée Hubert Clément, she studied English literature in London and Warwick. On her return she became a teacher trainee in Esch and Pétange. Today Anne-Marie continues to teach, but she also runs Black Fountain Press, Luxembourg's English-language publishing house. Her collection of stories „On the Edge“ was published in 2017, her story „Blue“ in 2021 by Redfoxpress, Ireland. She has translated, from French into English, poetry by Lambert Schlechter, „one day I will write a poem“ (2018), and, from English into Luxembourgish, the play „Disco Dementia“ by Larisa Faber (2018).

Because the Night

Come on now, try and understand
The way I feel under your command
Take my hand as the sun descends
They can't touch you now
Can't touch you now, can't touch you now

Because the night belongs to lovers
Because the night belongs to lust
Because the night belongs to lovers
Because the night belongs to us

(Patti Smith & Bruce Springsteen, Because the Night, 1978)

Die Serie This Hard Minett Land

Von März bis Oktober 2022 laden das Tageblatt, das Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH) und capybarabooks die LeserInnen jeden Freitag zu einer besonderen Entdeckungsreise durch Luxemburgs Süden ein. Rund vierzig SchriftstellerInnen und HistorikerInnen lassen sich von Bruce Springsteens Songs inspirieren und schreiben Texte über das luxemburgisch-lothringische Eisenerzbecken, „de Minett“, sowie über diejenigen, die dort geboren oder dorthin eingewandert sind, dort gelebt, gearbeitet, geliebt, geträumt, gehofft, gekämpft, Erfolg gehabt oder versagt haben. Begleitet werden die Texte in deutscher, englischer, französischer und luxemburgischer Sprache von Illustrationen des Luxemburger Künstlers Dan Altmann. Im Herbst erscheinen sämtliche Texte und Zeichnungen dann versammelt in Buchform bei capybarabooks. Bis dahin heißt es: „Son, take a good look around/this is your ... Minett Land!“

Tageblatt
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