

ARNOŠT **THE ART OF**
LUSTIG
1926 - 2011, PRAGUE

THE ART OF PROSE:
THE ARNOŠT LUSTIG COLLECTION

“The good in man expresses itself in action.”

Arnošt Lustig, “Diamonds of the Night”, 1958

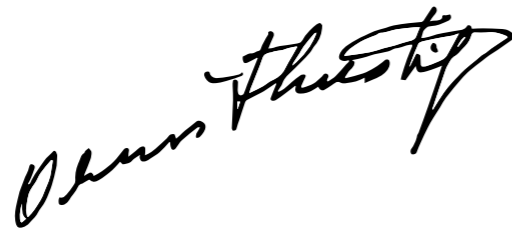
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arnošt Lustig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and is positioned diagonally on the page.

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ARNOŠT LUSTIG IN BRIEF

Acclaimed author of award-winning novels and short stories published in over 25 languages. His screenplays – based on his prose – were integral to the Czech New Film Wave. During his twenty-one year exile following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968, all of his publications and films were banned in Czechoslovakia. Most of his prose lends itself well to film adaptation.

He also wrote the dialogue for “Shop on Main Street”, the first Czechoslovak film ever to have received an Oscar for the Best Foreign Film (1966).

Shortlisted for the NOBEL PRIZE for Literature (2008, 2006, 2005)

Professor Emeritus of Literature, Creative Writing and Film

Holocaust witness, survivor of Nazi concentration camps in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz – Birkenau and Buchenwald – Meuselwitz

Fugitive from a death transport to Dachau; Resistance fighter in the Prague Uprising (In May 1945)

AWARDS

Knight of the Order of Mark Twain (Collection of short stories “Night and Hope”), 2011

Knight of the Royal Order of Moravian Knights of Saint Rastislav Kolumban for his humanitarian literary work, 2010

Honorary Commander of Culture of the City of Brno, 2010

Vladislav Vančura Prize, Czech Republic, 2009

Gentleman Pro – 100 PER ASPERA AD ASTRA, Comenius – Pan-European Society for Culture, Education and Scientific-Technical Collaboration (Comenius Pan-Evropská společnost pro kulturu, vzdělávání a vědecko-technickou spolupráci), Czech Republic, 2009

Franz Kafka Prize, 2008

Honorary Citizen of Prague 2, 2006

Czech Ministry of Culture Medal



Photography © Jaroslav Brabec

ARTIS BOHEMIAE AMICIS for long-term and committed dissemination of the good name of Czech culture at home and abroad, 2006

Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2004

Czech Republic Meritorious Medal of the First Order for Outstanding Artistic Achievement, granted by President Václav Havel, 2000

Pen Club Prize for Literary Achievement (top literary award in the Czech Republic), 1998

Karel Čapek Award for Lifetime Achievement, Czech Republic, 1996

1995 (April)
Recognized as a Gift Ceremony Honoree at The American University through Jared B. Hughes' gift contribution in his honour as documented in The American University Memorandum

Publishers Weekly Award for the Best Literary Work, shared with Norman Mailer and John Updike, 1991

Emmy Award for PBS News and Documentary Outstanding Individual Achievement, 1986 (co-author of screenplay, "Precious Legacy")

Winner of the Publishers Weekly Award for best books published (1981) for The Street of Lost Brothers, shared with books by Vladimir Nabokov, E. L. Doctorow and John Updike

National Jewish Book Award for Fiction, 1980 ("Dita Saxová") and 1986 ("The Unloved: From the Diary of Seventeen Year Old Perla Sch.")

Man of Achievement, 1977

Listed in B'Nai B'Rith Exclusive Lecture Programs of Great Teachers, 1975-76

B'nai B'rith Award ("A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová"), 1974

First Prize Prague Spring Music Festival for "Night and Hope" Symphonic Poem, Czechoslovakia, 1968

Klement Gottwald State Prize ("A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová"), 1967

First Prize by Radio Prague for radioplay "A Man In the Size of a Postage Stamp", Czechoslovakia, 1967

Dr. Vít Nejedlý Award for Literary Works on Antifascist Themes, 1966

First Prize by Radio Prague for radioplay "Prague Crossroads", Czechoslovakia, 1966

Best Book of the Year Award, Mladá fronta (Collection of short stories "Diamonds of the Night"), 1962

Best Books Published in English Honour, London Observer (Collections of short stories "Night and Hope" and "Diamonds of the Night"), 1962, together with Joseph Heller's "Catch 22"

NOMINATIONS

Shortlisted for Nobel Prize for Literature (2008, 2006, 2003)

Pulitzer Prize (for the novel "Lovely Green Eyes", 2003)

Man Booker International Prize for lifetime contribution to literature in the English language (2009)

Emmy Award (for televised interview on Channel 9, WUSA, Capital Edition, 1988-1989)

US National Book Award (for the novel "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", 1973)

THE CRITICS SAY...

"Lustig is the finest Czech living author and his work cries out for the Nobel Prize."
Literary Review, London

"An eminent Czech writer, who had an interesting, important and in its own way, a very difficult fate... Lustig belongs to the essence of Czech literature and the good embodied in it."
Václav Havel, ex-President, Czech Republic

"Lustig writes starkly and powerfully."
Publishers Weekly

"Lustig's view is oddly invigorating and his work invites a maximal audience: it will quarrel, it will recognize, it will marvel, and yes, of course, sometimes it will have to look away. Why, after all, do we read?"
The New York Times

"Wholly un sentimental and clean of self-pity, Mr Lustig returns in his novels and stories to the harrowing landscape of his youth, discovering within its brutal boundaries, the grim but still achingly recognizable panoply of a last, vast, various neighbourhood of man. In this murderous realm, he has carved out his turf."
The New York Times Book Review

"No writer in Europe, in the East or in the West, has expressed as much truth about the time of the holocaust as Arnošt Lustig."
Maariv (Tel Aviv)

"Arnošt Lustig has succeeded in putting truth into a poem. Nothing in art could mean more than that. His style is sober and modern, his sentence carries all attributes of that which connects prose with poetry and makes it obvious how slight and unperceivable are the borderlines between genres."
Ludvík Aškenazy, Literární Noviny (Prague)

"Diamonds of the Night"
"This book matters."
The New York Times Book Review

"A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová"
"A heartstopping parable."
The New York Times Book Review
"Devastating and ironic."
Publishers Weekly

"Lovely Green Eyes"
"This is a major work of fiction."
Mail on Sunday
"A remarkable achievement."
Independent

"Waiting for Leah"
"The power of his words lies in their very lack of melodrama ... beautiful prose."
Time Out

"Darkness Casts No Shadow"
"Tremendously moving ... One of the most impressive Holocaust novels ever written."
Doris Grumbach,
The Washingtonian

About Arnošt Lustig by Madeleine Albright
Let Us Never Forget Series Inaugural
"The Night and Hope of Arnošt Lustig"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbyzdZptaM4>

“The Greatest Art Is the Art of Living”

*“Art is something only in the service of life.
Art helps in the art of living; otherwise, it has no purpose.
And sometimes — a true story which is unbelievable — is actually art,
art created in life.”*

Arnošt Lustig





One of Arnošt Lustig's manual typewriters, similar to those he wrote on right from the start
Photography Eva Lustigová

Selected Bibliography*

* Contains only a list of selected publishers and years of publication. A complete Bibliography of Arnošt Lustig's publications worldwide is under preparation.



Arnošt Lustig, February 1959

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Night and Hope Noc a naděje

- Short stories
- 1958 – published in Czech eleven times until 2006

Theme

War-time (World War II): Bewildered adolescents in Theresienstadt caught in a clash of hope and death amid rumours of transport to Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

“Full of bravery and dignity and love.” The Washingtonian

Table of Contents

The Return (Návrat)
 Rose Street (Růžová ulice)
 The Children (Děti)
 Moral Education (Morální výchova)
 Stephan and Anne (Štěpán a Anna)
 Blue Flames (Modravé plameny)
 Hope (Naděje)

Translations

The collection: English; German; Spanish
 Selected stories: Polish; Dutch
 Stephan and Anne: French; Hungarian; Korean, Swedish

Publisher

Naše Vojsko

Awards

London Observer Best Books Published in English Honour for Lustig’s “Night and Hope” and “Diamonds of the Night” received jointly with Joseph Heller “Catch 22”, 1962

First Prize for film “Transport from Paradise”, based on short stories in “Night and Hope”, Locarno Film Festival, 1963

On the Prague Lovers’ Reading List (<https://praguetravelconcierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>)

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Diamonds of the Night Démanty noci



- Short stories
- 1958 – published in Czech ten times until 2011

ALSO PUBLISHED AS E-BOOK IN 2018:
<https://www.eknihovna.cz/demanty-noci/>

Theme

War-time: Stories of Jewish adolescents on the verge of destruction: Hope and life can survive against the most overwhelming odds

Table of Contents

The Lemon (Sousto)
 The Second Round (Druhé Kolo)
 The White Rabbit (Bílý)
 The Old Ones and Death (Starci a smrt)
 Beginning and End (Začátek a konec)
 Michael and the Other Boy with the Dagger (Michael a druhý s dýkou)
 Darkness Casts No Shadow (Tma nemá stín)
 Boy by the Window (Chlapec u okna)
 Black Lion (Černý lev)
 The Last Day of the Fire (Poslední den ohňů)
 Early in the Morning (Chvilé hned po ránu)

Translations

The collection: English; German; Slovak; Hebrew; Spanish; Finnish

Selected stories: Polish

Publisher

Nakladatelství Mladá fronta

Awards

London Observer Best Books Published in English Honour, for Lustig’s “Night and Hope” and “Diamonds of the Night”, received jointly with Joseph Heller for “Catch 22”, 1962

Best Book of the Year Award, Mladá fronta Publishers, Czechoslovakia, 1962

Best story of the Year Award for the short story “The Lemon”, Meajin Magazine, Melbourne, Australia, 1962

Best short story for “The Lemon”, University of Melbourne, Australia, 1962

First Prize for short film “A Bite to Eat” based on short story “The Second Round”, Amsterdam Film School Festival, 1962

First Prizes for film “Diamonds of the Night” – based on short story “Darkness Casts No Shadow”, at Film Festivals in Pesaro and Mannheim, 1964

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Street of Lost Brothers Ulice ztracených bratří

- Short stories
- 1959 – published in Czech nine times until 2009

Theme

Post-war: Three stories take place in Prague; one in Rome; one in newly established Israel, where a young Communist journalist and his bride face life’s choices during the Arab-Israeli conflict (1948) – based on the author’s autobiography.

Table of Contents

The Devilish Scooter Ride (Ďábelská jízda na koloběžce)
 At Half Past Four in the Morning (V půl páté ráno)
 My Acquaintance Vili Feld (Můj známý Vili Feld)
 The Girl by the Oleander Tree (Dívka u oleandrového keře)
 Radiance of the Midnight Sun, also published as Morning till Evening (Záře půlnočního slunce – Od rána do večera)

Publisher

Naše Vojsko Translations Selected stories: English
The Girl by the Oleander Tree: Russian

ALSO PUBLISHED AS E-BOOK IN 2018:
<https://www.eknihovna.cz/povidky-6/>

Awards

Named by Publishers Weekly among Best Books published with books by Vladimir Nabokov, E. L. Doctorow and John Updike, 1981

Publishers Weekly Award for Best Literary Work shared with Norman Mailer and John Updike, 1991

On the Prague Lovers' Reading List (<https://praguetravelconcierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>)

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

My Acquaintance Vili Feld Můj známý Vili Feld

- Novel
- 1961 – published in Czech eight times until 2008

Theme

Post-war: In 1950, two young men from Prague meet in Rome, filled with tortuous past of the Shoah, settling accounts and their conscience. Vili Feld reappears in Lustig's prose as an archetypal figure.

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Dita Saxová

ebook

- Novel
- 1962 – published in Czech thirteen times until 2015

Theme

Post-war: "Life is not what we want but what we have." The heroine, eighteen year-old, beautiful Dita, now alone in the world, is faced with contending with war trauma. She learns about life, love and surviving when the war is over.

Publisher

Československý spisovatel

Translations

English; Norwegian

Awards

National Jewish Book Award for Fiction, USA, 1980

On the Prague Lovers' Reading List (<https://praguetravelconcierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>)

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/czech-republic/articles/an-introduction-to-czech-literature-in-10-books/>

ALSO PUBLISHED AS E-BOOK IN 2018:
<https://www.eknihovna.cz/dita-saxova/>

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

You Shall Humiliate No One Nikoho Neponížíš

- Short stories
- 1963 – published in Czech six times until 2009

Theme

War-time: Psychological thrillers of unlikely heroes during final days of war in Prague. Last story about Czechs hiding in a cellar, fearing for their life, possibly having been taken for Jews by the Nazis.

Table of Contents

The Girl with a Scar (Dívka s jizvou)
First Before the Gates (První před branami)
Blue Day (Modrý den)
Clock Like a Windmill (Hodiny jako větrný mlýn)

Translations

English; Polish

Publisher

Naše Vojsko

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou

ebook

ALSO PUBLISHED AS E-BOOK IN 2018:
<https://www.eknihovna.cz/modlitba-pro-katerinu-horovitzovou/>

- Novel
- 1964 – published in Czech thirteen times until 2015

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/czech-republic/articles/an-introduction-to-czech-literature-in-10-books/>

Theme

War-time: "Perhaps the best Czech novel about the suffering of the innocent." Josef Škvorecký

A stunning young dancer sees through deceit of the Nazi machinery in the concentration camp, taking her dignity and destiny into her own hands.

Translations

English; German; Dutch; Spanish; French; Hebrew; Japanese; Slovene; Slovak; Croatian; Bulgarian; Serbian; Norwegian; Estonian; Finnish; Romanian; etc.

Publisher

Československý spisovatel; numerous reprints, including trilingual version Czech, English and Hebrew, Nakladatelství Franze Kafky; Euromedia Group k.s. for Edice Světová literatura Lidových novin (Edition of World Literature by Lidové newspaper); Mladá fronta

The Edition of World Literature by the Euromedia Group k.s. included novels by thirty-five other world renowned authors: Gabriel García Márquez, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Bohumil Hrabal, Erich Maria Remarque, John Irving, Josef Škvorecký, Ian McEwan, Truman Capote, Michail Bulgakov, Franz Kafka, E.L.Doctorow, Robert Merle, Mario Puzo, Boris Pasternak, Thomas Mann, James Clavell, Kóbó Abe, Frederick Forsyth, Horace McCoy, Fjodor Michaljovič Dostojevskij, Ladislav Fuks, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, William Eastlake, George Orwell, William Faulkner, Anthony Burgess, Toni Morrison, Boris Vian, Graham Greene, Karel Čapek, Virginia Woolf, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Saul Bellow, Alberto Moravia.

Awards

Klement Gottwald State Prize, Czechoslovakia, 1967

Nomination for the National Book Award for "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", USA, 1974

First Prize for television film "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová" at Monte Carlo Film Festival and eight other international film festivals, including the Cannes Film Festival, 1966

On the "Culture Trip" List "Introduction to Czech Literature in 10 Books" (<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/czech-republic/articles/an-introduction-to-czech-literature-in-10-books/>)

On the Prague Lovers' Reading List (<https://praguetravelconciierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>)

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Ripples on the River Vlny v řece

- Novels and short stories
- 1964

Theme

During and after the war: Compelling combination of a novel and several short stories that exemplify the range and depth of human determination to fight evil and through actions of the underdog, show the most precious side of humanity. See above (1963).

Table of Contents

A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová (Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou)

You Shall Humiliate No one (Nikoho neponížíš)
A Girl by the Oleander Tree (Dívka u oleandrového keře)
Dita Saxová
The Big White Journey (Velká bílá cesta)
Radiance of the Midnight Sun (Záře půlnočního slunce)

Translations

English; German; Spanish; French; Hebrew; Japanese; Slovene; Slovak; Serbian; Norwegian; Estonian; Finnish; Roumanian; etc.

Publisher

Československý spisovatel

Awards

Klement Gottwald State Prize for "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", Czechoslovakia, 1967

Nomination for the National Book Award for "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", USA, 1974

First Prize for television film "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová" at Monte Carlo Film Festival and eight other international film festivals, including the Cannes Film Festival, 1966

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

The White Birches of Autumn Bílé břízy na podzim

- 1966 – published in Czech

Theme

Post-war: See below (2008)

Translations

Mandarin

Publisher

Československý spisovatel

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Bitter Smell of Almonds Hořká vůně mandlí

- Novel
- 1968

Theme

War-time: Largely autobiographical account of the author's carefree childhood in Prague, the war and its tragic consequences for his family. All that remains is dignity of the humiliated and hope, even when all attempts for survival are exhausted. This pays homage to Lustig's father sent to gas upon arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Table of Contents

The House of Returned Echoes (Dům vrácené ozvěny)
A Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp (Muž ve velikosti poštovní známky)
Right Without God (Právo bez Boha)
Early in the Morning (Chvilé hned po ránu)

Translations

English

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Awards

Klement Gottwald State Prize for "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", Czechoslovakia 1967

Nomination for the National Book Award for "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová", USA, 1974

First Prize for short story "A Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp", Czechoslovak Radio Corporation, 1967

First Prize for television film "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová" at Monte Carlo Film Festival and eight other international film festivals, including the Cannes Film Festival, 1966

Period: Prague 1958 – 1968

Book Title

Darling Miláček

- Novel
- 1969 – published in Czech four times until 2012

Theme

Post-war: A love story in besieged Jerusalem during the Arab-Israeli conflict (1948-1949), drawing on Lustig's experience as a Czechoslovak Radio correspondent. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact Armies (1968), most of the printed stock was destroyed.

Translations

English: First draft underway

Publisher

Československý spisovatel



Arnošt Lustig, 1967 or 1968

Period: Forced Exile 1969-1989¹

During this period Lustig was in political exile and became a *persona non-grata* in Czechoslovakia; his publications – new and from the Prague period 1958 – 1968 – were banned from public space and only published abroad in English and other languages

Book Title

The Unloved: From the Diary of Seventeen-Year Old Perla Sch. Nemilovaná. Z deníku sedmnáctileté Perly Sch.

- Novel
- 1979
- published in Czech six times until 2007

Theme

War-time: A psychological thriller. 17 year-old Perla Sch. pursues the oldest profession to save herself in Theresienstadt Ghetto before transport East.

Translations

English; German; Polish; Japanese

Publisher

Nakladatelství Sixty-Eight Publishers, Corp.

Awards

National Jewish Book Award for Fiction, USA 1986

Period: Forced Exile 1969-1989¹

During this period Lustig was in political exile and became a *persona non-grata* in Czechoslovakia; his publications – new and from the Prague period 1958-1968 – were banned from public space and only published abroad in English and other languages

Book Title

Shevirat hakelim: Shattering of the Vessels

Ševirat hakelim: Rozbíjení posvátných nádob

- Poetry
- 1983

Theme

The only poem written by Arnošt Lustig. *A tour de force* in the mist of the kabbalah, about the silent and the invisible. About fatigue of truth and death, about madness of a darkness, which darkens even what existed in darkness and about the madness of a light which uncovers what had been hidden. For Lustig, this is the genesis of the theme of madness that he develops nearly two decades later in his Pulitzer-Prize nominated novel “Lovely Green Eyes” in the character of Rabbi Gideon Shapiro.

Translations

Adapted to musical performance by Herman Berlinski: English (Washington, DC, New Orleans, Detroit, 1983-1984); German as “Prager Kantate, Der

Synagogendiener zu Prag” (Annenkirche Dresden, Dresdner Barockorchester, 1993)

Publisher

Manuscript in Lustig’s archive

Period: Forced Exile 1969-1989¹

During this period Lustig was in political exile and became a *persona non-grata* in Czechoslovakia; his publications – new and from the Prague period 1958 – 1968 – were banned from public space and only published abroad in English and other languages

Book Title

Indecent Dreams

Neslušné sny

- Short stories
- 1988 – published in Czech twice until 2009

Theme

War-time: Prague, final days. “*The heroines are not Jewish, although the Jewish tragedy is omni-present... following the Czech and German protagonists. The short stories marvellously evoke hysteria, in which bloody events intersect with private thoughts and dreams... Only a few short stories in world literature have captured so vividly the madness, which possessed people on the edge of death and at the same time, so close to peace.*” Josef Škvorecký

Table of Contents

Blue Day (Modrý den)
The Girl With a Scar (Dívka s jizvou)
Indecent Dreams (Neslušné sny)

Translations

The collection: English; Spanish
Short story “Indecent Dreams” also published in bilingual English and Hebrew edition

Publisher

Northwestern University Press; Nakladatelství Franze Kafky



Arnošt Lustig, 1999?

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Darkness Casts No Shadow

Tma nemá stín

- Novel
- 1991 – published in Czech eight times until 2009 (since the first publication as a short story in collection “Diamonds of the Night”)

Theme

War-time: A treatise on friendship. Two boys escape from a train on its way to Dachau. Wandering through the woods in search of Prague, they slip from the present – into the idolized past of their childhood and the idealized future of manhood. Based on the author’s own story in April 1945.

¹ During this period, Lustig also publishes with Czech exile publishers, such as Sixty-Eight Publishers (also called 68 Publishers), Index, Svědectví, and others, and under the pseudonym Ernest Alus and others in the magazine “Partyzán”.

Translations
English; German; Dutch; Japanese

Publisher
Československý spisovatel

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Colette: A Girl from Antwerp. Jewish Trilogy 2.

Colette, dívka z Antverp
Židovská trilogie 2.

- Novel
- 1992 – published in Czech eight times until 2015

Theme

War-time: A love story of prisoners Vili Feld and beautiful Belgian Jewess Colette recounts the thin boundary between good and evil and truth and lie.

Translations

English: First draft underway

Publisher

Nakladatelství Kvarta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The House of Returned Echoes

Dům vrácené ozvěny

- Novel
- 1994 – published in Czech four times until 2019 (since the first publication as a short story in collection “Bitter Smell of Almonds”)

Theme

War-time: See above (1968)

Translations

English

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The White Birches

Bílé břízy

- Novel (expanded version of original novel “White Birches of Autumn”) ● 2008

Theme

Post-war (1950s Czechoslovakia): A story about soldiers without arms – excluded from civil life for all the wrong reasons – culminating when the youngest one’s timid compassion for a “girl-for-all”

turns to love and a shocking decision. A courageous critique of post-war Czechoslovak politics (see above, 1966).

Translations

Mandarin

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Friends

Kamarádi

- Novel
- 1995 – published in Czech three times until 2008, plus as various short stories in the collection “Rainy Noon” – Deštivé poledne, 2005 and the Shoah Series, “Clock Like a Windmill” – Hodiny jako větrný mlýn, 2010

Theme

War-time: An ode to friendship and solidarity. The war machinery intervenes with growing up of friends, their erotic discoveries and questions about life’s most basic things. The war mercilessly moves all of the events towards the chimneys in the extermination camps somewhere in the East.

Publisher

Victoria Publishing Praha, Mladá Fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Fire On Water

Oheň na vodě

- Novel and short stories
- 1998

Theme

“Flood”: War-time: Psychological thriller. A story of sadistic torture of a rabbi by SS officers in front of fellow concentration camp prisoners
“Waiting for Leah”: During the war: A passionate, dreamy love triangle in Theresienstadt before transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau
“Enzo – A Jewish Story”: Post-war: A psychological thriller in Rome, based on a curious bus acquaintance between a Czech journalist and Enzo Vittorini, an Italian survivor of torture under Mussolini. Enzo’s life unravels in the backdrop of an elaborate dinner...

Table of Contents

Flood (Potopa)

Waiting for Leah (Lea z Leuwardenu)

Enzo – A Jewish Story (Enzo – židovská povídka)

Translations

English

Publisher

Melantrich

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Waiting for Leah. Jewish Trilogy 1. Lea z Leeuwardenu. Židovská trilogie 1.

● Novel ● 1998 – published in Czech six times until 2008. In addition two chapters of the novel published separately as short stories “Cabaret” – Kabaret, and “I Am Leaving Into a Dream” – Odcházím do snu, in the Shoah Series, “I Am Leaving Into A Dream” – Odcházím do snu, 2009

Theme

War-time: A passionate, dreamy love triangle in Theresienstadt before transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau

Translations
English

Publisher
Melantrich

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Lovely Green Eyes Krásné zelené oči



● Novel ● 2000 – published in Czech four times until 2013. In addition as short story “Kůstka”

in the collection “Rainy Noon” – Deštivé poledne, 2005

Theme

War-time and right after: Skinny is a 15 year-old prostitute in field brothel Number 232 Ost. “It is a love story, about love, nearly as much as about murder; it is about one of the many faces of love... Skinny could not forgive what could not be forgiven. Nor forget that which could not be forgotten.”

Translations

English; German; Spanish; Italian; French; Polish translation underway

Publisher
Peron

Awards

Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, 2003. Lustig is the only Czech writer ever to have been nominated for this prize.

On the Prague Lovers’ Reading List
(<https://praguetravelconcierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>)

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Initiation Zasvěcení

● Novel ● 2002

Theme

During the war: Story of love and eros, based on the author’s autobiographical story of initiation in

Prague prior to transport to Theresienstadt (from “The House of Returned Echoes”, see above)

Translations
English

Publisher
Hynek s.r.o

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

We Have No Choice (alternate title “At The Airport”)

Nemáme na vybranou (Na letišti)

● Novel ● 2003 – published in Czech six times until 2013

Theme

Post-war: A story of two young Jewish men implicated by the Shoah, fighting in the Arab-Israeli conflict and impatient for love

Publisher
Odeon – Euromedia Group k.s., Czech Press Group – Koktejl Magazine Supplement

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The Abyss Propast

● Novel and short stories ● 2006 – published in Czech three times until 2011. In addition twice as a short story “The Big White Journey” – Velká bílá cesta in the collection “Ripples On the River” – Vlny v řece, 1964 and “The Street of Lost Brothers” – Ulice ztracených bratří, 1973

Theme

Post-war (1950’s Czechoslovakia): Psychological thriller of a 20 year-old soldier in a snow storm, his impending death and memories of the women in his life.

Table of Contents
The Abyss (Propast)
Porgess (Porgess)
Enzo (Enzo)

Translations
English

Publisher
Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Tanga: A Girl from Hamburg. Jewish Trilogy 3.

Tanga: Dívka z Hamburku. Židovská trilogie 3.

● Novel ● 2006 – published in Czech four times until 2008. In addition one chapter of the novel published separately as a short story “Love Has Sad Eyes” – Láska má smutné oči, in the Shoah Series, “I Am Leaving Into A Dream” – Odcházím do snu, 2009

Theme

War-time: The tragic heroine is a circus equestrienne and prostitute, 20 year-old Soňa Inge Crossová, *alias* Tanga. In the Theresienstadt Ghetto, she faces her past and uncertain future. She views events around her through the perspective of horses, the only beings she understands.

Translations

English

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The Luggage Thief Zloděj kufrů

- Novel
- 2008 – plus as short story “Ludvíček, der Vierteljude” in the collection “Rainy Noon” – Deštivé poledne, 2005

Theme

War-time: A love story of two adolescents before transport East. The protagonist is a jack of all trades, a Robin Hood for poorer inmates of Theresienstadt. To survive, you must adapt, you must do do whatever it takes. You can be happy even in this hell, explains Ludvíček to the girl. He is head over heels in love. The novel has an autobiographical thread.

Publisher

Euromedia Group k.s. – Odeon

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

My Acquaintance Vili Feld / Darkness and Light of the World

Můj známý Vili Feld / Tma a světlo světa

- Novel
- 2008 – this is the expanded and final version of the original publication in Czech in 1961

Theme

Post-war: Expansion of earlier edition (see above, 1961)

Publisher

Mladá fronta



In an interview with Arnošt Lustig in 2008 called “You mustn’t overestimate the Nobel Prize” for a Czech daily newspaper, the author said that winning the Nobel Prize would be nice, although it wouldn’t make him any better as a writer. Ironically, that year, he received more votes than Bob Dylan, the Nobel Prize for Literature Laureate in 2016.

ALSO PUBLISHED AS E-BOOK IN 2018:
<https://www.eknihovna.cz/muj-znamy-vili-feld/>

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Love, Body and Death

Láska, tělo a smrt

- Novel
- 2009 – published in Czech twice as a novel and twice as a short story “Love and Body” – Láska a tělo, until 2010 in the Shoah Series, “Clock Like a Windmill” – Hodiny jako větrný mlýn, 2010

Theme

War-time: A love story of young Gabriela Lágusová and Josef Reinisch in Theresienstadt Ghetto. The incomprehensible Final Solution of the Jews on one hand and love of life and the physical on the other. Forbidden love under the pressure of uncertainty of when the next transport will take them to the gas chambers.

Publisher

Listen, Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The Girl With a Scar

Dívka s jizvou

- Novel
- 2010 – this is the expanded and final version of the original publication in Czech in the collection “You Shall Humiliate No One” – Nikoho

neponížíš, 1963. Including this expanded version, the story has been published in Czech six times.

Theme

War-time: Psychological thriller of a Jewish orphan girl in Prague taking revenge on the assassins of her parents

Translations

English in short story version in “Indecent Dreams”

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The Case of Marie Navarová

Případ Marie Navarové

- Historical Novel
- 2010

Theme

War-time and post-war: Lustig's final novel. True story of a Czech health worker with German roots, who in 1942, jumps to the rescue of assassinated German Protector Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. The story of justice unfolds over three regimes (the Nazi Third Reich; the liberated Czechoslovakia; post-war Socialist Czechoslovakia), each of which tries and sentences her.

Translations

Roumanian

Publisher

Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.; Curtea Veche Publishing

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Good Day, Mr Lustig. Thoughts about Life

Dobrý den, pane Lustig. Myšlenky o životě

- Non-fiction: Interviews by Miroslav Kouba
- 1999

Theme

Interviews about life, literature and film, teaching, people and politics, shortly after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and Lustig's reentry into Czechoslovakia's public life as one of the eminent emigre writers

Publisher

Aequitas

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Testimony. Literary Recording of Arnošt Lustig's Memoirs and Reflections

Zpověď. Literárně zpracovaný fonetický záznam vzpomínek a úvah Arnošta Lustiga

- Non-fiction: Autobiography
- 2006 (Broadcast by Czech Radio) and published in Czech three times until 2009

Theme

Memoirs

Table of Contents

Childhood (Dětství)
End of Lightheartedness (Konec bezstarostnosti)
Worries Grow (Starosti rostou)
The Theresienstadt Fortress – Prior to Hell (Terezínská pevnost – předpekli)
Auschwitz – Hell (Osvětím – peklo)
Germans, Germans, Germans – Destiny (Němci, Němci, Němci – osud)

Buchenwald (Buchenwald)

Returns (Návraty)

Escape (Útěk)

Lucky With Friends: Israel (Šťěstí na kamarády, Izrael)

Exile – First Phase (Exil – první etapa)

America (Amerika)

Professor in Washington, DC (Profesorem ve Washingtonu, D.C.)

Books and Films Have Destinities (Knihy a filmy mají osudy)

Promised Land (Země zaslíbená)

Translations

English: First draft underway

Publisher

Multisonic, a.s.,

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

Tachles Lustig

- Non-fiction: Interviews by Karel Hvizďala
- 2011 – published in Czech twice until 2012, including an expanded version

Theme

Last book of interviews, optimistic, wise and philosophical

Translations

German: final draft planned in 2020

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Period: Prague Renaissance 1990 – 2011

Book Title

The Presence of Arnošt Lustig. Dialogues.

Tvoje slza, můj déšť: Přítomnost Arnošta Lustiga. Dialogy.

- Non-fiction: Interviews by Eva Lustigová
- 2012

Theme

Interviews about what matters in life and beyond with her father and his circle of close friends and colleagues, including Václav Havel, Miloš Forman, Ivan Passer, Jiří Menzel, and brother Josef

Translations

Roumanian

Publisher

Mladá fronta

All three periods

Book Title

Essays: Selected Texts 1965–2008

Eseje. Vybrané texty z let 1965 – 2008

- Non-Fiction Essays
- 2009

Theme

Philosophical Essays

Table of Contents

The World into which We Were Born (Svět do kterého jsme se narodili)
Auschwitz-Birkenau (Osvětími – Březinka)
About the Meaning of Life (O smyslu života)
They Killed Your Father, Do Not Forget (Zabili tvého otce, nezapomeň)
The King Spoke, Said Nothing (Král promluvil, neřekl nic)
Memory (Paměť)
Man's Only Achievable Immortality (Jediná dosažitelná nesmrtelnost člověka)
A Speech at the Opening of an Exhibit About Theater in Theresienstadt, 15. March 2000 (Projev při otevření výstavy o terezínském divadle 15. března 2000)
Once More About the Dead Who Are Alive (Ještě jednou o mrtvých, kteří žijí)
Exile Like a Destiny (Exil jako osud)
Hope and Reality (Naděje a skutečnost)
About Literature (O literatuře)
Who I Write For (Pro koho píšu)

Translations

English: First draft underway

Publisher

Mladá fronta

Short Stories

- Short story "Foreigner" – Cizinec (Věstník židovských náboženských obcí – the Jewish Communities' Journal, 1950)
- Short story "Arrival in Theresienstadt – Příklad do Terezína . Excerpt from novel "Ghetto" (Věstník židovských náboženských obcí – the Jewish Communities' Journal, 1951)
- Short story "A Dreamer" – Snílek (Věstník židovských náboženských obcí – the Jewish Communities' Journal, 1954)

- Eight short stories: "Olive Harvesters" – Česači oliv, "Building a Town" – Stavíme město, "The Sunny Road" – Slunečná silnice, "Market of Immigrants" – Trh přistěhovalců, "Yellow Danger" – Žluté nebezpečí, "House in the Sand" – Dům v písku, "Three from Jerusalem" – Tři z Jeruzaléma, "Egged" (Věstník židovských náboženských obcí – the Jewish Communities' Journal, Spring 1950 – March 1951)
- "First Station of Happiness. News Reports" – První stanice štěstí. Reportáže (Mladá fronta, 1961)
- Short story "Black Lion" – Černý lev, from collection "Diamonds of the Night" (Démanty noci) in "Stories from Jewish Authors. Sholom Alechem, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Arnošt Lustig, edited "With Notes" by: Kenji Inoue and Hajime Kijima (The Eihosha Ltd., Tokyo, 1967, in Japanese)
- Short story "The Beginning and the End" – Začátek a konec ("Diamonds of the Night", Mladá fronta, 1958), in anthology "More Tales of Unease", edited by John Burke, PAN Books, Macmillan, 1969
- Short story "Beginning and End" – Začátek a konec, from collection "Diamonds of the Night" (Démanty noci) in "More Tales of Unease", edited by: John Burke (PAN Books Ltd., London, 1969)
- Short story "Children" – Děti, from collection "Night and Hope" (Noc a naděje) in "New Writing in Czechoslovakia", George Theiner (Penguin Books, 1969)
- Short story "The Black Lion" – Černý lev, from collection "Diamonds of the Night" (Démanty noci) in "Writing from the World", edited by: Paul Engle and Hualing Nieh (University of Iowa Press, 1976)
- Short story from collection "Diamonds of the Night" (Démanty noci) in "By Words Alone: The

Holocaust in Literature", edited by: Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi (Barnes & Noble, 1982)

- Short story "Blue Day" from collection "You Shall Humiliate No One" (Nikoho neponížíš) in "The Best Stories of Tri-Quarterly" (Washington Square Press, 1982)
- Short story "Red Oleanders" in "The World and I. A Chronicle of Our Changing Era" (A Publication of The Washington Times Corporation, January 1990)
- Short story "The Merry Song of Dead Birds" – Veselý zpěv mrtvých ptáků (Židovská Ročenka, 1991 in Czech; in anthology of Czech prosaics freed from ban to publish, Feltámadt tetszhallotak. Tilalomtól szabadult cseh elbeszélők. Kalligram, 1991 in Hungarian)
- Short story "The Lemon" – Sousto, from collection "Diamonds of the Night" (Démanty noci) in anthology "World of Fiction", edited by: Roberta Rubenstein and Charles R. Larson, American University, Washington, D.C., (Macmillan Publishing Company, New York and Maxwell Macmillan Canada, Toronto, 1993)
- Short story "Infinity" – Nekonečnost (Šoa: Od rána do večera, Knižní klub, Euromedia Group, 2006; "Art from Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology, edited by: Lawrence L. Langer, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995)
- Short story "Kůstka" (The Kenyon Review, Spring 1999). This was the initial text elaborated to the Pulitzer-nominated novel "Lovely Green Eyes" (2003)
- "The Bitter Smell of Almonds. Selected fiction" (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2001 in English)
- Some of the stories are new and published for the first time. The short story "Night" – Noc, first

published in 1957 in Věstník židovských náboženských obcí (the Jewish Communities' Journal) was expanded in the "Shoah" series, "Morning till Evening" – Od rána do večera (2006), and also published in 'Bitter Smell of Almonds' (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2001 in English)

- Excerpt of the novel "Tanga. A Girl from Hamburg" (The Kenyon Review, Spring 2002)
- Short stories "Night and Hope 1" – Noc a naděje 1, and "Night and Hope 2" – Noc a naděje 2, published in "Constellation of Sadness. Anthology of Czech and Slovak Prose About the Holocaust" – Souhvězdí smutku. Antologie českých a slovenských próz o holokaustu, edited by: Lucie Friedlaenderová and Josef Šmatlák, Epoque, Praha, 2003). These short stories were published in Lustig's first collection of short stories "Night and Hope" (1958) where they appeared under the title "Children" – Děti, and "Hope" – Naděje.
- "Essence. Quotes" – Esence (Nakladatelství Andrej Šťastný, 2004)
- Collection of short stories "Rainy Noon" – Deštivé poledne (Jan Kratochvíl, 2001; Mladá fronta, 2005)
- "Shoah" series comprising four collections of short stories (Knižní klub, Euromedia Group) of the following titles: "Morning till Evening" – Od rána do večera (2006), "Blue Day" – Modrý den (2008), "I am Leaving into A Dream" – Odcházím do snu (2009), "Clock Like a Windmill" – Hodiny jako větrný mlýn (2010)
- "Povídky" (Mladá fronta, 2011) Soubor textů otce a dcery "Short Stories. A Collection of Texts from Father and Daughter" – Povídky. Soubor textů otce a dcery. Contains: – Arnošt Lustig's "Last Day of the Fire" – Poslední den ohňů, "A Moment Right

After Morning” – Chvilé hned po ránu; Eva Lustigová’s “Fame of Haim Stein” – Sláva Chaima Steina, “White Wind” – Bílý vítr (Mladá fronta, 2011)

- Short story “Someone Else’s Mother” – Cizí maminka, published in Židovská ročenka 5724, 1963/64 (in anthology “I Shall Not Let You Perish... Czech Journal Shoah Short Stories 1945-1989” – Tobě zahynout nedám... Česká časopisecká šoa povídka 1945-1989, edited by: Ivana Cahová, Erik Gilk and Martin Lukáš, Akropolis, 2017)
- Short story “Citronen” (“The Lemon” – Sousto, from collection “Diamonds of the Night” – Démanty noci). One of three short stories about the Shoah, including authors Aharon Appelfeld and Ida Fink (Novellix, Stories To Go, Number 139, Stockholm, 2019, in Swedish)

<https://www.fantasticfiction.com/l/arnost-lustig/>

Essays and Interviews

- “Film and Holocaust”, a textbook written with Josef Lustig (Spertus College of Judaica, 1978)
- “Arnošt Lustig – An Interview” in “Die Verbannten Dichter” (“The Forbidden Poets”) by Jürgen Serke (Albrecht Knaus Verlag, Hamburg, 1982)
- “Encomium for Josef Škvorecký” (World Literature Today, Oklahoma, 1980)
- “The Short Life of the Czech Writer, Ota Pavel” (World Literature Today, Oklahoma, 1981)
- “Auschwitz-Birkenau” (Yale Review, 1983; Jewish Monthly, October 1987)
- “Special Feature – The New Czechoslovakia. The Dissident as President. An Exclusive Interview with Václav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia by Arnošt Lustig” in “The World and I. A

Chronicle of our Changing Era” (A publication of The Washington Times Corporation, March 1990)

- Henry James Cargass. First chapter is an interview with Arnošt Lustig, in “Voices from the Holocaust”. Other interviews include Simon Wiesenthal, Emil Fackenheim, Elie Wiesel, Yitzhak Arad. (The University of Kentucky, 1993)
- Arnošt Lustig: “Man Should Not Let His Life Be Merely That Which Others Make It Or Want To Make It” – Člověk by neměl dopustit, aby jeho život byl jen to, co mu z něj dělají, nebo chtějí udělat druzí, in Karel Hvíždala “Czech Interviews in the World” – České rozhovory ve světě (Československý spisovatel, 1992)
- Arnošt Lustig. “What Do I Imagine As Czech Xenophobia?” in anthology “Czech Xenophobia” – Česká xenofobie, including views by a cross-section of significant personalities of Czech society, ranging from historians, philosophers and religious leaders, to writers and social scientists, edited by: Petr Žantovský (Nakladatelství Votobia, 1998)
- “Arnošt Lustig Essays. Selected Texts 1965–2000 – “Arnošt Lustig Eseje. Vybrané texty. 1965-2000 (H & H, 2001)
- “Arnošt Lustig Answers. Interviews with Harry James Cargass, and with Michael Bauer. Essay by Primo Levi and Arnošt Lustig About Moral Aspects of the Holocaust by Byron Sherwin” – Arnošt Lustig Odpovědi (H&H, 2001; Prostor, 2003). The 2001 edition won the **“Photographic Publication of the Year” Prize** in the *Literature Illustrated by Photographs* category awarded by the expert jury of Magazin fotografie (Journal of Photography).
- “Arnošt Lustig Interview. Selected Interviews. 1979-2002 – “Arnošt Lustig Interview. Vybrané rozhovory. 1979-2002 (Akropolis, 2002) and “Arnošt Lustig Interview II. Selected Interviews.

1979–2003 “Arnošt Lustig Interview. Vybrané rozhovory. 1979–2003 (C.A.T. International, v edici Devět Bran, 2004)

- Arnošt Lustig in Videotaped Interview Series, “Words & Images. Great Jewish Authors of Our Time” (The Jerusalem Literary Project in conjunction with Ben Gurion University of the Negev and in cooperation with The National and University Library Jerusalem, October 2006) <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/ijs/research/words-and-images/>
- Markéta Mališová
 - ✧ “About Literature. Stephen and Anne” – O literatuře. Štěpán a Anna (Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 2006)
 - ✧ “About Women” – O ženách (Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 2008)
 - ✧ “About Writers” – O spisovatelích (Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 2010)
- Arnošt Lustig in broadcasts of the Czechoslovak/Czech Radio. “We Wanted A Different World” – Chtěli jsme jiný svět, edited by Eva Lustigová (Euromedia and Radioservis, planned for 2020–2021). See flyer on next page

Biographical Books

- Památník národního písemnictví (Museum of Czech Literature – PNP). “Arnošt Lustig. I Had a Wonderful Time Reading. Correspondence With Ota Pavel, Mother Terezie and Sister Hanka. Israel, Yugoslavia, USA – Czechoslovakia. 1968-1973” – Arnošt Lustig. Krásně jsem si počel. Korespondence s Otou Pavlem, maminkou Terezií a sestrou Hankou. Izrael, Jugoslávie, USA – Československo. 1968-1973 (Mladá fronta, 2016)

- Arnošt Lustig. “Moments With Ota Pavel” – Okamžiky s Otou Pavlem (Mladá fronta, 2010)
- František Cinger
 - ✧ “Arnošt Lustig 3 x 18. Portraits and Reflections” – Arnošt Lustig 3 x 18. Portréty a postřehy (HAK Praha, 2002; 2003)
- “Arnošt Lustig: I Would Not Want To Forget All of the Whys of the Past Only Because They Are So Old ... – “Arnošt Lustig: Nechtěl bych zapomenout na všechny tehdejší proč jen proto, že už je jim tolik roků. In: František Cinger, “Czech Destiny. Our 20th Century Through the Eyes of Writers” – Český osud. Naše 20. století očima spisovatelů (Darus, Prague, 2011) Also published as “About Hatred and Forgiving. Reflections by Arnošt Lustig About Questions of František Cinger” – O nenávisti a Odpuštění. Úvahy Arnošta Lustiga nad otázkami Františka Cingra. In “Without Demons of the P. Czech. German-Relations in Fateful Moments of Joint History” – Bez démonů minulosti. Česko-německé vztahy v osudových okamžicích společné historie. (Rodiče, Praha 2003)
 - ✧ “Arnošt Lustig – Through the Back Door” – Arnošt Lustig zadním vchodem (Mladá fronta, 2009)
 - ✧ “This Was Arnošt Lustig. What František Cinger experienced with him and noted down” – To byl Arnošt Lustig. Co s ním prožil a zapsal František Cinger (Eminent, 2019)

- Renáta Fučíková. “Bohemian Stories. An Illustrated History of Czechs in the USA” – Historie Čechů v USA (Práh, 2019, in Czech and English). Czech immigrants came to America in search of religious and political freedom, or a better life. A graphic journey capturing the bonds between the two countries, with texts and vivid illustrations about the fates of Antonín Dvořák, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Anton Čermák and

Madeleine Albright; Miloš Forman, Arnošt Lustig, Ivan Lendl, Martina Navrátilová...

Forwards, Afterwards and Chapters by Arnošt Lustig

- "The International Writing Program – Unique in the World" in "The World Comes to Iowa. The Iowa International Anthology, edited by: Paul Engle and Rowena Torrevillas, advisory editor: Huanling Nieh Engle (Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1987)
- "Of Those Who Said No" – O těch, kteří řekli ne, in "From Victory to Hope. The Second World War and Today in the Eyes of the Contemporaries" – Od vítězství k naději. Other chapters by: Jakub Čermín, Václav Havel, Václav Klaus, Milan Uhde, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Madeleine Albrightová, Elisabeth II., John Major, François Mitterand, et al. Author of the project: Miroslav Kouba (Praha, Union of Czech Freedom Fighters, David and Shoel, s.r.o. in collaboration with other companies, 1996)
- "How To Teach the Holocaust" (Czech Reader's Digest, 4 September 1999)
- Magdaléna Robinsonová (photography) and Arnošt Lustig (text). "Israel: A Book Immured..." – Izrael: Zamurovaná kniha... (Slovak National Museum – Museum of Jewish Culture. Judaica Slovaca Edition, Vol. 30, Bratislava, 1997)
- "Yitzhak Rabin in Our Times" – Jicchak Rabin a naše současnost. Authors of the project: Arnošt Lustig and Miroslav Kouba (David and Shoel, s.r.o., 2000)
- "Small Pearls and Palaverers" – Perličky a pábitel, in "In Flagranti. Literary Revue of the Club of Czech Writers, Number 1" – "In Flagranti, literární revue Klubu českých spisovatelů č.1 (Hart, 2002)

- "Fortress" – Pevnost. Petra Růžičková (Czech Ministry of Culture and International Festival of Czech – German – Jewish Culture Nine Gates and the Czech News Agency in Prague, 2003)
- Preface in "About the Art of Getting Along with People. How the Famous See It" – O umění vycházet s lidmi. Jak to vidí slavní, and a chapter "Arnošt Lustig: At dinner time, do not spit nor pee under the table" – Arnošt Lustig: Při večeři neplivejte a nečůrejte pod stůl, by Alena Hájková (Grada Publishing, a.s., 2005)
- Afterward in "A Return Ticket to Ota Pavel's Final Paradise" – Zpáteční lístek do posledního ráje Oty Pavla, by Jaroslava Pechová (Laguna, 2012)
- "Dear Mr. V.!" – Milý pane V.!, in anthology "All Of The Best. One thousand issues and twenty years of Salon, newspaper Právo", edited by: Zbyněk Vlasák and Štěpán Kučera – Všechno nejlepší. Tisíc čísel a dvacet let Salonu Práva (Druhé město, Brno, 2018)

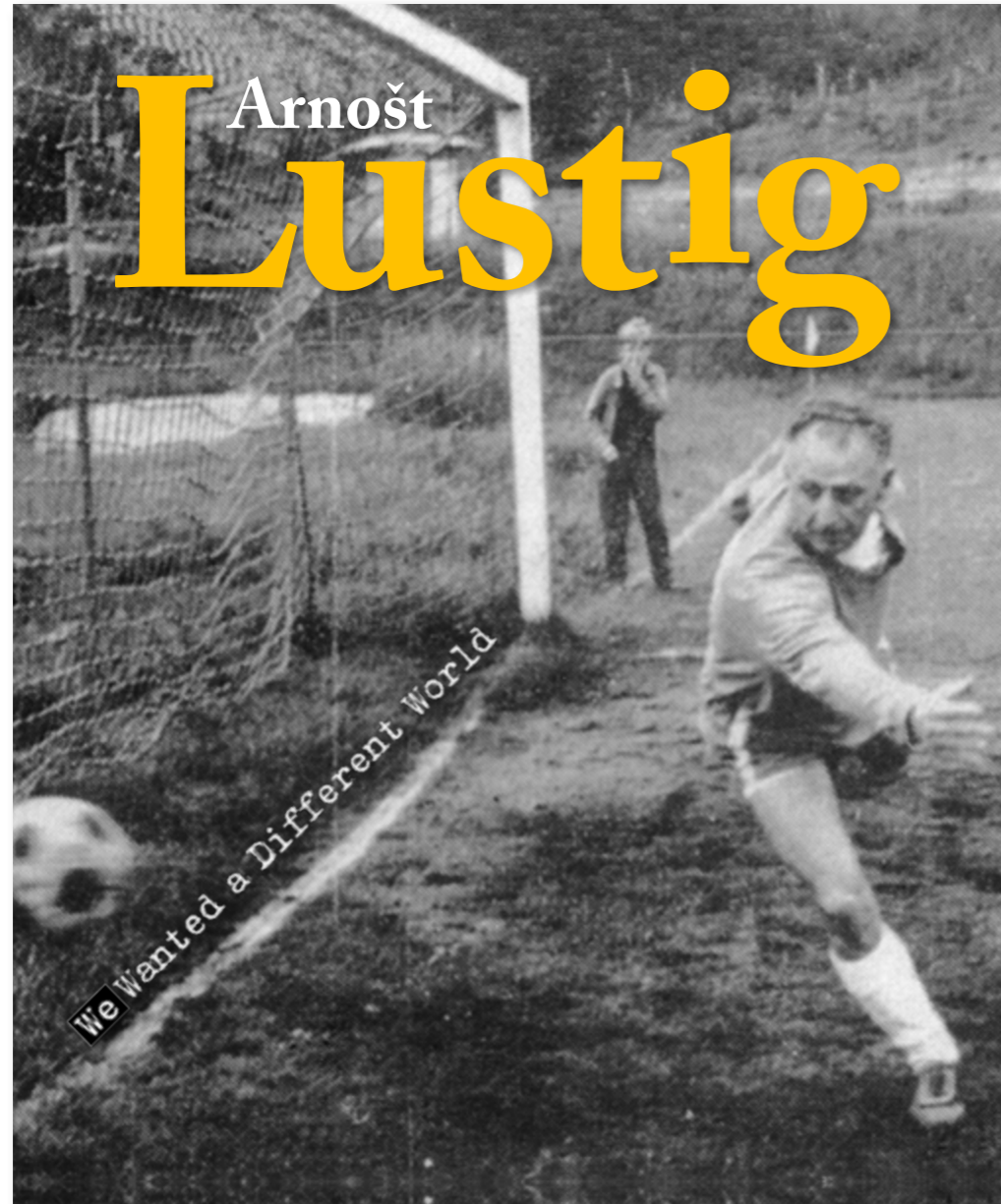
Selected publications relating to Arnošt Lustig's work and life

- Banned Books in Czechoslovakia, 1973 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064227308532279>)
- "Who's Who International Encyclopedia of Judaica"
- Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, Harvard University Press, 1980
- "Who's Who in the World", Marquis
- Oxford Film Dictionary
- Arnošt Lustig in "Authors and Artists, Vol. 3, 1988

- The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation (2001)
- Authors and Authors for Young Adults, volume 3, Contemporary Literature, Gale Research, Inc.
- Listed in various Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak Literary and Film Dictionaries
- Ivan Margolius. Reflections of Prague: Journeys Through the 20th Century (Wiley, 2012)
- Britannica Book of the Year (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arnost-Lustig>)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_literature
- Zachor Holocaust Remembrance Foundation (<https://www.zachorfoundation.org/expressive-circle/marnie-macauley/yom-hashuah/>)
- Aleš Haman, Literary Critique: "Arnošt Lustig", Series Profiles (H & H, 1995)
- Tietjen, Jeanie, "Lustig, Arnošt," in The Routledge Encyclopedia of Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century, edited by: Sorret, Kerbel. New York – London. Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003
- Pavla Totušková. Arnošt Lustig. "Thief of Human Hearts" – Arnošt Lustig. Zloděj lidských srdcí (Literární Akademie, Soukromá vysoká škola Josefa Škvoreckého, 2004)
- Veronika Volhejnová. "Czech authors" – Čeští spisovatelé (Fragment, Edice Odkaz, 2004, second edition)
- Pavel Janoušek and team. "The History of Czech Literature 1945–1989. Volume III. 1958 – 1969. Sections "Jiří Weil, Arnošt Lustig and the Rediscovery of the Jewish Theme", and "On the Journey Towards an Existentialist and Timeless Conceptualization of the Theme of War", and numerous other mentions, also in all other

volumes, namely Volume I. 1945 – 1948, Volume II. 1948 – 1958, and Volume IV. 1969 – 1989 (Academia, Praha, 2008)

- František Steiner. Chapter 18. "Ten Thousand Volts Between The Goal Posts" – Deset tisíc voltů mezi tyčemi, in "Soccer Under the Yellow Star" – Fotbal pod žlutou hvězdou (Olympia, a.s., 2009)
 - Dana Emingerová
 - ✧ "The Lustig Element. How To Write a Book" – Živel Lustig. Jak se píše kniha (Mladá fronta, 2011)
 - ✧ "The Magic of Writing. Writing According to Lustig" – Kouzlo psaní. Psaní podle Lustiga (2019)
 - ✧ "Fables. Aesop Would Laugh. Writing According to Lustig" – Bajky. Ezop by se smál. Nejvtipnější bajky z kurzů Dany Emingerové. Psaní podle Lustiga (2019)
 - Margareta Křížová. "A Prague Lover's Reading List – Prague Travel Concierge. A Different Way to Explore Prague and Beyond." 2017
- <https://praguetravelconcierge.com/prague-lovers-reading-list>
- A team of authors led by Mgr Eva Ješutová. A chapter in "99 Personalities of Radio Journalism" – 99 osobností rozhlasového zpravodajství a publicistiky (Radioservis, edited by Mgr. Eva Ješutová and PhDr Bohuslava Kolářová, 2018)
 - Karel Hviždala. A chapter called "A Writer by Coercion" – Spisovatel z donucení, in "The Astronomical Clock – Non-Forgetting" – Exilový orloj. Nezapomínky (Novela Bohemica, 2019)



Collected Works

Unique and distinctive, this is the very first collection to bring together the interviews and radio programmes that took place in 1962-2010 with world-renowned writer Arnošt Lustig. Still topical today, his thoughts touch on life, freedom, creation, and truth, as well as on the things people have, what they must hold onto, and what they can do without.

Night and Hope

Noc a naděje

Winner of the Knight of the Order of Mark Twain

Collection of short stories

- **“The Return” – Návrat**
- **“Rose Street” – Růžová ulice**
- **“The Children” – Děti**
- **“Moral Education” – Morální výchova**
- **“Stephen and Anne” – Štěpán a Anna (A discourse on love).**
- **“Blue Flames” – Modravé plameny**
- **“Hope” – Naděje**

*“Lustig burst on the Czech literary scene at the end of the fifties. During the last days of the reign of Stalin’s ill-conceived child called socialist realism... **“Night and Hope” came as a literary revelation for they bore no traces of that mandatory formula. Although mostly about death and dying, these stories were filled with an intense feeling of life, fleeting, tragic, maddeningly brief – in short, human. They – and other stories that followed – became one of the landmarks of contemporary Czech fiction bearing witness to the situation humaine, and refused to be subservient to the official political and aesthetic powers.**”*
Josef Škvorecký

“One is grateful for Mr Lustig’s quiet prose and for the fiction that we are reading fiction.”
The New Yorker

“Lustig does not exploit the horror of the death camps, but instead explores the possibility of moral survival, even triumph, in an adverse world... The human spirit provides a way out. And Lustig tells us so in prose so clear and sound that we hold onto it for fear of falling into darkness.”
San Francisco Chronicle

“To fall, to rise a hundred times and not sigh!”

“No, the relief he had expected to feel did not come. True, it had been pretty bad in the hole. But now that he was out of it, he had nowhere to go. He took an uncertain look along the street and stopped abruptly. Walk, he told himself, as if you were on your way to the tailor. He started out again. Once he used to go like this to his coffeehouse, bowing slightly to acquaintances and knowing that he was one of them. Now he felt his chin trembling. But what could happen to him if he walked along, as he did now, unassumingly treading an empty stretch of pavement? One step – blue paving stones, another step – white. He must not be scared. What was there about him that anyone could notice? He struggled against a constricting feeling of doubt. The pressure in his temples called attention to itself by violent throbbing. Jew! a voice called somewhere inside him. He was startled, was it his imagination, or did the houses on either side of him give him an echo? His legs carried him involuntarily off the pavement and into the gutter. But no, he admonished himself, that was nonsense. He mounted the pavement once more. One step, blue, one step, white...”

From “The Return”

“Hope, dignity, love are not extinguished by the night of suffering; the timeless problems of adolescent insecurity and adult loneliness are still of greater importance to the inhabitants of the (Theresienstadt) ghetto than their physical misery.”
The Spectator

“Lustig’s murderous, agile scarecrows, who treat death, starvation and pain as casually as the weather, are all children. It is only when you pause

to take this in that the stories become unthinkable.”
Commentary

*“Other survivors – Elie Wiesel, André Schwaz-Bart, Michel del Castillo – have dealt with childhood in the camps. But Mr Lustig attempts to **show not only how these youngsters died or survived, but how some of them managed to live, even retain their humanity.**”*
Ernst Pawel

“Moving beyond words”
Publishers Weekly

Adapted to film and music

The collection of short stories “Night and Hope” was adapted into the award – winning feature film “Transport from Paradise”, with the screenplay written by Arnošt Lustig and director Zdeněk Brynych. In 1963, the film received first prize, the Golden Sail, as the best feature film at the Locarno International Film Festival. In this film, Juraj Herz, then at the beginning of his highly regarded film career, was Assistant Director and actor.

Symphonic poem “Night and Hope” was composed by Otmar Mácha – student of Leoš Janáček, premiere 1960, LP 1962, CD 1997



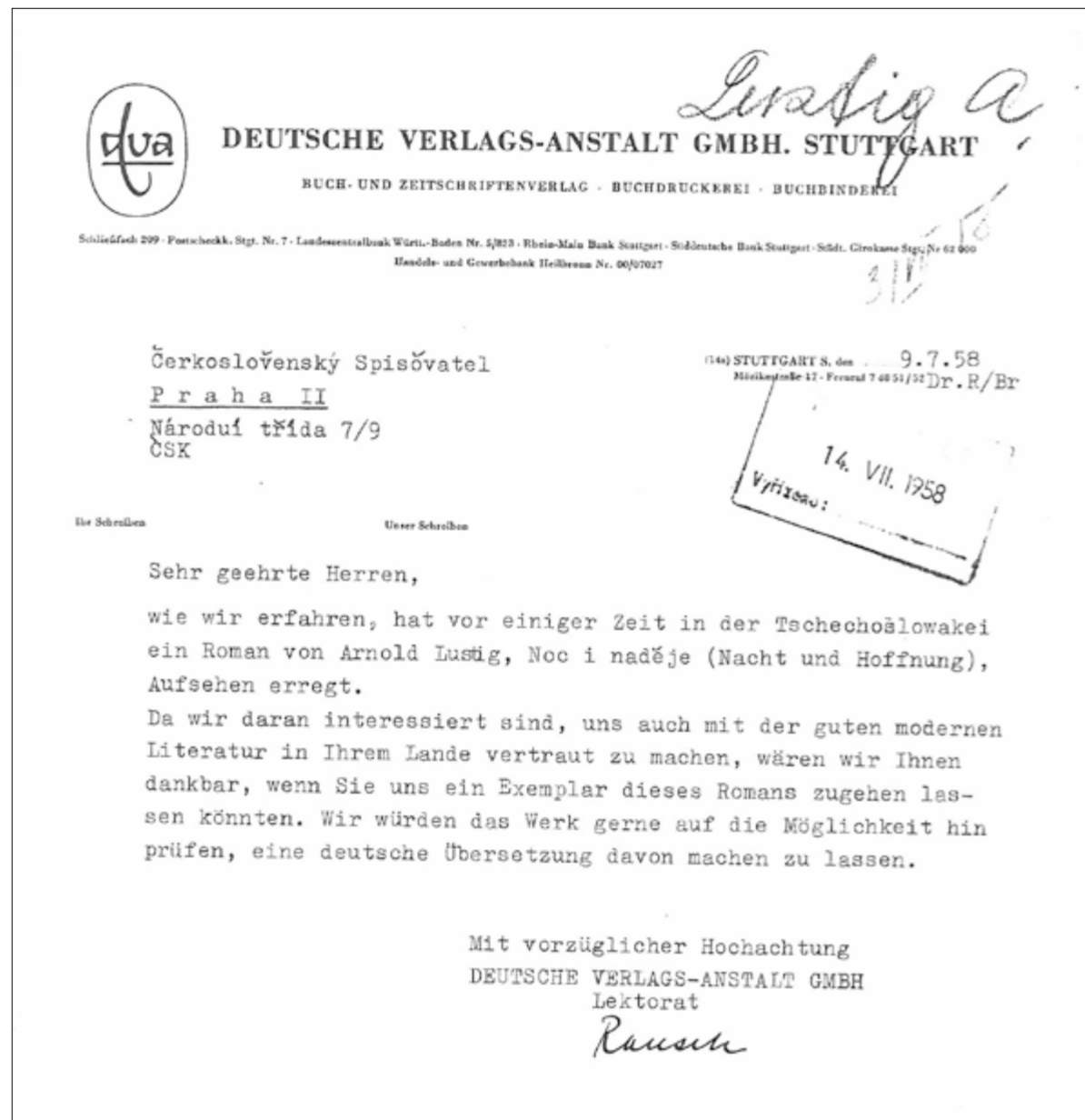
From the film by Zbyněk Brynych “Transport from Paradise”, with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his short stories in “Night and Hope”



From the film by Zbyněk Brynych "Transport from Paradise", with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his short stories in "Night and Hope"



From the film by Zbyněk Brynych "Transport from Paradise", with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his short stories in "Night and Hope"



Letter from Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH, Stuttgart to the Czechoslovak publisher, requesting the rights to translate and publish Arnošt Lustig's first collection of short stories "Night and Hope" merely a few months after it appears in Czechoslovakia

Diamonds of the Night

Démanty noci

Winner of the Best Book of the Year Award, Mladá fronta
 Winner of the Best Books Published in English Honour, London Observer
 (Collections of short stories "Night and Hope" and "Diamonds of the Night", 1962, together with Joseph Heller's "Catch 22")

Collection of short stories

- "The Lemon" – Sousto
- "The Second Round" – Druhé kolo
- "The White Rabbit" – Bílý
- "The Old Ones and Death" – Starci a smrt
- "Beginning and End" – Začátek a konec
- "Michael and the Other Boy with the Dagger" – Michael a druhý s dýkou
- "Darkness Casts No Shadow" – Tma nemá stín
- "Boy by the Window" – Chlapec u okna
- "Black Lion" – Černý lev

Two more stories were included in English editions (1978; 1986, 1996 and 1998)

- "The Last Day of the Fire" – Poslední den ohňů
- "Early in the Morning" – Chvilé hned po ránu

"Lustig's most successful characters are children – starving, orphaned, fragile as ancient skulls, drenched in horrors. A boy tries to trade his dead father's trousers, and then gold from his corpse's teeth, for half a lemon to save his dying sister; another survives a day of atrocity to dream at last of "a land of warmth and sun"; a young killer who has blown up German tanks with a fire bomb arranges for the merciful suicide of his grandfather before he is himself reduced to ashes. After "liberation", camp survivors witness a new kind of "justice"; a child who has experienced unspeakable at first exults in the killing of Germans – a river

filled with bodies, rags, blood, and oil – but then decides to examine the meaning of the "right" and then the "duty" of killing. **In his stark narrative and spare dialogue – as skeletal as the starved bodies of the speakers – Lustig sustains the reality of people scoured by obscene torture and loss, discovering islands of sanity in nightmare...**
 Kirkus Reviews

"This book matters."

The New York Times Book Review

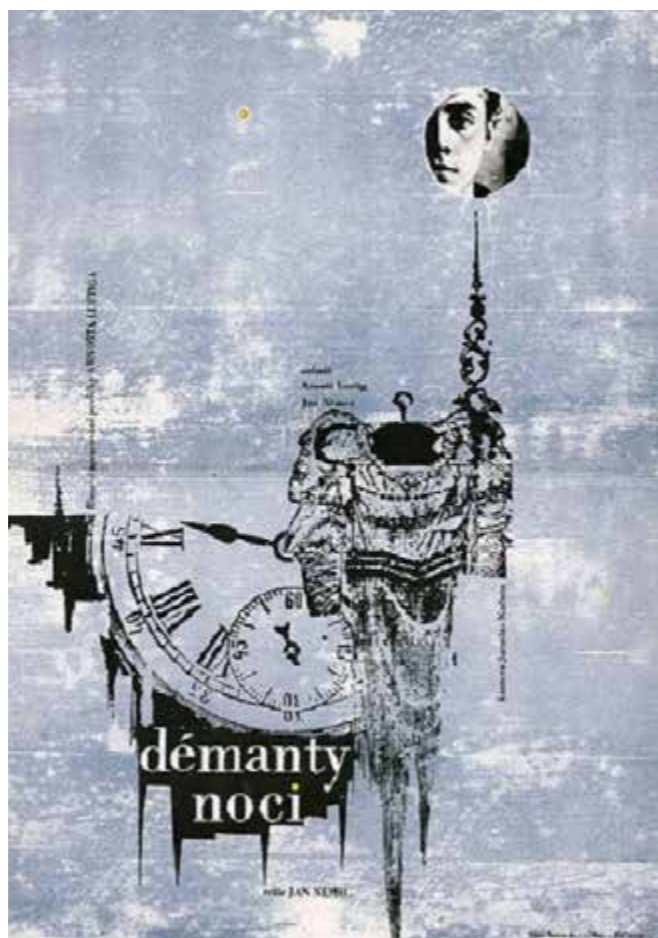
"Under the sentence of death, Lustig's characters freeze time, preserve decency. They luminesce like light crystals in the dark."
 Curt Leviant, Washington Post Book World

"He knew he had to go through with it now, even if the pants were full of holes. The skin on Chicky's face was thin, almost transparent, he had a small chin and rheumy eyes. A member of the local security force came around the corner. 'Hey, you little brats,' he snapped, casting a quick glance at their skinny bodies, 'go on, get out of here!' They turned around. Fortunately, a battered yellow Jewish streetcar came along just then and diverted the guard's attention. 'Don't tell me it's a big secret' Chicky said. 'Anybody can easily see those pants belonged to

some grown-up. What are you so scared of?' 'What should I be scared of?' Ervin retorted, clutching the trousers close. 'I've got to cash in on them, that's all.' 'They're rags.' 'They're English material, they're no rags.' 'Well, I might see what I can do for you. On a fifty-fifty basis,' Chicky relented. Ervin handed over the bundle. He looked up and down the street. The security guard was at the other end of the street with his back to the boys. They were at the end of an alley that didn't have a name for a long time. Chicky, the smaller of the two, the one with the shaved head, was clutching the brown checkered

pants under his arm as Ervin had done. 'But don't you go having second thoughts, Ervin. Don't let me go ahead and work my ass off and then...' 'My father died,' Ervin said. 'Now there's only one thing, and that's how you're going to cash in on those pants.'

It occurred to Chicky that Ervin might want a bigger share of the take because the pants had been his father's..."
From "The Lemon"



Poster for film "Diamonds of the Night", 1964

Diamonds of the Night

Démanty noci

English language textbook with Japanese annotations

The short story "The Black Lion" has been published in "Stories from Jewish Authors. Sholom Aleichem, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Arnošt Lustig" (The Eihōsha Ltd., Tokyo, edited "With Notes" by Kenji Inoue and Hajime Kijima, 1967)

Literature textbook

The short story "The Lemon" is part of the anthology "Worlds of Fiction" (edited by: Roberta Rubenstein and Charles R. Larson, American University, Washington, D.C., Macmillan Publishing Company, New York and Maxwell Macmillan Canada, Toronto, 1993). The anthology is targeted at university level students, although the short story is appropriate for younger adolescents from 14-15 years of age.

The story has also been published in Swedish under the title Citronen, also aiming at young people in the school system (Novellix, Stories to go, Stockholm, 2019).

"'The Lemon' was one of my first stories. I wrote it after the war, in the fall of 1945... The impulse came from a picnic I attended on the riverbanks near Prague. Everybody was singing, dancing and enjoying themselves, except for a friend of mine. Later that night, I asked him what was wrong. In response, he asked me 'Did you know my father, mother and sister, little Sonitchka?' I nodded. He told me how they had died in a Lodz ghetto, where the hunger was worse than in Auschwitz - Birkenau, and the humiliation unbearable. In order to save his mother and sister, he had to knock out the gold tooth from the mouth of his dead father before someone else would. He did it. He felt awful. I told him that I was glad I hadn't had to

"Each hour in the concentration camps contained 59 minutes of horror and a single minute of beauty; these moments of beauty were moral moments."

*do it, but if I had been in his shoes, I would have done the same, since, under the circumstances, it was the best and only way to help his mother and little sister. His story spoiled my mood, too. The next day, I wrote this story. I wanted to express **the truths in my heart: that human nobility can walk around in dirty rags; that heroism has many faces; that the feeling of human solidarity is stronger than the selfishness that society forces upon us; that even in the corrupted, you can find diamonds of a pure heart.** War brings about horrible things. But also moments of extraordinary beauty where humanity wins over indifference, courage over cowardice, and hope over resignation. This story aspires, like the entire collection "Diamonds of the Night", to be a poem about the moral purity of men and women of our time; a song about the purity inside the hearts of the stricken."*

Arnošt Lustig

Adapted to film and radio

Lustig's "stories became the material for such outstanding Czech films of the New Wave (and Lustig was one of the most important screenwriters of that celebrated movement) as Jan Němec's 'Diamonds of the Night' (Démanty noci, 1964) or Zbyněk Brynych's 'Transport from Paradise' (Transport z ráje, 1962)"

Josef Škvorecký

Based on the short story "Darkness Casts No Shadow" (see #14), Arnošt Lustig co-wrote the screenplay for the award-winning feature film "Diamonds of the Night" with director Jan Němec. The film received first prizes at the Mannheim Film Festival and Pesaro Film Festival in 1964. In 2018, the film was presented at the Cannes Film Festival, having been digitally restored by the Czech National Film Archive. This first feature film by Němec (1936-2016) was showcased in the Classics Section along with legendary films such as "2001: A Space Odyssey", "Bicycle Thieves", "The Apartment", "Grease", "The Big Blue" and "Driving Miss Daisy".

Two short films

"The Second Round" served as the basis for director Jan Němec's short film called "A Bite to Eat (Loaf of Bread)", 1960; and "The White Rabbit" for Dušan Klein's short film (1963).

The short story "Darkness Casts No Shadow" has been adapted into a radio play.



From the film by Jan Němec "Diamonds of the Night", with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his autobiographical short story "Darkness Casts No Shadow"



© AR archiv

Street of Lost Brothers

Ulice ztracených bratří

Winner of the Publishers Weekly Award for best books published (1981) shared with books by Vladimir Nabokov, E.L. Doctorow and John Updike

Collection of short stories

- “The Devillish Scooter Ride” – Ďábelská jízda na koloběžce
- “At Half Past Four in the Morning” – V půl páté ráno
- “My Acquaintance Vili Feld” – Můj známý Vili Feld
- “The Girl by the Oleander Tree” – Dívka u oleandrového keře
- “Radiance of the Midnight Sun” – Záře půlnočního slunce

“This third book was about the present rather than the past. Why write about it? It criticized by the Czechoslovak government as being existentialist and morbid. They were not interested in the glorification of people who do not contribute to building socialism. They said, “Write what you want, just avoid two things: attacking socialism and the state authorities, and the Soviet Union. Otherwise, write and do what you want. And I wrote about Jewish themes. That did not offend anyone. The Jews were already dead. Several thousand Jews lived here, so they let me be.”

Arnošt Lustig

About ‘Red Oleanders’

“There is a difference between a man’s love and a woman’s love, and when it comes to problems, understanding another person’s feelings is beyond almost anybody’s grasp. You can love but, at the

*“Four things disquiet man:
War, poverty, pain and death”*

same time, harm the person for whom you would build a paradise if you could. In ‘Red Oleanders’, Daniela is ready to sacrifice everything for her love for Kamil – and then there is his love for her and for an idea. She says, ‘Betray the idea, don’t betray me.’ He says, ‘I can’t, because to betray the idea would be to betray you’...

When the short story was published in Prague in the late 1950s and the 1960s, various people in power came to me and said, ‘Why don’t you write about our contemporary problems?’ And I said to myself, how can they say these things? This is my contemporary problem – a moral problem...”
Arnošt Lustig

“He said, I ‘m back.

‘Yes, said the woman.

Emanuel Mautner, taking off his coat, whistled the melody of a song from the Italian front. He stood there, thin, with soft black hair. His narrow, nutbrown face camouflaged the fatigue of the night.

‘How about something to eat?’

‘Were you there?’

Emanuel Mautner dropped his eyes. Her glance – as at night with the unfathomable sound of broken branches and the leafless stumps of wood – filled the echo of what she would only suggest.

He was glad there was plenty of light coming through both windows of the kitchen.

‘Did you look everywhere? All the time you were at the railway station?’

‘Now Emily,’ he tried once more.

He looked at the table, the blue tablecloth, which he had bought before the war, marked with

imprints of plates and glasses. The dishes from yesterday were in the sink.

‘Did you talk to anyone?’

In the morning, she had sent him to the railway station and the other places where efforts were being made to locate missing persons.

‘Button up, mamitschko,’ he said.

Emily stood there in her robe, with nothing under it. She looked at him remotely. He smiled at her. She had blue eyes, tired from the previous night’s sleep.”

From “Radiance of the Midnight Sun”

“The stories depict the imagination in its attempts at grasping unimaginable reality. **Each story leads to a different, subtly attenuated encounter in with this world.** Evil does not wear a uniform. Arnošt Lustig, perhaps alone among the writers to depict the Nazi world, recognizes that the true horror is always precisely what you do not see, what you never see. **The encounter with evil in Lustig’s fiction is always an encounter with what eludes the eye.** If one cannot see evil – or for that matter truth, justice or goodness – in Lustig’s stories, one can imagine it. And it is through the process of the imagination that his characters attain a knowledge of evil or a perception of truth. Revelation, for Lustig, comes from within oneself, not from without... Lustig’s moral vision goes far beyond the immediate setting of the Nazi death camps to the inner world of every man and woman...

Jonathan Brent

Adapted to film

“The Devillish Scooter Ride” served as the basis for director Dušan Klein’s short film bearing the same name (1963).

Of interests to filmmakers

Initially, for his first film while still at the Film School FAMU, Prague, director Jan Němec chose to adapt the story “Radiance of the Midnight

Sun”. However, the Czechoslovak government regarded it as subversive, withholding permission. He therefore decided to work with the short story “The Second Round”, adapting it into the short film “A Bite to Eat” (#2.).

My Acquaintance Vili Feld

Můj známý Vili Feld

Novel

The story is a mind map of two young men whose destinies meet for several days in Rome in 1950. Two people who until then were strangers, spend this time together as best friends, they part and never meet again. The gnawing of unkept promises and guilty conscience get the better of him.

The protagonist Vili Feld went through the Nazi hell. As the assistant to the kapo in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Vili Feld also routinely accompanied the medic while collecting the dead. When a motionless body moved, he made sure the any last signs of life would end right there. He assisted the Kapo no matter where he was. He could not avoid it by will nor instinct. Vili Feld could always take care of himself. In the camp, “his destiny, honour and courage or morality fit into the concept of survival. A swimmer who is drowning must economize his breath to keep his head above water. It is senseless to explain. He was in the midst of a stream that was pulling him down.”

After the war, Vili Feld is deciding what's next, how to live, where to cast his anchor, what kind of a life to choose. He emigrates to Italy... He does not tell people that he spent three years in the camps. “He does not allow anyone into the hole called memory. He does not speak about his little lost sister Noemi.”

“I said: My God, where on earth are you coming from, Vili?” And a few other phrases. He smiled without saying anything. I pictured his beautiful apartment in Štěpánská Street in Prague, a staircase with an elevator and door mats from caoutchouc, a balcony and bright yellow wooden furniture from ash tree. At that time, he was

saying: ‘Around here? You perhaps. Not me!’
 ‘Where did you come from, Vili?’ I said once more.
 ‘Would you like to see something?’ He showed me a sheet of paper with three dense rows and a stamp. In the meantime, he asked me whether I was going back? I nodded.
 ‘That’s lucky, Vili. A visa to Australia?’
 ‘At this time, only a pledge.’
 We looked at each other. Where does a decision for or against something begin?
 And then he said: ‘Could you do something for me?’
 He found himself colliding against my pause.
 ‘Nothing extraordinary – for you – only for me.’ And he saw my eyes getting grey. ‘It depends, Vili,’ I said.
 ‘Could you find my fiancé when you have some time back in Prague?’
 ‘And what should I do with her?’
 ‘You would tell her how things are with me.’
 ‘I don’t know how things are with you.’
 ‘Are you scared of it?’
 ‘The rain is letting up, Vili.’
 ‘I can give you her address,’ he said. ‘Will you write it somewhere?’
 ‘I’d rather remember it, Vili.’
 As I was coming to see him again, I was toying with the idea that I could treat his message like a particular type of paper. And then I was thinking like Judas.”

“It’s a story about man being the sum of good and bad. No one other than man’s most precious possession – his conscience – knows how these tally up. And Vili Feld actually has guilt on his conscience.”

Arnošt Lustig

Vili Feld is an archetype in Lustig’s prose. Lustig’s perception – understanding of human character under the pressure of extreme circumstances, is captured in this novel and his later work where he reappears during the war next to Lustig’s heroines Leah, Colette, Hana Kaudersová *alias* Skinny (#16, #17, #22.) and the short story “Flood” (in “Fire on Water”, #19.), as well as in his other prose.

The novel is further developed in its final text in 2008 (#25.).

*“Good and evil?
 Crime and punishment?
 Everyone sees it differently. But it is
 always someone.”*

Dita Saxová

Winner of the National Jewish Book Award for Fiction

Novel

“Lustig regularly reserves his surest touch, his greatest insight, for the lives of children who’ve survived the holocaust... A graceful, sad book with a namesake character worthy of the loving attention Lustig has given her.”

Kirkus Reviews

Dita Saxová opens in 1947 as the title character, an eighteen year old concentration camp survivor, tries to start a new life in post-World War II Prague. She tries to cope with memories of extraordinary trauma while simultaneously exploring the pleasures and adventures life has to offer. Unable to create a normal life, she finally leaves to Switzerland and commits suicide. Based on a true story. The yet unpublished letters of Dita Saxlová are part of the author’s archives.

“A memorable portrait of a complex young woman.”
Publishers Weekly

“This book is Dita’s song and she deserves it.”
Washington Post

“Her childhood hijacked in hell, Dita returned at the war’s end to a life after death. She had seen death up close, but little of life. An intimate associate of death, she now had to adjust to existence in the land of the living... Her statuesque figure... camouflaged the scarred soul that she sought desperately to heal. Dita seeks to resurrect her dead soul by employing the beauty of her body as a vehicle to life, love, passion, and meaning... Only a writer of Arnošt Lustig’s life experience, uncanny insight and narrative

elegance could so delicately tell the tale of Dita Saxová.” Byron L. Sherwin

“This edition confirms Lustig’s place as one of the most masterful storytellers of the Holocaust period.”

Northwestern University Press

Adapted to film

A feature film directed by Antonín Moskalyk (1967) and based on a screenplay co-written by Arnošt Lustig and the director, won the second Prize at the International Film Festival in San Sebastian. Star cast including the Oscar-winning director, Jiří Menzel.

“I don’t want to be like other people who have been dead for a long time, even though they are still living.” Dita Saxová

“Everyone of us lives instead of someone else. They didn’t murder me because when I was there, they were diligently murdering the others.” Dita Saxová

“Life is not what we want, but what we have.” Dita Saxová



From the film by Antonín Moskalyk “Dita Saxová”, with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his novel

You Shall Humiliate No One

Nikoho neponížíš

Collection of short stories

- “The Girl with A Scar” – Dívka s jizvou
- “First in Front of the Gates” – První před branami
- “Blue Day” – Modrý den
- “A Clock Like a Windmill” – Hodiny jako větrný mlýn

The heroes of these four short stories, living in the Czech and Moravian Protectorate, take part in the final big bust against the perpetrators during the revolution of May 1945 in Prague. For the most part, they are people not made to be heroes, they are kids or old people, or weak in other ways, but in their determination lays the expression of the most precious humanity.

“The author, with great effect and a deep understanding for the real workings of the human soul, merges the outside and the inside of the human being, employing a technique that is basically filmic but in contrast to film, makes use of the specific possibilities of fiction: introspection, the landscape of the mind. The stories marvelously succeed in creating a canvas of hysteria in which the bloody events blend with very private thoughts and dreams that have nothing in common with events in the objective world.”

Josef Škvorecký

“Everyone in the cellar was captivated by the woman sitting on the chopping block beside the door, although all she had said since her arrival was ‘Hello’ and ‘Excuse me.’ She had been the last to arrive. ‘The numbers ... on the clock,’ she said now. No one answered her and she added that the clock face showed everything backward.

‘It’s Hebrew,’ the caretaker said. ‘There are no

numbers. Only letters, and it goes backward.’ There were two clock faces on the tower, the upper one normal, the other with letters and hands that moved counterclockwise. The clocks had been a part of the town hall for a few hundred years. The woman on the chopping block was thinking about these clocks.

The caretaker had just announced that he was going upstairs to lock up in order to keep everyone unwanted from coming to hide. He peered out and up at both clocks before he locked the door. They still kept time well. They didn’t need winding today. Mondays were always set aside for winding. The doors were covered with thick sheets of metal and each had two small windows at about the level of a man’s head. Suddenly, a barrage of bullets hit the door near the caretaker’s feet. The wooden paneling around the door splintered, but the metal sheets which deflected the bullets saved him.

The woman on the chopping block jumped like a startled quail when the bullets exploded against the door...”
From “A Clock Like a Windmill”

“In my writing, I try to remain true to my understanding of what could have really happened. Some of my stories come from my life, and some from stories people told me.

Some also come from dreams. “Blue Day” is from a dream. I dreamt it completely. We had a small flat and I couldn’t write with the children sleeping, so Vera, my wife, put me where I always wanted to be, a bathtub, put a board over it, and put the typewriter on it. She couldn’t even speak to me or I would have forgotten the whole thing. And in three hours, I had this story. Later, I improved it a



Arnošt Lustig, Prague, early 1960’s

little. But I had the story complete with dialogue, colors, everything.”
Arnošt Lustig

Adapted to film and audio

“Blue Day” was adapted to film for Czechoslovak Television. The film, directed by Jana Sadková in 1963, was confiscated and destroyed. Director Sadková made the film once more in 1994, with a star cast. It is considered as a “hidden jewel” in Czechoslovak TV movies.

“The Girl With a Scar”: Lustig’s screenplay is available to directors and producers on request Audio (on CD) “The Girl With a Scar” has been adapted to an audio-story (in Czech)

“The dead were the only ones she could talk to. Only the dead could be told the truth.”

“There is a law that even sheep defy wolves and the wolves succumb”

“If there were one more Commandment in the Bible, it would be: You shall humiliate no one ...”

A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová

Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou

Winner of the B'nai B'rith Award
Nominated for the US National Book Award
Winner of the Klement Gottwald State Prize

Novel

A treatise on courage. A testimony of the pride of one girl's destiny under the absurd and cruel conditions of the Nazi extermination system in 1943. Based on a true story.

"Suddenly, she had a doubt as to whether there was some other world except for this camp.

'Undress', ordered lieutenant Schillinger.

'You started out with such promise. Why are you suddenly holding all of us up?'

'Do you have food? You do. We told you the number of the hook.' "

There was a perfectly different reason for why she procrastinated getting undressed. There was no future."

Only the blind could still think that there was hope.

'Undress, undress, don't delay, don't brood, focus on what is being ordered and promised. You're still in Germany.'

She no longer had to be prodded. She had the expression of someone who is no longer aware of her surroundings.

Sharply, she bent her elbow and suddenly tore off her whitish piece of loungerie and hit Horst Schillinger in between the eyes. "

This novel is associated with Lustig's name perhaps more than any other of his prose. Untypical for Lustig, he did not change a single word of the original in any of the many reprints.

"A great book. It scrapes the soul. No one who reads it will ever be the same."

Erich Segal

"The beauty and terror of the book are almost too great to bear. Seldom has evil been punished and the victims of evil exalted by such exquisite art."

Choice

"Devastating and ironic."

Publishers Weekly

"An intense, painful novel ... searing ... relentless."

Chicago Sun Times

"Beautiful ... powerful ... One is immediately drawn to the childlike innocence of Katerina. Like Anne Frank and others before and after, Katerina and her companions glorify what they do, unsullied by the brutality of evil."

Minneapolis Tribune

Translated into a dozen languages, including Japanese and Hebrew, English, German and French, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Serbian, Slovak, Roumanian, Finnish, etc.

In Lustig's words, "Ten or twelve days I was so aroused as if I were a personal witness of what is described in the novel. I could not sleep nor go to work. It is a fable, but a fable based on truth, a fable that is the truth by having been written.... I brought 'Katerina' to the publisher Československý spisovatel, where the respected critic and editor,

A. M. Piša said: 'Publish it as soon as possible and without a single revision.'

Everyone said that it is about courage, but I wrote about guile, insidiousness, about a lie. Of course, also about the courage of the girl, but that was only the third motive. Though the readers chose this one. That's the fate of all books, you imply your part and the reader fills in the rest according to his character, intelligence, education, experience. That is the magic of modern literature."

Surprisingly, or perhaps not, the story behind the story evolved. Long after he wrote the novel, in one of his memoirs "Arnošt Lustig Through the Back Entrance" (2009), Lustig reminisced: "Later on, in the archives, I found that in reality, the story concerned a Gestapo confidante, who turned in rich Jews in Warsaw. She lured them into coming to hotel Polski, managed by the Gestapo, promised them visas... Apparently, the woman did this for quite a while. Rich Jews still in hiding jumped at the hope of buying visas to South African countries and leaving. The Gestapo promised her a seat in the carriage, that en route from Warsaw to Auschwitz-Birkenau, would be detached in Krakow, and sent to Switzerland, while the rest of the train would go to the planned destination. In Krakow, no one detached her carriage. She grasped what was in store for her in the room underground where the victims were undressing, so that Germany would not lose even a coat buckle. And she committed her act, again according to the legend, because witnesses are not alive. I spoke to Filip Miller, the Sonderkommandant at the time. She shot both of the SS. One of them, Horst Schillinger, died on the concrete floor of a gas chamber, and Emmerich was taken away to the SS sickroom. Was she merely an immoral woman, or did she pluck up courage in the last minute of her life and take revenge, because she knew? Perhaps it was a story of the last second of a woman, a human being, a Jewess. I would like to write this real story

as well, whether this confidante redeemed herself by this last second from her previous life."

Adapted to film, theater, radio and audio

Based on this novel, Arnošt Lustig co-wrote the screenplay for the award-winning television film "A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová" with director Antonín Moskalyk. In 1966, the film received first prize at the Monte Carlo Film Festival and eight other international prizes.

Lustig also adapted the novel to a theatre play. Following his death in 2011, the play was staged during 2011–2016 in a wagon of a train called "The Lustig Train", with performances throughout train stations of the Czech and Slovak Republics, Krakow and Auschwitz, Poland. The novel has been adapted to a radio play and is broadcast regularly on the Czech radio.

Audio (on CD)

The novel has been adapted into an audio story (in Czech).

The novel is considered a Czech Classic and is integrated into curricula of Czech and Slovak high schools as well as questions in the national Maturite examination.

Considered among top ten finest Czech literary works:

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/czech-republic/articles/an-introduction-to-czech-literature-in-10-books/>

"He sang, a hundred times courageous, a hundred times good, a thousand times just, a thousand times beautiful..."



From the television film by Antonín Moskalyk "A Prayer for Kateřina Horovitzová", with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his novel

Ripples on the River

Vlny v řece

Collection of Selected Prose

- Novel “Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová” – Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou
- Collection of short stories from “You Shall Humiliate No One”
 - ⊗ “The Girl with A Scar” – Dívka s jizvou
 - ⊗ “First in Front of the Gates” – První před branami
 - ⊗ “Blue Day” – Modrý den
 - ⊗ “A Clock Like a Windmill” – Hodiny jako větrný mlýn
- “The Street of Lost Brothers”

Two short stories from the original edition (#3.)

 - ⊗ “A Girl by the Oleander Tree” – Dívka u oleandrového keře
 - ⊗ “Radiance of the Midnight Sun” – Záře půlnočního slunce

and

- ⊗ Novel “Dita Saxová” (#5.)
- ⊗ Short story “The Big White Journey” – Velká bílá cesta

This book opens with “A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová”, considered a classic where innocence and evil, avarice and guilt, collide with hope amid the scourge of the Nazi extermination camp. In his

“Only in human eyes can loyalty seem faithless and love look like betrayal”

A Girl by the Oleander Tree

laudatio at the Franz Kafka Prize award ceremony to Arnošt Lustig in Prague (2008), literary scientist Hans Dieter Zimmerman, a jury member, stated:

“From Lustig’s work, ‘A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová’ reminds me most of Franz Kafka. ..Lustig’s sympathy belongs to those who look the inevitable in the face, and who, to quote Kafka, preserve that which is indestructible in people in spite of the entire annihilation of their humanity. In “Diamonds of the Night”, Lustig writes ‘Hopelessness is much better than hope...’ Katerina Horovitzová is an allegory of this hopelessness that preserves the indestructible. At the end, the rabbi recites a prayer for Katerina Horovitzová: it is a kaddish for all of the dead, who had to die without a prayer.

The short stories in “You Shall Humiliate No One” follows the motto that *“There is a law that even sheep will defy wolves and the wolves will succumb”*.

Whereas Katerina Horovitzová could only make a vain gesture of high moral value leaving the “wolves” intact, the heroes of this set of short stories are free, already taking part in the final acts against the oppressors in Prague in May 1945. Mostly, they are people who are not well equipped to be heroes, they are children or the elderly or otherwise weak, but in their determination lies the expression of the most precious humanity.

The book “The Street of Lost Brothers”, which closes the “Waves in the River”, differs distinctly from its original version. In large part, it is comprised of “Dita Saxová”, accompanied by three shorter stories. **We find ourselves in the present and the heroes of these stories are healing themselves from the wounds of the war experience and the complexities of the post-war world. Someone finds the strength to heal, someone else is slightly fascinated or even overcome by these and dies as a result.** New questions and territories of life enter Lustig’s work without the author simplifying the answers in any way.

Adapted to film, theater, radio and audio

“A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová” – Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou: television film; theater; radio; audio story (see #7)

“Dita Saxová” – film (see #5)

“Blue Day” – Modrý den: television films (1963, 1994); audio story (see #6)

“Only man looks like a fortress that surrenders when it has stood its ground”

A Girl by the Oleander Tree

“Things remain only what they are”

A Girl by the Oleander Tree

The White Birches of Autumn

Bílé břízy na podzim

Novel

The story about soldiers without arms, people excluded from civil life, is a ballad about the birth of a dream and a desire in vain to realize it in the midst of brutal life conditions.

The novel takes place in Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s, at a time when the totalitarian regime is unlawfully detaining "offenders" considered "politically unreliable" in labour camps. Here, in deserted countryside close to the border, a simple village girl becomes acquainted with a special army unit made up of big, small and assumed offenders of different ages and origins. The men persuade the girl to secretly visit them at night and please whoever shows interest. Interest is naturally high but there are also some, who do not come to terms with such degradation.

Unlike Lustig's earlier prose tied to the Shoah, this novel was not welcomed by the existing totalitarian regime, as it challenged the paradigm of "building socialism" through exposing the dehumanizing values of the labour camps.

Tension rises and collisions erupt, culminating when the youngest one's timid compassion for the girl turns to love and decision to free the girl and himself to start a new life.

"Afterwards, she asked the one who was new here, 'You're not cold anymore?'

'You need not ask,' he replied. He felt great gratitude toward the girl, but he did not want to speak about it. Then he closed his eyes and he did not discourage her from leaving.

'I will write my mother about it,' he said nevertheless.

'I heard you,' she answered him. Should you ever

need to send that letter.'

'Come to me, you have your things here,' the man nicknamed Prosecutor let himself be heard.

It was time for the girl to go.

'You were really good today,' he added.

'A real countess.'

The nineteen year old followed her every step. He was agitated.

'There is a lad over here, above me, with fever,' said again the Prosecutor. 'You could take a look at him before you go.'

'Do you think so?' said the girl.

'It would do him good.'

'You ought to go,' said the priest. it's enough already. Go.'

"It's still raining outside,' said the girl, as if it was merely about that.

'For God's sake, don't you see that it's raining cats and dogs?' someone asked. Christian compassion.

The Commanding Officer of our room wouldn't do it, if he were well. Nor his deputy, if he were still here. Noone is here. It's very important that noone is here. Just her and us. The guard is snoring.

You're worse than the Commanding Officer.'

'It's probably terribly cold out there,' the girl said.

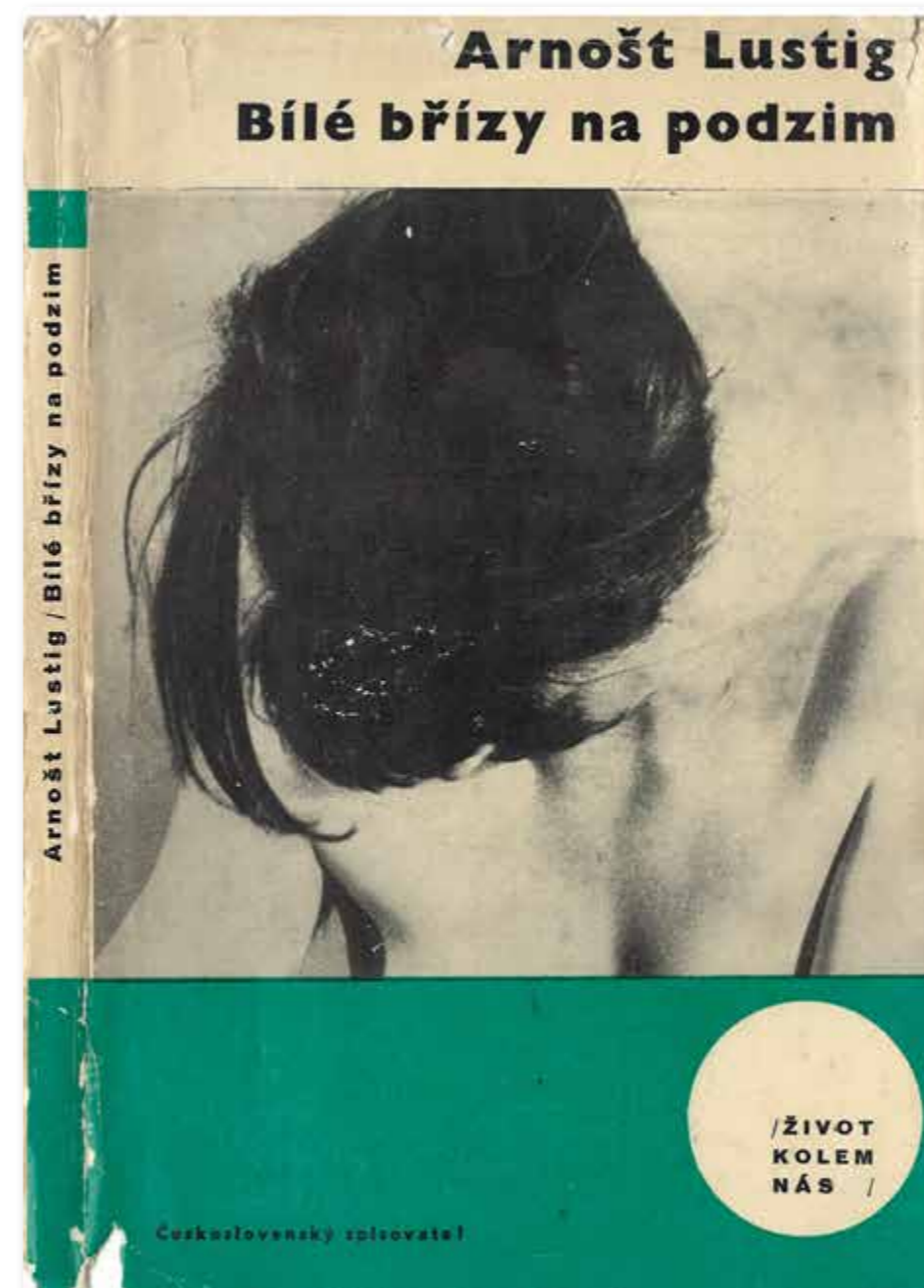
Both wrestlers and the Prosecutor giggled again.

'A lady, look. A born countess,' said the first one."

The author further developed this controversial novel thirty years later (see #26)

Of interest to filmmakers

The renown director Juraj Herz (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juraj_Herz) started work on the screenplay, as discussed with his long-time friend and colleague Arnošt Lustig, shortly before his untimely death. Further information available on request.



Bitter Smell of Almonds

Hořká vůně mandlí

Collection of Selected Prose

- Novel “The House of Returned Echoes” – Dům vrácené ozvěny
- Short story “A Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp” – Muž ve velikosti poštovní známky
- Short story “Right Without God” – Právo bez Boha
- Short story “Early in the Morning” – Chvilé hned po ránu

Four stories depicting the suffering of the Jews during World War II, focusing on the moral values of people who often faced grave decisions, be it the father of a family trying to save them from death, an old professor deciding whether to die a voluntary death, or a boy returning from a concentration camp and hesitating between revenge and forgiveness. Regardless, the heroes' life journey leads to the gas chambers in the concentration camps.

"In the fiction of Arnošt Lustig, evil may end in what is done to the flesh, but it begins in what happens to the imagination."

Jonathan Brent

"In a 'Man the Size of a Postage Stamp', a German Commandant and the simpleminded son he cannot love 'relocate' a group of Jewish children and their devoted teacher in a 'windowless' ambulance that is in fact a mobile gas chamber. Lustig's juxtaposition of true parent with false, of people who love each other with people who only pretend to do so, makes this one one of his powerful and evocative stories.

The questions Lustig explores were not born of the holocaust; they are as old and universal as

mankind's search for the meaning of existence. The fact that he has chosen that most real and unreal of times as a vehicle is not surprising.

What is remarkable is the way in which he is able to enter the minds of his Nazi characters, understanding their emotional and moral frailties as few others have been capable; the reader is at once repelled and fascinated.

Northwestern University Press

" ' Why don't you listen when I speak to you?"

'I'm looking,' the boy said.

'At what?'

'At the Ambulances. They look like birds. Like fish.

Like swans.

'They're good cars.'

'They don't have windows.'

'They're disinfection trucks,' the father told him.

'Yesterday, three of them broke down. They've got new engines already, or I hope so. I will show you four new ones.'

'They've got exhaust pipes like elephant trunks,' said the boy.

Maybe he should have been born a girl, Herr Commandant thought. What am I going to do with him? And through the father's mind flashed the thought how the boy would be better off.

The boy looked up at the sky, at the picture the smoke was frawing in the still air and at the rolls of huge, black, sooty, vaporlike ballons. The blue sky was endless.

'There will be a concert this evening,' Herr Commandant said. The Entry of the Gladiators. That's a nice march. Einzug, der Gladiatoren. Will we go listen in the casino?"

From "A Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp"

Adapted to radio and audiobook

"The Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp" was made into a play broadcast on Czechoslovak Radio, awarded First Prize (1967) ,and also adapted to an audiobook on CD (<https://www.audiolibrix.com/cs/Directory/Book/4269/Audiokniha-Clovek-velikosti-postovni-znamky-Arnost-Lustig>)

Of interest to filmmakers

"A Man in the Size of a Postage Stamp": Lustig's screenplay is available to directors and producers on request

"Justice is the loftiest man can reach in himself and towards others"

Darling

Miláček

Novel

A love story taking place in besieged Jerusalem during the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948-1949. With strong auto-biographical elements, drawing on the author's experience as twenty-two year old war correspondent for the Czechoslovak Radio.

"A beautiful book. Shades of Stendhal, Joyce and Lawrence. Romantic but neither dated nor comical. Erotic but neither indulgent nor crude. A stream of consciousness as a 'Leitmotif'... Another Michener..." Hutchinson's

"In 1948, in the midst of the Israeli War of Independence, we were walking with a friend in besieged Jerusalem. Artillery from the surrounding hills was shelling the street. Grenades were falling close. In a hurry, we found refuge in the apartment of two girls – soldiers. In the city under siege, there was nothing to eat. They only had a bit of hardened bread and half a bottle of wine. And a record player with a handle with one record with the melody from Rene Clair's film "Sous les toits de Paris" ("Under the Roofs of Paris"). We started to dance. Artillery grenades were flying over the flat roof of the house. **They reminded us that death and life are sisters**, and that they are damned close. The artillery was persistent. Both pairs ended up in bed. It was an unforgettable night. The women were beautiful, death near. The gunfire did not quiet down. We heard its zoom above our head. The friend who, during the war, fought against the Nazis, was calming us down. **'When you hear the gunfire, it's still good.'** At four o'clock in the morning, my companion got up and got dressed. Why? At this time, her fiancé, the Commander of the Northern Front, was going to

"Inspiration is the child of a dream and reality"

be waiting for her. Each one of us had someone we loved."
Arnošt Lustig

"Maybe I will manage to write it in twenty or fifty years, if I'm still alive, Danny Polnauer said to himself, and it will exist, for whoever is interested. He could do it right away, if she told him to. And the excitement, which drove his heart to his throat, meant he wasn't able to think about anything anymore, make the slightest movement or say anything, unless he would change his position and lie down next to her. Tingling he didn't know permeated him. He was hoarse without speaking. He loved her without touching her. He got up and lied down next to her. And the agitation that she'll throw him out or that she'll tell him not to do it, equalled the astonishment that made him do it in the first place. He crossed the line beyond which there was no way to tell whether anything he would spoil he could still fix, and the fear from this plunged into a sea of indifference. He merely waited, holding his breath about what she would do."

The author finished "Darling" in Israel in 1969 after emigrating there, following the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) by Warsaw Pact Armies. However, "Darling's" Czechoslovak shelf life was short-lived – while published, most of the printed stock was destroyed.

It was the author's last work before leaving Czechoslovakia due to the invasion of the Warsaw Pact Armies in August 1968.

"Good is the only thing I am moved by because I know evil"

"Perhaps peace is always and will always remain, an unborn child. An orphan... Because there is no place in the world where this peace can last as long as peace is not everywhere."

"The world is the place where everything happens. The place that we don't understand and at the same time, must understand lest we perish. The world is a trap but also a lovely green meadow."



United States: Arnošt Lustig (centre) with friends, including Oscar-winning film director Jan Kadar (Shop on Main Street) and wife (left), 1970s

The Unloved: From the Diary of 17-Year Old Perla Sch.

Nemilovaná. Z deníku sedmnáctileté Perly Sch.

Winner of the National Jewish Book Award for Fiction

Novel

The story of a prostitute in the Theresienstadt ghetto. Perla sells her body to save her soul. Surviving by giving it for whatever is offered: a slice of bread, a few grams of margarine, a scarf, some buttons, a bit of coal to warm her little garret. One customer's gift is his access to the Central Registry, where he switches her card whenever a new transport east – to Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, to Auschwitz – is being assembled. Her clients count a rabbi and a Luftwaffe officer. He tells her: "Well, what do you know? A Jewish whore."

"Despite its setting ... Lustig's latest novel is strangely affirmative in its vision of innocence and courage. Stunning and unsentimental."

New York Times Book Review

"Through the sensibilities of its young Jewish protagonist, this book gives us access to the inner lives of the victims as no history could possibly do!"

Washington Post

"In this stark, lyrical and powerful novel, the acclaimed writer A. Lustig has created a tale that soars beyond nightmare to leave us, moved and astonished, with a transcendent sense of hope."

Arbor House Publishing Company

"'I told him that I also seem as a passenger on the Titanic.' He closed his eyes and lifted his heavy eyebrows. 'We are still sailing and the

ship's orchestras are playing with all their might, he put his hand around my shoulders. 'Maybe the iceberg toward which we are going will melt.' "

"I wrote this book about the year 1976 or maybe a bit earlier, when Eva was growing up and I was wondering what she would do with her innocence had she been in the camps. I wondered about this not only when I saw my kids, but also when I saw all children around, in school, at home, on the playground.. The motives are deeper and deepest streams, where the memory and powerlessness mix with anger at that it is impossible to communicate that which is nearly incommunicable. I was looking at the picture of Anna Frank and wondered, how she would behave (act), had she survived Bergen-Belsen, where they killed her. I asked my daughter Eva, that, as long as it is possible, she confide what she is thinking about, what she thinks about the world, and I explained to her why I need it, that I am writing a story about the soul and the body, about the battle of the good with the bad, and the bad with the worst, and that I am returning to the time of war, to the people who would resemble her; one of the dreams, a moral dream in a house in the mountains is directly from her..."
Arnošt Lustig

"I was thinking of the strength which women have and which at the same time, is their most vulnerable

moment, strength which they can transform into a weapon."

Arnošt Lustig

"The protagonists of my books are often women because I admire them. In Auschwitz, they gained my esteem. When the Germans sent a mother of one of the women to gas because she had grey hair or wore glasses, the other women sang to her to console her. The SS sent dogs after them or shot them. Whoever would fathom Jewesses to sing? They shut them up with ease. I listened to them singing. I knew it would stop in a moment.

Every day, I awaited the beauty of their songs..."

Arnošt Lustig

Adapted to film, theatre and audio

The novel has been adapted into a screenplay and is under production in the Czech Republic. It has also been staged as a theatre play in Theatre Kolowrat, Prague and elsewhere in the Czech Republic, directed by Jakub Korčák and produced by ArtWay. The Theater of K. H. Mácha, Liberec staged the play for schools.

Audio (on CD)

The novel has been adapted into an audio story (in Czech)

"Between justice and revenge, there is a line so thin that I can no longer see it. Have you noticed that everything around you, people, things, time, the past, as well as the outlook for the future – even if it were to come between tomorrow and a thousand years hence – will teach you how to kill, even if you were born a lamb?"



Arnošt Lustig with daughter Eva,
at the time he wrote "The Unloved",
Washington, D.C., 1973

Nemilovaná

(Z deníku Perly Sch.)

podle stejnojmenné novely Arnošta Lustiga,
oceněné Americkou židovskou národní knižní cenou (1986)

Dramatizace a režie: Jakub Korčák

Scénografie: Jan Dušek / Kostýmy: Jan Dušek, Michaela Semotánová, Polina Akhmetzhanova
Hrají: Martina Balážová, Dagmar Jegerová, Milan Mikulčík a Lukáš Král

*Divadelní inscenace podle novely Arnošta Lustiga Nemilovaná, vyprávějící příběh židovské dívky Perly Sch.,
která za 2. světové války v terezínském v ghettu provozuje nejstarší řemeslo světa.*

25. 6. 2018 od 15:00 Terezín, Vlak Lustig



Korčák © Jan Dušek

„Moje nejmilejší kniha. Proto, že všichni, kteří by mohli milovat, zabili... A jestliže je v tom nějaká poselství, tak možná, že se musíme bránit, že je to naše právo i povinnost, že hránit se musí i bezbranní, a je-li v něčem velikost člověka, je to nakonec v tom, že se brání.“

Arnošt Lustig

„Lustigův román, navzdory prostředí nacistického koncentračního tábora, je nečekaně pozitivní ve svém pojetí nevinosti a statečnosti. Ohromující a nesentimentální, oslavující okamžiky normálnosti uprostřed labyrintu a smrti.“

New York Times



www.kulturni.amn.gov.cz
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Autorka práva uplatňuje Arnošt Lustig / OPA



From the theatre play "The Unloved"

Indecent Dreams

Neslušné sny

Collection of short stories

- “Blue Day” – Modrý den
- “The Girl with A Scar” – Dívka s jizvou
- “Indecent Dreams” – Neslušné sny

The author “explores the existential interiors of those at the margin of disaster..”

A German prostitute assigned to Prague, a girl in a Nazi home for orphans, and a young woman working as a cashier in a movie theatre, lose themselves in a world of cruelty and collapsing social order while their inner worlds teem with the fascination of life – sexual fantasy, naive idealism, vengencefulness, inchoate visions of justice. Flowing together in a single turbid continuum, these interior and exterior experiences provide the author with the occasion to question the human condition in both its most intimate, private confusions and its collective horrors. Each of the characters must piece together out of the whirlpool of their lives some sense of what it finally means to say “I exist”, “I am”, and therefore “I must act.” It is the emergence of their certainty that their existence can only be realized in action that and that this action often must tragically and ironically negate the very existence it confirms that distinguishes Lustig’s fiction and places it – morally, philosophically artistically – among the outstanding achievements of twentieth century literature.

The indecent dreams which the protagonists imagine for themselves cannot compare with the obscenity of injustice, cruelty and domination legitimated by the Nazi imagination. These are not stories about the war; they are stories about the endless conflict in any individual who resists the

“A woman is beauty, bliss, sacrifice, responsibility, esteem, inspiration ... everything.”

brutality and, finally, the stupidity of dehumanizing power.”

Northwestern University Press

“The heroines are not Jewish, although the Jewish tragedy is omni-present... following the Czech and German protagonists. The short stories marvelessly evoke hysteria, in which bloody events intersect with private thoughts and dreams... Only a few short stories in world literature have captured so vividly the madness, which possessed people on the edge of death and at the same time, so close to peace.”

Josef Škvorecký

“Blue Day” and “The Girl with a Scar” were published initially in the collection of short stories “You Shall Humiliate No One” – Nikoho neponížíš (#6.).

“Indecent Dreams” were published initially in collection of short stories “Bitter Smell of Almonds” (#10.) as “Right Without God”.

Adapted to film and audio

See #6.

Darkness Casts No Shadow

Tma nemá stín

Novel

A treatise on friendship. **Two boys escape from a train on its way to Dachau. Wandering through the woods in search of Prague, they slip from the present – the forest is in its own way as hostile as the camp – into the idolized past of their childhood and the idealized future of manhood.**

Based on the author’s own story in April 1945.

“Like my mother used to say – If you want to live, you’ll live. If you don’t, you won’t. That’s how nature’s arranged it.”

“The second one swung over the partition of the cattle car and landed on the grass. He had his eyes closed and his head was spinning. He stopped counting the days he hadn’t eaten. The eighteen-year old fell next to him and gasped ferociously: “Give me your hand. Hurry, pull yourself together. They’re shooting already.” The airplane was now above them. And in the next moment, it was spraying the front of the train with ammunition.

“They faded into the night, like a slim double shadow. The stillness was not silenced.”

‘Move it! We have to finish the rest of that run together!’ “

“Is everything lost in the darkness?”

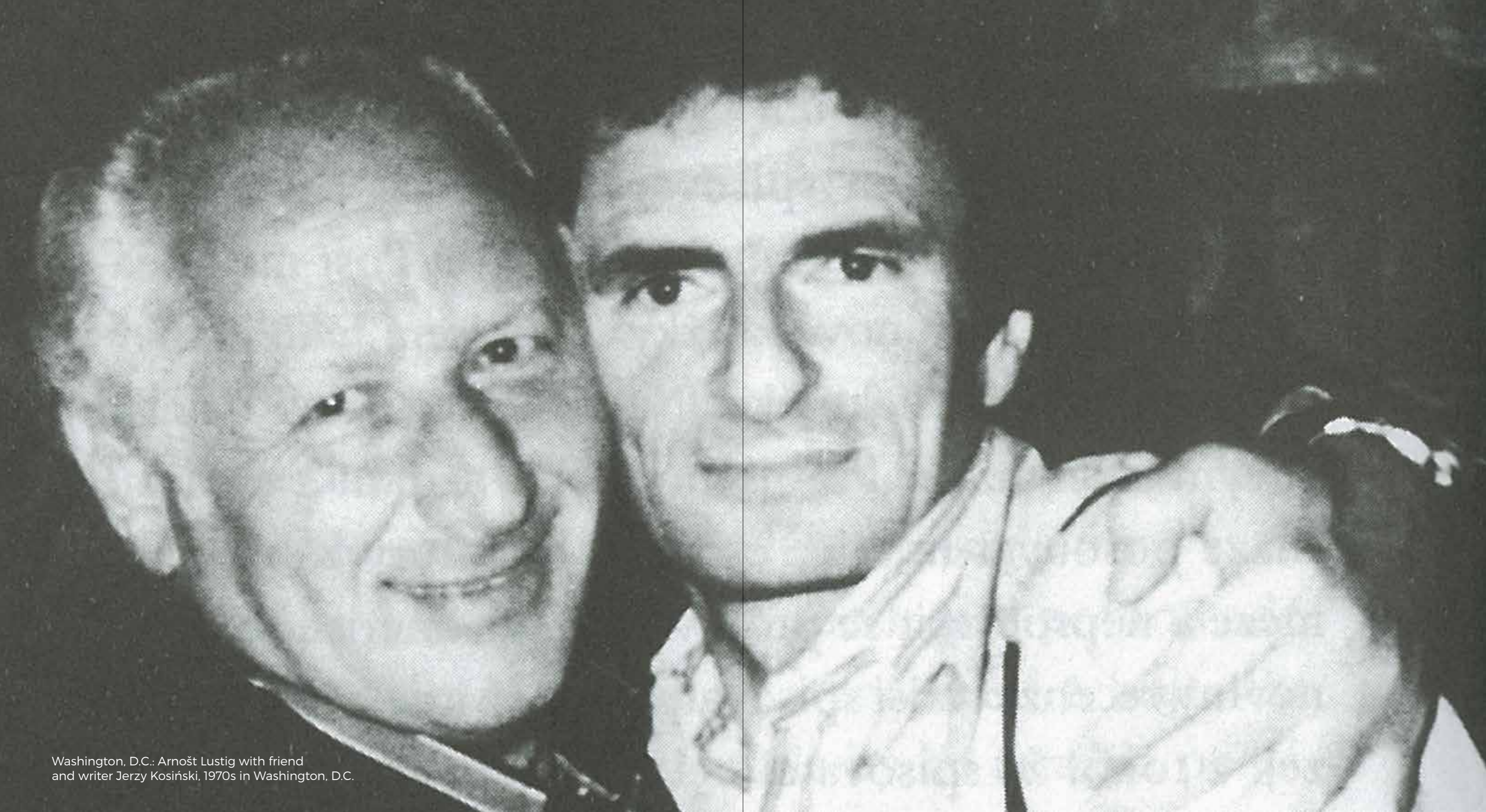
Expanded from the original short story published in “Diamonds of the Night” (#2.).

Adapted to film

See #2.

“To kill or not to kill had gotten into a man like the blood in his heart or the air he inhales and exhales. Alongside the will to live, there was the compounded determination to kill.

It was always stronger than you were, but as long as you lived, you could try to resist it.”



Washington, D.C.: Arnošt Lustig with friend
and writer Jerzy Kosiński, 1970s in Washington, D.C.

The House of Returned Echoes

Dům vrácené ozvěny

Novel

In this novel, the author pays tribute to his father, Emil Lustig, who died in the gas chambers in Auschwitz at the end of September 1944.

"It is the story of a man for whom family was the raison d'etre, for which he struggled against fate. In his case, fate was Germany, the Nazis, and the struggle for dignity. It is a story about the times he confronted – like a ship's pilot setting out to sea in a coracle without oars. It is also a story about a man, who like many others, believed until the end that the Nazis would not go through with their threats because he himself could never carry out such things on anyone – or admit that someone might be happy in the midst of others' misfortunes. He relied on what is called civilization and its laws, instead of relying on the instinct that says that man is his own devil and that he who does not defend himself perishes. He was one of the twelve million killed in the camps of World War II. In the same way that people are identical, and yet unique like their fingerprints. This is a story then, of a man and his family and the other people close to them. Or, we can say, that they all are inspiration, mixing truth and fantasy, in any fiction. But down at the bottom lies the reality – the final Solution, which the Nazis planned, created and mobilized.

It was said that zyklon-B, which the Germans used for extermination of people in Auschwitz-Birkenau, had the bitter smell of almonds. Perhaps. It seemed to me, that while writing, no matter where I was, I was breathing it – as if it were still in the air – that I am still breathing it, every night and each day. It transformed living people into dead ones, hope into despair, usefulness into futility.

I hoped to write an honest book."
Arnošt Lustig

Expanded from the original short story published in "Bitter Smell of Almonds" (#10.). Later on, the author crafted a shorter story from this novel called "Initiation" (#20.) and a short story called "Echo" (Ozvěna in the collection of short stories "Shoah: Morning till evening" – "Šoa: Od rána do večera").

"When I went on a journey around the world in 1965, I took the manuscript with me. I wrote in hotel rooms while in Persia, India and China; in Ceylon, Tokyo and Hanoi; and, finally, in San Francisco and New York. Before departing from New York for San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the airline tickets for Madrid, Paris, and return to Prague, I left my car, borrowed from an émigré friend, unattended for a moment. When I got back, the car was opened and the suitcase with my manuscript gone.

A representative from Prague said he suspected the American Secret Service; the American police said they suspected the Secret Police from the other side. No one ever located the suitcase. I rewrote the book from an earlier draft. I had the feeling that, in a sense, one completes the writing of a book before he touches the paper. Everything came back to me – it is easier to return a lost book to paper than to return to earth the lost people one writes about. This then, is the story of a man for whom family was the reason for his creation, for which he struggled against fate. In his case, this fate was Germany, the Nazis, and the struggle for dignity. It is a story about the times he confronted – like a ship's pilot setting out to sea in a coracle without oars."
Arnošt Lustig

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnošt_Lustig)

Letter from Prague, 1947

Dopis z Prahy, 1947

Lustig's first published article "Father" (Táto), 2 October 1947, Rudé právo

"Just today, on Saint Wenceslas' Day three years ago, I saw you last. I remember how you felt when you let me, your seventeen year-old son, go into the unknown. They said that we would be going to work in Germany. Of course it wasn't true, as you suspected while attaching transport number 1,861 on my coat... I know that you remembered me when the gas chamber door was slammed shut, wondering whether I wasn't the first member of the family to have already completed this journey. And that you remembered mother and the others, wondering whether the same destiny was awaiting them as well. I see the question marks in your blue eyes about whether the world knows and whether it is trying to prevent it... I don't know whether you got your answer because gas chokes rapidly..."



"We are all like a tree, deeply rooted, invisibly deep"

"Conscience is like your heart – you can't carve off a piece and expect the rest to function as before"

"I used to think that anything that happens has two sides to it, but now I know that it's not like that. There are afflictions that have no reason. There's only one reason and only the devil could explain it."

Waiting for Leah. Jewish Trilogy 1.

Lea z Leeuwardenu. Židovská trilogie 1.

Novel

This is the first in the trilogy about the destinies of three Jewish Women (#16.-#18.). The protagonists are cruelly deprived of their womanhood and must fight for it in the environment of the fascist concentration camps, where face to face with death, feminine beauty, love and tenderness, acquire fully unexpected dimensions. Thus, the novels are **three variations of a sovereign existential theme.**

A story toward the end of World War II in September 1944, about life and death, about the desire to survive, in which man – in his grandeur – and of course also weakness – is capable of nearly everything. On the outskirts of a concentration camp in northern Bohemia, three people – two eighteen year old men and a desperately lost young woman, Leah, are thrown together, sharing their precarious existence in an attic. While the world disintegrates around them, their interactions are charged with passion, their days filled with erotic and spiritual attraction. Caught in the web of their relationships, their futures are uncertain and any choices they have left to make will be made in the face of almost certain death...

The story has an autobiographical thread. Leah was a Dutch girl called Marie.

“In my view, Lustig is the finest living Czech author and his work cries out for the Nobel Prize”
John Murray, Literary Review

“The power of his works lies in their very lack of melodrama... beautiful prose.”
Time Out

“This wonderful book follows the shifting moralities of people caught in a hopeless situation.”
Good Book Guide

“Would I try to escape if I had a gun? Would I be able, say from an ambush, to shoot down the worst people in the Commandant’s officelike Karl Rahm, the Commandant, or Heindl? Or Anton Burger? Or their mistress on her white horse, the blonde telephonist? Or osme of my own people, the vilest, the most ruthless, the most disagreeable? Or Gottlieb Faber if he picked my index card and instead of his chance mistress, assigned me to hte next transport? Only after a while did the idea of a pistol give rise to the idea of suicide. That was close to everyone. Everyone felt they were on the borderline. Between what had been and what would never be again. For the moment, one just needed to survive...”

I despised them as the Germans despised us. Was I hoping, like that baker from Leeuwarden who sold his bread and flour to Leah, that the war would go on because he’d never made so much money before? The pistol had made me a judge – also of myself.”

Interestingly, Leah is foreshadowed already in Lustig’s first novel “My Acquaintance Vili Feld” thirty-seven years earlier.

Parts of the novel also published as short stories “Cabaret”– Kabaret and “I Am Walking Into a Dream” – Odcházím do snu in the collection of short stories “Shoah: I Am Walking Into a Dream” – Šoa, Odcházím do snu.

Colette: A Girl from Antwerp. Jewish Trilogy 2.

Colette: Dívka z Antverp. Židovská trilogie 2.

Novel

Considered among the top achievements of Lustig’s prose, although to this day, it has only been published in Czech.

The love story of prisoners Vili Feld and beautiful Belgian Jewess Colette recounts the fate of a secret love from the place of horror and death, and the thin boundary between good and evil and truth and lie. Auschwitz is the pitiless world of everyday battle for survival. There is a strict hierarchy even between the prisoners themselves. Everything and anything that could be traded to save life, or at least delay death, is racketeered. Colette arrives in Auschwitz in the Belgian transport. The prisoner Vili Feld, assistant to a kapo, advises her what to say when she reports for selection and thus saves her from death in the gas chamber. Her beauty is soon noticed by the fanatical SS officer Weissacker, who hence employs her in his workshop. Uncontrollably, he falls under her spell while drunk by the cruelty and power he holds over the life and death of a racially inferior being. In spite of the daily suffering, Vili and Colette become closer and stronger to tolerate the hell of the camp. In a hopeless fight for life, they plan a risky escape...

“The story of Colette is reminiscent of a flower, a straw of grass, stepped on by a hobnailed shoe, which rises again. It is the beauty of a flying bird, though the bird flies North rather than South. Her fate resembles that of a strong bird who became weak through an infinitely long flight and died perhaps only for exhaustion. Lustig’s novel

is a masterful drawing of characters in key life situations. Until now, the Jewish tragedy has not been noted in this way.”
Nakladatelství Kvarta

“It is the responsibility of writers to tell the truth about the time and events, which today seem unbelievable to today’s young generation. It is their responsibility to tell it well, to tell the truth and thereby, make the world more human. Sometimes, the truth is ugly. But what can one do about that? How can one express even ugliness beautifully?”

Arnošt Lustig

“She felt like a bird, flying above the waves that are engulfing her. Already, she had been hanging on for nine months. The waves were fed by the wind, the moon, the rain, the summer heat. She didn’t always have the courage to fly, and she didn’t have any place to rest, to hide, to gain strength. Sometimes, she wished to be one of those endless waves...”

“People are lies and truth. Good and evil. A grey zone without borders. A luminescent illusion disappearing in the dusk... The voice of conscience that is horrifying and improbable. The mute singing of the losers and the victors. The merry singing of dead birds. The destiny that is given us. The legacy of everything that has happened and of that which is yet to come...”

“Vili Feld never saw Colette Cohen again. (Nobody saw her.) She disappeared the way dusk swallows up the day and the dawn tears the night to shreds. (From lights-out to the morning star,

from daybreak to nightfall). She became one of the millions. Disappearing without a trace, as if she had never lived. He thought about the last time she came to him. By then, she already had the indifference she had encountered here as commonly as light in day and dark at night...
Death in Germany wasn't a handsome young man or a ravishing girl or a lumbering giant with big strong arms, but a huge poisonous spider, brutal and merciless... The Germans learned to size up human beings like insects, in the process of becoming insects themselves, dehumanized and alieated from the normal world. One day Unterscharfuhrer Edmund Franz-Horst Weissacker showed up at the workshop with a drunken shine in his eyes and announced, 'You may not believe it, but Zyklon B is a Jewish invention', he said the inventor's name. Little did he suspect how it would be put to use."

Prior to "Colette", the author wrote a short story with the leitmotif of dead birds, later present in "Colette". The story "Merry Laughter of Dead Birds" – Veselý smích mrtvých ptáků, was published in Czech (1987, 1991) and Hungarian (Kalligram, 2001).

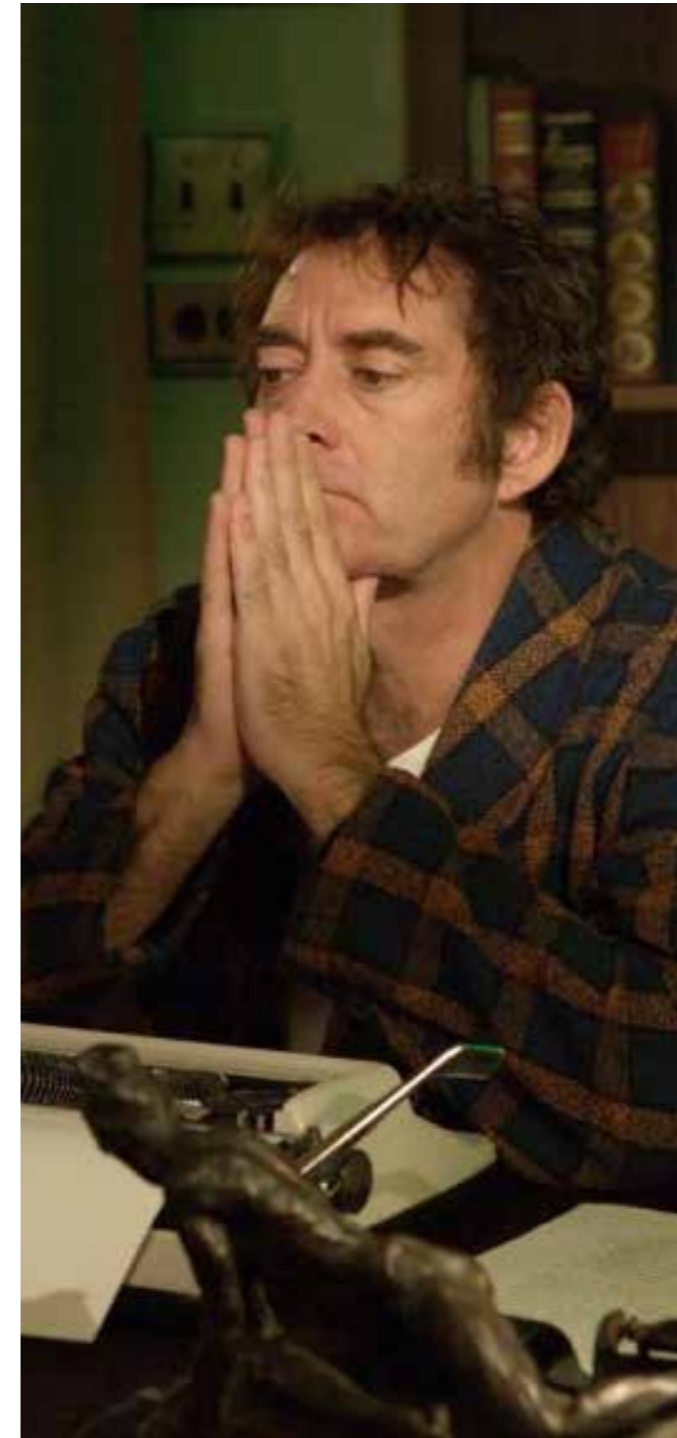
Adapted to film

The novel was adapted to film (2013), with the screenplay co-written by Arnošt Lustig and director Milan Cieslar, in a Czech, Slovak and Dutch co-production.

Musical score composed by award-winning Icelandic film and television composer Atli Örvarsson (Rams – Hrútar); winner of the UnCertain Regard Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival.



From the film by Milan Cieslar "Colette", with literary screenplay by Arnošt Lustig, based on his novel



Tanga: A Girl from Hamburg. Jewish Trilogy 3.

Tanga: Dívka z Hamburku. Židovská trilogie 3.

Novel

The heroine of this novel is a circus equestrienne and prostitute, twenty-year-old Soňa Inge Grossová, alias Tanga. In the Theresienstadt Ghetto, she must face not only her past, but also uncertain future. She measures events around her through the perspective of horses, the only beings with whom she has become accustomed to and understood. Their freedom reminds her that much more tragically, the prison, lack of freedom and distorted relationships, which are not always caused by the war.

Based on autobiographical elements.

*“I say things which perhaps I should not say. In Theresienstadt, my father kept asking me whether I had already been with a girl. I told him, ‘Father, don’t be silly, leave it alone. I know about it, but I still have time. **‘He asked me every day. I was sixteen. So once, I got irritated, and went to a prostitute, a girl from a German circus in Hamburg, half Jewish and half German. I say to her: ‘My father is on my case all the time, that I have not been with a woman yet.’**”*

‘So, have you been with someone already?’ she asked. ‘I have not been with one, but I am

informed.’ She said, fine, to come tomorrow, I will be eleventh or thirteenth, I do not remember that anymore. She told me the next day, ‘You are the last one, I will rest for a while.’ She had received a postcard or letter from her parents from Hamburg that day. She will read it and I should put my

things aside. She herself had nothing left to put aside. Then she told me the right things which a woman tells a boy who has no idea. Although I had heard about it from when I was four, but it is something else to hear and to live it. Well, it was not that nice, although she was very lovely. She tried to induct me in the most pleasant manner. There were traces on her of the eleven or twelve before me. I really did not like it. It was behind me.

I went home to the barracks and waited the entire evening whether my father will ask me whether I had been with a woman already, and what I will tell him. But from that day, he stopped asking me. I do not know what he knew or what he could figure out looking at me, but he never asked me again. I did not begrudge him for that. He was my father whom I loved.”

Arnošt Lustig, Testimony, 2006

A part of the novel also published as a short story called “Love Has Sad Eyes” in the collection of short stories “Shoah: I Am Walking Into a Dream” – Šoa, Odcházím do snu.

An excerpt of the novel was published in English in The Kenyon Review (2002).

Adapted to film

Tanga: A Girl from Hamburg: Lustig’s screenplay is available to directors and producers on request

Fire on Water

Oheň na vodě

Collection of short stories

- “Flood” – Potopa
- “Leah from Leuwarden” – Lea z Leuwardenu
- “Enzo – A Jewish Story” – Enzo – židovská povídka

“For Lustig, as for Primo Levi, the Holocaust reveals the fragility of the illusions created by our cultural certainties and our moral assumptions.

One may, for example, speculate on how Plato’s dialogues on the moral virtues would have differed had Plato been an inmate of Auschwitz.

Would Thomas Jefferson still claim that human beings have unalienable rights, had he experienced and survived Sobibór? After the experience of Dachau, what might Kant’s ‘categorical imperative’ have been? **For Lustig, survival in itself represents no moral virtue.** He said ‘that the best people did not survive the camps. In Lustig’s view, how one behaved rather than whether or not one survived is the focus of attention.”

Byron L. Sherwin

“V.F. was an electrical engineer by profession. Here, he lost his wife and two kids, his parents and three brothers... When someone’s turn will come only depended on coincidence or luck. When instead of someone, they will kill someone else. Until they kill everyone. V.F., the Kapo’s assistant, said to himself: ‘Each one of us has our own demons. Yesterday’s biases. Shadows of some sort...’ No one heard him.

‘Only each one for himself recognizes when losing is victory, and winning is defeat.’

He wasn’t sure. He knew that he had to be careful to recognize when good is good and bad is

bad (for himself) and when fair play or justice is burdensome. The camp was the end of the world as they knew it before. At the same time, it was the end of all human benchmarks. Did it still make sense to think of the camp as the result of man’s many contradictory attempts and tendencies, and was it possible to determine what led up to it, how the camp at the same time became a cancer and a part of the world? Perhaps it was the end of man the way the world knew him as much as the world will never be what it used to be...

In the meantime, everyone concentrated everything – on efforts to survive. It was no longer about the art of living, but the art of surviving. The worthlessness of life concerns everybody. Life and death... differed by the thickness of a hair. The instinct of self-preservation equalled the instinct of self-destruction.”

From “Flood”

In the first two stories, the character of Vili Feld (“My Acquaintance Vili Feld”, #4. and #25.) takes centre stage. In Enzo, it is time for reflection during a journey in Rome, a few years after the war.

“His best advice was: not to advise anyone”

Leah from Leuwarden

Initiation

Zasvěcení

Novel

“Initiation” is extracted from the tragic circumstances marking the life of Prague Jews following the onset of the Nazi rule, focusing on the mysteries of love, pursuit and sex which culminate with the recognition that even these form but a part of threatened existence of man and mankind.

Based on autobiographical elements.

“There is no definition of love. Man is destined never to come to know its secret.”

“It doesn’t matter that some call it debauchery, fornication or adultery. Words run short to describe it. The body is what it is. It’s a delight that even the German war will not destroy. ‘A man never has enough of it,’ sighed Marie. ‘Seriously, you didn’t get enough of it? And what about love?’ ‘It’s like food,’ said Mr Peters. ‘You can’t console the stomach because you overate yesterday.’ ‘Love remembers. As does hunger,’ said Marie.”

This prose is the story about the coming of age of young Richard Ludvig, one of the protagonists in the “House of Returned Echoes” (“Bitter Smell of Almonds”, #10 and #15.).

“As long as they have human characteristics, people will not be any better.”

The Abyss

Propast

Novel

This is a novel of “one second”. During a military exercise in a snow storm, twenty-year old soldier David Wiesenthal, falls into an abyss in the mountains in Southern Bohemia and mortally wounds himself. He is tortured by his memories of the Shoah, his entire family whom he lost in the concentration camps, and the knowledge that luck alone separated survivors from the doomed. In his last moments, he leads an inner dialogue and seeks solace from the women he has loved, his dead mother, with whom he consults, and girls, whose soul he belatedly discovers, joined into the sensuous image of a girl bathing. The beauty whom he dreamt about in vane. Shortly before his death, she appears to him as the angel of death, accompanying him on his final journey. A story of the mother’s wisdom, which is not lost in her children and about the immortality of the dead, remembered by those who are still alive.

“Lustig is not only an eyewitness but also a skillful, gifted writer ... With age, exile and distance, he appears to have outgrown mere brilliance and learned to deal with the past in his own way.”

Ernst Pawel, New York Times Book Review

“He had lost any notion of how long he had lain there. He only heard the roaring in his ears, in his brain, all around him. Was it a second, a fraction of a second, an eternity? After the war, in July 1945, he had gone to a lake in northeastern Bohemia. he had imagined that he was with a girl. That she was swimming next to him. She reminded him of the warm water, the waves and foam. Suddenly the sky clouded over and a storm rose. He crashed against waves that changed colour. Greenish

spots of water shone like honey and darkened in front of his eyes. Gray pieces of sky, the surface reflected and devoured the rumbling, the clouds, the lightning and the bottom. He was terrified of his own fear. He didn’t want the girl to guess it, He knew that it was something to suppress. He forced himself to call on his mother’s God. To accept him and to speak to him as his mother had in Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was ridiculous. God was unfair, he told himself. Apathetic. God was a criminal. He didn’t exist. Or I’ll drown. His mother’s God certainly couldn’t passively observe the murders of children, men, women and the elderly, of the innocent innocent. or he wasn’t all-powerful, but powerless. Mother explained that people, not god, were doing the killing, and not every murderer had a name, a place where he was born, a mother, a father, a nationality, fingerprints, work. He spit the water from his mouth. He talked himself into believing that he would make up for his blasphemy by frowning. But could he drown if he survived Auschwitz-Birkenau, the camps, escape, the woods, the three times they caught him and wanted to shoot him... He didn’t want to drown”.

Expanded from the original short story “The Long White Journey” published in “Ripples on the River” (#8.) where the protagonist remained nameless. He was “simply the human being” or “a young man.”

“He wanted to live. Was there a God? Wasn’t there? There was; there wasn’t.”

Lovely Green Eyes

Krásné zelené oči

**Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize
Recommended from 350,000 publications by the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the American Library Association to all libraries in the USA as one of twelve most significant**

Novel

Fifteen-year-old Hanka Kaudersová has ginger hair and clear, green eyes. When her family is deported to Auschwitz, her mother, father and younger brother are sent to the gas chamber. By a twist of fate, Hanka is faced with a simple alternative: follow her family or work in an SS brothel behind the Eastern front. She chooses to live, her Aryan looks allowing her to disguise the fact that she is Jewish. Hanka spends her days in the brothel, cold, hungry, fearful, weak and ashamed. She is sustained only by the loathing of the men who visit her and by a fierce, indomitable will to live.

“I started writing *Lovely Green Eyes*” from the end. First I wrote the last chapter. About how an eighteen year old boy, already after the war, on the Petrín (pridejte hacek nad r) hill in Prague, sees an inscription tattooed on the lower abdomen of his sixteen year-old love: ‘a field whore’. I describe a woman’s most intimate place in a way that I thought about for a long time. I let my daughter read it with apprehension. She said: ‘Daddy, this is the most beautiful thing you have ever written.’ When I heard her verdict, I embarked onto the beginning without hesitation.”
Arnošt Lustig

‘God,’ said rabbi Gideon Shapiro to himself. Why did you take our pride, exposed us to disdain? Why did you chase us, your chosen race, away from light to darkness? Why did you turn the noble into the low, the sublime into the rotten? Why did you take intellect from the wise, strength from the weak, hope from the desperate? Why did you let us live in a dead body?’

‘It’s gone,’ the rabbi whispered. He sounded confused to her again. What was gone? She had no idea that the rabbi was referring to his soul. She had seen a lot of people in that state. She didn’t say anything, she didn’t even move, she just let the rabbi unburden himself. ‘I’d like to say that we are rising from the ashes,’ the rabbi said feverishly, ‘but we are drowning in them, you and I.’ Was the mountain of ashes so big that it had drowned their God? ‘I’m free from it,’ she assured the rabbi. ‘You’re not.’ ‘Yes, I am,’ she insisted, ‘I am with you.’ ‘Perhaps you will be free one day.’ ‘I’m sure of it.’ ‘As sure as the heaven above me.’

In “*Lovely Green Eyes*”, the characters from the author’s earlier and later prose continue to intersect. Earlier, in 1961, Lustig marries the narrator in the novel “*My Acquaintance Vili Feld*” (#4) to

Hanka Kaudersová, who comes to life as the heroine of “*Lovely Green Eyes*” nearly forty years later. In “*Lovely Green Eyes*”, Lustig also prepares the ground for his later novel “*Friends*” (#29) with its genius loci, Belgická Street, Prague. After having been published as a novel, the short story “*Kůstka*”, was also published in Czech (2002). Earlier, published as a short story in English (1999)

The stories were based on themes of the “*War Never Again*”.

Adapted to film and theatre

Lustig’s screenplay is available to directors and producers on request.

The novel has also been staged as a theatre play in the Czech Republic.

Of note: Lustig’s actual first prose called “*War Never Again*” – Už nikdy válka, is mentioned in “*Lovely Green Eyes*”. Soon after the war, he submitted this book of over one thousand pages to the Mladá fronta Publishers. They accepted it right away. However, he changed his mind, convinced that he can do better and asked them not to publish it until then. He returned the honorarium, but the publisher refused to take the money back, saying that he should keep it until they publish the revised text. A number of years later, in 1958, after becoming a seasoned journalist and editor for the Czechoslovak Radio and weekly Mladý Svět Magazine, he handed in his first collection of short stories “*Night and Hope*”. It became an instant best-seller.

“How many people have secrets that no-one ever discovers?”

Indecent Dreams

Neslušné sny

Collection of short stories

- “Blue Day”
- “The Girl With the Scar”
- “Indecent Dreams” (expanded from short story “Right Without God” in “Bitter Smell of Almonds” (#10.)

“The indecent dreams which Lustig’s protagonists imagine for themselves cannot compare with the indecency of injustice, cruelty and domination which the Nazi imagination legitimated. These are not stories about the War; they are stories about endless conflict in any individual who resists the brutality and finally, the stupidity of dehumanizing power.”

Northwestern University Press

“Paul Walter Manfred zu Loring-Stein asked in a heavy voice: ‘Shouldn’t you take your name off the front door?’

‘The people here know me, and they’ve settled their accounts with me already,’ said Inge Linge. ‘Who lives in the house?’

‘There are only women at home now, and they won’t bother me anymore. They slapped my face this morning when I went out to get the milk, and called me names. I don’t think they really believe I was ever a tyrant. I’ve never done any harm.’

Then she added, ‘Why don’t you take your things off? There’s nothing to be afraid of. Major Fuchs never lets anyone down.’

The military judge still didn’t move to take off his coat. ‘Isn’t there anybody in that chemist’s shop?’ ‘No, the owner got himself a gun and went off with the other men this morning. He had one of our tropical helmets on his head.’

‘Fuchs said this was a quiet spot, but he didn’t say anything about that shop. Won’t you take your

name off your door?’

‘I don’t want to open the door unless I have to. If you think I should though... They told me what they thought of me this morning, and they slapped my face, and that settles things between us. I suppose they’ve won, now and in the courts set up to judge..., but not me ... I really never have done anybody any harm. I haven’t got the heart to hurt anyone.’

She saw his thoughtful metallic blue eyes in the network of saber scars, and she couldn’t be sure whether or not he approved of what she had felt forced to say.”

From “Blue Day”

The collection of stories was also published in 1988 (#13.)

The Girl With the Scar was expanded into a novel in 2010 (#27.)



From television film by Eva Sadková “Blue Day”, based on Arnošt Lustig’s short story bearing the same name

The Luggage Thief

Zloděj kufrů

Novel

Ludvíček and Markétka. She is twelve and he is nearly two years older. And he has already been in Theresienstadt two years. He is a quarter of a Jew and an orphan, he came here from a children’s home, while Markétka came together with her parents and brother. The boy has different jobs, he makes additional money as a luggage porter, sweeps the streets, transports the dead. Primarily, he is a thief of the contents of the suitcases – he chooses those that could belong to the wealthy, he takes what he can use, what he needs, what he might be able to exchange. With time, he is able to guess the suitcases and their owners. Suitcases speak. He became able to distinguish who is who according to the suitcases. He takes from the rich, because they will not miss it, he leaves the poor alone, because they would miss the little they have. The rules that apply in the real world do not apply here. He decided the rules, changes them or defied them.

And morality? What is morality? To steal? To steal. Markétka, who is not able to comprehend this behaviour at first, ends up agreeing with him. To survive, you must adapt, you must do do whatever it takes. You can be happy even in this hell, explains Ludvíček to the girl. He is head over heels in love. He would do anything for her. He has never been this happy before, no one has ever appeared to be so close. Ludvíček, Adler, Markétka.

The novel has an autobiographical thread.

“Through his masterly novels, short stories and films, Lustig has profoundly portrayed the humanity of the dehumanized, the courage of the terrified, the friendships of the abandoned, the loves of the unloved. To those cruelly denied life, he has granted a life after death through his enviable works that have emerged from his

“The luggage speaks by and in itself. He learned to distinguish who was who accordingly.”

unenviable experiences during the years of ‘night and fog’... Byron L. Sherwin

“Ludvíček said: ‘I don’t like to pretend.’

At night, Ludvíček stayed with her on the straw mattress. She slept with her back against him, huddled.

‘The important thing here is to know the right people.’ ‘Which ones do you know?’

‘The Chief Rabbi of the city of Berlin. His word counts here. The butcher Josef Reinisch, who wants nothing more from me than to break into the library of forbidden books and in return for meat, bring him everything he enumerates.’

‘The butcher!’

‘He has stories like when they recruited him into the army and the military physician approved him with the words: One longer testicle, take him out.’

‘What does he want to read?’

‘Shakespeare, for example, The Merchant of Venice, The History of the Jews. And so on.’

‘You read these as well?’

‘I glance at them.’

It suited Ludvíček to live in Theresienstadt, going with the flow, and sometimes upstream. He had a good disposition, it was enough not to hurt anyone or cause a mess, and he was pleased with himself. He didn’t consider it right to feel fortunate because of other people’s misfortunes...”

Adapted to theater

An excerpt of the story has been staged by students of an art school (Základní umělecká škola, Litomyšl, Czech Republic, 2016-2017)

Elaborated from the short story “Ludvíček, der Vierteljude” in the collection of short stories “A Rainy Noon” – Deštivé poledne (Jan Kratochvíl, Brno, 2001; Mladá fronta, 2005).



My Acquaintance Vili Feld / Darkness and Light of the World

Můj známý Vili Feld / Tma a světlo světa

Novel

The character Vili Feld continues to come to life once the war is over in this final version of the novel, as well as in “Friends” (#29.). During the war, Vili Feld takes center stage with Leah from Leeuwarden and Colette from Antwerp (#16. and #17.). He says that each of these striking young women had chosen him.... Vili is also present in “Tanga” (#18.) and elsewhere in Lustig’s prose. This includes “Porgess” (#21.) published also in the short story collection “The Big Three” along with stories by Milan Kundera and Josef Škvorecký, after the three exiled writers and friends were welcomed back in Czechoslovakia after the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

“When I’m unable to sleep and feel guilty although I haven’t done anything and no one is accusing me, I write. And the night stacks up its layers of darkness, until it becomes dense with its fibre rupturing like cloth that has been stretched to the limit as the sunrise starts to seep through. In my mind, I hear that which has no name and cannot be named. Only a quiver, silence surpassing a voice and a voice surpassing stillness, a boundary where good and evil merge...”

“Yesterday, Vili Feld did not ask me where I was staying because I didn’t say it myself. Intrusiveness or snooping around were not among his vices.

They gossiped about him in Prague that he doesn’t like people who commit suicide. His first wife killed herself. Did it discourage him from making a longer commitment to someone? Why did he have one lover after another? Utinka,

Colette, Leah? That little Adriana? If he doesn’t come, I’m going to buy juice. He should make his appearance. I didn’t know yet the address of the fiancée. How did he set up his love life here? Are we going to be discussing luck again? I knew already that he is helping an antique dealer who returned from Auschwitz-Birkenau because unlike his compatriots, he spoke German. He went to the left when the Germans yelled at him to go to the left, and to the right, when the command was to go to the right. Those who didn’t understand German paid for it by going up the chimney. He was a widower. He took on his accounting. I breathed in warm, humid air. The city had changed into a hotbed. Yesterday it was cold, today hot. The sparrows twittered and ate horse dung with olive patches.”

Expanded from the original short story and novel published in the collection “Street of Lost Brothers” (#3. and #4.).

“Get to know your neighbor and even yourself. Or you better not?”

“Who claims that one cannot live with terminal disease?”

“Do not believe them even if on a Sunday they said it was Sunday and you knew it was Sunday.”

The White Birches of Autumn

Bílé břízy na podzim

Novel

“I wrote this book a long time ago, first when it was not supposed to be published; it was intercepted by the censors, then a “crippled” version came out. I knew that time will come when I will rewrite it to look the way I wanted. That time came differently: in 1989, in the spring. Bohumil Hrabal arrived to the USA and gave me a message that the publisher Československý spisovatel, for which I was a dead man (as many others) for twenty-one years, a man without an existence, name and present and future, is willing to publish my “Diamonds of the Night”, “Night and Hope” and “Dita Saxová” and pay me 200,000 Czech Crowns, assuming that I would spend them locally – perhaps in Karlovy Vary.

I became alarmed that they might do so without my will and approval. I gave them a message: No. Only if they were to publish the books of all banned, who live in the country – I will be glad to be the last one in the row, after them.

I rewrote “The White Birches” in line with the voice of my heart. Did the people around totalitarian literature in Prague not comprehend that after sixty, one has more of a conscience than ambition? Not even the best resolve or clean conscience will make the book even a wee bit better; I am explaining the circumstances. Only the reader can judge the book. Here it is.”
Arnošt Lustig

For further details, see #8.

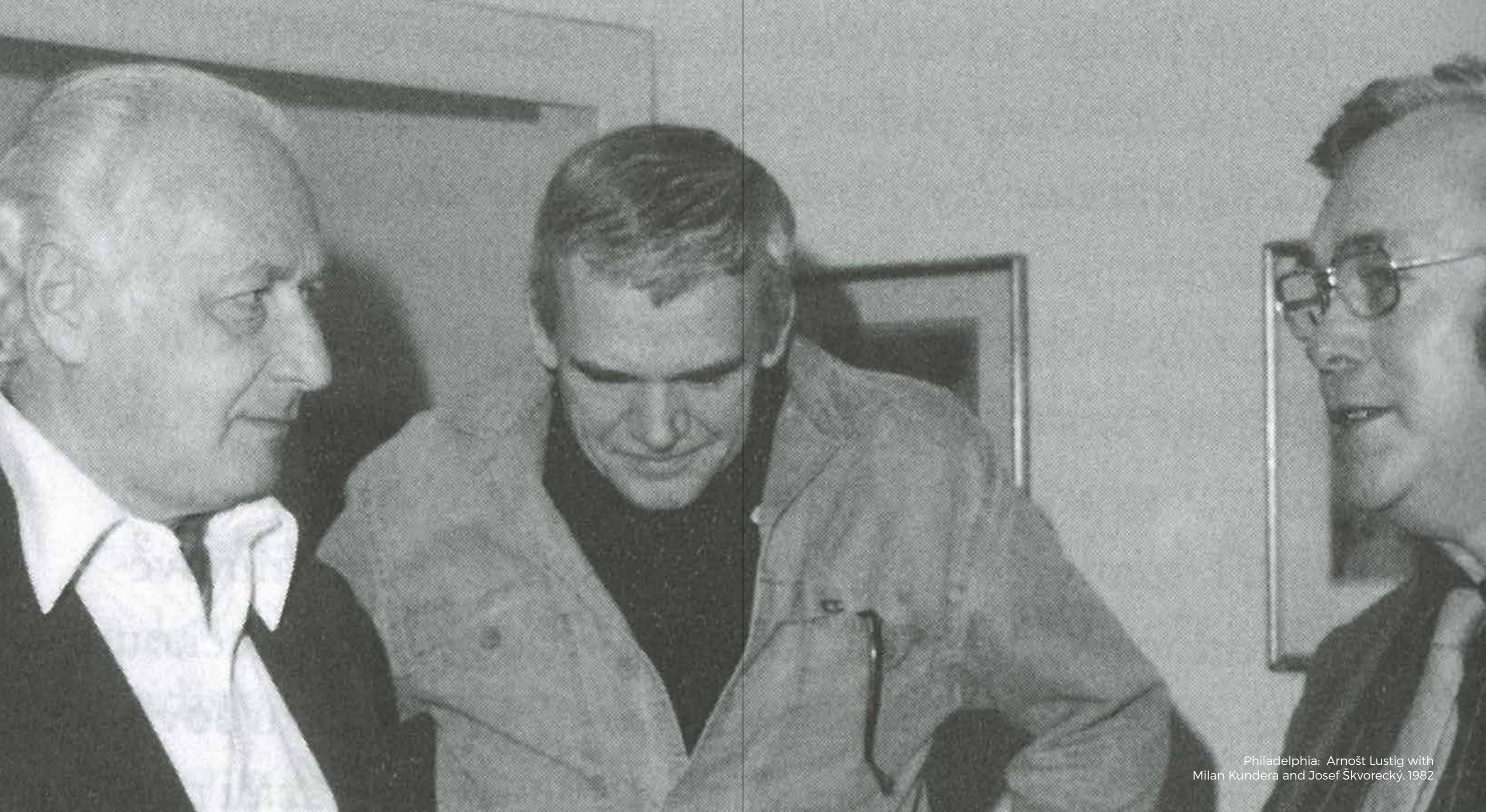
This novel was published in China in Mandarin (2010), and read and debated with the author at the opening of the Czech Exhibit “Week of Czech

Literature” during the World Expo in Shanghai, in the presence the Czech Secretary of Culture, Jiří Besser.

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“A dream is our greatest freedom, hope, a saving grace. It is a tunnel taking us to a less painful or even painless place, or one that is less ugly or even beautiful. A dream is a tunnel from a world, that in its essence, is miserable... Through dreaming, we can achieve everything we will never achieve.”

“Love resembles infinity, the universe, the stars... It fills us with hope and sadness. Perhaps we are love. And nobody understands why.”



Philadelphia: Arnošt Lustig with
Milan Kundera and Josef Škvorecký, 1982

The Girl With a Scar

Dívka s jizvou

Novel

“The horror for Lustig is not in the carnage of war or the unspeakable violations of the Nazis. As reprehensible as these are, the horror into which western civilization plunged lies within the subtle calibrations of daily thought and feeling.”
Jonathan Brent

“What makes people human is dignity. And what makes people more human than anything else is freedom.

No one in nature’s kingdom into which we belong, knows this dimension.”

“The Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) said: ‘I’d like to show you the sea close-up.’
‘I don’t know how to swim,’ Jenny Thelen from Prague Institute for Girls of Pure Race from Non-German Territories, said.
‘Would you like me to teach you?’
‘That’d be nice,’ she said.
‘Do you like fish?’
‘Not particularly.’
‘Because they’re cold-blooded, don’t have a soul, and can’t talk?’ the NCO smiled.
He pressed against her, and the girl with the scar felt his tight, muscular body and his warmth. She could feel strength emanating from him. It was the first time in her life she could feel anything like

“Human nature is like a river. A layer on top and deep down, the bottom current, which is death.”

this. She was aware of his will, and of her own as well.
Suddenly, it occurred to her that any answer might give her away, even if she said yes three times in a row without a single no. She also knew she could tell him exactly why it couldn’t be.
And so they walked a while in silence; it was as though she was uncovering in her mind everything the NCO couldn’t have thought of, or wouldn’t have thought of in the same way she did...”

This novel is based on the short story of the same name in the collection of short stories “Indecent Dreams” (#23.)

Adapted to film

A screenplay for a feature film based on this story is in the Lustig archives; available for interested directors and producers on request

“People are those who inhabit the world. All are the same while each one is completely different. There are as many people as ants but when one of those you love disappears, you feel that the wound cannot ever heal.”

We Have No Choice

Nemáme na vybranou

Novel

“This story takes place during a single day and is about a man, who loses a friend, a pilot who had to land in an Arab village, where they tortured him: they tied him naked to a pole, poured honey over him, for flies to bite him, and gradually, they cut off everything that can be cut off from a human being. And his best friend, against regulations, also a pilot, takes an airplane and flies to revenge him. All of this takes place during an evening party under the skies as the nurses and pilots proceed with romance.”

Arnošt Lustig

“Compassion is the medicine against cruelty, pain and hopelessness. The way a man becomes human, the way we become human ourselves.”

“To Dany Polnauer, the evenings here seemed more beautiful than anywhere else. It wasn’t only the stars, they laid practically at the reach of a hand, the humid darkness, the invisible but palpable rippling of the air carried by sparkling remnants of stardust, a spray of tiny diamonds, which stupefied like opium or the mystery between falling asleep and waking. He sensed something that was summoning up dreams, ebbing into them and springing back out. It contradicted the war, cruelty, blood. Or was that which he sensed nourished by the war, cruelty and blood?”

The secret of a human being, his eternal struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust elbowed its way to the surface like fish

from the deep sea, like a scent that emanates from a rose or a eucalyptus, a lemon tree or a fig tree. Like cruelty that was passing its hand to conciliation.

He didn’t understand it and he surrendered in the hope that he will.”

The novel was initially published under the title “At the Airport” – Na letišti.

“Cruelty is the reverse of kindness. The ghastliest that surrounds us and of which we are capable.”

“Wisdom is the result of pain, experience, suffering and understanding.”



Friends

Kamarádi

Novel

An ode to friendship, love and always solidarity, with a strong autobiographical thread.

Weltfeind Flusser, Luster Liebling, Ervín Adler, Kirsten Mali and others – these are Lustig’s “Friends”, the boys and girls from the Jewish orphanage in Belgická Street 24, Prague, coming of age before the transport going East. In the author’s words, “it is a book about the situational morality of kids who were humiliated and offended, about their premature sexuality, and in its own way, about revenge and defiance. It is a story about boys and girls who had to lie to get at the truth, steal to defend what was theirs, and adapt to be able to survive. It is a bit about bodily prerogatives in times when one has nearly nothing else. It is about friendship, love, compassion, sometimes debauchery, and always about solidarity, warmth of which a person is capable even when he’s reached the bottom.”

**“Dedicated to Zdeněk Pick, who in the Theresienstadt Fortress on 25. September 1944 surprised me at the train carriage of the transport going East: ‘I signed up voluntarily.’ I asked him why, given they didn’t put him on the list.
‘After all, I wouldn’t let you go alone.’
Three days and three nights later, he went straight from the ramp in Auschwitz-Birkenau to gas. He was fourteen, going on fifteen.”**
Arnošt Lustig

“Lustig’s works raise fundamental philosophical and moral questions reflected through the prism of the Holocaust and its aftermath. **For Lustig, the Holocaust is not an event that can or should be**

segregated from the rest of human history and experience, but is rather an event in which human nature and experience can be viewed in an amplified and magnified way, an event in which cruelty is completely cruel, generosity is ultimate sacrifice, true love is absolute love and absolutely true, courage is life risking and friendship represents complete commitment rather than intensified acquaintance .”

Byron L. Sherwin

“Mali Kirsten said, ‘You’re an animal.’
‘They shouldn’t irritate me’, said Pepe.
‘What if I would have done it?’
‘I would have forgiven you. You’d have been lost for a bit. But it doesn’t mean anything. Even if I’d do it with ten girls. I like being with you most of all.’
‘Pepe, you animal.’
‘You’re right,’ admitted Pepe.
Then he said: ‘But I’d forgive you. You’d feel as if you lost gravity, as if you were and you weren’t.’

He’d understand her even without words. Couldn’t life be beautiful? Next to her, he felt his manly strength. Soon he will be savouring the tenderness akin to what Adam and Eve felt in paradise.”

“It was funny who and what I was thinking about in Rome the first week in October 1950. How and why, in 1942, I was going back to Belgická Street 25. I had confirmed for myself that whatever character someone had in third or fifth grade, remained the same in his most manly age (had he lived to be that long).

There were a few people with whom I interacted permanently in my mind – although only some of them were still alive. Some were concerned by the stories, others only by some episodes, fragments,

haze or echo. I learned to look back. My past was simultaneously my present and together, the two penetrated my future like three spirits. The boundary between remembering and forgetting disappeared. Both became a necessity. That which was inside forced its way outward, but even from the outside, it was only apparent to me, changing its meaning, as if the meaning of everything was changeable, like the moon from new moon to full moon, like the mortal or immortal soul of everything that happens...”

“One regrets only those sins which he didn’t commit.”

“The principle of Belgická 25 – from the basement to the attic and the garden – lied in the fact that when someone jumps from the Charles Bridge into the Moldau River, the others do the same.”

“He felt what was about to come and what he will not be able to turn away. Before death, one measures himself by what he didn’t manage to do. This was one of his final thoughts, also fading out.”

Love, Body and Death

Láska, tělo a smrt

Novel

A love story of young Gabriela Lágusová and Josef Reinisch in Theresienstadt Ghetto. The Final Solution of the Jews, incomprehensible, on one hand and love of life and the physical on the other. **Forbidden love under the pressure of uncertainty of when the next transport will take them to the gas chambers.**

“He said, ‘We’re together.’

‘I’m taking poems with me – the souls of the dead who didn’t die.’

Did he have the appearance of a man who wasn’t scarred?

‘I have to get dressed,’ she said and both of them knew, that they had to undress before that.

‘You’re beautiful naked. Prepare to take something warm, we’re going east,’ he said.

‘I’m warm,’ she said. ‘Darling. My love, nothing will separate us.’

‘I’m with you,’ he said. ‘Darling. Don’t stop.’

They felt their hands on one another. There wasn’t a single pore on her body he didn’t touch with the tips of his fingers or his palm and lips. They whispered and it sounded like a prayer.

‘We will not speak about death.’

‘No,’ he promised.

‘I could swear that I am alive,’ she said.

Life flowed from one to another, life that lovers dream to be eternal. Eternal life as from fairy tales they did not yet forget. Death, *mavet*, was invisible, transparent and an untouched shadow. As was the premonition of a journey and of the ramps onto which they will arrive, where they will tell them to

leave everything they brought in the wagon; they will no longer need it.

‘My dearest darling,’ she exhaled.

“Sweetheart, my dearest,’ he replied.

‘Love.’

‘Love.’

‘We’re having our wedding,’ she said. And did she think – the funeral as well?

‘we will still have the one with the papers and rings many times,’ he said and kissed her on the lips.

‘We’re together,’ she said.

‘Forever,’ he said.

‘How long is forever, darling?’ she asked. ‘Hug me. Don’t stop.’

Then he said: ‘The time has come.’

‘I will get dressed quickly,’ she said. And she added:

‘It’s beyond time, just like me.’ And finally, ‘I took warm socks. I have comfortable shoes.’

‘Nothing is beyond time,’ he corrected her. ‘My love.’

‘I will hurry up,’ she said.

‘Everything is fine,’ he said. ‘Nothing could be any better. Even the worst of it.’

‘Will you always lie to me this beautifully?’

‘To infinity.’

‘I’m happy with you.’

‘It will be fine,’ he was assuring her.

‘With you even a lie isn’t a lie.’

He was thinking about that which no one knew yet or which no one believed.

Like the condemned before the executioner’s bullets penetrate the heart or the forehead. In a while, they will depart, numbered. They will no longer need names.”

“In this book, two lovers in Theresienstadt decide that they will “defeat” Germany by their love – spiritual and physical. They know that they will die, but before they die, they want to enjoy...”

These characters already appear in my novel “The Luggage Thief”, which is about the love of a twelve year old girl and fourteen year old boy, so in reality, they are still puppies who are – to a certain extent – blind. There is love between them, but they don’t entirely know it.

“Love, Body and Death” concerns a nineteen year old girl and a twenty-five year old boy, so they already realize their love and know how to go about it ...

The Germans were keen on accentuating inequalities among the Jewish population – starting with portions of food, bringing about quarrels and envy. In this way, the Jews were easier to control – unity could only result in rebellion. And because my hero, Josef Reinisch is a butcher, he has a slightly better lodging, although in comparison with our apartments, it was unreal and miserable. While it is true that they had ‘privacy,’ it didn’t in any way mean that they couldn’t be placed in a transport like the others. And like the others, they were dying of fear.”

Arnošt Lustig

Initially published as short story “Love and Body” – Láska a tělo (Listen, 2009)

Adapted to theater scenic reading

An excerpt of the story has been staged over a number of seasons on a sold-out tour throughout the Czech Republic by Lukáš Hejlík’s company Listování

The Case of Marie Navarová

Případ Marie Navarové

Historical Novel

Arnošt Lustig's last prose.

True story of a Czech health worker with German roots, who in 1942, jumps to the rescue of assassinated German Protector Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. The story of justice unfolds over three regimes (the Nazi Third Reich; the liberated Czechoslovakia; post-war Socialist Czechoslovakia), each of which tries and sentences her.

"The judge asked, 'What do you think about your character?'

'What do you think I should think?'

'Are you defiant?'

'Sometimes, in my mind,' she smiled.

'In the Theresienstadt Small Fortress?'

'They tamed us by beating, hunger and illness, horror,' she replied.

'All of you?'

'Nearly all. And certainly all of us sometimes.'

'Is it behind you now?'

'It's in me.'

'Did it break you?'

'It would would break everyone, perhaps even you.'

'Don't be personal, defendant.'

'I didn't do anything. Why am I here? I'm not bad.

I like to help people.'

'All people?'

'Like Christianity demands it, a good heart for all.'

'Even murderers?'

'I'm afraid that even murderers,' she said. 'I worry about people. I feel compassion.'

'Are you sincere?'

'They say that about me,' she replied."

The work was commissioned by the Czech Legal Chamber in 2009. The author dedicated it to **"all the Czech lawyers who during the war, held as their dearest virtues honour and bravery, and who did not fear to stand side by side by the persecuted and discriminated** in order to save the reputation of their guild. And to the lawyers who did not agree with the racial and political discrimination of their colleagues and did not fear extending a helping hand to those in need."

Of interest to filmmakers

The suspenseful plot lends itself to film adaptation. Further information available on request.

"To have the whole picture, it is necessary to portray the victims and the murderers. A writer's responsibility is to empathise with his characters. Heydrich, as other criminals, fascinates with something. The best people, like Christ or Masaryk, are better than good. Then there are those who are worse than the worst. And both poles attract writers. The average is literature's enemy. The average is boring. The Nazis wanted to refute that human life is sacrosanct and that the loss of each human being is a loss for the whole world. They wanted to destroy Jewish morality, which together with Christianity, is the foundation of civilization, and establish a guidepost that what is good, is good for the Germans, for Germany, for the Aryan race."
Arnošt Lustig

"Lies impose themselves on each truth. Sometimes, it is an entire lie, sometimes, it is a shadow of a lie, sometimes, it is a distortion. I'm obsessed by this, because we live in a world of lies."

"Their eyes met from time to time. Marie Navarová. Lawyer Jan Novák. Destiny which never sleeps, it is only invisible and unpredictable."



Essays: Selected Texts 1965 – 2008

Eseje. Vybrané texty z let 1965 – 2008

Non-fiction: Essays

“There are voices that go past us like the wind, like everything that is fleeting that we come across many times each day. Or there are voices that penetrate us. And get stuck against something in us, getting caught against a fragment of emotion, some kind of an experience. And whenever we wish, these voices make themselves heard through a memory or an echo.”

“A short story that is not beautiful even when it depicts ugliness, has misplaced the function with the aim.”

“Writing is the only thing that gives me a feeling of beauty and meaning and something that can last, in case it is good, and naturally, it gives me some sort of stability. There are few other things that leave me with a similar feeling. No one can write about that which is not really inside of him, and I have inside of me that period, which I do not like to call the ‘Holocaust.’”

Arnošt Lustig

*“I often think about something that happened to me when I was seventeen years old: I was riding in a freight car that was leaving Auschwitz, Poland. My father was dead, having been sent to the gas chamber. Some days before, I had last seen my mother; she was one of a group of women that had been forced to run naked through a field in the cold wind and rain. **I’d wished at the time that my mother was dead – feeling it was better to die than to live** in such a situation.”*

“There were about seventy or eighty of us in the freight car. A young German soldier, armed with a rifle, guarded us. His beard was still wispy and he

had blond hair. He couldn’t have been over twenty. He was silent for a long time. Then he finally said to me that he’d rather kill himself than return to Auschwitz and have to see more of what was going on.”

“The German soldiers who were garrisoned in that strange town had already undergone special training to kill mice, birds, cats and dogs so they could get used to the sight of blood flowing freely. When they were able to cut the throat of an animal with their knife and then use the knife to cut their bread, they were considered ready for duty.”

*“Whoever survived Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Buchenwald or Bergen-Belsen, will no longer feel like saying goodbye to anyone nor have the strength for it. **Saying goodbye was marked by death.** The war imprints upon goodbye a fatal likeness, an unexpressed possibility. Those who remained felt guilty without committing anything. The faces of those leaving did not show relief.”*

In Theresienstadt, there were one hundred and three thousand kisses, strokes or embraces. Tears and dearth of words. Everyone was saying goodbye to someone. And carried the echo, regardless of where he went next. Should you meet people who were there, don’t expect a goodbye. They will not like it. They will not be able to explain it to you. They will not vocalize that it is the echo from the times when each goodbye was the last one. Goodbye is the eclipse of the sun. These were places where people wished they hadn’t been born.”

Testimony. Literary Recording of Arnošt Lustig’s Memoirs and Reflections

Zpověď. Literárně zpracovaný fonetický záznam vzpomínek a úvah Arnošta Lustiga

Non-fiction: Autobiography

Lustig tells his life story (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnošt_Lustig) with simplicity and his characteristic style, from a childhood in a working class suburb of Prague, onset of World War II and exclusion from school and cultural life prior to transport to the concentration camp in Theresienstadt at fifteen years of age, to internment in hellish Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald-Meuslowitz.

He covers his escape from a death transport taking him and other prisoners from Buchenwald to Dachau, and his hard-to-believe journey back to Prague through the woods for six days and nights, with his best friend, while pursued by Nazi officers. He wrote this as the story and later novel “Darkness Casts No Shadow”, which was filmed as the “Diamonds of the Night”.

Once in Prague, he took part in Prague uprising against the Nazis in May 1945. He went on to become a radio correspondent covering the Arab-Israeli conflict, a journalist and subsequently a best-selling author and screenplay writer during the famous Czech New Film Wave.

As a proponent of Prague Spring in 1968, he was forced into exile, first Israel, followed by Yugoslavia and the USA. There, he taught literature, creative writing and Holocaust in film while continuing to write.

After the Velvet Revolution (1989), he reestablished himself in Czechoslovakia as a best-selling author while also teaching at The American University, Washington, DC.

“Life of every human being is unique, irreplaceable and should have meaning. I lived a happy childhood and a full remainder of my life. I speak about my life and I don’t know myself, whether I am glad to or not. But I tell about it because it is meaningful. Letting others know what a human being is capable of doing to another, is the key to our life. The only meaning it gives is to know, it is not to make people feel pity or sadden them. He who knows is ready to defend himself. And keep his dignity. This is key for our existence.”

“Father insisted on one thing: that I learn how to ride a horse. Why, I don’t know. That was his obsession.

I started learning when I was six, at fairs, it was cheap. He explained to me how to not fall off the horse. This came in handy later...

When I lived the US, I was invited for a visit by a rich family in Chicago. They asked what I would like to do – go to a ballet or horseback riding? I told them I would prefer horseback riding. They had a private stable. They gave me an older horse – a mare – and said: “Please no galloping!” The horse felt me out, and immediately started to gallop. They were amazed! In my Sunday best, I rode a galloping and sprinting horse! That father of mine... In World War I, he was in the cavalry and loved horses.”

The book comes with a CD.



Good Day, Mr Lustig. Thoughts About Life

Dobrý den, pane Lustig. Myšlenky o životě

Non-fiction: Interviews by Miroslav Kouba

“As I sit here, sipping my coffee, I savour it three times. Two thousand years ago, the Greeks let their captives tie knots and then untie them again, so that those who were defeated would grasp their insignificance. When old Romans wanted to humiliate someone, they shaved their head for them to feel belittled and powerless. The Nazis pursued a goal that has no precedent in history. By humiliating people, they made them feel glad to die. Thankful to be murdered. The Nazis were intelligent murderers. They were terrified of infections and were therefore sticklers with hygiene. As long as the ovens had the capacity to burn ten thousand people in twelve hours, more than that were not killed – because of hygiene. Unburned cadavers would rot. The Germans in the camps were scarred of disease like of the devil. They paid attention to cleanliness. They put on their gloves.”

“Fame dies down like when you throw a stone into a pond. It makes a few circles and then it’s quiet again. What remains is meaning. Even a reminiscence loses its colours, details and so on; the only thing that will remain from it in memory is meaning.”

“Do we truly see all of our relationships with someone the way they are, or rather, the way we would wish to have them? There is hardly anyone who doesn’t lie to himself. Nothing that is valuable is for free.”

Question: “What is life?”

Answer: “A beautiful question. What is life? I think that when man became a philosopher when he posed this question to himself for the first time. Life is everything that is. **Life is an inexplicable miracle, an inexplicable tragedy. The best and the worst.** Completely everything. Even that which we perceive. If there is, for example, some sort of a ray from an invisible planet that touches us, that is also life. When I meet a good person, see a pretty woman, that’s life as well. Life is everything.”

Question: “**Young people and you?**”

Answer: “The nicest thing about my profession as a professor is meeting young people. Of course, I am not an academic. I became a university professor because I had no other work, and secondly, when you write a book, like for example, Kundera or Škvorecký, then each book that is accepted by serious critics as respectable equals a dissertation. So that writers and filmmakers or musicians and dancers can be professors at universities in the USA without a doctorate. What is appreciated is first-hand experience. **It’s not that a professor would read seven books and write the eighth one, but that he wrote one or two according to which the next eight books can be written.**

Young people – regardless of whether they will become astronauts or businessmen – this is their last opportunity to come in contact with the arts. They are still perceptive. Later on, perhaps they will not read any literature. They are young, ambitious,

for the most part, morally pure. I feel good among them... In exile, I lost the idea of who my readers were. So in this new country (the USA), I imagine that I write for them.

I tell young authors: You will write badly, there will be a lot of mistakes, but write it now, while you are still young, because youth has unfathomable energy unlike anything else.” An old writer knows all kinds of tricks already, some mysteries of the trade, not all, but that energy which only a young person has, that is what gets lost. I tell them: Even if it doesn’t turn out well, put your manuscript in the drawer, but write it now! ...

Among young people, sometimes I seem as a demon to myself, drawing their invisible energy. I turn younger in their company. Of course, then it’s enough to look in the mirror to see that I’m a ragged old man. I tell them: There isn’t a big difference between us. It’s only that I’ve been around long enough to gather experience, but you have more energy than me. **I need them more than they need me.”**

The Presence of Arnošt Lustig. Dialogues.

“There are more mice than mousetraps, that is my philosophy.”

Tvoje slza, můj déšť: Přítomnost Arnošta Lustiga. Dialogy.

Non-fiction: Interviews by Eva Lustigová

“A man is immortal as long as he lives in the memory of others,” said to his daughter the late world-renowned Czech writer Arnošt Lustig with a very smile.

Marked by premonition that the clock is ticking, director Eva Lustigová enters the world of her artist, Arnošt Lustig, through a series of interviews. She encounters his mortality and what matters in times of war as much as in times of peace.

In this book of interviews, we get a glimpse of a major literary figure of the twentieth century, a humanist and holocaust survivor replete with talent, humility and love of life. Against the backdrop of father-daughter complicity, Lustig, the man who wanted to rewrite his world to make the unlivable make-believe, is accompanied by friends Václav Havel, Miloš Forman, Ivan Passer, Jiří Menzel.

The book is based on the documentary film directed and produced by Eva Lustigová (2012), purchased by Czech and Slovak television stations and featured at international film festivals and events profiling Arnošt Lustig's legacy. (Premiere at International Film Festival, in Karlovy Vary, 2012).

Question: “What would you say to someone who denies the Holocaust?”

Answer: *“If it were a university professor, I'd say:*

*‘Sir, you’ve never been as mistaken as in this statement!’ And though I wouldn’t wish you any harm, I’d wish that you’d spend two minutes in Auschwitz when they were sending mothers with children to the gas chambers or the healthy, only because they were born to Jewish mothers. Alfred Rosenberg, the leading thinker of the Third Reich, was behind the ideology justifying all that was underway. And once Hitler invited him. And Rosenberg used to write a diary and after the meeting with Hitler, he wrote: **‘I will not write down what Hitler told me about the concentration camps, but I will never forget it.’**”*

Question: “Do you ever carry on silent dialogues, for example with Hitler?”

Answer: *“With Hitler I don’t carry on even a silent dialogue, because he was a psychopath who wouldn’t listen to me. I think it’s a human prerogative to lead a dialogue with oneself. Though maybe a dog getting ready to bite you is carrying on a dog’s dialogue with himself.”*

Question: “What saved you?”

Answer: **“I’d say, luck and coincidence, the fact that we were younger, that we still had strength, because people all around us were dying of exhaustion. In the camp, there wasn’t a day, night or moment when one didn’t think about whether it wouldn’t be better not to live because life was so wretched, so humiliating, that the only alternative – not to live – seemed to be most tolerable.”**



From the film by Eva Lustigová “The Presence of Arnošt Lustig”



From the film by Eva Lustigová "The Presence of Arnošt Lustig", with Oscar-winning film director and friend, Miloš Forman ("One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"; "Amadeus")

Tachles* Lustig

Non-fiction: Interviews by Karel Hviždala

In the last year of the author's life, the renowned journalist Karel Hviždala, also a one-time émigré after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, host questions to his long-time friend and colleague. The book is a flowing conversation on a wide range of topics.

From the book cover:

"Already due to decency, we have a tendency to adapt our sentences to the thinking of those with whom we are speaking. **Courage is necessary for sincerity. This, Lustig never lacked, but as time continues, it seems to me that it even grew some. Together with that openness is linked a passion to see the world from below, in concrete meetings, in concrete conflicts and details, which is not at all common in our time of simplified thinking when all judgements are prepared ahead of time and memory loses the right to remember.** Arnošt and Karel, accept my thanks for this marvellous, rich text.

Yours, Milan Kundera, 2010"

Question: "Since the time I've known you, and that's already many years, the first time we met was in the beginning of the 1960s in the magazine "Mladý svět" where you worked. I brought you a short story and you gave me a bunch of blank sheets of paper to write on, very happily and cheerfully. Can you actually be as happy as you seem? Don't somber submerged rivers surface more frequently than what would appear to an outside observer?"

Answer: "I am good-natured and for that, I thank my mother and father, my grandfathers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and

great-grandfathers four thousand years ago. Just yesterday, a journalist asked me how I was feeling. I tried to tell him absolute truth and I had to tell him: I am well in the summer of 2010."

Question: "But well-being and good-fortune are different categories..."

Answer: "Afterall, we don't know what luck is. There is no definition for luck, like there is no definition for love nor justice. I only know that I wouldn't be alive without luck, luck of one person is always balanced out by the absence of luck for someone else. Had they killed me, someone else would have stayed alive. And in reverse, someone else had to die in my place. For the old Greeks, luck took precedence over intellect and health. Try to tell me what luck is? "

Question: "Now that we are in the more complex categories, how are you with forgiveness? What are you as Arnošt Lustig able to forgive others? Would you be able to say, like Milada Horáková, to the worst female warden in Auschwitz, the Austrian Maria Mandel, that she forgives her, when these two women met prior to their execution already in the Communist prison in the shower?"

Answer: "Theoretically yes. However, practically probably no. Forgiveness is the only bridge which a human being can cross to one another. But forgiveness is almost always linked with the question of accusation. As long as you are thinking of Nazism, the war and establishment of the worthlessness of human life and the extermination of not only ethnic groups but of entire nations, such as the Jews, Czechs and Slavs, this is I am never able to forgive anyone. I have to admit that this is over and above my own might."

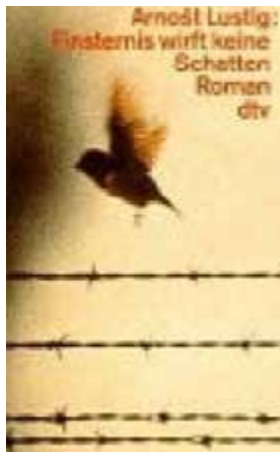
Publications in German

Finsternis wirft keine Schatten

Tma nemá stín

Broschiertes Buch
Roman 1994, DTV

Gebundenes Buch
Roman 1994, Luchterhand
Literaturverlag,
München 1994.
ISBN 3630868401
Übersetzt von Peter
Ambros



"Tremendously moving... One of the most impressive Holocaust novels ever written."

Doris Grumbach, The Washingtonian

"The setting only underscores the often audacious air of heroism and hope with which Lustig's writings abound... In their purity and starkness, the writings of Lustig.. help us remember the purposeful heinousness of the recent past."

Los Angeles Book Review

"Moving beyond words."

Publishers Weekly

"Merits the deepest attention ... achieves the simplicity of a fable, the power of legend."

Bette Howland, Chicago Tribune

Adapted to film

Based on this novel, Arnošt Lustig co-wrote the screenplay for the award-winning film "Diamonds of the Night" with director Jan Němec. The film received first prizes at the Mannheim Film Festival and Pesaro Film Festival in 1964. In 2018, the film was presented at the Cannes Film Festival, having been digitally restored by the Czech National Film Archive. This first feature film by Němec (1936-2016) was showcased in the Classics Section along with legendary films such as "2001: A Space Odyssey", "Bicycle Thieves", "The Apartment", "Grease", "The Big Blue" and "Driving Miss Daisy".

Ein Gebet für Katharina Horowitzová

Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou

Winner of the B'nai B'rith Award, 1974

Winner of the State Prize, Czechoslovakia, 1967

Nominated for National Book Award, 1974

(not received as at the time, Lustig was not a US citizen)

Übersetzt von Peter Sacher. Luchterhand-Literaturverlag, Hamburg, 1991. ISBN 3-630-86764-2.

Neuaufgabe Berliner Taschenbuch-Verlag, Berlin 2006, ISBN 978-3-8333-0338-8. (translation of Lustig's 4th edition, 1990 by Peter Sacher)



"A great book. It scrapes the soul. No one who reads it will ever be the same."
Erich Segal

"A heart stopping parable."
The New York Times Book Review

"Devastating and ironic."
Publishers Weekly

"Incredible...agonizing...suspenseful...Goads the reader to hope against hope... We are the richer for it."
Washington Star News

"An intense, painful novel...searing...relentless."
Chicago Sun Times

"Beautiful...powerful. One is immediately drawn to the childlike innocence of Katerina. Like Anne Frank, and others before and after, glorify what they do, unsullied by the brutality of evil."
Minneapolis Tribune



Adapted to film, theater and radio

Based on this novel, Arnošt Lustig co-wrote the screenplay for the award-winning television film "A Prayer for Katharina Horowitzova" with director Antonín Moskalyk. In 1966, the film received first prizes at the Monte Carlo Film Festival and eight other international prizes.

Lustig also adapted the novel to a theatre play. Following his death in 2011, the play was staged during 2011-2016 in a wagon of a train called "The Lustig Train", with performances throughout train stations of the Czech and Slovak Republics, Krakow and Auschwitz, Poland.

The novel has been adapted to a radio play and is broadcast regularly on the Czech radio.

Part of required reading in high schools in the Czech Republic

The novel is considered a Czech Classic and is integrated into curricula of Czech and Slovak high schools as well as questions in the national Maturite examination.

Die Ungeliebte. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Siebzehnjährigen Nemilovaná: Z deníku sedmnáctileté Perly Sch.

Winner of the National Jewish Book Award for Fiction, 1986

Übersetzt von Andreas Roschal, Roitman Verlag,
München 1984, ISBN 3-923510-09-8.

Frankfurt/M, Berlin: Ullstein, 1989
Vom Autor erweiterte Neuauflage, übersetzt von Peter Sacher mit einem Nachwort von Jiří Gruša. Ullstein Verlag, Berlin 1989, ISBN 3-548-30224-6.



"Despite its setting – a Nazi concentration camp – Arnošt Lustig's novel is strangely affirmative in its vision of innocence and courage ... A stunning and un sentimental novel, celebrating moments of normality amid corruption and death."
The New York Times

"This novel is a testament to the ineradicable inner resistance of the human spirit."
Chicago Tribune

Adapted to theater and film

This novel was staged as a theater play in the Czech Republic (2017-2018) and is under production as a film.

"Lustig has invented some ingenious strategies for drawing his readers into the orbit of atrocity without drowning them in a language of passionate outrage."
Washington Post

"Lustig recreates the climate and the atmosphere of those times and places with the skill of a master."
Library Journal



Deine grünen Augen

Krásné zelené oči

Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, 2003. Lustig is the only Czech writer ever to have been nominated for this prize.

Roman.

Aus dem Tschechischen übersetzt von Silvia Morawetz und Werner Schmitz. Berlin Verlag, Berlin 2007. ISBN 9783827005762

“This is a major work of fiction... Czech-born Arnošt Lustig, an Auschwitz survivor, writes about the Holocaust with such merciless clarity that at times one is ashamed to be human.”

Mail on Sunday

“Lustig survived Auschwitz. Every fibre of his latest book... resonates with the pain, questions and scars of the Holocaust.”

Daily Telegraph

“Lustig has a wonderful talent for setting down the detail of human misery and survival... He has faith in a soul that transcends the body... if I were a schoolteacher, I would teach this vivid picture of human evil as moral philosophy... a remarkable achievement.”

Independent

Adapted to theater and film

This novel was staged as a theater play in the Czech Republic in 2010 and is under film option in Hollywood. Lustig's screenplay is available on request.



“A moving act of absolution...”

This strong novel about a girl who is debased but never destroyed pushes the reader to a new level of understanding of the things people do – and the things that are done to them.”

Washington Post Book World

“Absolutely incendiary reading, frightening and compelling in its authority ... appeals by its feather-light touch.”

Review of Contemporary Fiction

“Lovely Green Eyes could be described in the words of Mr Kertesz's Nobel citation, which praised 'writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history'... A work of extraordinary delicacy.”

Washington Times

Demanten der Nacht

Démanty noci

Winner of the Best Books Published in English Honour, London Observer (Collections of short stories “Night and Hope” and “Diamonds of the Night”), 1962, together with Joseph Heller's “Catch 22” Winner of the Knight of the Order of Mark Twain (“Night and Hope”)

This book contains the author's first two collections of short stories: “Nacht und Hoffnung” (“Noc a naděje”, 1958) and “Demanten der Nacht” (Démanty noci”, 1958), and the novel “Totengebet für Katharina Horowitz” (“Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovizovou”, 1964)

Übersetzt von Lotte Elsner-Reiter und Rudolf Illtis. Artia Verl., Praha (1964).

“This book matters.”

The New York Times Book Review

“Under the sentence of death, Lustig's characters freeze time. Preserve decency. They luminesce like light crystals in the dark.”

Curt Leviant, Washington Post Book Review

“In his stark narrative and spare dialogue – as skeletal as the starved bodies of the speakers – Lustig sustains the reality of people scoured by obscene torture and loss, discovering islands of sanity in nightmare...”

The Kirkus Reviews



“Unlike other Holocaust writers, Arnošt Lustig attempts to inform and inspire his readers, rather than terrorize them. He writes about the humanity of the dehumanized, the courage of the terrified, and the friendships of the abandoned. He writes for the children – for the innocent who surrendered their lives rather than their innocence.”

Byron Sherwin, Midstream

“Goes far beyond the existential despair that has become a familiar refrain in our time.”

Lawrence Langer, The Chronicle of Higher Education

Adapted to theater and film

The collection of short stories "Night and Hope" was adapted into the award-winning film "Transport from Paradise", with the screenplay written by Arnošt Lustig and director Zdeněk Brynych. In 1963, the film received first prize, the Golden Sail, as the best feature film at the Locarno International Film Festival.

Lustig's short story the "Second Round" (Druhé kolo) published in the collection "Diamonds of

the Night" was adapted to a short film entitled "A Bite to Eat" (also known as "The Loaf of Bread") by director Jan Němec in 1960 as his film debut while he was still in the Czech Film School (FAMU). The film received first prizes in the short film category at the Amsterdam Film Festival (1962) and Oberhausen Film Festival (1961).

Another short story from this collection, the "White Rabbit" (Bílý) was adapted by Czechoslovak director Dušan Klein to a short film called "The Little Rabbit" in 1963.

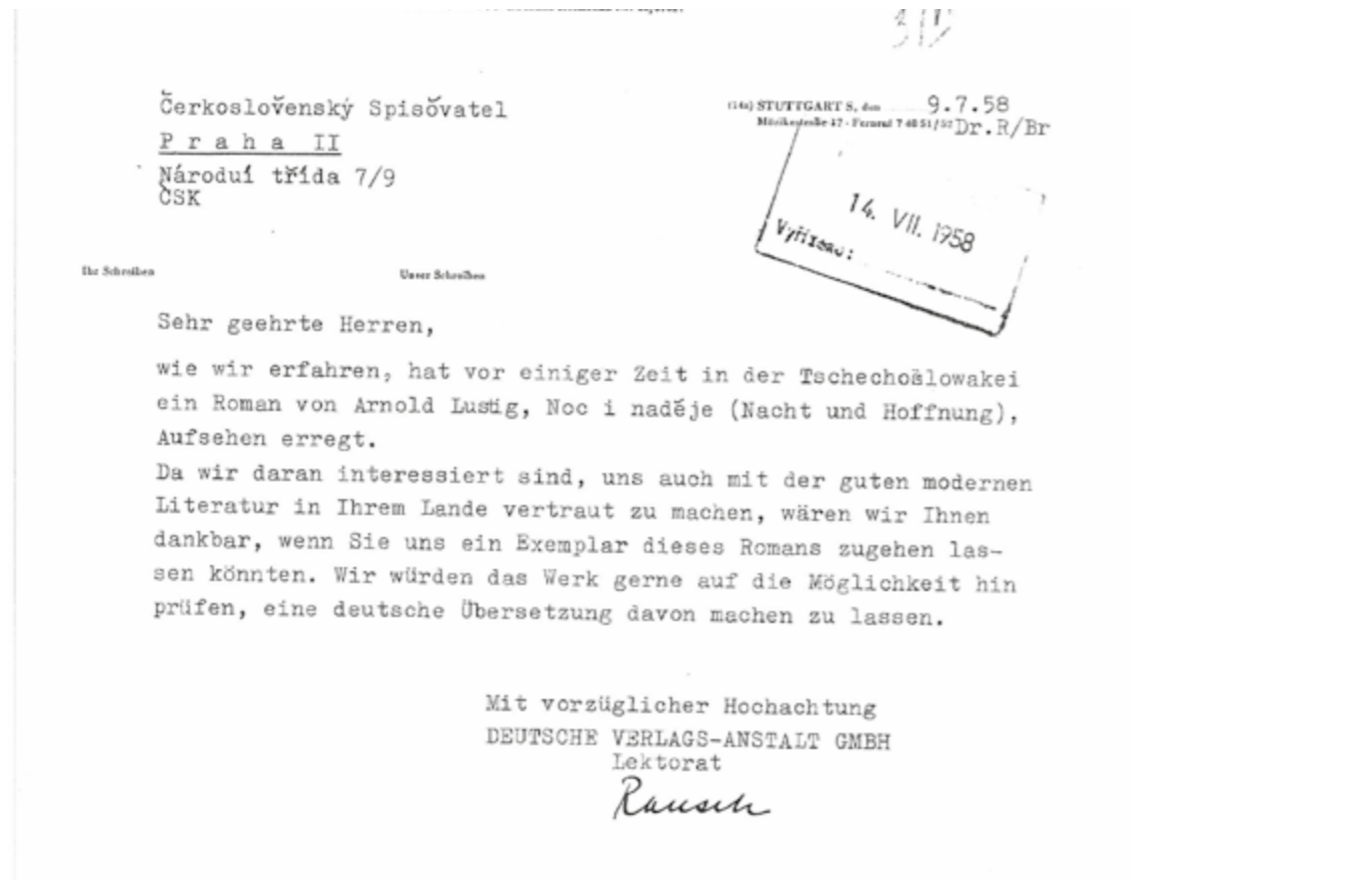
O literatuře

About Literature

Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, Prague
(Franz Kafka Publishing), 2006

"Warum ich schreibe": "Stephen and Anne" in Czech, English and French from the collection of short stories "Night and Hope" (1958)

Arnošt Lustig
O literatuře



Letter from Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GMBH, Stuttgart to the Czechoslovak publisher, requesting the rights to translate and publish Arnošt Lustig's first collection of short stories "Night and Hope" merely a few months after it appears in Czechoslovakia



Warum ich schreibe

– Ist diese Frage nicht überflüssig? Sollte das nicht dem zu entnehmen sein, was ich geschrieben habe, und dem, was ich vielleicht noch schreiben werde? Klingt das Bekenntnis nicht zugleich ein wenig Größenwahnsinnig, daß ein Mensch, der schreibt, noch hinter die Grenzen des Dialogs in sich selbst zielt, irgendwohin zum unbekanntem nahen Menschen, dem er sich mit dem Besten anvertraut, das in ihm ist und das mitunter, wenn er in seiner Arbeit gute Augenblicke, Tage oder Jahre hat, zu seiner eigenen Überraschung Gestalt annimmt wie etwas, das er vielleicht selbst nicht erwartete und in dem auch ein anderer einen verborgenen Sinn findet? Sicher ist, daß bei jedem Menschen, der schreibt, der Versuch einer Antwort andere Bilder und eine andere Folge von Rückblenden hervorruft, von denen man beim Suchen nach dem Tenor der Antwort ausgehen muß. Dabei gibt es direkte und indirekte Zusammenhänge. Vielleicht ist darin auch die Erklärung für meine folgenden Worte zu finden. Vielleicht wird sich daraus auch eine Entschuldigung für das Personalpronomen ergeben, das man sparsam verwenden soll.

– Von der dritten bis zur fünften Volksschulklasse (oder etwas länger) las ich nur Schundliteratur, Groschenhefte ... Aus ihrem Inhalt kannte ich fast alles; es verdichtete sich zu einer Legende, die um so nachhaltiger wirkte, je länger es währte. Ich lebte in einer Prager Vorstadt, aber ich beherrschte die Ortsbeschreibung aller amerikanischen Ranchs und Canons und Herden; ich wußte, wo die besten wilden Pferde gefangen werden; in welchem Salon der Barman schneller schießt als die schnellsten Pilsener; ich kannte die Schicksale der Banditen, die auf jeden schossen, um sich einen Weg in die schwarzen Felsen zu schießen, und die käuflich

keit oder Unbestechlichkeit der Scheriffs, die wie Spürhunde hinter ihnen her waren. Ich wußte von den Feuern der Hirten vom Rio Grande unten an der mexikanischen Grenze bis hinauf nach Norddakota und zurück durch den Mittelwesten über den Colorado nach Arizona bis zur Zentrale der Falschspieler in Las Vegas.

– Aber ich wußte nicht, in welcher Straße meine Mutter mir das Mittagessen kaufen wird, als die schlimmsten Zeiten waren, die es in dieser Beziehung jemals für unsere Familie gegeben hat. In der Nähe der Notarbeitsstätten von Liben, wo Männer wie Felsen Hanf zu Seilen spannen, oder unten, unter dem Stahlleib des Gasometers, wohin die Arbeitslosen spazieren gingen oder wo sie sich sonnten wie im teuersten Badeort, der für sie unerreichbar war, sind wir den Abhang hinabgeritten auf herrlichen fuchsbraunen Pferden, die unsere Jungenphantasie zu feurigem Trab anspornte. Aus den Straßenbahnen wurden Kutschen, aus der Verkäuferin im Süßwarengeschäft oder im Konsum wurde die blonde Ranchers Maud; aus den vertrockneten Grashalmen unter dem Gasometer wurde die Prärie. Wir zähmten bei Rodeo wilde Mustangs, und meine Kameraden gaben mir den Namen Jim Lustica oder auch zuweilen Colorado Jim oder Colorado Johnny Bill. Durch diese Ereignisse und durch die Summe dieser Ereignisse konnte ich leben; in ihnen fand ich fast alles, was ich zum Leben benötigte. Hier war nicht das kleinliche Dasein, gebannt vom klingeln der Silber der Münzen. Es war der einzige erreichbare Traum von einem interessanten freien Leben, wo der Mensch sein Leben wie ein richtiges Spiel lebt. Noch lange wußte ich nicht, daß ich einmal in die echten Rocky Mountains kommen würde, die an allen Ecken und Enden von den Spitzhacken ehemaliger Goldgräber durchbohrt sind wie ein

alter Käse von Würmern; daß ich vergebens den Abglanz der Legende aus der Kindheit suchen würde, um im Vergleich das Davle-Tal weitaus romantischer zu finden als die touristische Central City mit künstlichen Schenken und den Zusammenfluß von Sázava und Moldau schöner als den brausenden Niagara, der ein wenig wie die Hügel bei Radotin aussah. Noch lange wußte ich nicht, daß mich einmal der Wahnsinn befallen würde, aus dem Urstoff des Lebens und des Traumes eine neue Messe zu schaffen, Literatur genannt, manchmal mit Anerkennung bedacht, aber stets mit Erschöpfung bis zur äußersten Grenze der menschlichen Kräfte bezahlt, da nur auf der höchsten Stufe der Erregung und der Kontrolle dieser Erregung durch kaltblütig disziplinierte Arbeit ein gewisses Ergebnis erzielt werden kann. Noch immer sog ich also die Storys meiner zerflederten Hefte ein, wie mein Vater und meine Kameraden und deren Väter sie einsogen. Über den gedruckten Worten erlebten wir unsere Flucht, lebten wir unser falsches Leben, unsere kleinen und größeren Illusionen. Niemand konnte uns diese Illusion der Flucht leichter und schneller verschaffen als diese Hefte. Es ging um den Sinn des Lebens.

— Es ist so, der Mensch wird doch nicht nur des halb geboren, daß sie aus ihm einen Sklaven fürs Fließband in der Fabrik oder im Büro oder auf dem Feld machen. Vielleicht ist der Mensch wirklich nichts als eine Maschine, zur Überwindung von tausenderlei Sorgen zur Welt gekommen, damit er Halbhunger in Halbsättigung umwandelt, damit er, umgeben von Krankheiten, um seine Gesundheit bangt: die Sorgen um eine unendliche Zahl von Unbekannten, die immer von neuem eingesetzt werden, verwandeln das Leben nur in eine Reihe von Wünschen. Die Illusion war wie eine Medizin, die den Schmerz lindert, aber nicht heilt. Der Versuch einer Antwort auf die Frage, für wen ich schreibe, muß zum Teil auch hier einsetzen, bei der Illusion von der Flucht.

— Eines Tages wurde die Eintönigkeit der Lektüre unterbrochen. Die Lehrerin brachte zur Heimatkunde das Buch "Das Herz" des italienischen Schriftstellers Edmondo de Amicis mit und las daraus vor. Es war die damals bekannte Geschichte eines Jungen, der seine Großmutter ärgerte, so daß sie vergebens darüber nachdachte, woher in ihm so viel Nichtswürdigkeit stamme. Sie war abends allein mit ihm zu Haus, plötzlich kamen Diebe, und als sie der alten Frau ans Leben wollten, hielt der Junge seinen Körper dem Messer entgegen. Zu weinen schickte sich nicht, es weinte auch keiner in der Klasse laut. Aber von dieser Zeit an war die Lust an den Heften für zehn oder zwanzig Heller nie mehr so süß gewesen wie vordem. Dann brachte meine Schwester das Buch des amerikanischen Schriftstellers Aben Kandel "Die Stadt ergibt sich". Der Vater eines Jungen, der Boxer werden wollte, arbeitete in einer New Yorker Fabrik für Gasstrümpfe, verdarb sich die Augen und verdiente so wenig, daß sie sich nie satt aßen. Der Held des Buches, Pepik, kämpfte sich durch, bis er den Träger des Weltmeistertitels herausfordern konnte. Es war die einzige Hoffnung, wie er sagte, den großen Sprung zu machen und sich richtig abzustößen. Der alternde Boxer fühlte, daß er verlieren könnte; in der Ecke tauchte er die Handschuhe in Kollophoniumstaub und blendete seinen Gegner mit Schlägen auf die Augen bereits in den ersten Runden. Pepik verspielte nicht nur den Kampf, sondern auch das Leben; blind verkaufte er an der Ecke der vornehmsten Straße der Stadt Zeitungen. Das war auch ein Traum von der Flucht. Aber es war keine Illusion. Es war ein Traum, den man in dieser realen Welt leben kann, in die wir geboren wurden. Auf einmal entdeckte ich, daß auch Bücher existieren, in denen Wahrheit ist. Es war ein wahrheitsgetreues Bild vom Leben in einer New Yorker Straße, aber es ähnelte bis ins Grausame dem Leben in unserer Straße, in unserem Haus, in unserer Wohnung. Es genügte, in der Vorstellung die Namen der Straßen und der Personen auszuwechseln, und aus New York wurde mit einemmal Prag, Kandel und Pepiks Stadt war die

Schwester unserer Stadt, ihre Straße die Schwester meiner Straße, die Häuser gleichen einander wie nahe Verwandte. Als sei beides von ein und derselben erbärmlichen Henne ausgebrütet worden. Plötzlich erkannte ich, daß ein Buch nicht nur eine Traumpille ist, daß es mich mit Erkenntnis in Berührung brachte, daß es mir einen Blick hinter den Vorhang gewährte, der vor dem Unwissenden zugezogen ist.

— Die Zusammenhänge, von denen ich spreche, sind indirekt, entfernt, aber sie sind die Ausgangspunkte des Wegs, den ich als Mensch gehe, der schreibt und auf die Frage antworten soll, für wen er eigentlich schreibt. Ich glaube an die klassenlose Gesellschaft, ich bin tief davon überzeugt, daß es einen Weg gibt, der zu ihr führt, und daß wir uns trotz aller Windungen und allen Umherirrens und aller Fehler auf diesem Weg befinden und daß es wirklich an jedem Menschen liegt, an seiner Kraft, Lust, Verantwortung und vielleicht auch an seinem Glück, wie weit er auf diesem Weg gelangt, und an der Summe aller persönlichen Anteile, wohin wir alle gelangen, denn anders als gemeinsam geht es nicht. Die klassenlose Gesellschaft, in der jeder den Sinn seines Lebens und die Gleichung findet, Inhalt ist gleich Ziel, ist mein Ideal, und ich fürchte mich vor jeder Voreingenommenheit in der Hinsicht, daß man blindlings annimmt, derjenige, der Rockefeller zum Vater hat, sei a priori ein Nichtsnutz, und ein Arbeitersohn sei allein wegen seiner zufälligen Herkunft edelmütig wie Jan Hus oder Wladimir Lenin. Aber ich kann das Milieu nicht vergessen, in dem ich aufgewachsen bin und mit den ersten Erkenntnissen in Berührung kam, wie die wirkliche Welt beschaffen ist, in die wir geboren wurden, die Welt, in der die Armen nur einmal am Tag und schlecht aßen, in der sie um die Gelegenheit bangten, arbeiten zu können, obwohl sie fähig und willens waren zu arbeiten, in der nicht nur die Trunkenbolde nicht arbeiteten, sondern in der mein Onkel, der es bis zum Ingenieur-Diplom gebracht hatte, niemals seinem Diplom und seinen Erkenntnissen entsprechend eingegliedert wurde, so

daß er mitunter als Hilfsarbeiter tätig war und manchmal regelrecht umsonst arbeitete, da er befürchtete, aus der Übung zu kommen und fachlich nicht mehr Schritt halten zu können, und sich dessen schämte, weil er es als einen Beweis für seine eigene Unfähigkeit ansah. Aber es war nicht seine Unfähigkeit. Es war die Unfähigkeit des Systems, das ständig von neuem den verhexten Irrkreis von Überfluß aus Not und von Not aus Überfluß erzeugte. Das kann für mich nicht seine Gültigkeit verlieren, nur weil es sich durch ewiges Wiederholen abgenutzt zu haben scheint und die Henne, die die damalige Welt ausgebrütet hat, sich heute unvergleichlich besser um ihre Eier und um ihre Küken kümmert als ehemals, da sie sonst ihr ganzes Nest verlieren würde. Möglich, daß es eine schon einigermaßen abgenutzte Wahrheit ist. Aber es ist eine Wahrheit. Und wenn ich mich frage, für wen ich schreibe, und ich möglichst umfassend antworten möchte, muß ich auch dies in Betracht ziehen. Ich glaube, daß die klassenlose Gesellschaft menschlicher sein wird als jede noch so vervollkommnete und modernisierte alte Brut, sogar im Interesse der Kinder heutiger Rockefeller.

— Die Welt ist aus kompliziertem Gewebe, aber keine Kompliziertheit kann mich darüber hinwegtäuschen, daß die Gesellschaft, die meinem Onkel keine Arbeit gab, die dreißig von vierzig Jungen in der Klasse nicht einmal drei sättigende Mahlzeiten am Tag und ein eigenes Bett in einer zumindest ein wenig annehmbaren Wohnung bot, die Millionen Menschen die Hoffnung nahm und sie nicht einmal Tausenden gab, sondern nur einzelnen Auserwählten, daß diese Gesellschaft dieselbe ist, die in Viet Nam mit der gleichen Grausamkeit mordet, wie Adolf Hitler meine Brüder hingemordet hat. Immer begann es mit dem Hunger der Arbeiter und immer endete es mit ihrem Massaker, im Kleinen und im Großen, in den Straßen, auf Schlachtfeldern, bei Demonstrationen für Brot, für ein größeres Maß an Freiheit, in Berlin, in Prag oder heute in Djakarta. Und das Buch von damals über den amerikanischen Boxer, der im entscheidenden

Kampf sein Augenlicht verlor, war zugleich ein Bild der Niedertracht nicht nur eines alternden Weltmeisters im Schwergewicht. Man brauchte nur die Namen beliebig auszuwechseln. Ein fremdes Leben war beschrieben, aber es war mir so nahe, daß ich es mir aneignete wie eine eigene neue Erfahrung. Ich hatte den Eindruck, daß mir der Mensch, aus dessen Feder dieses Buch hervorgegangen war, eigentlich einen persönlichen Brief geschrieben hatte. Ich hatte das Gefühl, daß es für mich geschrieben war. In dem Buch war mit einemmal nicht mehr nur seine, sondern auch meine Leidenschaft, war seine und mein Zorn. Ein unsichtbares Band war hier gespannt, das einen neuen Start und vielleicht auch ein neues Ziel bedeutete.

— Für wen schreibe ich? Ich wäre froh, wenn wenigstens ein einziger Mensch einen solchen Eindruck aus meinen Büchern empfangen würde, wie ich ihn damals empfing. Sicher ist es wichtig zu wissen, für wen ich schreibe. Ich glaube, daß sich derjenige selbst belügt, der für seine Person diese Frage oder die Antwort auf diese Frage leugnet. Ein einziges Buch kann im Leben eines Menschen so viel bedeuten wie das Wort an Erkenntnis enthält. Ein Mensch kann viele Bücher lesen oder nur wenige, und sie müssen ihn nicht sonderlich berühren; aber ein einziges Buch, das ihn berührt, kann seine Seele verändern. Vielleicht wäre es Größenwahn, wenn ich das von dem behaupten wollte, was ich schreibe. Ich spreche davon, wie ein Buch auf mich wirkte, an das später - gleichsam in einer Art Echo - nur ein einziges anderes Buch heranreichte: Nikolai Ostrowskis "Wie der Stahl gehärtet wurde". Mir ist gleichgültig, daß das lächerlich klingen mag. So wie ein Mensch, der schreibt, nicht lügen kann, weil jede Lüge von vornherein verraten ist, brauche ich auch nicht zu leugnen, was ich gern habe. Dann war Krieg. In dieser Zeit wurden keine Bücher gelesen. Einmal lag ich in der Zelle auf einer Matratze, aus der Pferdehaare spießten. Die Decke hatte ich lieber nicht angerührt. Jemand warf "Schuld und Sühne" herein. Ich hatte keine

Ahnung, wer Dostojewski war. Ich verstand auch nicht gut genug, was der Autor alles sagte; da waren viele Schichten, die ich nur erahnen konnte. Aber es war da etwas Dunkles, Entferntes, Grausames in der Wahrhaftigkeit, es war, als würde ich auf dem Grund eines tiefen Brunnens einen Frosch berühren, der dort das Wasser trübt. Und damals begriff ich mit letzter Gewißheit, daß es auf der Welt Bücher gibt, in denen nur Wahrheit ist, und daß das wertvoll ist und nur mit einem einzigen Wort ausgewogen werden kann: wieder mit Wahrheit. Mit der Wahrheit als Zeugnis vom Menschen, von der Zeit, in der er lebt, von der Seele, mit der er mit ihr und mit sich selbst ringt, für sich, für das, was gestern war, was heute ist und morgen sein wird.

— Das war der Weg, auf dem ich zur Literatur kam. Ein sichtbares Dreisiegel, das in meine Seele eingebrannt ist. Mehr brachte mir dann nur noch das Leben, im Krieg entblößten sich die Menschen bis ins Innerste. Das Gute, das Böse, Tapferkeit, Feigheit, Mut, Angst, Ausdauer, Verzweiflung, das alles war irgendwo irgendwer, das waren Menschen, die einen Namen hatten und ein Gesicht. Ich entsinne mich einiger Dinge aus dieser Zeit, die sehr schön waren und die ich mich so aufzuschreiben bemühte, wie sie waren, und ich entsinne mich auch ziemlich scheußlicher Dinge, die ich teilweise auch schon aufgeschrieben habe, so gut ich es vermochte. Erzählungen und Novellen schreibt man als einmalige Erscheinungen einmaliger Menschen nieder, allgemeine Erkenntnisse sind eher Sache der Philosophen. Aber bei Kriegsende drängte sich in alles, was ich dachte und was ich tun wollte, eine allgemeine Erkenntnis:

— Die Gesellschaft, in die wir geboren wurden und in der wir aufwachsen, hob Hitler und General Franco auf den Thron, machte aus Schurken Politiker, aus gestrandeten Individuen Beamte und fast Sozialvertreter. Diese Gesellschaft konnte ihren Platz an der Sonne nur mit Krieg behaupten und im Krieg nur mit Gas und

Rücksichtslosigkeit, die bis heute noch nicht zu überblicken ist, da der Berg der Leichen höher ist als der Montblanc. Diese Gesellschaft ist verantwortlich dafür, daß manche Länder die Besten ihrer eigenen Menschen und die besten Menschen der Nachbarvölker hingemetzelt haben. Sie führte Vancura und Fucik zum Richtplatz ... Sie würde Einstein nur wegen seiner jüdischen Abstammung hinrichten und Joliot-Curie nur wegen seiner kommunistischen Gesinnung. Irgendwo ist das Böse und irgendwo ist das Gute, und es ist stets irgendwo und irgendjemand. Vom Standpunkt meines Hauses konnte es der Krämer sein, der, um sich zu verbessern, seinen tschechischen Söhnen die Hitleruniform anzog, oder die Tochter des kommunistischen Eisenbahners, die an Tuberkulose starb, da sie sich schämte, jemand um etwas zu bitten. Vom Standpunkt des Landes und der ganzen Generation kann es dann nurmehr die Summe, das Ergebnis und die Drohung des Erfüllens sein. Für diese Erkenntnis holten wir uns im Jahre fünf und vierzig das Mitgliedsbuch der Partei der Revolution, deren Programm nicht nur in der Vernichtung aller dieser Schurken und Mörder und Schufte und in der Zerstörung dessen bestand, was sie als menschliche Gesellschaft ausgeben wollten, sondern auch darin, gleichzeitig aus erreichbarem Material eine Welt aufzubauen, die vom Geist der Besten der Ermordeten und der Besten der Lebenden erfüllt ist. Das Gute, das Böse, das Gute, das Böse, ja, ja, nein, nein. Diese Erkenntnis enthält offensichtlich auch ein Teil der Antwort auf die Frage, für wen und warum ich eigentlich schreibe. Vielleicht ist es ein großes Programm, und man kann es nicht bis auf den Punkt genau in zehn oder zwanzig Jahren erfüllen. Aber fünfzig Jahre sind schon eine Frist, die ich mir im Geist setze ...

— Für wen und warum schreibe ich? Das Beste, das Schlimmste, das Wichtigste, das ich im Krieg sah, wünschte ich niederzuschreiben, Nicht, weil ich mich dazu berufen fühlte. Es gab Talentiertere und Berufenerere, aber sie starben. Es gab Klügere

und Fähigere, aber sie starben auch. Von den Lebenden sind viele, die es bestimmt könnten, an andere Stellen gekommen. Und so hatte ich manchmal nachts oder in Augenblicken der Ruhe den Eindruck, daß es Dinge gibt, die nur ich selbst gesehen habe, und daß ich vielleicht der Letzte bin, der darüber ein Urteil abgeben kann. Vielleicht besteht darin - allgemein gesprochen - der Selbsterhaltungstrieb des Menschen, der sich einbildet, der Mittelpunkt der Welt alles zu sein, um das menschliche Gedächtnis über das zu erheben, was er selbst möglicherweise ist. Vielleicht ist das eine schwache Waffe gegen das Vergessen, aber es ist die einzige.

— Manchmal bin ich selbst erstaunt, daß ich im Schreiben den Sinn meines Lebens gefunden habe. Noch mit achtzehn Jahren wußte ich nicht recht, was ich werden sollte; bis dahin hatte ich mich in einigen Handwerksberufen versucht, verschiedene Milieus und ein paar Menschen kennengelernt und auch, wie einzelne Schichten, Klassen und Völker leben; das war lehrreich für mich gewesen, indem es mir als Beispiel oder zur Warnung diente. Zuletzt hatte ich auf einer schönen deutschen Maschine, die alles fast allein tat, Stahl bis auf Zehntelmillimeter bearbeitet; aber die Arbeitsergebnisse dieser Maschine, in deren Rumpf, Arme und Beine ich Energie schickte, brachten Menschen um, wie ich selbst einer war. Ich einem war es lehrreich in höherem Sinn, als sich in der bloßen Geschicklichkeit zu üben. Vor dem Krieg erzeugten die Arbeiter Dinge, die sie dann nie mehr sahen, im Krieg mußte man sich eine Schlinge knüpfen, die sie einem um den Hals legten. Der Mensch braucht nicht einmal sehr klug zu sein, um darauf zu kommen.

— Ich wünschte, im Leben etwas Interessantes zu tun, um der vernichtenden Eintönigkeit zu entgehen, die abstumpf, um nicht der irrsinnigen, teilnahmslosen Langeweile, der Frucht der Uninteressiertheit, der qualvollen Alltäglichkeit ausgeliefert zu sein, ich wollte Pilot sein, wie mein bester Freund in jener Zeit ein Rennfahrer werden woll

te wie Chiron, Nuvolari oder von Brauchitsch. Wir gaben uns das Ehrenwort, daß wir, wenn wir den Krieg überstehen würden, einen anderen Namen annähmen, um als Brüder leben zu können, und daß wir zu unserem Wort stehen würden, er als Rennfahrer, ich als Pilot. Wir sind heimgekehrt. Wie es war, darüber berichtet die Erzählung "Die Finsternis hat keinen Schatten" aus "Diamanten der Nacht", die später verfilmt wurde. Ich besaß schon die unterschriebene Anmeldung für die Fliegerakademie, und nur die Tatsache, daß ich nicht Pilot, sondern Navigator werden sollte, ließ mich Reporter werden. Und wieder sah ich die Welt, die nicht aus den besten Ergebnissen des Krieges hervorgegangen war; weiterhin wurden Fehler gemacht; wenn auch nicht in solchem Massenmaßstab. Aber es genügte, durch ein paar Länder zu reisen: Kriegsberichterstatte im arabisch-israelischen Krieg zu sein, die Naturfestung Dien-Bien-Phu zu besuchen, deutsche Soldaten ins Nachkriegsengland kommen zu sehen und die Provokationen englischer Faschisten im Jahre 1962 oder 1963 auf dem Trafalgar Square zu erleben; zu hören, daß Mörder wie der Auschwitzer Josef Mengele nach Argentinien geflohen sind und Martin Bormann sich nur ein Stück hinter unsere Grenzen abgesetzt hat; den Sechzehnstundentag japanischer Arbeiter als Preis für den erstaunlichen Nachkriegsaufstieg Japans unter die Industriegroßmächte zu sehen; besiegte Länder kennenzulernen, die nach amerikanischen Dollarinjektionen wirtschaftlich – und nicht nur wirtschaftlich – die Siegerländer überflügelt; den Nahrungsüberfluß in Amerika zu sehen, wo auch die tägliche Arbeitslosenunterstützung dem halben Wochenlohn eines Arbeiters gleicher Qualifikation auf der anderen Hälfte der Erdkugel in Südostasien entspricht; in Hiroshima und Nagasaki, in Jerusalem, Paris und auch in New York herrliche Denkmäler zu besichtigen, die als Gelöbnis errichtet wurden, das Vermächtnis der Toten treu zu bewahren, und gleichzeitig zu beobachten, wie einige Länder alles Mögliche tun, um nach einiger Zeit für neue Opfer neue Denkmäler errichten zu

können; das Erkannte in Zusammenhängen zu sehen und zu verfolgen, in Zusammenhängen, die dazu drängen, daß ich alles, was ich schreiben wollte, unter dem Gesichtspunkt schrieb, was war, was ist und was sein wird oder sein sollte. Ich begann als Journalist schreiben zu lernen; es war offenbar unumgänglich, um zu Erzählungen und Novellen übergehen zu können. Ich schrieb ein paar Sachen, die vielleicht nicht viel taugen, aber ich fand das, was der Mensch zum Leben braucht: eine wunderbare Arbeit, die den ganzen Menschen erfordert, Kraft, Ausdauer, Mut zum Risiko, und die es nötig macht, hundertmal ein und das selbe zu wiederholen, um einen Schritt voranzukommen oder alles wegzuworfen, was mit so vielen Mühen geschaffen wurde, und von neuem zu beginnen, wieder schön von Anfang an. Nichts anderes hat hier Hoffnung auf Erfolg. Ich schrieb von jenen Sachen, die ich selbst erlebte oder die Menschen erlebten, die mir sehr nahestehen. Ich schrieb immer so, daß auch jene, von denen ich schrieb, lesen könnten, wenn sie noch am Leben wären. Ich sage mir stets, daß man das, was man schreiben will, mit solcher Anstrengung schreiben soll, als sei es das Letzte, was man noch tut, als müsse man morgen sterben, vielleicht nicht physisch, aber als Schriftsteller. Denn keiner hat die Gewähr, daß er nach einem fertigen Buch jemals noch ein anderes schreiben wird. Es jedoch so zu schreiben, daß das, was man erlebt oder gesehen hat, auch auf den Leser so wirkt, wie es im Leben gewirkt hat, erfordert Arbeit und bestimmte Grundsätze in dieser Arbeit, die zu erlernen man ein Jahr oder zwanzig Jahre oder das ganze Leben braucht. Wer das mit einigen Grundvoraussetzungen durchhält, die für ihn so unabdingbar sind, wie es für einen Piloten etwa unabdingbar ist, gute Augen und einen guten Magen zu haben und schwindelfrei zu sein, wer Talent besitzt, das heißt, die nicht abgestumpfte Fähigkeit, die Dinge ringsum wahrzunehmen, für sich selbst, mit eigenen Augen, und sich ein Urteil darüber zu bilden und so sie auch zu beschreiben, der darf hoffen, daß er eines Tages das schreiben wird, was er

schreiben wollte, und wenn nicht auf einmal, dann stückweise, so daß alles zusammen schließlich das ganze Bild ergibt. Er muß vieles lernen und viel lehren entsagen können. Er muß viel hinnehmen und viel zurückweisen können. Er muß demütig sein wie ein Engel und gleichzeitig in mancher Hinsicht stolz oder hartnäckig wie eine spanische Königin. Er muß oder sollte nur eine langfristige Perspektive kennen, weil dieser Wettstreit auf kurze Entfernungen keine Ziele bietet, für die sich der Einsatz wirklich lohnt. Das ist auch ein Stück Antwort auf die Frage, für wen ich schreibe. Jeder Autor hat wohl einen imaginären Leser; ich rechne diejenigen hinzu, die schon tot sind. Das kann einem leichtfertigen Menschen auch zu größerem Verantwortungsgefühl verhelfen.

– Und wenn ich zusammenfassen sollte, würde ich noch sagen: Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die eine Gesellschaft ohne Klassen suchen, wie ich sie suchte, eine Gesellschaft gerechter, leidenschaftlicher, einmaliger Menschen, die jeder für sich ein wertvolles Leben haben und deren Leben einander nicht im Weg sind, sondern einander ergänzen und bereichern.

– Ich schreibe für die ehemaligen Leser der Groschenhefte mit Illusionen, wie dem unerträglichen Leben zu entfliehen sei, in denen jeder für sich selbst spielt, ohne Rücksicht darauf, gegen wen. Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die fühlen, daß der Mensch nicht nur dazu geboren ist, zu vermodern und alles, was er zu schaffen beginnt, zu verlieren. Oder betrogen zu werden. Oder zu der Ansicht zu gelangen, es sei zuweilen vielleicht besser, nicht geboren zu sein; beziehungsweise abgestumpfter zu sein oder zumindest gefühlloser.

– Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die überzeugt davon sind, daß es möglich ist, die Welt zu verändern, und die sie verändern wollen, damit das Leben nicht einem Gerichtsprozeß gleicht, der vor dem Angesicht eines jeden Menschen und gleichzeitig unter Ausschluß seiner Teilnahme abrollt, ohne Berücksichtigung seiner Schuld oder Unschuld,

entgegen seinen Rechten, von vornherein zu seinem Schaden beendet, da schon von vornherein, hinter seinem Rücken, Verhandlungstermin, Urteilspruch, Datum der Vollstreckung und Unwiderlichkeit des Urteils festgelegt worden sind.

– Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die noch immer in Gefahr sind. Manchmal sind die Gefahr Bomben, manchmal ist sie Rechtlosigkeit, manchmal Hunger, manchmal Kleinmut.

– Ich schreibe für die Ehrlichen gegen die Unehrlichen, für die Besseren gegen die Schurken. Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die davon überzeugt sind, daß aus dem Stoff, aus dem der Mensch besteht, eine edle Form zu modellieren ist. Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die (zuweilen auch am Ende ihrer Bemühungen) davon überzeugt sind, daß der Mensch trotz allem so weit gelangt, sein Leben zu verändern, wie es bereits in sechstausend schriftlich festgehaltenen Jahren von den besten Menschen angestrebt worden ist, wie Spartakus und Einstein es angestrebt haben.

– Ich schreibe für diejenigen, die davon überzeugt sind, daß jeder Mensch, der nicht auf Kosten anderer lebt, Recht hat auf alles, was das menschliche Wir dem menschlichen Ich heute schon geben kann.

– Ich schreibe nicht nur für sie, sondern auch über sie. Ich möchte so schreiben, daß es interessant, wahrheitsgetreu und aufmunternd ist, auch wenn es vielleicht traurig und grausam ist, wie alle Tränen der Welt. Ich wünsche so zu schreiben, daß die ganze Kompliziertheit unserer Welt in den Punkten, in denen ich sie festhalten möchte, so einfach wiedergegeben wird, wie jede neue Entdeckung anmutet. Damit die Menschen allem zum Trotz mehr Lust zum Leben bekommen.

Doch es gibt Menschen, die es kompliziert niederschreiben, und es ist weitaus besser. Es gibt tausend Möglichkeiten, ein Ding zu beschreiben, und es kann nur die eine tausendmal anders

beleuchtete Wahrheit sein, die dadurch sich nicht verändert, sondern besser erkannt wird. Mir würde leid tun, wenn diese Zeilen einen anderen Eindruck hervor riefen, als ich wünschte; aber jedes persönliche Bekenntnis wird wahrscheinlich ein wenig einseitig erscheinen, besonders auf diesem Gebiet menschlicher Arbeit. Zum Schluß möchte ich zu der Frage, für wen ich schreibe, noch das eine sagen: Es ist ermutigend zu wissen, daß ich in diesem Kampf nicht allein stehe und daß in diesem Kampf niemals jemand allein stehen kann ...

Ich schreibe für die Menschen, die ich gern habe.

Arnošt Lustig - an Interview in "Die Verbannten Dichter" ("Forbidden Poets") by Jürgen Serke (Albrecht Knaus Verlag, Hamburg, 1982)

Übertragen von Alexander Ludwig



Arnošt Lustig's seminal article "Who I Write For", Rudé Právo, 1966
Also republished in "Essays: Selected Texts 1965 - 2008" (Mladá fronta, 2009)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbyzdZptaM4>

Biography

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arno%C5%A1t_Lustig

1926

Born on 21. December in Královská Třída 428 in Vysočany – Libeň, an industrial, working-class suburb on the outskirts of Prague. Here, among the many poor labourers and unemployed, his father, Emil Lustig, owned a small textile shop and his mother, Terezie Lówyová, worked as a seamstress. The suburb had the highest proportion of Prague's Jewish population.



The Lustig family, Prague, perhaps 1928 or 1929

Cowboys and Rin Tin Tin

"In Libeň, in movie theater Svět, they used to show cowboy films Tom Mix, and Rin Tin Tin, and others – every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon. And us kids never had any money and so we waited for the weekly newsreel to end and then we said to the owner 'Milady', and she asked, 'How much do you have?' ... And she let us in.

Most of the time, the cowboy was on his own, he had a sense for justice, he was courageous, gregarious, he helped people and at the end, he won.

And today, when I think about it, what I liked was that the films were fairy tales for grown ups, where good, in some manner, won over evil ... For me, the movies were a source of entertainment, learning and contact with the world. This was still before the war, during the First Republic. Well,

then the war came, the Jews were forbidden to enter theater... "

Arnošt Lustig

1939 (15 March)

On this snowy day, on the sidewalk of Královská Třída, Arnošt and his sister Hana, **watch the German troops** occupy Prague



1940 (June)

Excluded from primary school in Libeň, subsequent to the coming into force of anti-Semitic, racist Nuremberg Laws. His childhood comes to an abrupt end. As all Jews, he must wear the Star of David on his clothes and at home by 20:00. He faces countless restrictions on what he can do and where he can go. There are more than 3,000 anti-Jewish laws with crippling economic and social impact on the Jewish community. No more movies, theatres,

concerts, parks, museums, cafeterias, restaurants, walking on sidewalks. Entering stores is possible only in the afternoons, when most food and other products – issued on ration tickets – are sold-out already. No more bicycles, scooters, musical instruments, radios, cameras, no non-Jewish friends, no soccer matches, no oranges, no pets, no jewelry, no furs, no sewing machines, no more houses...

1940 (Fall)-1941

Given that from fall 1940, Jewish students are not admitted to Czech schools of any kind, public and private, he **becomes an apprentice** with Mr Novotný, the tailor next door, on Královská Třída thanks to an agreement between his father and the tailor. After a year, Mr Novotný asks him to leave to protect himself from being found out as employing a Jew.

1941 (Fall)-1942

Becomes an apprentice in Mr Rejsek's decorator and leather goods shop, Jungmannovo náměstí, downtown Prague. They manufactured attaché cases, wallets, ladies handbags. He made sure the heaters were fully stocked with coal, he glued the leather, and carried it to wherever necessary. There were sixteen apprentices, all females. He goes to the only two coffee houses Jews could visit – the Jewish Aschermann and Sklípek, both in Prague. He learns to play cards there and frequently wins.

1942 (19. November)

Deported from Prague-Bubny train station, with his mother and older sister Hana, to concentration camp Theresienstadt. He lived in the ghetto's Boys' Home, Room L-16, and worked as a jack of all trades (Hundertschaft), carrying bricks, sweep luggage, helping out in a carpenter's, cobbler's or tailor's shop. Theresienstadt was built by Emperor Josef II for his mother the Empress Marie-Thérèse of Austria, as a garrison town for 5,000 soldiers.

1942

Imprisoned in Theresienstadt Small Fortress

for six weeks for stealing margarine from a warehouse. One night, he finds Fjodor Michajlovič Dostoyevskij's "Crime and Punishment" hidden under the matrace and falls in love with literature. Possessed by reading, he gets fever from the experience.

1943 (Summer)

Wins the Best Soccer Goalie title for junior league Bašta in the Theresienstadt Ghetto. But soccer is a life-and-death pastime. The players on the losing team are deported on the next transport East as the Nazis bet on who would win and banish the losers.

1944 (28. September)

Deported to extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in the penultimate transport from Theresienstadt. Once there, he is prisoner number 94,633 condemned to go to the gas chambers, without ever being tested and tattooed, as was routine for all inmates. Beforehand, his father Emil dies in the gas chambers upon arrival.

1944 (28. October)

Deported to Buchenwald-Meuselwitz bei Leipzig, a satellite camp of Buchenwald. **He is number thirty-six** out of the one hundred and fifty prisoners in Auschwitz selected to work as slaves in the Hasag Werke Nazi ammunition factory there. He poses as a twenty-year old skilled metal-worker with experience in the well-known Czech-Moravian Kolben Daněk Company (Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk). He **escapes being shot to death** by a Nazi officer as he is caught stealing a loaf of bread and his friend jumps in front of him to be shot instead. Stunned by this act, the Nazi lets both of them go (see short story "Second Round" in "Diamonds of the Night" and short film "A Bite To Eat" directed by Jan Němec).

1945 (13. April)

Escapes with his best friend Jiří Justic from a death transport as Allied Forces' fighter aircraft (called Tiefflieger or Jabos) mistakenly take their train for an enemy ground target and bombard the train. The train just reaches the Lower Railway Station of Kraslice (today a suburb of Kraslice, Czech Republic), carrying Lustig and other starved, ill and destitute prisoners from Buchenwald - Meuselwitz where their slave labour kept the Hugo and Alfred Schneider AG (HASAG) factory going. The train is en route to the Dachau concentration camp. Lustig and Justic run and hide in the woods for six nights and six days. They encounter a close brush with death when they are caught by older members of a local Volkssturm. They are **sentenced to death in a mock trial** and then left to their own devices. The two of them reach Prague as fugitives.

In 2014, the Association of the Friends of the Town of Kraslice place a commemoration plaque for Arnošt Lustig on the façade of the train station bearing the following text: *"In the memory of a writer and journalist of global significance, who here in Kraslice, in April 1945, as if by a miracle, escaped from the death transport."*

1945 (May)

Participant in the Anti-Nazi Uprising in Prague that commenced 5 May. He was delivering food supplies and materials to a make-shift rebel's hospital set up in the basement of the so-called Jewish Town-Hall in Old Town.

1945

Joins the Communist Party
"After the liberation, we believed in communism as a matter of fact. In the Russians. Although one of their Colonels said to us, do you know what I imagine as communism? It is when you will have bread, you will not have salt - and when you will have salt, you will not have bread. We said to ourselves, such treason. How can a Russian Colonel ever permit himself to say that? But he

was probably right. And he looked at us as if we were mad. We liked the Russians, the liberators... "
Arnošt Lustig, Testimony, 2004

1945 (June)

Reunites with his mother, sister Hana and cousin Věra, at the Vršovice Railway Station in Prague arriving in a freight train from the Mauthausen concentration camp.

"My life is divided into before Auschwitz-Birkenau, there and after"
Arnošt Lustig

1945 (Summer)

After liberation, **commences** studies at the Business Academy, Prague, based on an intelligence test

1946 (September) - 1951

Transfers to the Charles University, School of Political and Social Sciences, Obtains a Master's Degree in Journalism in 1951

1946 (Summer)

Happy to finally meet Věra Weislitzová, a stunning young woman he had noticed initially in Theresienstadt a few years before. Now, both are heading from the Wilson Train Station in Prague, to a recreational villa in Ostravice, Beskydy on a trip subsidized by the Social Department of the Jewish Community, Prague for Jewish orphans and partial orphans. Lustig and Weislitzová fall head over heel in love.



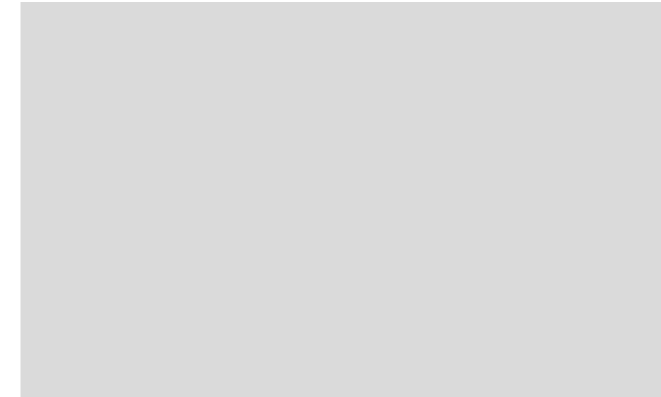
Arnošt and Věra, Ostravice, summer 1946

1948

Deployed as a correspondent of the Arab-Israeli conflict by newspapers Lidové noviny and Zemědělské noviny and the Věstník židovských náboženských obcí

1948-1949

Deployed as a correspondent of the Arab-Israeli conflict by the Czechoslovak Radio



Arnošt Lustig s Aškenazym

1949 (July)

Marries Věra Weislitzová, in Naharyia, Israel. Věra emigrates to the British Mandate of Palestine earlier, having trained as a military nurse in one of the two Czechoslovak Haganah brigades of Jewish volunteer soldiers, under the command of the legendary anti-Nazi World War Two commander, brigadier general (posthumously), Antonín Sochor.

1950s

Under investigation by the Czechoslovak authorities for supporting refugees to Israel

1950 (Spring)

Flies back to Prague with wife Věra from Israel via Brussels. The airplane is empty except for the young married couple and the legendary Emil Zátopek - nicknamed the "Czech Locomotive" - returning from competitions. Zátopek was the Czechoslovak long-distance runner best known for winning three gold medals soon after at the

Summer Olympics in 1952 in Helsinki. En route, they form a long-standing friendship.



Arnošt Lustig and Věra Weislitzová Lustigová in Romania with friends, around 1950

1951 (June)

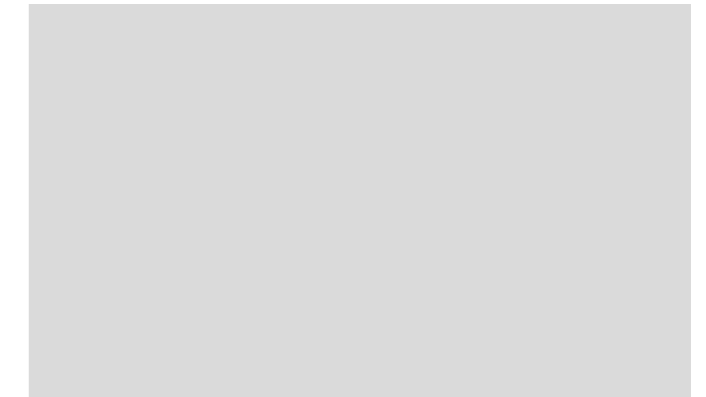
Son Josef is born

1951

Publishes a series of eight short stories based on his experience in Israel in Věstník židovských náboženských obcí - the Jewish Communities' Journal.

1950-1958

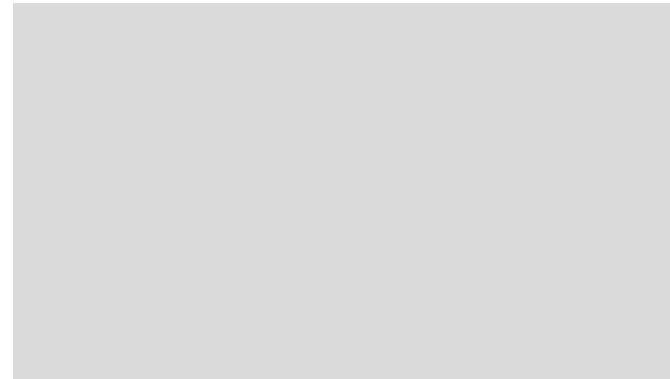
Joins Czechoslovak Radio as a newsman and directs selected cultural programmes



Arnošt Lustig and Věra Weislitzová Lustigová in Poland with friends, early 1950s

1967 (Six-Day War, June)

Stands up courageously, with a handful of Czech and Slovak intellectuals, in protest of the Czechoslovak government's one-sided anti-Israeli rhetoric in line with the policy of the Communist regime – including a television interview challenging the break in diplomatic relations with Israel.



Arnošt Lustig, Israel, June 1967

1960s

Belongs among bestselling authors, with over half a million of his books published in Czechoslovakia, a country of ten million people. Over this time period, 150,000 copies of Hemingway's books were published and 200,000 of Fitzgerald's.

1968

Engages in the reform of the Socialist regime for 'Socialism with a Human Face' as part of the Prague Spring of 1968

Lecturer on Film and Literature at Charles University in Prague, University of Jerusalem and University of Tokyo

Summer 1968

Heads up the Czechoslovak Film Delegation to the San Sebastian Film Festival

Member of the Jury, 3. International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia

"Daytime After the Night, Clear Skies After the Rain"

"1968 was the most beautiful year of my life, and I am not likely to live something like it again. It doesn't mean that an era of darkness didn't precede it nor follow it, but that year seems splendid. Though it isn't unequivocal. In this beautiful year, I had to get a revolver because friends and guardians of Arab terrorists threatened to kill my children, and at night, unknown perpetrators smashed the windows in my apartment in Lužická Street in Vinohrady, Prague. I don't miss that. I miss the hope that promised liberty, democracy and social justice."
Arnošt Lustig

1968 (August)

Flees Czechoslovakia as he learns of the invasion by the Warsaw Pact Armies to crush the liberal reforms of Alexander Dubček, ending an era known as the Prague Spring of 1968. At the time, he is vacationing in Caorle, Italy with his wife, daughter Eva and friends.

"In 1968, after the Soviet invasion, there was a big meeting of Czech, Swiss, German and other European writers, organized as an act of solidarity. Böll and Grass were there and it took about three days, I remember it well, there were about thirty Czech writers there. And a curious thing happened there. Arnošt and I met in the certain room and we stood next to one another and in between joking and talking, he said: 'Vašek, what do you think, should I emigrate or should I return?' And he said: 'You know, you have to understand. I'm a Jew and I've lived through all sorts of things.' And I said: 'Arnošt, this is a serious decision I can't make for you. It's a life decision.'"

Václav Havel, Czech statesman, writer and former dissident, Ex-President of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic



Arnošt plays goalie during a soccer match at the 3. International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia on the *Artist's* team against the *Technicians*, summer 1968

1968 (September) – 1969

Arrives in the port of Haifa, Israel by ship Theodor Herzl with his wife and daughter Eva, at the invitation of the Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. They are housed in the emigrants' Ulpan there and join Kibbutz Hachotrim in northern Israel founded in December 1941 by Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia and Germany. He continues working on his novel "Darling" about the first Arab-Israeli conflict, published in Czechoslovakia in 1968, but after the invasion by Warsaw Pact Armies that year, most of the printed stock was destroyed.



Arnošt Lustig, Secret visit to Czechoslovakia, November 1968

"Darling" - Miláček

In November 1968, Lustig decides to attend the Extraordinary Congress of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union in Prague. At that time, a Colonel of the Israeli Secret Service confiscated (and then returned) Lustig's manuscript of the novel "Darling" – Miláček.

"I finished writing the novel in Israel and sent it to Prague for them to publish it there (although for the book to make it through censorship, it was published on paper slated for textbooks, and after publication, it was confiscated and destroyed). The Colonel asked me an ironic question about why I am going back to an occupied land at the risk of not being allowed to leave? (I was going at the invitation of Jaroslav Seifert, the Nobel-Prize winning poet and President of the Czechoslovak Writers's Union - he said, 'Welcome in Prague, you are one of us'.)

So back then, the Colonel asked, what I owed the Czech country to be risking so much and going to the Congress? I replied with clean conscience and quickly, that I owe them everything. My father considered the Czech country as the one promised to us..."

1969 (September) – 1970

Lives with his wife and children, in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. He works as a screenplay writer in Jadran Film Studios on a film about Marshall J. B. Tito's famous battle of Sutjeska, with Richard Burton in the leading role. The battle was the greatest engagement of the Yugoslav Partisan War, also known as the Fifth Offensive, during World War II.

1970 (September) – 1971

Joins the International Writing Program in Iowa City, Iowa, USA

“Everything good in the world has grown out of contradiction. Perhaps the first man to discover this truth was Heraclitus, and every thinking man since has had to rediscover the same truth. So it is not surprising that conflicting opinions about the best working conditions for writers helped create the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Neither is it surprising that the program should be the work of a stubborn poet, an American in body and soul, Paul Engle. Without question, his program represents the most that has ever been accomplished on an international scale for writers, and has, in the positive sense of the word, the same meaning for writers that the idea of the Olympic Games has for athletes. Given the existence of traditional writers’ organizations – P.E.N. Club and the European Writers’ Union, for instance – it was the essential next step: essential because the time had come to do more than organize writers into unions and defend their endangered interests. It was necessary to meet writers’ most basic creative need. i.e., to offer them a place where they might create for a certain period of time, undisturbed by the pressures of a job.

I lived for a year with people from Latin America, to whom the word revolution meant a vibration of all the senses, as though they were the incarnation of Marat or Lenin; and I lived with people from Peking and Taipei to whom the word meant a chilling vision of severed heads rolling senselessly

over a country whose uninterrupted civilization is the oldest in the world. Regardless of their personal backgrounds, they met in Iowa City and they became friends. At the very least, learning from and about each other humanized them; that is to say nothing of their work, which may one day affect the lives of millions.”

Arnošt Lustig, *The World Comes to Iowa*, 1987

1971–1972

Visiting Lecturer teaching “Playwriting” at the University of Iowa, Iowa City

1972–1973

Visiting Professor teaching “Creative Writing” and “European Literature in translation” at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa



Arnošt teaching, The American University, Washington, D.C., 1980's

1972 (31 December)

Loses Czechoslovak permit to travel abroad for himself and the family

1973 (1. January)

Loses his Czechoslovak citizenship in absentia, along with his family members.

1973 (Spring)

Co-organizes a three-day film festival of the Czech New Wave called “REFOCUS” at The University of Iowa, Iowa City, featuring including Ivan Passer, Czech-born film director and screenwriter. A significant figure in the Czech New Wave of the mid-1960s, Passer worked closely with Miloš Forman on many of his films, and directed his first feature in 1965. Following the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Passer defected to the West, aided by Carlo Ponti and has been living and working in the United States since then (Law and Disorder, Cutter’s Way, Stalin, and many others).

1973 (September) – 2004

Teaches as a Visiting Professor of creative writing, film and literature at The American University, Washington, D.C. After five years, becomes **Associate Professor**. Named full Professor (1978). After teaching for thirty-one years, retires as Professor Emeritus (2004).

During this period, lectures widely on Film and Literature at various universities including Jerusalem University and various universities in the US, e.g., Georgetown University, George Washington University, Yale University, University of Hartford, University of Michigan, Temple University, University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, University of Cincinnati, University of Nebraska.

“Had I not become a writer, I would have been a pilot or a judge. A judge because I would let people have everything they are entitled to. I see that life and society have cheated and cheat many people.”
Arnošt Lustig

1977

Delivers his paper “The Writer in Dissent: The Hope and the Reality”, at the World conference of Writers and Filmmakers, Bienalle de Venezia, Venice, Italy

1979 (Fall)

Becomes a US citizen, after his wife and children obtain US citizenship earlier in the spring that year

1981

Sentenced in absentia by Czechoslovak authorities to an unconditional prison term of three and a half years in a medium security prison and absolute loss of property for crimes against the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on grounds of illegal defection, thereby not being permitted to visit the country until the fall of the government (Velvet Revolution, November 1989). His wife and son were sentenced to two year and one year imprisonment, respectively.

1981–1982

Takes up a Visiting Professorship at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. In March 1982, he directs the International Film Festival of the Czech New Wave, with leading Czech exiled filmmakers and actors, including Ivan Passer, Jan Němec, Vojtěch Jasný, Jiří Weiss, Bedřich Bařka, Jan Tříska, Karla Chadimová, Olga Schoberová, Eva Límanová. The Festival Coordinator was Josef Lustig. The festival had over 3,000 visitors.

1987

Receives Honorary Doctoral Degrees from Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago in Hebraic Literature



Arnošt Lustig in Washington, D.C. with friends – Josef Škvorecký visiting from Toronto (left) and Bohumil Hrabal visiting from Czechoslovakia, March 1989

1988

Serves as Vice-President of the Organization of the Holocaust, Washington, D.C.

1989 (September)

Has an Exhibit of his writings - books and manuscripts, in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

1988-1989

Interviews on television Channel 9, WUSA, Capital Edition (aired four times), nominated for Emmy Award

Serves as President of the S.V.U. (Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences)

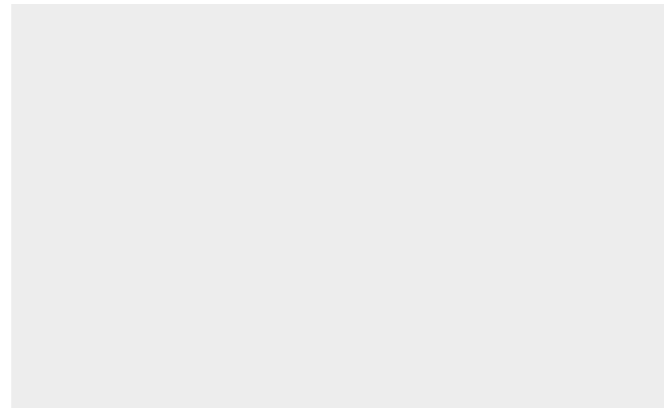
1989 (December)

Returns to Prague to orchestrate the preparation of the leading story for weekly magazine LIFE featuring interviews with dissidents Václav Havel and Alexander Dubček. In his beloved city, he reunites with family, friends, colleagues and fans he no longer dreamt of seeing. On this trip, one of the most momentous and joyful of his life, he is accompanied by his wife Věra and son Josef.

1990

Reestablishes his life in Prague, while maintaining his tenure as Professor of Literature at The American University, Washington, D.C. and teaching summer school courses at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem and The George Washington University and Georgetown University, also in Washington, D.C.

Invites Alexander Dubček, Chairman of the new Federal Assembly (the Czechoslovak Parliament) after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the political leader who attempted to reform the communist government during the Prague Spring but was forced to resign following the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, to The American University, Washington, D.C. There, Dubček gives the Commencement address to the graduates of the Class of 1990 as well as received an Honorary Doctorate. It is Dubček's first trip to the United States.



Arnošt Lustig with friend Jiří Krejčík, legendary film director, screenplay writer, actor and professor, Prague, 1992

1995 (January)

Gives a radio interview on his essay "Auschwitz-Birkenau", National Public Radio

1995-1997

Serves as the first Editor in Chief of Playboy magazine, the newly established Czechoslovak edition

1996

Serves as a member of the Principal Film Jury at the 31. International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary, presided by Regis Wargnier (directed Oscar-winning film Indochine, for Best Foreign Language Film, 1992)

1996

Invited as Honorary Guest, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

1999 - 2011

Serves as Academic Board Member, Josef Škvorecký Literary Academy

2000

Serves as Member, Czech Film and Television Academy

2001

Gives a radio interview on film and the arts, National Public Radio, Chicago

2003

Random House/Vintage War Edition publishes Lustig's Pulitzer Prize-nominated novel "Lovely Green Eyes" in a run of 50,000 copies, in the same Vintage Classics edition as prose by Ernest Hemingway and Erich Maria Remarque.

"My life is broken into before, during and after Auschwitz. The camps are part of our existence for me and those who returned, just like childhood, youth, adulthood and the way we look. Auschwitz-Birkenau was hell, a modern embodiment of evil in all of its forms, which in comparison with Dante's lyrical testimony resembles a many times reboiled tea, a morning fog in the valley..."
Arnošt Lustig

2000-2011

Serves as Honorary President of the Franz Kafka Society, annual festival of Czech-Jewish-German culture Devět bran (Nine Gates)

2001-2011

Serves as the Honorary President of Česká hlava (Czech Mind), the largest project supporting the development of Czech scientific and technical intelligence

2006 (July)

Receives Honorary Doctoral Degree, jointly with President Václav Havel, from Western Michigan University in the Humanities, in recognition of "the exceptional literary quality of their writings and their fight for freedom for mankind".

2007 (December)

Speaks at a demonstration in Prague against Neonazism



"After the war, we thought that Nazism, with its ghastliness and defeat in a war against the entire civilized world, was dead. It isn't. The fight for men to resemble a human continues."
Arnošt Lustig



Foto: Josef Lustig, J.-P. Mauchner

Vor dem Tor der Hölle: Mit seinem Sohn Josef besuchte der tschechische Schriftsteller Arnošt Lustig in diesem Winter das ehemalige KZ Auschwitz

Wie es wirklich im Mädchenorchester von Auschwitz war, erzählt Esther Loewy im STERN. Sie kam als 18jährige dorthin und wurde zwei Jahre später im KZ Ravensbrück von Rotarmisten befreit. Den Bericht »Das Mädchen Esther und die Stiefel der SS« lesen Sie auf Seite 282.

Herausforderung

Bundeskanzler Helmut Schmidt hört schon gar nicht mehr hin, wenn sein Parteifreund Erhard Eppler in der allmorgentlichen Präsidiumssitzung in Bonn das Wort ergreift. Dafür polemisiert er mit Vorliebe in Interviews gegen seinen konsequenten innerparteilichen Kritiker – ohne dessen Namen zu nennen. Für SPD-Fraktionsvize Horst Ehmke ist der radikale Moralist Eppler »gefährlicher für die SPD« als der SPD-Abgeordnete Karl-Heinz Hansen, der dem Kanzler jüngst »politische Schweinereien« attestierte. Eppler kontierte jetzt: »Wenn jemand der Meinung ist, ich sei für manche Opportunisten in der SPD gefährlich, kann ich nur sagen: hoffentlich.« Ganz sicher ist Erhard Epplers neues Buch »Wege aus der Gefahr« eine Herausforderung für Schmidt und Ehmke, weil er dort mit der Kanzler-Politik abrechnet. Nicht jeder wird Epplers Thesen gern hören, manchen werden sie sogar Angst einjagen. Gerade deshalb stellt sie der STERN zur Diskussion – auf Seite 80.

Letztes Jahr hat Eppler in Baden-Württemberg zusammen mit Schmidt zum Bundestagswahlkampf an. Heute zählt er zu den härtesten Kritikern des Kanzlers

Augenzeugen

Die Vergangenheit hat die Deutschen in dieser Woche wieder eingeholt an zwei Fernsehenden im ZDF-Film »Spiel um Zeit«. Es ist die Geschichte des Mädchenorchesters in Auschwitz, das aufspielen mußte, wenn an der KZ-Rampe die Häftlingstransporte selektiert wurden – Arbeitslager oder Gaskammer.

An dieser Rampe hatte 1944 auch Arnošt Lustig gestanden, damals kaum 18 Jahre alt. Er kam aus Theresienstadt, überlebte Auschwitz und wurde nach Buchenwald geschickt. Dann konnte er fliehen. Der 54jährige Lustig zählt zu den großen Dichtern tschechischer Sprache und gehörte 1968 zu den Schriftstellern des »Prager Frühlings«. Als die Sowjets das Land besetzten, entschied er sich, mit seiner Familie auszuwandern. Heute arbeitet er an der American University in Washington.

Lustigs Bericht »Der Weg in die Hölle«, übersetzt von seinem Schriftstellerkollegen Gabriel Laub, der ebenfalls 1968 Prag verließ und heute in Hamburg lebt, beginnt auf Seite 40. Das ehemalige KZ fotografierten Harald Nadolny und Jürgen Kahlert, beide Jahrgang 1955 und Absolventen der Gesamthochschule Essen – Fachbereich Visuelle Kommunikation.

Arnošt Lustig in feature story for STERN magazine, visits Auschwitz-Birkenau and speaks about being there then and nearly thirty-seven years later, March 1981

Lustig is very active right up to his last days

in addition to ongoing work in the literary and screenplay writing arenas, as:

Professor of creative writing, literature and film at various institutions in Prague (e.g., Charles University, Josef Škvorecký Literary Academy) and US universities programmes abroad (e.g., Western Michigan University, New York University), also in Prague



Writer Arnošt Lustig says: *“The public gave Neonazis a lesson. I was there, at Staroměstské náměstí. Like the others who are not indifferent to Neo-nazism. I was proud that I was born and live in a country where people themselves had sewn on their coat the yellow Star of David in solidarity with the victims of Kristalnacht in 1938 and with us, the survivors of concentration camps.”*

Public spokesperson on the national media and lecture circuit on various themes close to his heart – literature and the arts, the Shoah, human rights

“Justice is not revenge, but even in revenge there is a germ of justice. Such is the world in which we live.”

Arnošt Lustig

Featured in television – films and talk shows – and feature films

In the television series “From Eyes to Eyes. An Interview by Antoním Přidal with Arnošt Lustig” (Z očí do očí, Rozhovor Antonína Přidala s Arnoštem Lustigem, 1992), Czech Television, Brno Studio

In the documentary “**Ota Pavel**” (1996), directed by Eugen Sokolovský ml. Ota Pavel, the beloved sports journalist and author of sports stories and prose, was Lustig’s best friend

In the television series “**Small Banana Fish**” by Halina Pawlowská, about “How to Survive Old Age”, with S. Zázvorková (Banánové rybičky, 1999), directed by J. Rásoch and K. Czaban

In the television series “**At the Swimming Pool** with Marek Eben” (Na plovárně s Markem Ebenem, 1999)

In a one-hour long documentary “**Lustig in Prague**”, based on the life of Arnošt Lustig, produced by Danish TV Copenhagen (1999), directed by Ole Retsbo

In a feature-length documentary “**Europa, Europa**”, based on the lives of a German officer in charge of the bunker of Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin’s personal translator, and concentration camp survivor Arnošt Lustig, directed by Allan Murphy von Kalckreuth (1999)

In “**Theresienstadt**”, one-hour documentary for ABC, co-written with Ernest Pendrell, directed by Ernest Pendrell

In the critically-acclaimed documentary film “**The Fighter**” (2000), directed by Amir Bar-Lev, Special Jury Prize, International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary (2000). Winner of Best Documentary Film, Shannon International Film Festival, 2000, and Newport International Film Festival, 2000. The film is a psychological adventure of two

friends travelling into the past. Together they revisit romance and humour, and life-or-death circumstances. Their journey turns into an ideological clash, to the extent of threatening the breakdown of their friendship.

In the documentary “**In the Heat of Power**” (V žáru moci, 2001), directed by Jordi Niubó

In the television series “Small Banana Fish” by Halina Pawlowská, about “How to Leverage the Mind”, with Karel Vágner (Banánové rybičky, 2005), directed by H.Pawlowská, P.Ryšavý and K. Czaban

In the television series “Jan Kraus, Relax, Please”, with Mathilda Nostizová and Josef Toldi (Jan Kraus. Uvolněte se, prosím, 2005), directed by V.Nouzák

In the documentary “**The Immortal Balladeer of Prague**” (Písníčkář, který nezemřel, 2007), directed by Marek Jícha and Josef Lustig

In the documentary “**Hold On, This Moment, You Are So Beautiful...**” (Postůj, okamžiku, jsi tak krásný..., 2007), directed by Petr Lokaj

In the documentary “**Arnošt Lustig’s Message. The Man Who Survived Meeting Nazi Criminal Josef Mengele**” (Vzkaz Arnošta Lustiga. Muž, který přežil setkání s nacistickým zločincem Josefem Mengelem, 2008), directed by Roman Vávra and J. F. Potužník

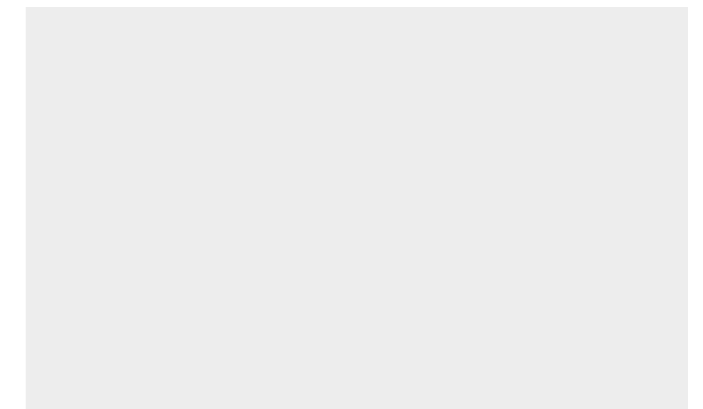
In the television series **Čtenářský deník (TV pořad) “Arnošt Lustig: “A Prayer for Kateřina Horovitzová – František Cinger Presents the Author and His Book”** (Modlitba pro Kateřinu Horovitzovou – František Cinger uvádí autora a jeho knihu, 2008), directed by Pavel Jirásek, et al., screenplay by Petr Minařík

In television newscast “An Interview with Arnošt Lustig” on New Year’s Eve (Rozhovor s Arnoštem Lustigem, ČT24.CZ, Ostrava, 2008)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGM1iom7g0c>

In the documentary “**Process H**” (Proces H, 2009), directed by Martin Vadas about Milada Horáková and the other twelve individuals in her group who were also unjustly sentenced to death by the Communist regime in the 1950s

In hit romantic comedy “**You Kiss Like a God**” (Líbáš jako Bůh, 2009), directed by Marie Poledňáková, with a star cast, including Jiří Bartoška, Executive Director of the International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary

In the documentary “**Thank God for Soccer**” (Zaplať Pánbůh za fotbal, 2009) directed by Ivan Stehlík, about soccer and soccer players in the Theresienstadt Ghetto during 1943-1944. Soccer helped forget the place and time spent there – *“The one and a half hours we played soccer, it was no longer Theresienstadt, it was life.”*



Arnošt Lustig in Theresienstadt, around 2009

When asked how an amateur soccer player can turn into a professional writer, Arnošt Lustig reverts:

“When no one prevents you from saying what you want to say! When you’re free – from the outside and on the inside. When you have something to say, that shouldn’t be forgotten. And when you have it in your veins, mind and head, and you have a sufficiently strong sedentary muscle and enough strength to get it out on paper!”

In the documentary **“Darkened Democracy”** (Zatemněná demokracie, 2010), directed by Oliver Malina-Morgenstern, against growing Neo-nazism

In the documentary series “Febio Inventory”. **“Arnošt Lustig and Sühnezeichen – In the Sign of Repentance”** (Inventura Febia seriál. Arnošt Lustig a Sühnezeichen – ve znamení pokání, 2011), directed by Fero Fenič and Jan Němec

In the documentary series **“The Czechoslovak Film Miracle”** (Československý filmový zázrak, 2014), directed by Martin Šulík, mapping the most significant period of development in Czech and Slovak cinematography in the 1960s

In the documentary series **“Golden Sixties”** (Zlatá šedesátá, 2009-2015), directed by Martin Šulík, et. al., covering the ‘Czechoslovak Film Miracle’ of the Czech New Wave in the 1960s.

Memberships

Board of the Faculty of Industrial/Applied Art, Charles University, Prague

European Cultural Society

Arnošt Lustig’s literary and film contributions and rich life experience, tied to an unusually charismatic personality, have been the focus of several Czechoslovak television documentaries during his lifetime and since:

- **“From the Diary of a Crazy Husband”** (Z deníku bláznivého manžela, 1971 and 1975), directed by Josef Lustig
- **“The Gallery of the Nation’s Elite – Arnošt Lustig from Jan Němec’ point of view”** (Gen – Arnošt Lustig pohledem Jana Němce, 1993), directed by Jan Němec. The New Czech Film Wave director’s beginnings are closely tied to Lustig’s literary work from the 1960s (see the critically – acclaimed films “Diamonds

of the Night” and “A Bite To Eat” above). The director, thirty years later, shoots a portrait of an exceptional author who inspired his imagination.

- **“My Old Man and His Favourite Concentration Camps”** (Můj fotr a jeho oblíbené koncentráky, 2010), directed by Josef Lustig
- **“A Day With Arnošt Lustig”** (Jeden den s Arnoštem Lustigem, 2008), directed by Igor Chaun for the series “24 hours with ...” for Television Channel Z1 (Zpravodajská televize Z1)
- **“Thirteenth Chamber”** (Třináctá komnata, 2009), directed by J. Rauwolf, M. Čech a P. Slavík
- **“To Live is Lustig”** (Žít je Lustig, 2011), directed by Martin Pátek
- **“Arnošt Lustig – Nine Lives”** (Arnošt Lustig – Devět životů, 2012), directed by Ivo Pavelek and Kristina Pavelková
- **“The Presence of Arnošt Lustig”** (Tvoje slza, můj déšť. Přítomnost Arnošta Lustiga, 2012) directed by Eva Lustigová, featured at various international film festivals, including Karlovy Vary, Jihlava; Pizeň; JEWISH MOTIFS, Warsaw
- **“The Trains to Nowhere”** (Vlaky do nenávratna, 2012) directed by Martin Pátek

2010 (September)

Travels to Shanghai to open the Czech Republic’s Exhibit “Weeks of Czech Literature” at its pavilion at the international fair, Expo 2010 Shanghai China, with a reading from his novel “White Birches of Autumn” translated to Mandarin. After the reading, in spite of his advanced illness, the writer answers many questions posed by the young Chinese audience. From Shanghai, **he continues on to Seoul, South Korea** to open the “Franz Kafka and Prague Exhibit” in the Czech Infocentre. He is also the guest of honour at the literary evening at the

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies for the first ever presentation of his short story “Stephan and Anne” in Korean.

Shanghai or Theresienstadt?

Seventy years before, Emil Lustig, the writer’s father, wanted to move to this port city with his family. The plan didn’t materialize: *“At the time, the Nazis took my father’s money for the visas, but afterwards, sent us with the transport to Theresienstadt,”* recalled Lustig.

2011 (26 February)

Succumbs to lymphoma at the Faculty Hospital Královské Vinohrady (Fakultní nemocnice Královské Vinohrady) in Prague, after a long and courageous battle. He thus joins wife **Věra Weislitzová Lustigová** (19 February 1927 – 11 May 2011), an editor, language teacher, poet and sculptor.

“Arnošt, you are surely smiling at us from the heaven with your typical smile, in the way only you know.” **Ex-President Václav Havel**, in his note sent to the cemetery along with a wreath of flowers.

2012 – Present

Arnošt Lustig’s significant literary, artistic and pedagogic legacy lives on Prizes

- **The Arnošt Lustig Literary Prize** awarded annually to gifted writers by the Mladá fronta publishing house during the International Book Fair “Svět knihy” in Prague (since 2011)
- **The Arnošt Lustig Prize** awarded annually to an individual exemplifying the values of courage, humanism and justice by the Czech-Israeli Chamber of Commerce in Prague (since 2012). The Prize honors the values embodied by Lustig in his exceptional way, so essential today.
- **The Arnošt Lustig Best Goalie Prize** awarded to the best soccer goalies during a tournament of younger students (8–15 years of age) in Theresienstadt in “Thank God for Soccer”

(Zaplať Pánbůh za fotbal), as a reminder of soccer tournaments played by inmates of the Theresienstadt Ghetto during 1942–1944. Organized by the Theresienstadt Center for Genocide Studies (Centrum studií genocid Terezín). The name ‘Thank God for Soccer’ (Zaplať Pán bůh za fotbal) was coined by Arnošt Lustig and later used for a television film bearing the same name (2017).

Events

Literary legacy

- **Publications** in the Czech Republic and abroad
- To mark the anniversary of his 90th birthday, the biographical book **“Arnošt Lustig. I Loved Reading. Correspondence With Ota Pavel, Mother Terezie and Sister Hanka. Israel, Yugoslavia, USA – Czechoslovakia. 1968–1973.”** (Krásně jsem si počel. Korespondence s Otou Pavlem, maminkou Terezií a sestrou Hankou. Izrael, Jugoslávie, USA – Československo. 1968–1973), in collaboration with the Museum of Czech Literature – PNP (Památník národního písemnictví), published by Mladá fronta, 2016

“Arnošt Lustig: An Exhibit of Photographs by Petra Růžičková, Petra Našice, Karel Cudlín and Pavel Chalupa”. The objective of the exhibits is to educate youth in schools and the general public about the causes and consequences of genocide. Placed in the Centre of Genocide Studies Theresienstadt, Dělostřelecké Barracks.

Way forward: An Artistic and Educational Foundation

2020

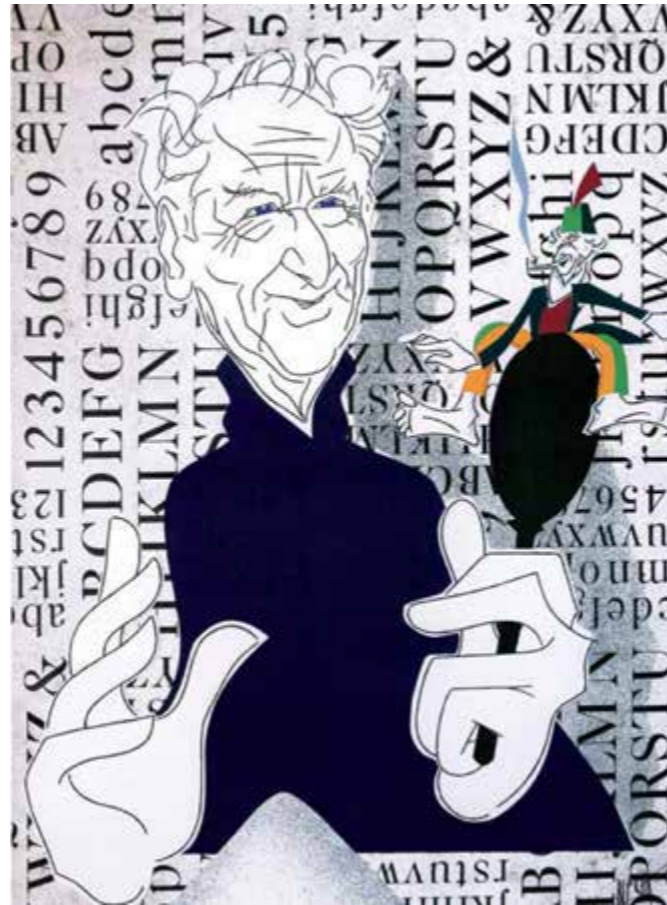
Plans are underway to establish The Arnošt Lustig Foundation (Nadační fond Arnošta Lustiga) to steward his life’s work by promoting and growing the legacy globally.

The Foundation is underpinned by the writer’s humanist vision – belief – questions – that the essence of life is in what is good, not what is bad. The Foundation will enrich world cultural heritage and the pool of knowledge for present and future generations about the challenges faced in confronting evil and injustice, and the possibility of choosing good over evil, as seen through the lens of creative endeavour.

Of interest to filmmakers

Most of Arnošt Lustig’s prose is “very suitable text for film treatment, because it is situationally-focused, succinct in narrative, and meticulously elaborated in terms of characters and psychological motivation. Essentially, the texts are ready synopses prepared for film treatment.”

Aleš Haman, Literary Historian (in Arnošt Lustig, H&H, 1995)



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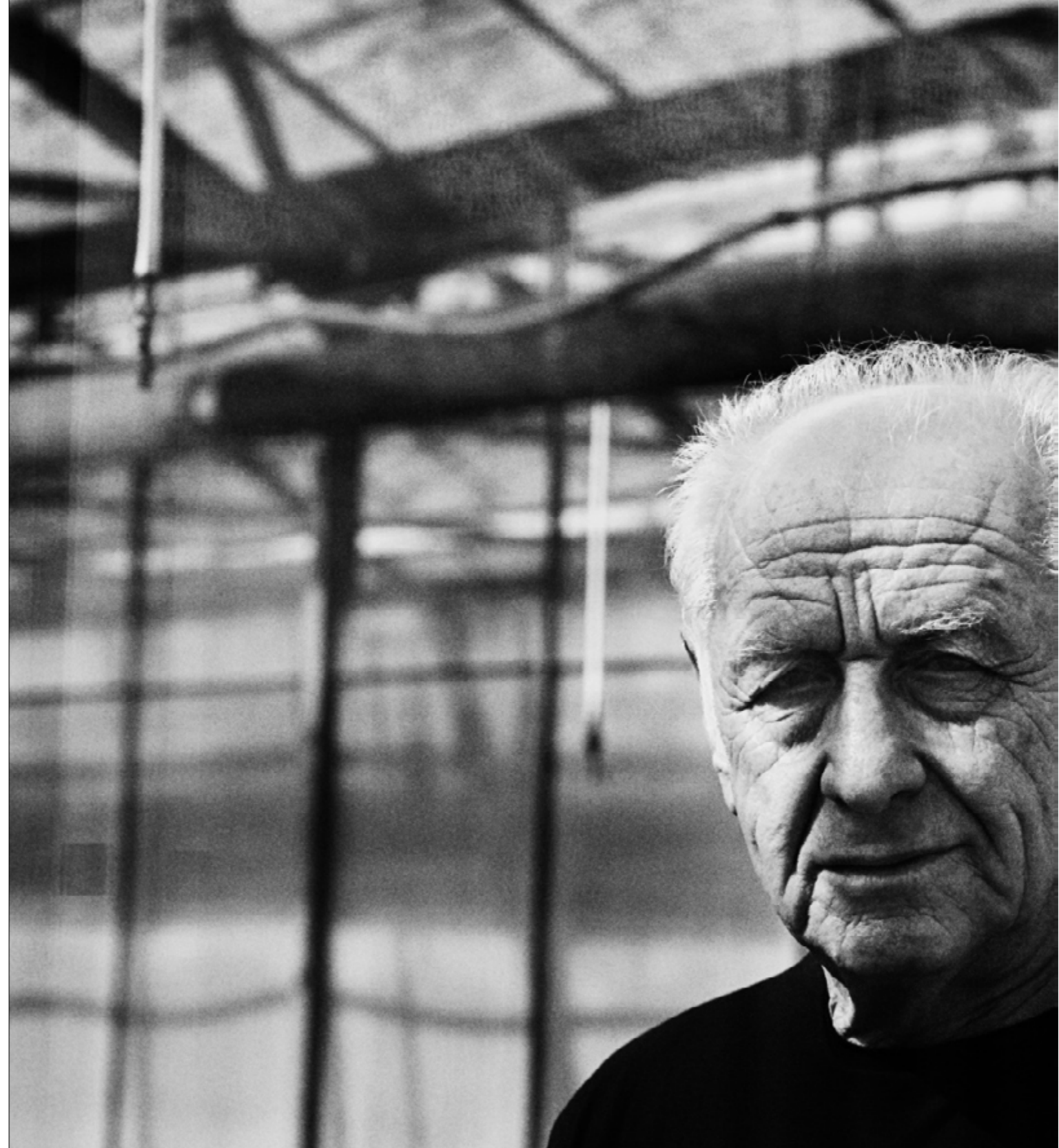


Photography © Alan Pajer

“If mankind were a novel and I were writing its last chapter, it would end with the word hope.”
Arnošt Lustig

"I'm not a philosopher, nor an amateur philosopher like we all are, but the truth fascinates me. I think the truth is incredibly powerful. I believe that without the truth I'd be horribly poor. But with the truth, although I may still be poor, I'm tremendously rich at the same time. I'm just saying that a person is in constant need of the truth. The truth is like sunlight, like oxygen, and if you get rid of sunlight and oxygen you wither away..."

Arnošt Lustig



THE ART OF
ARNOŠT LUSTIG
1926 – 2011, PRAGUE

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