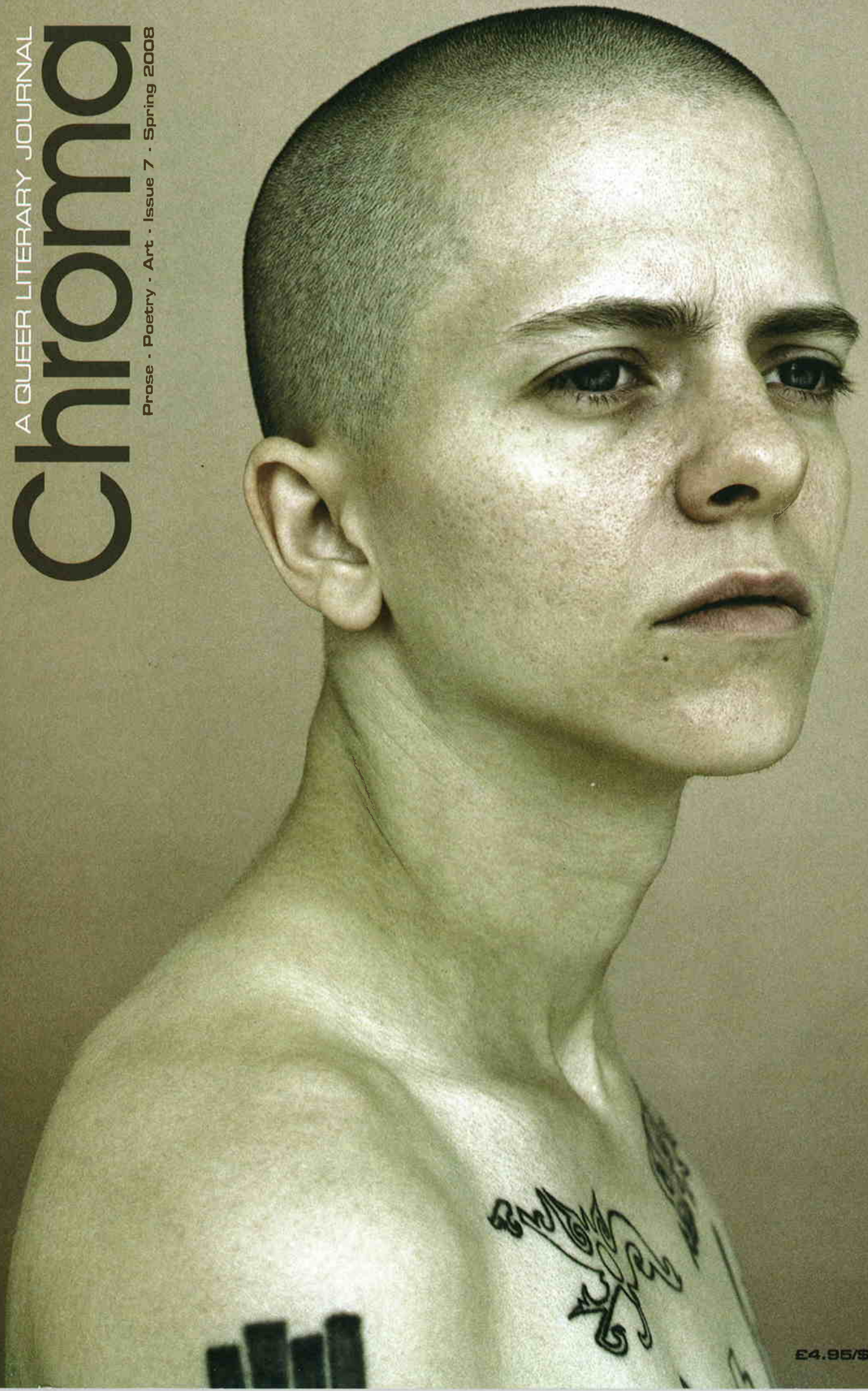


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The Revolution

Lotte Inuk

from the novel *Ice Age*
translated from the Danish by Thomas E. Kennedy

My music teacher, Nukâraq Enoksen's daughter, Susanna, is by far the best-looking girl in town. The teacher plays bass and writes lyrics for a band whose songs we all know and can sing along to, even if we belong to that part of the population that doesn't understand the words, and his band, unlike, for example, Sumé, doesn't print a translation of the songs next to the original lyrics on the back of the album cover.

Susanna's hair is thick and sleek and black as coal, almost violet in a certain light. She has long, strong legs and carries herself like a queen, and at dusk she likes to strut around on the narrow colourful footbridges of painted wood between the city's split grey concrete housing blocks with a green-eyed cat on her shoulder; I don't know why or where to. Sometimes she listens to her Walkman, the cat doesn't seem to notice it or anything else, it just sits there, matching her wild look. She doesn't seem to notice you when you walk by, which is too bad, and even without the obstacle of the music, she isn't the type you'd think of just going up to talk to. Every boy, without exception, must be completely wild about Susanna, but she doesn't seem interested in contacting them or impressing them, and, strangely enough, they neither rush nor follow her around the way they usually do in Nuuk when such striking beauty is combined with such a lofty attitude.

Maybe she's just too beautiful, too mysterious, maybe you get the impression she could be a little crazy. Maybe it has to do with the cat, it gives the sense of a witch and danger and magic. It just sits on her shoulder like a guardian angel in the form of a tiger and never runs off and is content with its place. That's maybe what I envy most about Susanna Enoksen.

The Danish boys in town you don't even notice, they could just as well not exist. Here there are Greenland girls, and Danish girls, and Greenland boys. Some Greenland boys only go for Greenland girls, others go for the Danish girls, as well. To win their hearts and their coveted glances you have to try to act as Greenlandic, as tough and cool and streetwise as pos-

sible; you have to eat Greenlandic food and play without fear anywhere in the mountains and all the way down on the ice and not be afraid of anything; not even the Greenland girls who hate you and gang up outside your street door to mock you and grab you and slap you if you get too popular, even with one single boy in their class, no matter how uncool he might seem to you, or to them.

Malou and I dream about having black, thick, sleek hair and speaking fluent Greenlandic, just like that, so no one will have the slightest doubt about where we really come from anymore.

Malou's father divorced her mother in Denmark because of a Greenland woman not that much older than we are, and moved here to the city for her sake with Malou. Malou's little brother stayed with their mother in Jutland. So, in a sense, Malou is half Greenlandic and can even pass for a Greenlandic if she's careful with her accent and nobody knows too much about her; there are quite a few half-Greenlandic children and even some completely Greenlandic ones who can't speak a word of the language anyway, and also a lot with hair the same light brown as Malou's and eyes that don't look very different. I envy her that; with my own yellowish hair and unmistakably grey-blue eyes, it's harder to fake it, even if my mother, thank god, is seeing more and more of this gorgeous, completely cool Greenlandic boyfriend who's younger than she is.

Anyway, in winter my hair gets darker and Malou and I eagerly compare colour, count the black strands among the lighter ones and feel that it's going in the right direction, and we go without washing our hair for as long as possible because it seems darker then, and we practice the slang the girls in our class use as well as the unusual way they pronounce certain Danish words.

The Greenland boys are so beautiful. How could the pale, bloodless, clumsy, faint-hearted boys in our own class, sons of out-stationed librarians and bird watchers and maths teachers and scout leaders and pencil

pushers ever measure up to them? They don't even try, they already know they're only here for a limited time anyway, and it's just not worth it to take up the challenge. They'll soon be home again, in their own territory, where they can use language or intellect or their family names to elbow their way forward.

The guys who sit half-naked in the dormitory's open windows in the evenings when you're walking home on the walkways below have strong, light-brown chests, polar bear amulets carved from whale's tooth on black leather cords tight around their necks and Indian hair shining blue and hanging halfway down their broad backs. They look like captured warriors, sorrowful dreamers in the orange-gold evening sun. They whistle at you with child-like enthusiasm so your diaphragm twitches with longing. Their voices are disturbingly dark and soft and come from beautifully bowed mouths you know would taste good and salty as the sea, like the smell of those small dried fish from their thick sweaters when you lean your head against their shoulders at the movies or happen to bump against them on a rocking, crowded city bus.

When they're out walking the streets, they have their hands dug into the pockets of their leather jackets and skate elegantly, invincibly over the icy ground in slick cold rubber soles, hunching their shoulders and looking down at the ground and their breath steams and they send a slanted sharp glance full of unconcealed desire and sweet recognition when you walk past, all the while watching yourself that you don't stumble like some cow on the treacherous rock.

You have the idea these boys would fight and die for you, like in a fairytale or a romance magazine. You lose yourself in your childhood dreams of noble wild men or brave martyrs, dramatically dead, much too young, from courageous battles in mysterious jungles on distant, suffering continents.

I never imagined boys could be so beautiful! So shameless and purely fascinating, so uninhibitedly attractive, simultaneously so heartbreakingly gentle and dangerously raw and violent. If only I had the same blood running in my veins, if only I knew what these boys knew, thought and felt! If I could wake up one morning and speak their language, know their history, decipher their codes. If *those* hairs which are growing against my will and all too fast could be just as coal black and sleek and fine as the Greenland girls in the showers during gym class.

What raw beauty and perfection!

Exactly what a human being should look like.

Miki says that when the revolution comes I'll be thrown out, sent straight back to where I came from, I'll have no chance to stay here or ever return for a visit. I know that he wants me to stay, he talks as though even he doesn't believe any such revolution

will happen. But I think it will, and I hope so with all my heart.

"What if we get married?" I ask.

"If we get married and have a baby," Miki tells me. "The child would be allowed to stay. Our child would be a pure native."

Not even my schoolmates and best friends, Martin and Nico, who were both born and raised here with no connection to their family's original Scandinavian homelands, would ever be considered pure natives or equal citizens of the proud pure kingdom that will rise up on this mighty island after the revolution. It seems that to be considered a native or a citizen is not based on anything concrete or on any definite fact or at least not on that alone – it seems to be something more abstract.

The Danes or Faroese and other illegitimate changelings, who've not voluntarily left by the time of the revolution, will be promptly deported, Miki claims, with a bullet in the head.

"Will you fight for my life?" I ask, my heart beating wildly at the thought of such a serious and decisive revolt. "Do you think we could dye my hair?"

He laughs. "It would never look like a Greenlander's, no matter what you do with it! And our child would be a poor bastard, think about that."

"Like the two of us," I say.

"Speak for yourself," he says.

The bastards are the most beautiful, here and everywhere else: that black hair, those light eyes, or the other way round. Those long, powerful limbs. That warm complexion. All the best salvaged from both fallen worlds, a new beginning, a Phoenix rising from the ashes, a whole new breed of human being.

Miki says these are racist thoughts. He plucks the word out of the blue, suddenly, neither of us has really thought about it before, even considered its existence: Racist. It's racist to think that bastards are more beautiful than pure-bloods, to have such a preference.

But I still love the bastards of this world, maybe it's an innate preference, there from conception: My father was married, but not to my mother; my mother, when she's in that kind of angry mood, claims that that precisely is my grandmother's tragedy, the cross she must bear. But even if I don't doubt that it must have been a terrible, shameful history for her, and she doesn't hesitate to remind me constantly either, though not in so many words, I still know for sure that it can't be so, that despite everything, this can't be the only reason. ■

Originally published as *Sultekunstnerinde*. Copenhagen: Tiderne Skifter Publishers, 2004.

Chroma: Biographies

Nikolay Atanasov was born in Pleven, Bulgaria in 1978. He studied Bulgarian Philology at Sofia University, and English Language and Literature at Broward Community College, Florida. He is the author of two books of poetry: *Apple* (1999) and *Organic Forms* (2007). *Apple* won the Bulgarian National Award Yuzhna Prolet for best debut poetry collection.

Brian Bergstrom is a doctoral graduate student in the East Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at the University of Chicago. Currently based in Montreal, Canada, he is completing a project examining representations of youthful criminals in contemporary Japanese literature and popular culture.

Frances Bingham's poetry, short stories and non-fiction have been published in anthologies, reviews and magazines; her edition of Valentine Ackland's *Selected Poems* is forthcoming from Carcanet. She lives in London with Liz Mathews, studio potter and lettering artist; they work together on projects such as their artists' book *Mother tongue*.

Nicole Brossard writes and lives in Montréal. Poet, novelist and essayist, twice Governor General winner for her poetry, Brossard has published more than thirty books. Many have been translated into English. In 1991, she was awarded le Prix Athanase-David. She won the W.O. Mitchell 2003 Prize and the Canadian Council of Arts Molson Prize in 2006. Her work has been also been translated into Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Slovenian, Romanian, Catalan and other languages.

Kathleen Bryson, author of the novels *Mush* and *Girl on a Stick*, received her BA in Swedish from the University of Washington in 1992, and was the co-winner of that year's Peterson Scholarship. She lived three years in Stockholm, where she studied Archaeology at Stockholms Universitet. Her first feature film, *The Viva Voce Virus*, will be finished this year.

Chris Campe writes: "I was born in 1979 and drawing is the only thing I kept doing even though it never came out the way I wanted it to. It's getting better, though." See more at queeristics.de.

Jacek Dehnel was born in Gdansk in 1980. In 2005 he was one of the youngest ever winners of Poland's annual Koscielski Prize for promising new writers. He wrote his PhD on Polish translations of Philip Larkin, some of whose poetry, along with other English poets, Dehnel has translated himself. He has published four volumes of his own poetry. He is also a painter, and presents an arts programme on Polish television. In 2006 he published his first novel, *Lala*. A collection of short stories, *The Marketplace in Smyrna*, appeared in 2007. He lives in Warsaw.

Jesus Encinar is a Spanish entrepreneur whose companies include Idealista.com, Floresfrescas.com, and 11870.com, as well as the publishing house *Desatada*, dedicated to publishing gay poetry in Spanish. His first book of poems, *¿qué querías decir cuando decías que me amabas?*, is forthcoming in 2008. He lives in Madrid.

Zizi Fareeshah is a visual artist and a writer. She uses a pseudonym because she is still afraid, and also because she wishes to bring her drag queen self out of the closet. The name is a small step. Zizi lives in Amman, Jordan.

Linda France works as a poet, tutor and editor, based in Northumberland. Her five poetry collections are published by Bloodaxe Books, including *The Simultaneous Dress* (2002) and *The Toast of the Kit Cat Club* (2005). She edited the acclaimed anthology *Sixty Women Poets* (1993). Linda is currently writing fiction.

Olivia Heal sprung from the north Norfolk marshes. She set off to study languages in Dublin, and later to trail around Latin America. She then stopped off in France, where she has since been working as a translator, and is currently doing a Masters degree in feminine and gender studies at Paris.

John Hobbs has held and contributed to many exhibitions, and has his photographs published in various publications. He's

a passionate photographer, fascinated by the beauty of graphic and simple subjects and the delicacy of the human experience. He lives in Vauxhall, South London and can be reached at j.hobbs2@btinternet.com.

Tomoyuki Hoshino was born in 1965 in Los Angeles, but grew up in Japan. Hoshino made his debut with the 1997 Bungei Award-winning novel, *Saigo no toiki* (*The Last Gasp*). Hoshino is one of the most critically recognized Japanese writers of his generation, earning many more awards, including the Noma and Mishima. He is also an avid soccer fan and amateur player whose commentaries on the game and the politics that surround it have attracted a following independent of his fiction. See more at hoshinot.jp.

Lotte Inuk has published more than a dozen books and many stories. In 1993 she was awarded a Danish Ministry of Culture prize for her trilogy of novels, *Regina*. The excerpt here, *Ice Age*, is translated from her most recent novel, about the life of a young woman in Greenland.

Åsa Johannesson is based in London and currently completing a Masters in Photography at the Royal College of Art. "Photography, for me, is a tool for self-exploration. When selecting my sitters I look for qualities that reflect aspects of myself. They become a type of mirror and, more specifically, I feel, reflect the person that others perceive me as." See more at asajohannesson.com.

Frans Kellendonk (1951-1990) wrote novels, short stories and essays, translated English-language classics (including Emily Brontë, Henry James and Wyndham Lewis) and for five years edited a leading literary journal, *De Revisor*. Published in 1986, *Mystiek Lichaam* (*The Body Mystic*) was his last novel.

Thomas E. Kennedy has published over 20 books, amongst them the four novels of *The Copenhagen Quartet* (2002-05). In 2007 a new novel, *A Passion in the Desert*, and story collection, *Cast Upon the Day*, appeared. He is currently guest-editing a Danish issue of *The Literary Review*. For more, see thomasekennedy.com.

Menis Koumantareas was born in Athens. He has written sixteen books of fiction – including *Motorbikes*, *Vest No. 9*, *The Glass Industry* – a number of which have won the National Book Prize, while others were made into films. He is a founding member of the Greek Writers' Guild. "The Bells" is from his collection, *The Flying Woman*, which won the Thiavazo Book Prize in 2007.

Sophie Lewis is a journalist, translator and associate of Dalkey Archive Press. Her translation of Marcel Aymé's *La Belle Image* appears in February as *Beautiful Image* (Pushkin Press). She was born in London and still lives there.

Timothy Liu is the author of six books of poems, most recently *Of Thee I Sing* and *For Dust Thou Art*. He lives in Manhattan.

Antonia Lloyd-Jones is a translator and writer. Her most recent translations from Polish include *Castorp* by Pawel Huelle (*Serpent's Tail*) and *Catharsis* by Andrzej Szczeklik (Chicago UP). Her translation of *Mercedes-Benz* by Pawel Huelle was shortlisted for the *Independent Foreign Fiction Award*.

W. Martin has translated books by Natasza Goerke and Emil Kästner and published numerous translations from Polish and German in magazines. He is a former editor of *Chicago Review*, a 2008 recipient of the NEA Fellowship for Translation, and lives and teaches in Chicago.

Andrew May moved to the Netherlands in 1990. Besides pulling beers and pursuing sideroads into journalism that included a couple of years feeding the newswires, he's been translating from Dutch and French for the last decade, specialising in art, music and architecture, with occasional ventures into the literary domain.

Randa Mirza is a visual artist based in Lebanon. She works with digital photography and live video editing. Her latest works reflect on