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Peter Wortsman

Stimme und Atem

Out of Breath, Out of Mind

Peter Wortsman has the voice of a symphony orchestra that starts out softly, but soon builds to a crescendo that leaves no reader unmoved.

– Deborah Feldman, Author of *Unorthodox* and *Überbitten*

“To have reached at age 66, after years of considerable creative effort in English, the beginner’s level in another language is in my view no small feat, something on the order of digging a hole so deep into New York granite that you come crawling back up in China, filthy but still breathing. If as an adult I stutter and stumble with the shaky spoon of my tongue back into the still fluid forecourt of consciousness that German constitutes for me, I do so in full consciousness as an English speaker reminded of other syllables that say more to me about the unspeakable than yes and no.” So writes the New York-born author, son of Austrian-Jewish émigrés, in the foreword. “I harbor a stillborn scribe of the German tongue in me,” he maintains.

In this collection of stories, some quasi-autobiographical, some nightmarish, most of them originally written in German and thereafter translated, or rather, adapted by the author himself into English, Wortsman creates a compelling, albeit disturbing, portrait, not only of himself, but also of our shattered age.

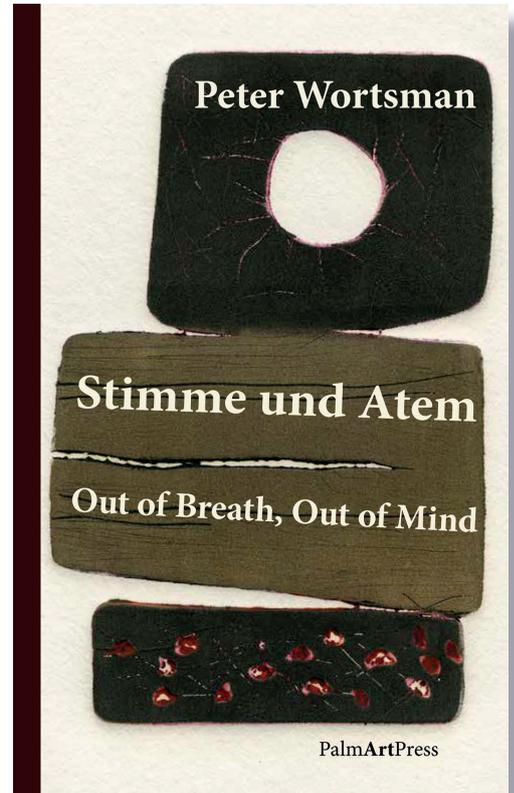
Despite all, with his writing, Wortsman harbors a hope: „ Perhaps we Germans and Jews of the Post-War generation, as children of a shattered cultural union, can still achieve something productive together, perhaps we can pick a few rags of reason from the ruins of the past and therewith pitch a tent big enough to hold all our dreams.”

Born in the shadow of the flames of the World War II generation, Peter Wortsman is a master of short prose. Though a native New Yorker, he is essentially a European. His prose harkens back to that of such masters as Dino Buzzati, Clarice Lispector, Juan Rulfo, Tonino Guerra or Paul Bowles. Wortsman’s short stories are breathtakingly astonishing: his take on the unbearable lightness of being reveals the inescapable banality of evil.

– Julia Kissina, Author of *Frühling auf dem Mond* and *Elephantinas Moskauer Jahre*



The son of Austrian-Jewish emigrés, born in New York in 1952, **Peter Wortsman** was raised bilingually in German and English. He is the author of novels, books of short fiction, plays, and travel memoirs. Wortsman is also a literary translator from German into English. Recipient of the 1985 Beard’s Fund Short Story Award, the 2008 Gertje Potash-Suhr Prosapreis of the Society for Contemporary American Literature in German, the 2012 Gold Grand Prize for Best Travel Story of the Year (Solas Awards Competition), and the 2014 Independent Publishers Book Award (IPPY), he was a 1973 Fulbright Fellow at the Albert Ludwig Universität in Freiburg im Breisgau, 1974 Fellow of the Thomas J. Watson Foundation in Vienna, and a 2010 Holtzbrinck Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin. His travelogues were selected five years in a row, 2008-2012, and again in 2016 for inclusion in *The Best Travel Writing*. His short fiction and essays have appeared, in German translation, in *Manuskripte*, *Schreibheft*, *Cicero*, the anthology *AmLit: Neue Literatur aus den USA*, published by the Druckhaus Galrev, Berlin, and in *Die Welt* and *Die Zeit* erschienen.



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