

JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2010 SELECTION

Alois Hotschnig

Im Sitzen läuft es sich besser davon

Nearly all the stories in Alois Hotschnig's book deal with the issue of ageing. In passage after passage, the threat of everyday life permeates the text. It involves a struggle against failing memory scrambling the threads of recall and leading to a world that, previously so familiar, becomes increasingly incomprehensible.

The undermining of personality is irremediable, despite the daily consumption of pills that become essential. A life spent waiting : waiting for your name to be called out in the doctor's surgery, waiting in the end for the call of death, from which no one escapes.

Alois Hotschnig describes with acute tenderness the situation of people during their last years, recounting in carefully crafted phrases, in which each word has its place, the weird situations which reveal his familiarity with conversations filled with the nostalgic « *Do you remember ?... »* caused by dementia and Alzheimer's. He never invokes compassion for his protagonists. On the contrary, he takes his readers gently, page by page, into this universe of gerontology which we will all one day inhabit. And page after page there emerges a better understanding of these people and their daily routine, which turns out to be reassuring rather than burdensome. The misused word « *anrührend* » finds a new authenticity in these short stories.

Alois Hotschnig is a consummate master of the short story in German. Unfortunately, his reputation is limited by the low consideration in which this literary form is held.

Ilija Trojanow

Member of the Jury



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(Erzählungen)
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