

Debra Di Blasi

CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RHAPSODY  
SUNG TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF PIANO

A DEAD GERMAN

You would say, "Serves him right, fucking German bastard," like a joke, but you'd mean it. Your arrogant Czech tongue spitting out the word *German* like a hair, hairball from the tongue of a cat, Bohemian dog, you. Should I be horrified that I slept with you *after* you insulted Jews, Germans and North American Indians? It was hot that night, and the bar was hot, and you were dressed in an undershirt and jeans and hot from playing soccer, hot so drinking cold Pilsner<sup>1</sup> of course, and you said, "You look hot tonight, woman," and flipped that big Czech hand of yours as if the

worldworldworldworldworldworld

were nothing more than gnats swarming/breeding, and you added: "At least all these horny bastards think so." Which was a lie; no one saw me come in. What you really meant was: *We would like to suggest that Paradise was never really lost. We would like you to consider that Eden is a state of mind, and that the mind of Adam and Eve (yes, they thought as one!) has not evolved beyond the ability to recall and thus conjure Paradise: its light and heat and scent. We would like to urge you to embrace the possibility of Heaven-on-Earth and come a little bit closer, you're my kind of [wo]man, and I'm all alone.*

1 Pilsner is Czech beer: "Czechs like to drink Czech beer because it's the best in the world," said Antonin Jelinek, editor-in-chief of *Pivní kuryr*, a magazine for beer connoisseurs. "They'd have to be pretty desperate to drink anything else." (source: *The Prague Post*, page A8, Nov. 25-Dec. 1, 1998)

A dead German sat in front of his television set for five years with the lights of his Christmas tree flashing beside him, and none of his neighbors noticed.

"Someone said once that he had gone off to a home, I didn't ask any more," said Monika Majarres, who lived in the same Hamburg apartment building as Wolfgang Dircks, a divorced, disabled loner who died in 1993 at the age of 43.

The landlords came knocking only after the bank account from which Dirck's rent and bills were automatically paid ran out.

Next to the no-longer-functioning television set and the still twinkling tree, they found his skeleton with his TV listings magazine still on his lap and open to the page for Dec. 5, 1993.

I came.

*Closer.*

#### PAIN: THIRSTY NO MORE

You're a vampire and when you suck me you suck me dry: There's nothing left but teeth marks, bruised to blue. I *want* you to go when you go. I want you to stumble over the diminutive pebble somewhere anywhere there just beyond my door—Goliath taken down by disregard—and fall and bruise black for you disregard me.

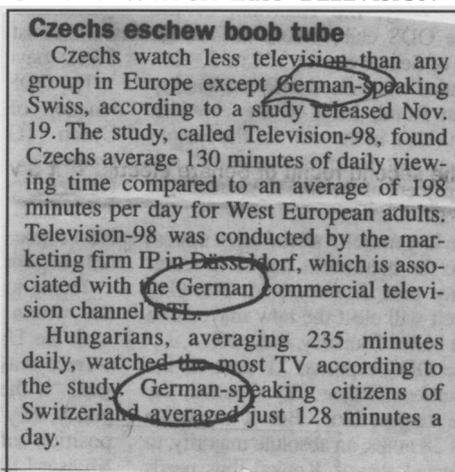
*I said:* "It looks like the world turned inside out, like a part of the surface of the moon transplanted onto the surface of the sea."

*You said:* "What the hell are you talking about?"

*I said:* "Pain."

*You said:* "Oh."

#### CZECHS WATCH LESS TELEVISION



ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE I am part German, Jew, and North American Indian. It wasn't that my mother's side of the family was unprejudiced, eager to achieve the hybrid vigor<sup>2</sup>, spawn a new race of superhumans who would somehow bring Peace, Tranquility and, yes, perhaps even Joy to the World. No, it was that the Jews lied about their Semitism, and the North American Indians lied about their "Savage Blood" and the Germans

who did not yet have the murder of 6 million Jews on their conscience lied about not knowing the difference between a Jew and an Irishman (ref. "Geneology: Bad to the Bone," page 34. You of the Bohemian<sup>3</sup> blood would

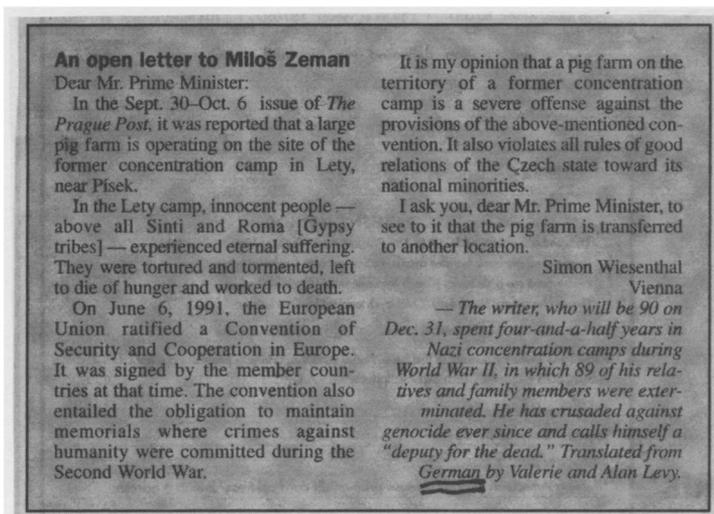
2 Hybrid vigor: a term used in animal husbandry and horticulture to indicate the result of cross-breeding wherein only the sturdiest genes from each species are reproduced in offspring, the weaker genes having been supplanted by the genes most useful for survival.

3 You think I don't know that my calling you "Bohemian" is an insult to you, you Prague-lydte, you who used "Bohemian" to disparage your own brother because he weeps the tears

find my blood of English, Scotch and Welsh ON MY FATHER'S SIDE somehow more palatable, as if vampires like you had the luxury of being a bloody gourmet.

I *should* be horrified that I slept with you after you insulted Jews, Germans and North American Indians. Why am I not? Even now, at this late date, why does it occur to me as nothing stranger than, say:

### COLD PRESSED VIRGINS



(4)

IN THE WINTER OF 1942 IT WAS COLD IN LETY. THE WOMEN LAY PRESSED TOGETHER IN THE HARD WOODEN BUNKS. SOME WERE VIRGINS. THEY DIED WITHOUT KNOWING THE PLEASURE OF HAVING A MAN INSIDE THEM.

of a lover during—*o mein gott!*—Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. You think I don't know Germany occupied Bohemia during World War II, that your father who believed in the intellectual superiority of Bohemians—after all, he had let German soldiers win at chess in order to keep his shoe repair business open—your father, an otherwise good man, good father, told you repeatedly, rapping you on the head with his knuckles, that the fall of Bohemia was the fall of civilization, "From here on out," knock knock "it's facedown in the gutter and piss on your breath and don't you ever," knock knock knock "ever whisper Bohemia again because it is gone, you understand," knock knock "a memory, a dream, a cloud—vanished." You think I don't wonder if he wasn't right, damn him, watching the Germans come and go, the Soviets come and go, the Americans come and stay and sit in coffee houses reading Kafka and pretending to understand the real meaning of *refugee* and *exile* and *irretrievable* while here at home refugees in exile mourn their irretrievable past beneath a billboard advertising underwear that cost more than their life savings. You think I don't know Bohemia was the world's most legendary enclave of refined pleasure and now it's gone. *Kaput!* as Hitler grinned, watching the ash of Kafka's sisters fall upon the sill of the window of his bastard dream.

4 The citizens of the Missouri town where I grew up have filed a class-action lawsuit to shut

## CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RHAPSODY

I had you inside me. It was a pleasure. I should be horrified.

### CO JE TO PTAKOPYSK?<sup>5</sup>

In the hot bar the British tourist at the next table said, “The South Devon<sup>6</sup> tourist board seized upon any clue, however slight, that tied Christie<sup>7</sup> to the region.” This has nothing to do with anything except that as a writer I am always eavesdropping on conversations, especially when they are more interesting than the one in which I’m engaged.

*You said:* “You really liked those Injuns, eh?”

*I said:* “North American Indians.”

*You said:* “Injuns. Savages. Red niggers.”

*I said:* “You are joking, aren’t you?”

*You said:* “Of course I’m joking. Don’t be silly.”

*I said:* “My great grandmother was an Indian.”

*You said:* “What the hell is a platypus, and how come I’ve never tasted one?”

The British tourist sighed, “It’s a mystery.”

### A COMPLETE COURSE FOR BEGINNERS

Jedl ptakopysk.	He was eating platypus.
Snédle ptakopysk.	He ate the platypus.
Jedle.	He was eating.
Najedl se.	He had something to eat.
Najedle se ptakopyskem.	He ate his fill of platypus.

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down the newly built corporate pig farm because “its odor creates an environment that makes daily life unbearable.” Question: Does the stink of the future out-rank the stink of the past? Must the task of living always consist of holding one’s nose?

5 Czech for: *What is a platypus?*

6 This is the name of my elder brother, in fact derived from Devon, England, where my father (who was flight engineer in 30 Berlin bombing missions) was stationed during World War II.

7 Dame Agatha Christie, the British mystery writer.

## THE (W)HOLE OF MY INVENTIVENESS

I was walking along a slope so steep and high it was impossible to see what lay below, obscured by the fog of ignorance only dreams and faulty imagination can provide, and I saw a boulder made of brown clay compacted by time, exposed now to the elements, and I knew the moment I set foot upon its slippery-damp surface it would crumble and I'd go toppling down into the



w of my inventiveness, yet set foot upon the boulder anyway, and it did crumble, and you twitched in your sleep, softly crying, "Fuck!" and woke me.

I was saved.

You continued sleeping, snoring, victim of apnea.<sup>8</sup>

I think we knew each other centuries ago, were ill-fated lovers. We do not know each other now. Though we are ill-fated nonetheless.

xenophobia: hatred of foreigners

[ xenos = stranger (Greek) + phobos = fear (Greek) ]

[ [ xenophobia really = fear (therefore hatred since we hate what causes us fear because fear is a loathsome human characteristic, thus we first hate our self then loathe our self then hate the stranger whom we fear) of strangers ] ]

[ [ don't argue with me, I know I'm right ] ]

## AUF WIEDERSEHEN

*"Some say it's a wise person who seeks harmony  
in mind, body and spirit."*

—Anonymous Ad Copywriter

I want you to go when you go. When you are gone I want you back.

—*I was you were we were it was—*

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8 A sleep disorder in which the air passageway is blocked, causing night terrors and sometimes even death. (I sat up in bed and watched you sleep and timed the silences between breaths. I imagined a silence that went on in perpetuity, imagined myself tucking the blankets under your big permanently silent chin, getting dressed, and calmly walking out of the hotel as if nothing had happened, as if I'd never known you.)

Why does my body play deaf to the protests of my mind? It's the plight of the vampire's victim, *ano?* Teeth wounds on my thighs. Metal-bitter blood on my lips. This close to death, and it's my murderer I cry out for. Boulders of clay, feet of clay, you're a clay-footed devil<sup>9</sup> and your father played chess with Nazis to save the soles of shoes while the souls of my ancestors cried, "Devil! Bloodletter!" and marched to the points of bayonettes to stand on the high steep slope with nowhere to step but upon the clay that crumbled forever into a future where their progeny sleeps with you who would wish all of them (and plenty others, too) dead once more in order to cleanse the world of the guilt you can neither bear nor name and thus wish yourself to disappear, vanish into the night: bat-winged wolf-howl mist and not a human scent for miles.

Each time I open this book<sup>10</sup> : : : : : *What is a platypus?*

**platypus**, semiaquatic egg-laying MAMMAL, or MONOTREME (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*). Also called duckbill, it has a rubbery, duckbill-shaped muzzle, no teeth, and no external ears. Its head, body, and tail are broad, flat, and covered with dark-brown fur; its feet are webbed. The adult male is about 6' 5" tall, handsome, well-endowed. The platypus eats small freshwater women of 1/2 German-Jew-North American Indian descent and originates from the Czech Republic—or what was once Bohemia, now vanished.

#### GENEALOGY: BAD TO THE BONE: PART 1

My maternal grandmother died believing she was half German, half Irish. She was not. Here's the story:

Toward the end of the 19th Century my great-grandfather, who was a Jew and whose last name began with the letter G, emigrated from Germany to the United States. This was his second emigration. The first was during the European Revolution, as an infant carried by his parents. There had been "some sort of trouble" and the G family had escaped it by fleeing to America. (Something about Kaiser Wilhelm. Something about money and/or property. Something vague but unseemly, perhaps dangerous but not, perhaps, noble.) The trouble vanished, or was momentarily forgotten by the Kaiser, and the G

<sup>9</sup> *cert* = devil, *dábel* = devil, *jednohubka* = canapé

<sup>10</sup> *Teach Yourself Czech: A Complete Course for Beginners* by David Short.

family returned home only to flee again for similarly vague but [perhaps] ignoble reasons. The family settled somewhere in the area of Beaver Dam, Wisconsin—that region known for its HUGE Jewish-emigré population (ha ha ha!).

There were six children in the G family: three girls and three boys, one of whom was my great-grandfather. Something happened to the parents: either they again returned to Germany to face whatever political music was playing (Wagner?) or they died or they simply could not afford to feed, clothe, and shelter a brood of six. Therefore, the girls were sent to live with a family by the name of Johns, and the boys were sent to live with a family by the name of Clark. The Clarks were Irish. My great-grandfather took not only their name but their heritage, and passed it on to (1) his daughter (my grandmother) who he never told otherwise, and (2) his son who he told shortly before his death, shamefaced, though it was never clear whether his shame arose from the 70-year charade or his Jewishness. Let me explain:

My great-grandfather hated being a Jew. It shamed him. Whether it was the anti-Semitic climate in Germany or the anti-Semitic climate in Beaver Dam or the anti-Semitic climate in his soul, my grandfather wanted so badly to fit into the world—a world that offered the possibility of rejection wherever he went—that he himself became anti-Semitic. He was a handsome man with olive skin and black hair and eyes, and a thick black mustache, and a streamlined soldierly physique. There was an exoticism about his appearance that couldn't be explained away (though he tried) by saying he was not only Irish but Black Irish: finer, rarer, worthier.

He was worthy to Hattie, my great-grandmother: a tall big-boned German woman, her blue eyes drawn to his black eyes like day to night. She knew his true identity for he confessed it one night after they had kissed and kissed deeply, and she had hinted at their shared future by saying, "I wish to go on kissing you forever—if you know what I mean." Loved him especially for the burden of his self-hatred: the limping melancholia it lent him.

#### AND YOUR ARYAN EYE, BRIGHT BLUE<sup>11</sup>

Ah, yes! I remember you years ago, when you were in the shape of a young man with Aryan looks of blue eyes & blond hair, and an Aryan last name (von Something-or-other), and an Aryan hatred for Jews and Gypsies and Blacks

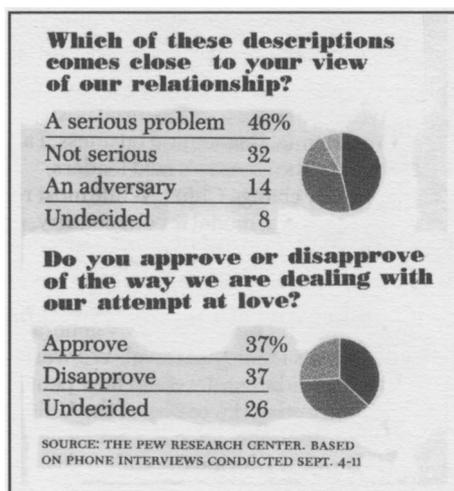
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11 from the poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath (b. 1932). She committed suicide in 1963 by sticking her head in an OVEN and turning on the GAS.

and Hispanics and Homosexuals and anyone everyone all who did not appear Aryan, as I did then in my German-skin phase, my eyes-Swiss-blue phase, my English-tongue-and-cheek phase. And I remember I remember that last night you visited me before I fled to Europe, you were hungover and disgusted because you had fucked a Jewish woman (“But she had blonde hair!”) and how you felt, you said, “unclean” and “damaged” and how those words toppled incongruously from your young ignorant lips, the way “genocide” and “supremacy” might spill from the lips of a three-year-old boy—for the implications of the words are as yet incomprehensible to him of the small dick the incomplete prick, and the words themselves only sounds his father makes when he’s pissed and self-righteous and light-in-the-pocket after a long shitty day at the office. And I remember how I could not bring myself to declare, “My great-grandfather was a Jew,” and how the shame of my reticence made me hate you that night so that when you said “I love you” and kissed me good-bye I shuddered, and when you’d gone I scrubbed my lips with a rag until they bled.

I should have sent you the part-Jew-bloody rag with a note: “Fuck this, you fascist disease, you crime against humanity.”

Instead, when I ran into you ten years later I kissed you on the cheek and asked about your health and your new wife. Who was Irish.



**“WHAT YOU NEED IS A GOOD ETHNIC CLEANSING!”**

. . . and I cried I wept like a grandmother, *which I was: mother to half-breeds, grandmother to quarter-breeds, great-grandmother to eighth-breeds,*

and so on and so forth, my descendants fractionalized until there is so little of my blood left I could vanish with a paper cut.

The English did not wipe out my tribe of agrarian pacifists, nor the French, nor the German. It was the Iroquois who loved to fight us for we were not them, and the Sioux who loved to breed us for we were beautiful, and my father who loved fire water more than good-for-nothing squaw daughters and so sold me to a wealthy farmer whose blood was as irrelevant as his skin red as mine when it was summer and the fields to be mowed. (All right, he was a white man—1/2 German, 1/2 Swiss—but he bled red, and though he was more hirsute than the pigs he farmed, I let him between my pretty fawn thighs because he was a kind man, a big ugly kind man, a burnt-skinned kind man like a roasted pig, and I let him come (he came) because I saw the world to come and there was no place in it for me, the last of my breed.

Great-great-granddaughter who invents my words here, hear my inquiry: What do you get when you cross a stream with a horse? Answer: You get to the other side, baby, that's all.

## THIS IS NOT BOHEMIA



## NOR IS THIS

“[Czech] history has taught them to keep their heads down, and to make an ironic comment or JOKE .”<sup>12</sup>

That hot night in a bar a North American Indian sat down at our table and told white man jokes and you told red man jokes, and the two of you laughed

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12 *Fodor's Exploring Prague*. Emphasis on the word “JOKE” is obviously mine.

and laughed and laughed and laughed as if to say: “Look how far we’ve come, white man and red man, able to laugh at each other without one of us dying with a knife or bullet in our back!”

The jokes were not funny. I yawned and excused myself to the bathroom, and when I returned I sat down and asked: “What do you get when you cross a stream with a horse?”

And you of the white skin and he of the red skin grinned and shook your heads, and I paused a moment to build suspense, then answered: “A platypus.”

ZNOVA: CO JE TO PTAKOPYSK?<sup>13</sup>

**Platypus, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus cowboyishnus*** On each ankle the male platypus has a spur connected to poison glands in the thighs; these spurs are used against an attacker or against a woman who is one-half German/Jewish/North American Indian. The poison is not fatal to her but causes intense pain.

It’s not just that I’m half German/Jewish/North American Indian, is it. It’s also that I’m a woman. And you would say with a predicability that would make meteorologists climax: “Oh, here we go with that fucking feminist piss-and-moan crap, pissing and moaning about injustice when what you’re really pissed about is that you have a hole and I have a cock. Meaning, you represent absence. I represent the opposite.”

(What is the opposite of absence? Is it you, here<sup>14</sup>, kneeling between my thighs like some reluctant communicant, waiting for a miracle you can no longer convincingly argue, no longer believe in? Or is the opposite of absence the memory of absence, for you are more present to me in my memory of your leaving—foot crunch upon gravel, *chît-chît* of lighter lit, scent of smoke fading.)

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13 *Again: What is a platypus?*

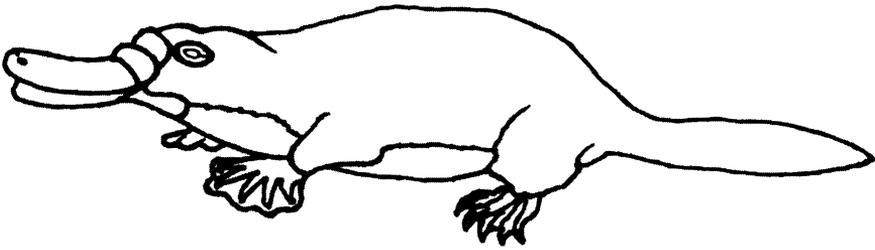
14 You’re not *here*, of course; I’m writing this in my study miles and miles from where you are, and this is merely paper and ink. Lest there be any confusion with reality.

PAIN: CHILDREN SUPPLIED THE ART

You with whom I fell in love at first sight: you bloodsucking/bloodletting/  
bloodcurdling vanished-Bohemian vampire: you transplant to land of cow-  
boys and injuns: you with guilt up your ass, spurs on your boots, ice in your  
heart: you cause me pain . . .

*I said:* "Ouch."  
*You said:* "You want me to not thrust so deeply?"  
*I said:* "I want you to take off your boots."  
*You said:* "Fucking demanding mutt of a woman."  
*I said:* "The spurs, too, lover."

. . . for I should shudder at the memory of you inside me.  
Instead, I want to bear your children.<sup>15</sup>



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15 Scientists recently identified the gene responsible for genocide. Here's how it works: When a member of a species or race (as in humans) meets another member of a species or race with qualities the former finds somehow reprehensible (such as whacky religious beliefs, flagrant ignorance, too shrewd money management skills, or even, ironically, bigotry) the genocide gene will compel the former individual to take measures to eliminate the latter individual. The most obvious methods are shooting, stabbing, gassing, burning, electrocuting, strangling, drowning, bombing. . . . Less obvious methods—but no less disagreeable—are rape (wherein the male deposits his seed in the reprehensible female, thus halving the strength of her bloodline) or seduction (wherein the female seduces, then spends, say, \$200-\$400 for the reprehensible male's seed in order to halve and thus reduce the strength of his bloodline). Unbeknownst to rapist or seductress, the genocide gene will default in these instances to produce a hybrid vigor, usually consisting of reprehensible traits of both individuals, thus "guaranteeing" the perpetuation of the species for at least one more generation. (You understand that it's possible I've made all this up. You also understand—if you know anything at all about the Human Genome Project—that I may not have made it up. The point is: I want you to question what you think you know or don't know, what you believe or don't believe. In other words: I want you to consider that you don't know your ass from a hole in the ground.)

(Let's have nothing here but white space. Let's have nothing but a cool plane of white for our tired tired eyes, our weary weary mind. My mind is weary, isn't yours? And perhaps also your heart? It's strenuous, this acute caring, this heavy penitence, this *thing* writers and readers do. Oh yes, we're in this together, you and I. Didn't you know? For godsake, don't you know that *yet?*)

## THE 50 MOST BEAUTIFUL GUYS ON EARTH . . .

“Are Czechs,” you said, dabbing a napkin at the blood oozing from the corners of your mouth. “My semen will cost you \$200. That’s half the price of a wad purchased at a sperm bank.”

“You’re joking, right?”

“Don’t you see?” you grinned. “Don’t you understand? I’m giving you an incredible discount!”

## YOU’LL WANT TO TAKE ONE HOME WITH YOU!

(IT’S RAINING NOW. IN THE STREET OUTSIDE THIS CAFE, ALL UMBRELLAS ARE BLACK EXCEPT ONE: BRIGHT BLUE. LOOK HOW IT STANDS OUT! SUCH A BRIGHT BRIGHT BLUE BLUE UMBRELLA! I STUDY THE CLOTHES OF THE MAN CARRYING IT IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE CHARACTER FLAW THAT WOULD HAVE HIM CHOOSE A BRIGHT BLUE UMBRELLA OVER A TYPICAL BLACK ONE. THOUGH HE’S DRESSED SIMILAR TO OTHER MEN—BLACK TRENCHCOAT, GRAY TROUSERS, SHINY BLACK SHOES—THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT’S DIFFERENT, SOMETHING *NOT QUITE RIGHT*, SOMETHING *QUESTIONABLE*. I KNOW IT.)

A recent spate of incidents involving organized skinhead actions has prompted the government to propose a plan to create a new police unit dedicated to curbing racist violence. But Interior Ministry officials are not in favor of the move.

“No unit against skinheads is planned,” even though increased skinhead activity is a reality, asserted Jan Decker, spokesman for the Interior Ministry. “We are only going to strengthen the anti-extremist unit so that it will monitor the skinhead movement more effectively than before,” he said. The police can’t just act against citizens because they have short hair and dress like a skinhead, he added.

## WILD. AND CRAZY.

No one will make excuses for you, not even me. However:

It’s true that shortly after you arrived in the United States a popular television program called *Saturday Night Live* began. It was a funny show. People watched it late Saturday nights and they laughed. They laughed hard. One of the skits they laughed particularly hard at was “Two Wild and Crazy Guys.” The two wild and crazy guys were played by Steve Martin and Dan Akroyd. They were funny, funny, funny. They dressed in ugly polyester-looking clothes that were too tight and too colorful and too unfashionable to not be funny. They were always trying to pick up “some crazy American chicks.” Those two wild and crazy guys, how stupid they were! Ha ha! How crass! Ha ha ha! How sleezy! Ha ha!

They were Czechs.

One only has to imagine the humiliation you suffered as a result: a relatively new Czech in a relatively new world with nothing but the cheap polyester shirt on your back. Anyway, it wasn't so much that your father played chess with Nazis—chess, unlike war, is only a game—but that when your Jewish neighbors (the ones with the two children you used to play “cowboys and injuns” with) were arrested and shipped off to Auschwitz<sup>16</sup> and you asked him, your father of the Bohemian blood, “Why?” he replied, “Because they were very bad people.” And when you asked, “But what did they *do*?” your father smacked you hard across the back of your head.

It was the smack that made you WILD. The smack that made you CRAZY. The smack that made you turn to me in bed that hot hot night and whisper, “Platypus . . . How do you spell it?”

P - L - A - T - Y - P - U - S

#### ORNITHORHYNCHIDAE

##### Platypus Family

The single species of this family is an extraordinary animal in appearance but perfectly adapted for its way of life. The platypus was discovered 200 years ago, and when the first specimen arrived at London's Natural History Museum, scientists were so puzzled by it that they believed the specimen to be a fake.

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16 It's true that you could not possibly have been born yet, but the fact that you tell this story as if it were fact must mean something, you clinging to a memory that never was. (Of the two neighbor children who were shipped off to Auschwitz, one was a little girl with long black hair, wavy and perpetually beribboned, round black eyes that made you think of aching things you could not yet comprehend. It could be said that you loved her with a love far wiser than any 8-year-old boy could summon. It could be said she was your wife, love of your life, just waiting for the both of you to grow up. Of course, she never grew up. The Nazis were so kind to let her stay seven forever—the age she remains for you in your imaginary memory of her. Though sometimes, you confess, you think you see her walking down the street of any American city, dressed in blue, hair cut short now out of respect for her 7-year-old ghost. “Once,” you said, “I even thought you were her. The first time I saw you. But I can smell the German in your blood. I can taste it. I suspect, though cannot be sure, it resembles the flavor of platypus.”)

## THE WONDER OF YOU

“Or be more energetic and propel yourself,” said the British tourist, irritated by the heat and his partner’s daftness.

You and I, on the other hand, looked at our watches:

*I thought: The word “injun” resulted from men too ignorant, too stupid to pronounce “indian”. And the word “indian” resulted from white men so stupid they thought Newport Beach was East India. Men so stubborn they insisted on calling the natives “Indians” even after their mistake clearly had been brought to their attention.*

*You thought: Life wasn’t easy under Communism but at least it was predictable.*

*I thought: The world’s worst murderers are made up of boys who never got into art school, or didn’t make the soccer team, or kissed a little girl with red hair who cried “Ew!” and wiped her cherry-red mouth hard with the back of her hand. They never outgrew their wormy grudges; their grudges outgrew them: became monstrous parasites gnawing their slimey way through humanity. Or what was left of it.*

*You thought: I wonder how long she will take to achieve orgasm.*

*I thought: In the 1960s television show Hogan’s Heroes, all World War II German POW camp officers and soldiers are stupid, and all World War II Americans, French, and British POWs are smart. The POWs play with their German captors the way cats play with mice.<sup>17</sup> They learn the German weaknesses which are HYSTERICALLY funny (if you are American or French or British) and infinite—or at least plentiful enough to make it through 6 television seasons.<sup>18</sup>*

*You thought: Fucking who cares if she achieves orgasm, anyway.*

The British tourist leaned toward his partner and said, “Did you know that if you reverse only a couple of DNA strands in a cat you’ll get a human?”

I turned to him and grinned: “That doesn’t say much for cats, does it?”

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17 Cats play with mice with a cruelty that makes them nearly human.

18 *Hogan’s Heroes* trivia: Werner Klemperer, who played the POW camp’s pompous assinine idiotic Colonel Klink, was the son of the Jewish-German conductor, Otto Klemperer. Robert Clary (néé Robert Widerman), who played the beret-donning “frenchie” Captain Louis LeBeau, was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp as a child.

His flat-heart expression didn't waver as he downed the rest of his ale and stood and left.

You watched every inch of his departure, looking down your elegant Czech nose at his plump belly and woman's ass, and you said, "Fucking potato-eater."

"I think that refers to the Irish," I said.

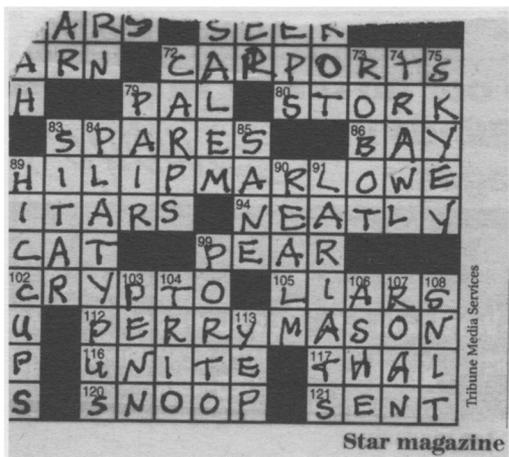
You flipped that big Czech hand of yours through the gnat-teeming world and said, "Same thing. Potato-eaters, tea-sippers, Kikes, Krauts, Ruskies, Japs, Gooks, Chinks, Camel-jockeys ..."

"You forgot *Injuns*."

"Injuns. Come on, woman, let's go have sex."

#### 84 DOWN: DUCKBILL

There is nothing fake about the platypus. We know that now. Now we know it exists: hybrid vigor of creatures that should never have fornicated—they had so little in common. (Why, my god, a duck and a beaver! What could they have talked about that hot hot night? What could they have seen in each other but the insult of their difference.) Yes, now we know the platypus is real and stubbornly alive. And what is a platypus, after all? What does it represent that its name is on everyone's lips, silent but noticeable as a drop of blood about to drip onto one's chin?



It's Sunday afternoon and I'm taking a break from writing *Czechoslovakian Rhapsody*, sprawled on the couch doing a crossword puzzle simultaneously though abstractly thinking about the pungent scent between your legs, and there it is: 84 Down: Duckbill: an 8-letter word that begins with the letter P. I kid you not. Fucking P-L-A-T-Y-P-U-S is the answer. What are the odds! I put down the crossword puzzle and close my eyes and think of you that last night when the heat of the wind and our scorched flesh created a vortex into which all histories light and dark good and bad left and right descended, and the world as we knew it (imperfect with its genocides and ethnic cleansings and [un]holy wars and racist swine) vanished like so many Bohemias—*kaput!*—and it was just you and me IMPROVED! and naked as in Paradise, getting ourselves back to the Garden, getting it on. And I thought that it *just might be possible* to forget about blood and skin and accents and finally feel the hot bending of each other's "sold-as-is" soul. Until you came inside me!<sup>19</sup> and said breathlessly but matter-of-factly: "I knew you were good for *something*, woman."

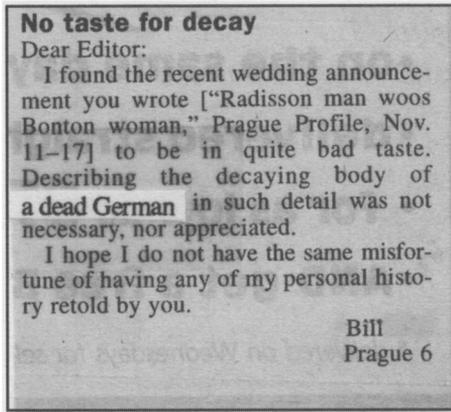
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19 I.O.U. \$200.

## BOHEMIA WAS

If you are ever in Prague and standing on the spot where Bohemia vanished forever and someone walks up to you and asks, “*Co je to ptakopysk?*” tell them the truth. Tell them:

*A platypus is a creature that has outlived its time, has refused to evolve when everything around it was evolving into a more sensible form. It is archaic, antediluvian, breathing fossil, specter out of everyone’s history wherein everyone, it seems, died at the hand of everyone else. Why? That is simply the nature of the platypus. Sleep with one if you wish. Feel the horror of its flesh inside your flesh, duckbill against your bloody lips, spurs against your blue-bruised thighs. If you can. If you cannot, then by all means succumb, succumb! You won’t be alone.*



**Note:** Platypuses are now protected by law and are quite common in some areas.

### NOTE:

All newspaper clippings are from *The Prague Post* except for the crossword puzzle, which is from *The Kansas City Star*.