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**The Restless Wild Obstinacy**  
Klara Blum and her Novel *The Shepherd and the Weaver*

Translated by Sarah Wolbach

*May you live in interesting times!*  
Chinese Proverb

The middle of war is no time for literature. The need arises for the telling and reading of a story, however, after wars and before them, in times of upheaval, uncertainty, and insecurity, during the constitution of new and old values. How was it, and how could it once have been? In literature we experience where the truth of a story settles: between inspiration and arbitrariness, one's own experience and the experience of others. If a story reaches beyond individual experience into the universal, we can find ourselves in it. "May you live in interesting times" is a Chinese proverb, the polite form of which is more of a curse than a blessing.

As important as political literature seems to be at the time of its production, its half-life is short. The writer as enlightener, provocateur, admonisher, and moral authority—her immediate political relevance wanes and seems slightly out of place or outdated in the next moment.

And yet, after decades, some literature allows later generations a very special kind of time travel. Even in ancient times, disagreeable writers such as Xenophon and Ovid were banished and sent into exile. The burning of books, such as under National Socialism, left a trail of destruction in its wake. Some authors hardly found their voices again, and German readers took a long time

after the war before they wanted to read this or that again, if at all. Some, such as the bestselling author Jakob Wassermann, who was extremely popular and respected during his lifetime, disappeared completely from cultural memory after the book burning. The power and violence of the National Socialist rot had a long-lasting effect, anti-Semitism had not disappeared. To this day, the persecution and imprisonment of allegedly dangerous writers in dictatorial states has been an instrument of intimidation. With the destruction and elimination of the respective person and his or her work, an example is made.

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Klara Blum is the great unknown and outsider of 20<sup>th</sup> century German literature. Essayist, poet, translator, and writer of novels – her literary style can hardly be separated from her political furor. Her novel *The Shepherd and the Weaver* is an extremely exciting contemporary document, a moving sign of life, and at the same time a piece of literature with all conceivable difficulties. During her lifetime, Klara Blum was widely marginalized and ignored. Here we can hardly assign responsibility to individuals, publishing houses, or states, it is rather a matter of complex cultural mechanisms.

The Jewish European Klara Blum, thanks to migration and poetry in the diaspora, not only saved her own life, but also raised her voice against the oppression of others, and was engaged in political, literary, and journalistic activities for decades. In the second half of her life, she increasingly solidified the attitude she had gained along the way. The solitary Blum appears strangely frenetic from today's distance, since against all indications she was blind to variants of the White Terror and bloody injustice in her immediate vicinity. And yet it is precisely Blum's blind love and politicization that makes her novel *The Shepherd and the Weaver* an exciting and controversial testimony of the story of a life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Blum's heroine is named Hanna Bilkes, and the Eastern European Jewish woman bears unmistakable traits and characteristics of her creator. Her life stages and experiences reflect Klara Blum's own story of survival and a deep love, and of both a political and romantic awakening. Hanna's alter ego

in the novel in turn is Zhinü (Dshe-Nü), the weaver from the ancient Chinese legend Qixi, which revolves around the cowherd and the weaver. The cowherd Niulang (Nyu-Lang) and the weaver Zhinü stand in the sky as constellations, separated by the great stream of the Milky Way. Every summer, on the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese calendar, the festival of lovers is celebrated: Qixi. Niulang and Zhinü are allowed to see each other for a single night of love, and magpies create a bridge with their wings to span across the Milky Way.

Klara Blum comes from Chernivtsi in Bukovina, which at the time belonged to Austria-Hungary, a few years later to Romania, and which today lies in southern Ukraine. If this Jewish-European cosmopolitan, who was finally to become Chinese in 1954 upon insistent demand, remained unknown to a wider public, it could be because her idiosyncratic position does not lend itself as a figurehead for any faction or social discourse. Neither a group, nor an association, a minority, or a party—and hardly any culture, nation, or religious community—can identify with this pugnacious writer completely. It was impossible to get along with her.

As is common in times of political distress and barbarism, in which individuals experience exclusion on the basis of their social, ethnic, and gendered characteristics, Blum's literature is one of resistance and self-assertion. She reclaims her own story, her unusually emancipated existence, her own survival, and recognition of herself as a poet. Of course, the heroine of her novel is also a poet, a woman of the word, a weaver. She demands justice for oppressed and persecuted people, indeed, *peoples*. When Hanna Bilkes meets the Chinese Niulang in Moscow, both are already over the age of thirty and live modestly, partly supported by aid organizations, rather isolated in exile.

It seems as if Hanna Bilkes is falling in love for the first time in her life, as if she were meeting someone at eye level for the first time, a well-traveled and internationally well-read intellectual, with whom she can philosophize about literature and talk about theater, politics, and her very private origins, about everything – and he is patient even when it comes to physical love; he does not push her and respects her hesitation. After all, there is no chuppah

nor registry office. She is not even allowed to know the address of her beloved. She will never live under the same roof as her Niulang, just as Klara Blum will never be able to live with her lover. It is a marriage neither in the religious nor in any governmental sense; only the spiritual, romantic, and sexual devotion seems to seal the young happiness of man and woman. They feel a cosmic belonging and completion, a perfection, for which Hanna cites the Chinese principle of yin and yang. The myth of the Chinese sun god and moon goddess also foresees that the two will never live together.

When she claims her love for a foreigner, the Chinese Niulang, whom Hanna meets in Moscow, she does so without betraying her own. Hanna Bilkes knows as little about the danger of cultural appropriation as Klara Blum does; only her self-evident joy of judgment, political determination, and some hate, which she freely professes, are disturbing from the omnipresent sense of the present day.

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Klara Chaje Blum was born on November 27, 1904, to a German-speaking Jewish family in Chernivtsi, which at the time was a small metropolis in Bukovina, where a wide variety of languages—Yiddish, German, Polish, Ukrainian, Romanian, Lachian, Hebrew, and even some Russian—were spoken, and cultures and religions lived together peacefully, temporarily. At the time of her birth Chernivtsi belonged to the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy; about 40% of the population was Jewish. After the First World War Chernivtsi belonged to Romania, but Blum had long since fled with her mother.

Blum's mother, Cipre (1876-1937), came from an educated and wealthy family in Galicia. While her brothers were allowed to study and earn doctorates, Cipre was required to marry. Soon after the death of her first husband, who left the young woman with a small son, she was given away by her parents to Josef Blum (1850-1934), a landowner and member of the Bukovina parliament, who was 26 years her senior. Except for a certain Zionism, there was probably no common ground. The arranged marriage

became torturous for the young woman. She dreamed of a self-determined life and studies. As often as she could, she traveled away with her two children. No sooner had her older son Oskar come of age and moved to Vienna to study, Cipre Maschler-Blum, née Kaner, demanded a divorce and fled with her daughter Klara to Vienna in 1913. *Such was childhood: quiet beech rustling, / family hatred, impotent deep rage*, she will recall it in a poem (*Harvest Wreath*) written in 1939 in Moscow exile. Since children of her time were awarded to the father in the event of separation and Josef Blum searched for his fugitive wife and daughter, the two had to go into hiding in Vienna. Every few weeks they moved from one room to the next, mostly in shabby boarding houses or hotels. In order to give herself and her daughter a self-determined life and education, Cipre earned a modest living as a housekeeper. Cleaning, washing, cooking. Her health was ailing. The price of their hope for freedom was flight and exclusion, working in foreign households, and poverty. After Chernivtsi became Romanian after the First World War, Josef Blum most likely lost some property. Whether Klara Blum ever saw her father again is not known. She must travel to Chernivtsi several times in the following decade to apply for her Romanian passport. In 1919, her mother Cipre was probably treated in a mental hospital for the first time. Klara remained in Vienna, attended school and lived with her mother, who was becoming increasingly ill. Who looked after whom can hardly be interpreted from today's perspective. Klara Blum spent her childhood and youth as an impoverished refugee, in fear of her once wealthy and powerful father.

While her older brother went to Palestine during the Zionist movement in the twenties, Klara began studying psychology in Vienna in 1923. She attended lectures from Alfred Adler. In addition, she was active in Zionist associations and socialist organizations, and wrote poems, stories, and feminist articles for relevant magazines. From what did the two women live in their precarious circumstances, when Blum's mother could work less and less on account of her health? Klara Blum dropped out of her studies, presumably for health reasons. At times her mother was in mental hospitals, other times with relatives in Lemberg. In 1928 Klara spent several months in Germany in

convalescence, then traveled to Palestine to be with her brother. She remained there for over a year.

Like Theodor Herzl and most Zionists of her generation, Klara Blum was firmly convinced that Jews formed a nation. At first, *aliyah* probably seemed self-evident. But Blum's efforts to gain a foothold in Palestine failed. The reasons remain speculative: did she fall out with her older brother's family? Was the climate and peasant work in the fields disagreeable to her, and life in collective work and living communities (*kibbutzim*) not possible? Perhaps she was not sufficiently pious, or she lacked faith altogether. Those who search for traces of religiosity in *The Shepherd and the Weaver* might suspect that she lost her beliefs at latest during the years of National Socialism. Like she characterizes her heroine Hanna Bilkes later in the novel, Klara Blum was a proud, fearless, contradictory and unusually argumentative young woman. But of what use was a young poet and reporter at that time in Palestine? As a self-confident young woman in Palestine, could she not fit in or find a place for herself? Or was she simply called back to Vienna to her mother who was in need of care?

After her return she became a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP) and wrote articles about women's rights and the workers' movement in Palestine for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. In 1930, Blum was most likely in Berlin for a time and in 1931 probably in Chernivtsi for the last time. She advocated for the united front with the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) and left the SDAP in 1933. Her mother became sicker and was first taken to relatives in Lemberg in 1933 and was finally brought to Klara's brother in Palestine in 1934.

In the same year, Klara Blum won the Literature Prize of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers for her rhymed, angry *Ballad of Obedience*, which was accompanied by a two-month stay in Moscow. In light of the worsening political situation for Jews and Communists under National Socialism in her homeland, the poet prolonged her stay in the Soviet Union. It was meant to be eleven years.

In the early days, she was rather isolated and was subject to suspicion and political spying, even within the immigrant community. She was met with antisemitic and misogynistic marginalization. In 1935 she receives Soviet citizenship. In the Moscow journal *International Literature*, she publishes poems, translations, and reviews. She also does editorial work occasionally. Although Johannes R. Becher and Georg Lukács initially appreciate and support her work as a writer, her repeated applications for membership in the German section of the Soviet Writers' Union were not granted until 1938. Due to "lack of discipline," she is expelled from the association just one year later and is asked to be more self-critical. It is the era of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The few immigrants that remained in Moscow could at best agree on the common enemy of British imperialism; their relationship to Germany, to Jews, and to Communism, however, was very different. If Blum was able to publish anything in *International Literature* in the coming war years, then it was almost only translations and adaptations. In her 1944 poem *Porcelain*, she describes the misery she suffered in unsparing harshness and clarity: she feels *repulsive, lousy, humiliated*.

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Coming from Bukovina by the hand of her fleeing mother, having grown up with feminism, socialism, and Zionism in the increasingly antisemitic Vienna of the twenties, and working as a journalist, the political was obvious as a source of material for Blum's literature. Some of her poetry appears as a cautionary tale. Her early stories from the twenties are religiously tinged; the later ones, with an increasingly clear historical-political character, come across often as moral parables. Later, in China, it seems as if she finally wants to carry out a historical and political enlightenment, so purposefully does she arrange every encounter—no matter how private—into a greater political, if not mythical, context. In 1937 as she hears of the death of her mother in Palestine, she dedicates an almost private poem to her, in which she recites or imagines the last surviving words of her mother. It ends with the motherly words:

*La Marseillaise roars in my ears,  
And I gladly bear it, to be without you.  
Not to me, but to mankind I gave birth to you.  
My child, my child, let me be alone.*

It's no wonder that the Jewish poet Klara Blum met the theater director and journalist Zhu Xiangcheng (born 1900) from Shanghai in her transit from west to east and fell head over heels in love with the communist of the same age. Both recognized each other as educated intellectuals, they were familiar with oppression and danger, their shared obsessions were literature and the theater, and perhaps even more strongly at this place of transit the struggle for freedom and justice, the love for the wholly other. Despite all the difference in their origins there are also similarities, which are explored in the novel as well as in reality: At the behest of his wealthy parents, Zhu must marry a woman befitting his social status at nineteen, whom he could not choose himself. He had three children with her. She worked as an actress in his theater before he joined the "League of Left-Wing Dramatists." In 1931 he left China for Paris. From there, he went to Moscow in 1933. In the novel, Niulang suspects that Hanna comes from a much freer world. But Hanna Bilkes bursts out in laughter, saying he could "celebrate Sabbath" with that idea – an ironic figure of speech which means something like "Likely story." And she tells him in return the story of her mother's arranged marriage, also organized by the parents, for the young widow with a son. In the novel, Hanna characterizes her own parents as "the cunning businessman and the young women's rights activist and Zionist, small, inconspicuous, unattractive, but with enchanting intellectuality." She was "the product of a fox and a nightingale, in one word, as a legitimate bastard." In this scene, as well as others in the novel, Blum's dark humor with a tendency toward tender, wicked self-irony shines through, which is hardly understandable to today's readers. Humor requires not only knowledge but also contemporaneity and complicity.



Niulang and Hanna compare his Chinese and her Jewish origins through the ancient histories of both peoples, their wisemen and scholars. In the next moment, the two exchange views on philosophy, attitudes towards life, contemporary theater, and the opium fantasies of Niulang's uncle, who died of drug overdose.

After three months of burning passion, in which Niulang (alias Xiangcheng) and Hanna (alias Klara) only see each other two days out of the week, and she doesn't even find out where he lives in Moscow, the beloved disappears without a trace. She suspects him of being on a secret mission for the still-young Chinese Communist Party.

They are at the beginning, but Blum still expects his call every day, a message, a reunion for the two of them. At one point, he actually calls, at least Blum narrates it thusly in her novel: In a glassy voice, he tells her he wants to speak to her one more time. Then the line goes dead, and Niulang reveals neither where nor why he has gone. Seemingly, Blum does not doubt for a moment in the weeks and years to come that he is alive and fighting underground, as a heroic messenger of communism in China. Klara Blum searches for the missing lover, contacting Chinese men suspected to be connected in Moscow, but nobody can help her.

Stalin's "purges," suspicions, and denunciations cast their shadows. It must have been difficult and almost impossible for Blum to confide in anyone. The migrants suspected each other of spying and denunciation. Klara Blum suspects again and again that certain persons wish harm to her. Antisemitism also seems to be omnipresent in Moscow, at least among Europeans. Blum's connection to the Chinese Zhu is apparently racially derided in her milieu of European migrants, and cast into doubt as a curious affair, her marriage claim a "Jewish impertinence."

The writer and revolutionary Xiao San (alias Emi Siao) who was a school friend of Mao Zedong, stays in the Soviet Union in the thirties like Blum and was married there to the German-Jewish photographer and journalist Eva Sandberg. He was, like the character Han in the novel, responsible for the Chinese section of the Communist International (Comintern) and acquainted

with Zhu. He is probably the model for the character of Han Kiu-Pao, from whom Hanna seeks trusting advice after Niulang's disappearance. He is active in the fight against imperial Japan.

The Austrian Ernst Fischer (1899-1972) had been in Moscow since the fall of 1935, representative of the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) at the Comintern. He operated as editor of the German edition of the publication *The Communist International* from 1938 to 1945, and in this function had great power over the publications of other immigrants. Opposite to Blum, who lived in various rooms of small boarding houses, Fischer lived with his wife for years in illustrious society in the well-known Hotel Lux.

In the novel there is the character of George Montini. Hanna points out to Niulang in Moscow that this influential Montini is a shifty and dubious figure among the immigrants. Earlier in Vienna he was not yet a communist, but in Moscow he suddenly presented himself as such. Over the course of the novel Montini is displayed as a conniving antisemite, who wanted to make Hanna unemployed and isolate her from her friends, even drive her to suicide. The fact that Hanna warns her Niulang directly of the man and accuses him of falsehood and evil intentions testifies to the literary depiction of the emigrants' power and entanglements with each other, their enmities, the dependency and exclusion they experienced, and the dangers during these years of Russian exile. It will probably never be discovered who at the time could have harmed Klara Blum (and not only her) from presumably antisemitic motivation, who ensured "order" in the cultural circles among the emigrants, and who betrayed her lover Zhu Xiangcheng in these first months of 1938, so that he was captured and imprisoned during Stalinist waves of arrests and deported to a Siberian camp. It may have been more than one person.

Although clues began to pile up, Klara Blum would not find out what really happened to Zhu until the end of her life in 1971. At the end of the 1980s, a companion of Zhu's recounts that on April 18, 1938, they had set off in a truck on their way to China to join China's fight against Japan. Shortly before the border between Kazakhstan and China, the truck was overtaken by two Russian officers in an automobile. Only a single one of them was collected from

the truck: Zhu. Upon their arrival in Yan'an (Yenan) his companions wait for him, but he was never to appear again. Only after decades of inquiries made to state bodies on the whereabouts of their father did Zhu Xiangcheng's children receive a document from Moscow via the central government in Beijing. In it is stated that Zhu was detained by the NKWD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in Kazakhstan, and in the following year was sentenced to eight years in jail after a resolution from a special meeting of the Soviet Ministry of Interior. Zhu died on January 17, 1943, in a Siberian work camp. In 1989 he was officially pardoned by Gorbachev.

It is remarkable that Klara Blum ascribes the first residence of Yan'an to her disappeared hero Niulang in the novel. It may be a clue as to how great the trust was during the two lovers in 1938 in Moscow. Contrary to the description in the novel, the lover Zhu could have confessed to her in Moscow under the vow of secrecy that he was heading there to join the Chinese fight against Japan. This utmost confidentiality might have convinced her of how serious he was about her, that he was alive, and that she only had to follow him to China in time if she ever wanted to see him again.

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Despite persistent efforts, for years Moscow does not allow Klara Blum to leave. She files numerous applications to the different factions of the Comintern, the German, Austria, and Chinese, as well as to the Foreign Commission of the Soviet Writers' Union, claiming to want to write a novel about China, and describes herself everywhere as Zhu's "wife." Yet she does not receive license to travel.

After the end of the Second World War, China finds itself in a civil war, and Blum files another travel application. She hopes to get to China via Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, and Bucharest, with a Romanian passport if needed. But Bucharest does not have a Chinese consulate. In the novel, Hanna finds via the Jewish aid committee in Prague entry into the Camp for Displaced Persons, where she lives with about fifty people: Jews from Poland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium. There she meets a Polish Jewish woman, who suffers

from beard growth because she was forcibly sterilized by the Nazis and was treated with corresponding hormones. She also describes the psychological effects of another Jewish woman and the adverse health effects, hunger, poverty, and squalor of her European odyssey during the years 1945-46.

The Jewish aid committee sponsors Blum's further travel to Paris. Having arrived in Paris, Hanna is missing numerous documents. She notices "even in left-wing circles a barely-hidden hostility towards foreigners – well, who knows, maybe also hostility towards Jews. Nazi bacteria." Blum experiences herself as a foreigner, everywhere. During this time, her poem "Grim Account of a Life" is written. It goes:

*Born on Europe's backstairs,  
Inclined towards pathos and eccentricity,  
Ready to carry thought's heaviest burden,  
And under this burden still ready to leap,  
I grew up as a child of the powder keg,  
From flint full of love and hate.*

*The Jewish Quarter is my ancestral castle,  
My fatherland a colorful retinue of the people,  
The restless wild obstinacy my inheritance.*

*I fell into the twentieth century,  
In the gas age, the bomb era  
Life, made dumb, marveled at the murder,  
The beauty of the finest voices becomes silent.  
An army of victims wanders around the earth  
With half-frightened, half-furious behavior.  
And what gave me spirit and fervor of tears,  
It ricochets with wounded wings  
Off the tarnished wall of world history.*

The poem, however, does not end there. In her life glints “A Sliver of Happiness”:

*A son from afar gave me his hands,  
Created for me the picture of the most beautiful turning point.  
Finally, body, heart, and mind reached their destination.  
Twelve weeks – Mouth to mouth and forehead to forehead –  
I saw the future weaving in the sliver of happiness.*

*Grim Account of a Life* is the nucleus of the novel begun later in China.

There is a Chinese consulate in Paris, but Klara Blum is still missing quite a few papers: a certificate of identity, this time a passport for the stateless, “three vaccination reports,” official authorizations. After she had lived in the Soviet Union for eleven years, she was difficult for the Chinese to assess politically; she needed certificates and declarations from Chinese organizations who could vouch for her and guarantee that she would not engage in political activity.

Klara Blum spent one and a half years in Paris, encountering misunderstandings, mistrust, and obstructions. Had she told anybody she had been, before he disappeared, only together with Zhu for three months and had not seen her husband in the meantime for eight years, authorities and acquaintances raised their eyebrows; one thought she was crazy.

In the novel she describes her experiences in Paris. She finally hears from the Jewish aid committee in Paris that there is one just like it in Shanghai. Once again, Blum claimed that she was a contributor to German-American and Swiss newspapers and wanted to write a book about China. When, in the summer of 1947, after ten years of effort, she was finally able to embark on the voyage to her promised land, she no longer had any relatives in Europe, no one whom she would leave behind, and no one who would miss her. The one thing with which she could still identify was the German language, her Jewishness, and her love for a missing Chinese citizen.

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Shanghai was a cosmopolitan city. Battered from the First Opium War and colonial claims from every direction, shaped by dazzling wealth and abysmal exploitation, poverty, trade, and change of all kinds, it appeared to the writer Aldous Huxley in the 1920s as the largest thicket between East and West. The colonial powers of Great Britain and France as well as the USA and Japan as war and colonial allies fought over the coveted city since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They set up so-called concessions in the middle of the city and lived in privileged enclaves (*International Settlements*). There were Buddhist, Taoist and Confucianist temples, and with the colonial rulers Christians of every conceivable orientation, missionaries, and also Jews had come to Shanghai. All German property claims had fallen to Japan after the First World War according to the Treaty of Versailles. Great Britain, France, and the USA relinquished their claims after the Second World War and left the city to the Japanese and Chinese. For decades, the Chinese were recruited and exploited here as a cheap labor force. In addition, Jewish refugees from Europe arrived during the Second World War.

Shanghai had an enormous harbor, via which the opium trade from India and Turkey flourished. Here the great trade organizations and shipping companies were located; there were workers, refugees, migrants, tradespeople, and colonial rulers from all over the world, and every dubious pleasure of the big city: opium dens, prostitution, crime.

In the twenties, the modern spoken-word theater developed. Zhu Xiangchen and his friends Xia Yan and Tian Han staged foreign and own pieces. The theater was the most important public place of political communication and cultural conversation; here, traditional politics was done and negotiated. In the theater, controversial topics could be highlighted, one could instigate, liven up, form opinions; there was clapping and booing. While the British, French, American and Japanese kept to themselves, the Chinese artists developed socialist ideas and preferred to put on Eastern European pieces.

Here, upon her arrival, Blum experiences her whiteness and various forms of racism as a widely recognizable “foreigner”, and she reflects this

experience accordingly as Hanna Bilkes in her novel. Blum critically recounts how whites and Jewish emigrants in Shanghai's Hongkou District treat Chinese domestic workers with disrespect. Hanna is called a "man-crazy pig" and a "Chinese harlot" by them because she visits a Chinese family.

The terms *racism* and *colonialism* stand in contrast to the then-common terms and concepts of *race* and *nation* were not yet available to her immediately after the Second World War. The despicable and exploitative colonial tyranny of whites over others is referred to by Blum often as *imperialism*, and in her novel as *so-called comprador capitalism*.

Klara Blum also receives meager support from the Jewish aid committee in Shanghai in 1947. While Blum wants to settle here and look for her lover as well as a job, there is already a great exodus of European Jewish refugees to Palestine. After a year, Klara Blum finally finds her first position; she will teach German at the Tongji University. She will be employed as teaching staff and moves into a room at the university. Until eight months later, when inflation makes it impossible for the universities to pay their teaching staff, requiring Blum to go back to refugee accommodation. Hanna Bilkes also lives in Shanghai in the novel in the "Home for Displaced Persons." Blum is allowed to teach for a short time in Nanjing, and after her naturalization in 1954 she is finally relocated to a university in Guangzhou (Canton) in the south of China, where she teaches German and German literature. Over months, she read Heinrich Mann word-by-word with her students. Although she was missing a university degree, she was regarded as a professor. She was said to have spoken English with a strong German accent.

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It was not until Klara Blum arrived in China in 1947 that she began writing her great romantic-political life myth and love story with the Chinese Zhu Xiangcheng as a novel. She details his Chinese background and the Jewish-Eastern European background of her own family history, calling upon both literary and philosophic upbringing. Klara Blum describes the time of their

separation in mutually addressed diaries and finally recounts her own arduous journey from war-torn Europe to China.

In order to be accepted and given asylum in China, Blum not only calls herself Zhu's wife, but, like Hanna Bilkes in the novel, she self-confidently titles herself a "Jewish anti-imperialist writer". In the novel, Hanna solemnly welcomes the founding of the state of Israel; she also notes the numerous journeys of Jewish community members from Shanghai to Israel. But two decades later, shortly before her death, Klara Blum will find Israel's politics to be a great shame. She "suffer[s] bitterly from the disgrace that the state of Israel, this tool of US imperialism, has brought upon my people," she writes in her will. Furthermore, she will note in it that she considers it the duty of every progressive Jew to "stand in solidarity with the anti-imperialist masses of the Arab peoples and to fight and condemn the reactionary, racist, and aggressive military government of Israel." From which perspective will Klara Blum in faraway China learn of the Six-Day War, the expansion of the Jewish settlements, and the war of attrition between Israel and Egypt?

Blum herself wishes, like Hanna in the novel, to stay in China and to find recognition as the wife of Niulang, who is thought to be dead by many people, and acceptance as a Jewish woman. Already in the encounter with Niulang, the author referred to the sages and philosophers of ancient China. "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?" Blum quotes from the wise Pharasaical Rabbi Hillel, who lived at the turn of an era and was a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth. Hillel is still known as one of the most formative rabbis in Judaism, known for his softness and patience. Those who are familiar with this wisdom of Hillel know that the rhetorical triad ends with the question: *And if not now, when?* Blum refrains from this third famous sentence, knowing full well that it will be completed by the readers silently.

In China, Hanna proudly and stubbornly emphasizes her Jewishness: "I am and will remain a Jewish woman." Asked by an older Christian woman whether she was religious, Hanna Bilkes insists defiantly, "I am a national Jew,"



and adds “I am not religious at all.” Here she casually mentions the missionary nature of Christianity, to which there is no equivalent in Judaism.

The novel becomes fantastical when Blum writes herself into the ancient Chinese myth of Qixi. Like a dream, she sketches the diaries of both of them during the years of their separation and finally stages Niulang’s appearance in China as a prelude to their reunion, for a single night. With pomp and circumstance, the magnificent magpies, golden pheasants and magical blue kingfishers fly into the sky and build their bridge; the imagined mythic encounter forms the end of the novel.

Klara Blum’s novel is a light buoy, a sort of beacon to the lost lover. The writer assures him of her constant love and loyalty. Her alter ego, Hanna Bilkes, appears as Zhinü, the weaver, and elsewhere she calls herself Penelope – she will remain the wife of her shepherd for life. Their shared cause, the anti-imperialist class struggle and socialism, which turns into Chinese communism, is the deeper ideological color of the novel.

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In 1951, Blum’s *The Shepherd and the Weaver* was to be published by the Greifenverlag in the GDR. It is the year in which Anna Seghers, almost the same age, receives the GDR’s National Prize for the first time. Seghers had already returned to Berlin from Mexico in 1947 and initially lived in the West, but soon after, however, the convinced socialist moved to the East. Seghers has long since ceased to emphasize her Jewish origins. She left the community at the end of the 1920s and joined the Communist Party. In West and East Germany there is cautious initial interest in literature that deals with the flight and expulsion of Jews and Communists, exile literature, depending on the occupied zone. Antisemitism, on the other hand, has persisted despite the end of the war, no matter how much the governments of both German states try to admit guilt, repent, and make a new political start.

While Mascha Kaléko had emigrated to Palestine, Feuchtwanger remained in California and Nelly Sachs remained in Sweden, Gabriele Tergit and Sybill Bedford settled in England, Stefan Zweig took his own life, and

Joseph Roth drank himself to death in Paris at the early age of 44, few Jewish women writers want to return to Germany after the Shoah. Unlike the socialists Anna Seghers and Arnold Zweig, Klara Blum does not toy for a moment with that idea – rather, as a proud Jewish woman and self-declared wife of Zhu, tries to obtain Chinese citizenship.

The Greifenverlag in East-German Rudolstadt and the advisory GDR government agencies appear to hold Blum's novel in high literary esteem and trusted it to be a far-reaching success. A large first edition is planned and sent into print. The publisher reads in her work an "infinite love for China" and thinks that it deserves "wide circulation." But before the novel reaches bookstores in late fall, on November 19, three days after its official publication date, it was banned by the state.

How can the events be reconstructed? The Office of Literature and Publishing censors the book with reference to the Soviet authorities and the Chinese Mission. Blum's novel betrays an unfavorable attitude toward the Soviet Union. The overly negative Montini character should be removed, it is not realistically shown and is portrayed solely in terms of emotion, national Judaism is too strongly emphasized, and the entire immigrant milieu in Moscow is portrayed too negatively. No bad light, no shadow, however tender, should fall on the Moscow of the war years. The Soviet Union was the occupying power and in the young GDR it was known as the Big Brother, communist, infallible. The development of the German Democratic Republic strived to follow their model.

Stalin's Great Terror, the antisemitic campaigns, the persecution, elimination, and murder of unfavorable comrades culminated a few months before his death in the so-called "doctors' conspiracy," an alleged plot by mainly Jewish doctors against state leadership. In 1953, the heads of the GDR government Otto Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht were to travel to Moscow for the funeral services of Stalin's state funeral. A figure as malignant as the communist official Montini in the powerful circle of the Comintern displeases the Soviets and the GDR.

The foil of the character of Montini is, as mentioned, probably the Austrian writer Ernst Fischer, whom Blum knew from her years in Vienna. In the novel, she attests to Montini's aristocratic origins. Ernst Fischer had a noble mother and was married to a noblewoman in his first marriage. Blum suspected him of being out to harm her and other Jewish emigrants in Moscow. In fact, Fischer probably defended Stalin's so-called "purges" at the time.

Correspondence bears witness to the struggle between the East German publisher Dietz and the China-based author over the terms of publication. Klara Blum defends her novel as thoroughly positive towards the Soviet Union. The subtle but clear criticism and fear of Stalin is only put into the mouth of the Chinese mother-in-law of Niulang, Madame Tang, who will one day visit Hanna in China and ask for shelter.

Strangely historicizing, the sentence "The Soviet people have eliminated the nightmare pressure of the earth and are returning to their work" stands out from the novel. From Blum's now Far-Eastern perspective, it was apparently not four Allied states that defeated Nazi Germany. The Western victorious powers appeared in China as colonialists, so their participation in the war against Hitler is withheld in Blum's novel.

Above all, however, Blum defends herself in the face of GDR censorship; her novel stands politically for the "broad criticism that Lenin and Stalin repeatedly required, from the top down and from the bottom up." Blum is quite willing to compromise, and, in the event of a successful publication, considers the additional introduction of a "positive Soviet figure" in the second edition. But she refuses stubbornly and "with all determination" to eliminate the figure of Montini. In her eyes, it is one of the unconditional tasks of a progressive writer to show how "unscrupulous elements" creep into "one's own ranks." And she fights back against the "censor" who searches in her work to find out whom she is referring to with Montini. Under no circumstances does she wish to accept the designation of *roman à clef* from her publisher. While her work is based "on her own experience," like many works of world literature, such as Molière's *Tartuffe*, she does not describe the personal circumstances of the Montini character at all, but only depicts the moral and political behavior.

“If someone thinks of a public personality in Austria with such behavior” (Ernst Fischer), this does not reflect badly upon her book. Blum writes in her letter to the publisher Karl Dietz: “For years Montini has tried to economically exterminate me and others by systematically poisoning all our sources of work, and at the same time in his pamphlet *The Fascist Race Question* has already declared that the best solution to the Jewish question would be if there were no Jews.”

Blum herself had “hungered for” Shanghai under the “cruellest conditions” and gave poetic expression to the “feeling of internationalism” in her novel. One must not prevent her from “speaking the truth.”

It takes months before the publisher’s efforts bear fruit, with letters to Wilhelm Pieck, Friedrich Wolf, Arnold Zweig, and others. Pieck and Blum had met each other in Moscow. On May 2, 1952, Pieck, who is mentioned in the novel as “Needle,” lifts the ban with reservations. Existing books were permitted to be delivered to bookstores, but a second edition was not desired. Blum’s novel is loudly silenced, not a single review is published, no interview, and no publicity whatsoever is given to it.

The author lives in distant China and writes novels about the Opium Wars while, in the fifties, the GDR celebrates Brecht and Seghers, Erich Weinert and Leonhard Frank, Johannes R. Becher and Arnold Zweig. No one takes note of the novel from the Chinese Jewish woman, born in Chernivtsi. The books remain lying around and are sent back to the publisher, which has them pulped.

In the GDR Anna Seghers became a state writer; she was awarded the National Prize several times, the Fatherland Order of Merit, and other honors. In West Germany Nelly Sachs and Paul Celan are discovered and honored rather hesitantly, but not celebrated by the state. In the first years after the war, no one Else Lasker-Schüler and Mascha Kaléko They were not political authors, they did not serve any ideology, and yet their literature was deemed political, simply because they were Jewish and their literary impact was shaped by German history. Only in the mid-fifties began the reappraisal, and with it, a rediscovery. The fact that Alfred Margul-Sperber’s anthology *The Beech* with

Jewish poets from Bukovina, which he had planned as early as 1931, could not find a publisher for decades and was only published in 2009, shows the ignorance of the two German states.

Klara Blum virtually disappears from the German-speaking literary radar. She will live out the last 24 years of her life modestly in China without a partner or family, without fame or honor, and teaches German language and literature at the Zhongshan University in Guangzhou there for fourteen years. The stateless Blum is granted citizenship in 1954 after many years in China. She gives herself the name Zhu Bailan and, in her fiftieth year and seventeen years after their meeting in Moscow, places herself in an eternal relationship with her lover: *Zhu*, like the last name of him and millions of others; *Bailan*, based on her birth name Klara Chaje Blum, Chinese for “white orchid,” symbolizes purity and fidelity.

Just once, upon the publication of her volume of novellas in the summer of 1959, does the Chinese citizen return to Europe for a few weeks, staying in the GDR. She gives readings and visits the Buchenwald concentration camp, but there is a final falling out with her Rudolstadt publisher Karl Dietz. She is not allowed to take the small income from her publications out of the country. She exchanges them in small amounts for health supplies and medicines for friends and donates the larger part to a relief fund for Korea. She must ask for a contribution to her travel expenses. In 1961, Aufbau Verlag expresses interest in her extensive novel manuscript *Overcomer of Fate* but desires a series of changes. Blum reacts proudly and negatively; she would rather leave her novel in a drawer forever than agree to the East Berlin publisher’s changes. In 1962, all of China's relations with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries are terminated. Further publications in the GDR are no longer possible.

Despite her adopted Chinese name, the naturalized Chinese citizen hardly finds acceptance. She is permitted to work, but her letters are censored, and she is not allowed to travel anymore. According to her biographer Zhidong Yang, Blum lives under “constant supervision.” With the beginning of the

Cultural Revolution in 1966, the slander and denunciations increase; people disappear. When a friend of her childhood friend Clara Weininger, who meanwhile lived in Israel, wants to visit her in China one day and deliver greetings, she shows up for the painstakingly arranged appointment accompanied by a German-speaking colleague who had been assigned to her.

To no avail, she had searched since 1952 for a Chinese publisher for her novel *The Shepherd and the Weaver*. She had asked one of her students, Han Shizhong, for the translation. But the Chinese publishers declined, they did not like the novel, saying it focused too little on the class struggle. In the course of the Cultural Revolution, all foreigners are suspected of being spies and collaborating with foreign agents. Blum found herself isolated again amid a society of defamation and denunciation. She spoke Chinese, dressed in the Chinese fashion, had a Chinese passport and name – but her colleagues and students moved even further away from her. Even her former student Zhang Penggao, whom she adopted in her younger years and finally named as an heir for her will, visited her only rarely.

Klara Blum survived a great deal and for a long time, escaping deportation and murder. In her Chinese years she did not have to flee anymore, but her staying required a lonely and humble life. It allowed her no freedoms, no travels, and no deep friendships, not even freedom of speech. She remained a stranger.

She did not want medical help when she became ill. For the last days of her life in May 1971, Zhang Penggao traveled to see her in Guangzhou. She did not wish to go to a hospital. In her will, she wished for cremation, unusual for a Jewish woman, but appropriate for her life after the loss of any religious faith.

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The great arc across Klara Blum's sole novel published in her lifetime spans the old Chinese legend of the two lovers, the shepherd and the weaver, Qixi. Blum also takes up other Chinese legends, such as that of the kitchen god

Zhaoshen and the moon saga of the archer Houyi and his wife Chang'e, who steals the immortality pill from her husband and becomes the moon goddess Yue Taitai. As much as she drew from the cosmos of legends, myths, and fairytales in the oral tradition, Blum was equally fascinated by literature, Lüshi poetry, and especially by theater pieces, by China's history and politics. Often she mentions contemporary writers in connection with Niulang's theatrical work, such as Cao Yu (*Thunderstorm and Sunrise*, called a "courtesan tragedy" by Blum) and Tian Han (*Night at the Café*), whom she sometimes refers to by name, sometimes nameless, and sometimes turns into characters in the novel, whom she then renames. Chen Baichen's drama about the Taiping Rebellion thematizes the then-current Second Sino-Japanese War. The character in the novel, Tschen Bo, is probably the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun, who lived in Shanghai at the time. Whether Zhu Xiangcheng and Lu Xun knew each other is unknown.

Hanna is apparently sexually inexperienced and implied to be a virgin, but she surprises him with her language, an "unrestrained clarity of her declarations of love" – she reads to him the ancient Hebrew love song, the Song of Songs from the Bible – and when Niulang grasps here the "tremendous beauty" of the language, the reader of the novel wonders if he understands the Hebrew, or if she is reading him an English, Russian, or German translation, perhaps that of Martin Buber, which he is equally unlikely to understand. As in the reality of Blum's meeting with Zhu, Hanna is thirty-three years old and has been with him for "twelve weeks." In the novel, Hanna lacks a chuppa for their marriage, and feels that she is "unattractive," which is repeatedly discussed in her conversations with Niulang. "I am not a beauty," she tells him the first night they spend together, and Niulang agrees with her, but says that she must have certainly been desired. She hesitates, and he offers understanding and patience.

In Blum's novel, they are said to speak English with each other. Yet Blum and Zhu could just as well have spoken Russian, which both spoke fluently. The only difference is that in the Soviet environment, every passerby could have understood it. Zhu is said to have spoken perfect Russian as a

student at the Lenin Institute, as well as English and French fluently from his youth, as his wealthy parents had originally intended for him to become a businessman. At one point he asked her if she was a member of the party, and Hanna freely says no. She was, nevertheless, a political emigrant, having written too many poems about “masses rushing forward” and “waving red flags.” He would like to read them, but she waves him off, embarrassed, saying she no longer likes the poems.

The last time they meet, Hanna and Niulang are attending the Armenian opera in the Moscow Artists’ Theater; they are enthusiastic and amazed at the “joyful pride” of the “Soviet Armenian” in the role of Gayaneh – and in this scene, to underscore her ideal, Blum has a Black American appear who overhears the two lovers speaking English and joins them: “The four of us, Armenians, Jews, Chinese and Negroes! We understand each other!” Blum is not too particular about the accuracy of dates here either. The “Armenian” opera ballet was commissioned by the Communist Party and had its first performance only in December 1942 in the Russian city of Perm. It hardly serves to reliably mark the time in which her novel is set.

The chapter ends on the happy note that they both did not engage in “a power struggle like some lovers,” felt no need to “triumph over the other” and had “better and stranger things to offer each other” than the desire for domination and submission.

In the following chapter, the ice in Moscow melts, and spring is anticipated. Hanna mentions that Hitler had occupied Austria (March 1938) and since then, one suicide note after the other has arrived. It is noticeable that Klara Blum does not mention Stalin’s so-called “purges.” Yet they had already been spreading an atmosphere of fear and terror in Moscow since the mid-thirties.

Niulang disappears and Hanna believes him to be safe underground in China, fighting against Japan. She tries in vain to get permission to leave the country; she would prefer to follow him. In the novel, as well as in real life, the missing man remains her counterpart, even if only in spirit.



The third part of the novel announces with its title a certain suspension, something between dream and plot, an invention in the sense of the Qixi myth: two constellations keep a diary. These diary entries, which, like letters, are addressed monologically to the other, begin on May 7, 1938, where Niulang writes his Zhinü from a small Chinese farming village, and she, in response, writes to him a few days later from Moscow. She writes to him that she is not “pregnant” after all. Relieved and bitterly disappointed, she sometimes dreams of a “Chinese child.” The theme of childlessness and the associated melancholy of the single writer is here addressed unusually openly in literature.

At the same time, she develops a very stubborn, quasi-cosmopolitan definition of family, when Hanna meets Niulang’s biological son as a student in China one day – and gives him his own name. She forms kinship. Blum also feels a relationship to her Chinese students, sees herself as a mother in spirit, and would like to be a role model to them. More than once, she wishes to adopt one of her students – by no means in competition with biological parents, rather in addition. Her idea of family is not a biological one. It is not about sex, procreation, and childbearing. Family for her is evidently something between *philia*, *agape*, and communism; acceptance, mutual appreciation, and education.

Hanna visits Niulang’s sister-in-law, wife, and mother-in-law in Shanghai, describing them as extremely beautiful and dignified people. Similarly, Klara Blum must have tracked down the wife of her lover Zhu, and have gone to the surprised Wang Jifeng (1904-1977), introducing herself to him as his “wife.” Mrs. Wang did not wish to believe her claim at first, but showed the visitor a portrait photo of her missing husband. The white Blum immediately recognized “her husband” and confidently asked for the unique piece as a gift. Mrs. Wang could not refuse the stranger this wish. From then on, the picture was in Klara Blum’s home and was shown to many people in the years to come, people whom she hoped had seen or met her beloved somewhere. Klara Blum could not interpret the unknown polite behavior along with the Chinese smile. Often she describes the smiles and giggles of Chinese characters, almost always interpreting it in a European way, as sympathy, approval, recognition, or shame.

How would Zhu's widow and children have received Blum's novel in Chinese, in which they become characters whose personal and intimate lives are tendentiously fabricated in the sense of the inventor?

Niulang later writes to his Hanna from Yan'an; Blum imagines the beloved as a communist fighter in China. In the addressed diary entries, she describes the events among the friends in her Moscow exile milieu, and in the process, the sexual and moral independence of women, political distrust and intrigue among the exiles, as well as the publication of her poetry collections. In 1939 Blum published *The Answer* in Moscow and *Above All!* in a Kiev publishing house. One is even translated into Russian and reviewed. In it is said that she is "one of the most beautiful hopes of German-language literature".

As a faithfully waiting woman, who believes her lover to be heroic in the world and resists many a desire and attempt at seduction, Hanna sees herself in the novel *Penelope of Drohobyz*. This parable reveals the tragic exaggeration of her love into the mythical, in which she herself has little more than an archetypal and idealized role in every respect. She writes around the neuralgic point of loss. Blum resolutely does not want to realize that her lover may have been arrested, murdered, or may have escaped into the arms of another woman and that she will never see him again in her life. She firmly blocks out these options because it would put her entire future into question. Her emigration to China would be as nonsensical as the writing of the novel and the alleged marital affiliation with Niulang/Xiucheng.

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When Hanna Bilkes writes to her Niulang in her diary on March 1, 1943, writing, as if in passing, that the National Socialists had "gassed six million Jews," this shows Blum's growing concern and her furious courage. Her character could hardly have known the historical figure at the time; the author Blum, on the other hand, had long since been aware of the historical figure when she arrived in China at the end of the 1940s to write her novel.

By placing this figure breezily in the middle of the novel, which is set during the time of National Socialism and the Second World War, in which a Jewish woman, like herself, on the run and politically resisting the course of history, which is written in German and to be published in faraway Germany in 1951, it bears witness to her proud brow and her desire for enlightenment. No reproach is contained within this passage, no accusation. The mere mention of the number puts her in perspective and singles her out as a survivor: she raises her voice tersely and soberly. If she were to accuse with reproach, she would take the position of the victim. Nothing is further from Blum's mind; she has saved her voice; she is a writer.

Klara Blum may have known that her readers would be mostly Germans who, only a few years earlier, had been National Socialists and antisemites, warlords, if not murderers. Despite humanistic and politically rather socialist-communist ideals, Klara Blum knew about the Hitler-Stalin pact. She knew that leftists and socialists could be bad people and communists could be antisemites. Without this ambivalence, without the interrogation of the cultural concepts of race, nation, and ultimately identity, the descriptions and conditions of her own existence, belonging, and *raison d'être*, the novel would probably have been merely an implausible and seemingly kitschy love story.

In the novel, Hanna is evacuated from Moscow to Kazan, writing to her lover that she is safe. In addition, Hanna, like her inventor Blum in reality, reports to the front as an interpreter for the Red Army. There, she probably wrote pamphlets to show the German soldiers "the senselessness of the war before their eyes". Later, in China, she criticized the "useless bloodshed". A universal concern, peace. In 2023, we are not only thinking of international attempts at talks and negotiations, we are thinking of the Ukrainian appeals to Russian soldiers to lay down their weapons and end the war.

Blum takes the names of historical figures in certain chapters, uses them as political markers and invents a story for them. Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek appear as characters. The historical figures and Blum's characters from the novel encounter each other in places that their real-life models did not visit

at the same time. For instance, Blum suggests in the chapter of addressed diary entries, Niulang (alias Zhu Xiangcheng) had visited Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai personally in Yan'an in June 1938. Niulang claims further that he had once already met Enlai in Paris. The real figures Zhu Xiangcheng and Zhou Enlai were not in Paris at the same time. Zhou Enlai was there from 1920 to 1924 and the Niulang of the novel does not set out for Paris until 1929, his alias Zhu Xiangcheng in 1931. Did Blum perhaps mean the deployment of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, who had been China's Foreign Minister and Premier of China since 1949, acted as a signal of deference? Undoubtedly, she shows a flag, a red flag.

A further clear indication of the arbitrary fictionalization is the embellishment of Zhu Xiangcheng's theatrical activities as a director in China: in the 1929 novel, Niulang not only brings only *Night Asylum* to the stage and translates *Uncle Vanya*, which Zhu had also staged with great success at his Xinyou Theater, but he is also rehearsing the successful contemporary play *Thunderstorm* by Cao Yu (1910-1966). However, this play (Chinese: *Leiyu*) was not published until 1934. It is conceivable that Zhu had told Blum during the two encounters in 1937 in Moscow, that he had read it or seen it before, or at least that he had heard of it, but it is simply impossible that it was staged in China in 1929. Blum's frequent mention of Mao Zedong is done completely uncritically, as it would not have been conceivable or possible otherwise as a Chinese person in China. In her unpublished novel *Conqueror of Destiny* she quotes him frequently. Even during the Cultural Revolution between 1967 and 1969, Blum presumably translated 37 poems by Mao from Chinese into German, and up until her death she hoped in vain to find a publisher for them.

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Klara Blum's political furor, as it permeates some of her poems and her novel in a socialist and communist way, often overshadows her underlying humanistic and narrative concern. By invoking famous historical figures, the text appears superficially striking. The garish namedropping obscures the view and leaves these figures without literary contours. On the other hand, the

author desires this secular reference, as if the historical names confirm the true content of the novel. Similarly, she employs the mostly Latin political vocabulary, without realizing how much it obscures and how little it tells. Literarily the novel disintegrates, breaking apart at the noisy markers. Cultural archaeologically and sociologically speaking, on the other hand, it is precisely this narrative method that is interesting, since it shows the enormous influence of a poet on the political developments of her time.

*The Shepherd and the Weaver* is not a realistic novel, but rather a truly autofictional and at the same time political-fantasy novel. One could call it political romance. Doesn't man have the right to hopes and dreams? Does romantic hope and any deviation from realism in literature create kitsch? For Klara Blum's life, the novel and romantic hope were undoubtedly existential.

*The Shepherd and the Weaver* is an amazing testimony of internationalism, if one understands it as the inspiration and interweaving of political developments and cultural characteristics, which, unlike the modern concept of globalization, by no means focuses on economic connections and dependencies. From today's perspective, the novel can be seen as an early document of the obstinate and militant formation of an anti-racist concept. Of course, it uses – how could it not – the vocabulary of its time, but it makes an immanent effort to treat all the differences in the cultural and physiological manifestations of human beings as equal. Blum's "internationalism" arises from the life experience that made her a citizen of the world, not solely out of need, exclusion, and flight. Where she discovers superiority and rejection, criticism and anger, rage and hatred ignite. The politicization of the lifelong loner sharpened itself in the desire for freedom and justice, cultural curiosity, love and appropriation as if out of competition - be it of languages, ideologies, religions, literature, myths and theater, along the respective economic and political dependencies, the conditions of a human existence.

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