

THE SELF IN LANGUAGE: VIIVI LUIK'S *SEITSMES RAHUKEVAD*¹

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Viivi Luik writes a carnal discourse. Her word is not the Saussurian, formalist-structuralist word—abstract, skeletal, and etiolate—that thinks of the sign as primarily connected to another, substanceless sign; nor is her word only the Bakhtinian utterance, filled with the intention of others, throbbing and alive only in the moment of interaction, simultaneously individual and social, myself and the other, that "combat zone" (as one critic called it)² in which all those who speak participate and struggle, though it also is that (and I will get to the heteroglossia of this novel later); but her word is particularly the word that Kristeva called semiotic, a word mindful of somatic experience and the somatic self, attentive to suffering and rejoicing, to the unreflective, lived life, to sensuous perceptions, filled with light, odor, taste, and the recollection of touch,³ the semiotic which Roland Barthes once called style: "the decorative voice of hidden, secret, flesh" . . . "where the first coition of words and things takes place."⁴

Luik knows that the self in language was and is first of all an embodied self, a self that learned to renounce things for words, substance for abstractions, bodily reality for verbal power. She also knows well the self as a psychological, social, and dialogic entity, but part of her greatness lies in her recollection of the self as a corporeal entity and of the fact that style evolves from the body, from biography, a graphy or writing that stresses the bios, the lived life.

Thus the child lies on the ice in a winter experience not unlike that of the Wordsworthian child in *The Prelude*.⁵

My legs made slow movements, my body slid rustingly along the gray ice field, and a strange joy tightened my throat. I bit the white air, redolent of spruce needles and frozen potato tops. With each breath I swallowed a bit of the raw, smooth, and remorseless life force which filled this familiar, gray expanse from earth to heaven. (108).

The child, lying on its back like a baby, with its legs up, biting the air, recaptures at once the posture of its infancy and its joyous infant relationship to its environment. Its sensuous life — motor movements, taste, smell — bring it joy, a joy that registers in the tightening of the throat, that sensitive site of the interaction of the emotional and the verbal.

The bodily self, lusty, ecstatic, rejoicing in its own mobility and senses, described here has its origins in the nineteenth century Romantic conception of the body, characterized by sentience, objectivity, and with Marx, productivity. This dialectical subject-object body, site of the interfusion of the self and the object, where the body and the world or subject and object may appear distinct but never divided (anymore than the back of my hand is several from the front of my hand though the two are distinguishable)—this Romantic body, felt, emotional, relational, vibrant, sensuously alive, on which scenes of rapture such as this one leave a mark, and which was created by the Romantic generation against the utter denial of the relevance of embodiment of a Descartes or the image of the body as a machine (la Mettrie) or the static, passive neo-classical body, an idea of decorum and form based on the self as a statue, portrait, or building — this body, analogous to nature, organic, vital, mobile, revolutionary, agitated, and aching — Luik apprehends as globally endangered. She seems to be in intuitive assent with Foucault who defined our nuclear situation as one of bio-power and bio-history,⁶ a situation in which the soma and *bios*, life itself are continually at stake.

Asked in an interview what motivated her writing, Luik recounted what she had felt one evening as a child of eleven when after weeks of bitter longing and waiting outdoors in the cold for the return of her mother from the hospital, her figure had appeared suddenly and as if miraculously at the edge of the forest:

I felt, somehow bodily, how the surrounding landscape seeped into me together with the winter cold. The snow and the meadow stalks, the whistling of the wind and the black shining ice patches, filled me from head to toe.

Within me the landscape changed; my desperate longing and great worry cast on it their own reflection . . . Not simply a landscape, but a landscape through me ... I went home and wrote . . . [7](#)

The episode, which recounts the first time in her life she felt forced to write, also reveals the carnal basis of her writing, a writing born of bodily experience and affects more intense and overwhelming than the organism can support, a writing in consort with the aspirations of such French feminists as, for example, Hélène Cixous, who exhorts women to write and to write with their bodies⁸. For these writers there is no body-word disconnection, no body-word split. The labor of the writer is to exchange "flesh for the word" (p. 81) in such a way so that what Barthes called "style" results, a language rooted in carnal structure. Such a writer, said Barthes, whose language is related to "its fleshly double", is "above History as the freshness of Innocence".⁹ He could have been speaking of the poetic prose of Viivi Luik.

The child is an ambiguous somatic-linguistic being, living at once in two domains. It is greedy for words, eager to talk or read aloud at every opportunity, proud of its linguistic skills, inventive and adept at verbal games, and envious of another child's clever, succinct expression, the untranslatable: "suuvooder", as in: "ega mina pole sinu soovooder", which means: I am not your messenger boy, or literally, the lining of your mouth (p. 115). Still, when frightened, as for example by the noise of passing airplanes, it seeks, as all children do, solace in the body, the contact with the mother's body, from which it emerged not that long ago:

I sneaked behind my mother's back, and then, fell unexpectedly around her neck, like a beast of prey, a wolf or a wild cat. My mother shrieked; I made: 'grr-grr-grr!' and roamed all over her on all fours . . . Thus I banished the crooked-winged planes torn before my eyes. (7)

The child can return for protection and comfort to its own body or that of the mother, whereas the adult author feels that her only shelter is her faith in the nerves and brain cells of writers and thinkers. "As long as we have these, I believe, the world will persist" (p. 49).

A perfect image for this word-body intersection, which is the special domain of the child, is the moment when this passionate child bites savagely into its own arm, leaving there a ring of tooth marks, for having mouthed words that strike her as despicable and frightening (p. 69-70). Predominantly, however, words are, as are most things in the world of the child, primarily for play, objects of an amusing practice. Sometimes this child toys merely with sounds, with the primordial signifier. The signified, or such meanings as she tears, "are not her concern" (p. 24), or she thinks, naively, as the adult writer ironically knows, that they "do not touch her life at all" (p. 182).

The child is in the process of language acquisition. It listens avidly to the various dialects and voices about her, that of parents and strangers, madmen and bureaucrats, as well as the radio; she memorizes slogans, poems and songs, and entire speeches that sound authoritative or impressive (p. 103). She is ashamed that she cannot as yet write (or tell time), but she would like to write a handbook on the great wall clock (p. 79). However, often, to comprehend language she needs still to refer it back to her body-centered reality, to concrete, material, and often terrifying images. Thus, when the grandmother tells her that she is not willing to denounce the partisans because she does not wish to "have their death on her soul", the words bore themselves through her skull and conjure up for her an image of the Bible and that of a freshly slaughtered "bloody animal heart, still beating, in a clay bowl" (p. 72). To make words intelligible, the child translates them into something sensuously experienced. Words have the same reality as things. She responds to words as to things. She smells and tastes words; for her they are palpable. Thus she experiences nature and the forest with a sensuous immediacy forgotten by most adults, but similarly she also experiences all the stories that she hears, of people immured in walls, murderers sown in mattresses, cows crucified in the forest, and partisans raided' in their bunkers, in the same immediate, real, and frightening manner.

The writer tries to capture all in the sign, the word, the sentence, so that there is no remainder, but there *is* a remainder, and that too the writer must try to mark. This remainder, this unnamable experience, to which Luik is superiorly sensitive, is what Kristeva designates by the word body or the semiotic.¹⁰ It is the confusion, contradiction, opaqueness, emptiness, or "silent knowing"¹¹ that is not synonymous with silence, but also not language. For example, the sigh or the sob, or the tears that the child sheds, are a profound communication that are not language, but a reversion to an earlier, nonlinguistic speech. Similarly, anger or grief (and this child is often angry in order not to be sad), or the presence of any affect have been defined as "the physical appearance of meaning".¹²

Another example of the semiotic, which is the predominant mode of this text, is that mixture of world-weariness, curiosity, resistance to home, and sadness that leads the child to give itself a mock burial and dig the snow grave, where it lies for a while, as if buried alive, absent from the world, experiencing suddenly an "animal-like and frightening" loss, of herself, her life, her possibilities, or even more dimly the notion of a primal lack and no fulfillment as such, or possibly an anticipation of the ultimate renunciation of all that we ever securely possess: our own bodies (p. 145-6).

The child's reality is still body-centered; language, although enticing and desirable, is not yet fully understood or its meaning and, certainly, its ideological import are only dimly apprehended. The pre-school child is only at the beginning of its process of socialization, merely on the threshold of the symbolic in Lacan's sense. She, unlike the adult writer, is still as much actor as speaker, and uninhibited and unrestrained in both. Her communications with the world are bodily, a series of actions, misdeeds, pranks, disobediences, and rebellions, such as kicking another child under a table (p. 133), holding

matches under the nose of her dog (p. 20), sticking scissors into the flesh of cactuses (p. 141), putting roosters on the roof, eating forbidden food, stealing money, betraying her mother in her mind, and destroying the bees, the source of the honey.

From the first moment we hear her voice in the text, begging insistently for more peapods to eat from her mother, we are aware of her as an unassuageable bundle of demands and needs, and we grow conscious of her irrepressible hunger, heightened by deprivation, which demands more control and repression than she ultimately has or could have as a child. Nonetheless, the child's evil, as much as many others, haunts the adult, filling her with doubts, guilt, and with moral longings and questions (p. 144).

The small protagonist is given to fits of grumbling and whining, and sometimes loud lamentation and screaming: "And when I felt like it, I bellowed" (p. 5). She has noticed that simple verbal demands like "let's go," or "give me" are not very effective with adults unless accompanied by clamor and bawling, or by silent, heavy tears which have to begin to drop as if of their own accord (p. 34-5). Thus to succeed politically in her own child versus adult arena, she has had to invent her own methods, among which is this borderline language between the animal and the human, mere bawling and the intelligible. With other children, she has learned to dominate via her own version of the apotrope, the gesture performed to intimidate the enemy, her fierce stance of clenched fists and bared teeth and gums (p. 35-6). But when she has her way, she "bites the air, happy as a dog being taken along on a hunt" (p. 76). Or when the sorrow and worry of the adults becomes too overwhelming, she escapes outdoors, spreading her arms like wings, freeing herself by making free movements and by forgetting all the adult voices, including that of the radio, which says: "The time forty-five minutes after twelve! The broadcast for the sugar beet growers begins" (p. 167). But even outdoors, the immense, gleaming, but heavy-hearted Northern landscape can suddenly fall upon the child, "piercing through its ribs, with a long, burning shaft of longing, into the heart" (p. 175).

She is unusually and all too keenly aware of herself as a mere biological, anatomical being, as mere exposed, unprotected physicality. She makes frequent references to her skeleton, or to herself as a body in process, a growing structure of bones, nails, and flesh, as if she had seen herself X-rayed (pp. 61-2, 94). What has, however, no doubt brought forth this acute sense of her own vulnerability and mortality is the blatantly unsafe environment into which she awakens, a world that fills her consciousness with weapons, barbed wire, and no end of stories and rumors of raids and round-ups, of people who have left or disappeared, never to return (p. 91), and deaths and suicides (pp. 3, 190). Thus, the melted snow in the spring lays bare the bodies of the partisans, who committed suicide in their forest bunker (p. 190). And thus, it is no wonder that when she happens to see on the roadside the leg of a dead cow, already partly chewed up by dogs, she reacts with almost hysterical identification, seeing this naked, bluish knee bone "as if a part of all the bones of the world" and herself, with her "living, growing thigh bones a participant in it all" (p. 119).

But the vulnerability that the child feels is also real, and accentuated by the family's great deprivation, by their lack of adequate protective layers of object hood, of material culture. There is not enough firewood for the next day, although the cold cuts "like a razorblade" and the well water is so frozen that her mother breaks it with a pick ax (p. 135-6); nor enough hay for the starving cow; often there is no milk, or meat, or even potatoes for these have to be saved for the seeding. People are so poor that they snack on raw flour (p. 176), and when the child asks for a special treat of carrots, even these are not available, but have to be saved for supper (p. 168). She has barely any toys and a doll she hates, with a head made of stone. Her clothes are all hand-me-downs, some from the departed people, ragged, with moth-eaten collars, and "an odor of lambs wool, alder wood smoke, and piss" (p. 83). In fact everything in their home, as the child says, was being used for something else: an old apron as a towel, an old dress as her nightshirt (p. 19); lack as such accompanies her life like a natural phenomenon (p. 151). Thus, there are not enough decorations or candles to tame and transform the dark New Year's Day tree into something other than it is, a piece of indomitable, primeval forest, a bit of nature unconquerable by culture (p. 154).

"Wet, postwar Estonia" (p. 6) in the fall and winter of 1950 is a complex, multi-leveled, and perplexing socio-historical and political reality, a place of uncertainty and instability, where no one knows for certain what the next rules or laws may be, a bleak site also of deserted farm houses and abandoned beds, still war-torn and fearful, a place where chickens are vengefully beheaded (p. 40), or a cow is symbolically crucified in the forest (p. 92), and where "rebellious" verses are pinned each night on the schoolmaster's door (p. 47). She knows that life has changed unalterably since the great war (p. 38), and that not everyone is content with the new, for example, the bus driver for whom ownership of the confiscated bus he now merely drives for the state was life's meaning (p. 30). The pre-school child is learning her history in a fragmentary rather than in a systematic or institutional way; she is learning from the artifacts about her, like the fine China cup that is a remnant from the time of the Czar (p. 71) or the German books, fashion magazines, and record that testify to the time of the occupation (p. 10,12, 89), and above all from the people around her who represent different generations, different historical experience and values.

Luik's novel is sectioned into fifteen major episodes that constitute the life of her small female, albeit as yet engendered, protagonist in a time span that is less than a year (this novel has no summer), but columns of condensed time intersect the text vertically or shoot through it like temporal lightning bolts, opening up the limited time of the present (1950-51) to the future or boring through it to the distant and mythic past. This technical narrative innovation which produces volumes of time rather than traditional, sequential, historical time makes the text flare in surprising and sometimes shocking ways with the fires of history. Thus in one such moment the prose leaps by a process of associations from a description of the features of the grandmother to the Biblical Moses, to the past history of the Jews, and then to their bitter future in the

concentration camps, which Luik conveys with a quotation from a contemporary account (p. 13.). The historical lightning bolts tell us what has/will happen, who has died, what has been achieved. We learn, for example, that the mother who has never as yet used a telephone or gas oven, ridden a train, seen the sea, rung a doorbell, eaten frozen fish, or touched a radiator with her hand, will do all these things, and have to boot, imported shoes, courses in Finnish, and excursions to Moscow (p. 32), but that terrible worry which oppressed those she knew in the past and from which she tried to disassociate herself as a child seems not to have lessened, but to have grown more immense and worldwide. Fear, one of the governing affects of the texts, has become global. Possibly we have bought our sugar, our civilized amenities, at too great a price, like the child that in its sugar greed, killed the very source of the honey, but whether this is true is uncertain.

The temporal condensations allow the adult author, writing in 1982, to question historical process in novel ways, without, however, providing answers. What Kundera once said of the novel form applies absolutely to the texture and methodology of *Seitsmes Rahukevad*:

A novel does not assert anything; a novel searches and poses questions. I don't know whether my nation will perish and I don't know which of my characters is right . . . The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything . . . The novelist teaches the reader to comprehend the world as question. There is wisdom and tolerance in this attitude.¹³

Immanuel Kant said that it is through the mind that we acquire truth and through the body and senses that we acquire reality. The child is primarily in the process of acquiring reality; the adult writer longs for truth, without attaining it, and thus, she is brought back to the child and reality.

Autobiography ought to be the site where the self encounters itself and its truth. Instead the modern self encounters an alterity, an otherness, language, and the voices of those from whom it constituted and borrowed its discourse. The self comes upon its splintered and divided core, upon a subject (auto) writing about itself as an object (biography), hence upon a subject-object split, that is also an unhealable temporal split, and a split between writing (graphy) and speech, as well as language and lived experience. Pure autobiography is obviously an impossibility, as Bakhtin said, and the new surge of autobiographical writing among writers, particularly in France, proclaims itself as nothing but fiction.

Even if the author-creator had created the authentic autobiography or confession, he would nonetheless have remained, insofar as he had produced it, outside of the universe that is represented in it. If I tell (orally or in writing) an event that I have just lived, insofar as I am telling . . . this event, I find myself already outside of the time-space where the event occurred. To identify oneself absolutely with oneself, to identify one's "I" with the "I" that I tell is as impossible as to lift oneself up by one's hair.¹⁴

In the great autobiographies of the past — that of St. Augustine, Rousseau, or Wordsworth, for example, — the self was offered ultimately as model or representative of an era because it had had some special experience of revelation or enlightenment through which it had been healed, or repaired, or made whole. In more recent autobiographies, however, that of Leiris, Barthes, and Sarraute, to name only a few, the self remains dispersed, a heterogeneous experience that cannot be drawn together into a unity or logos. And Luik's work, which has already been acclaimed as (he representational novel of the Estonian postwar generation,¹⁵ is representational, among other reasons, because it also offers no resolution or closure to the contemporary issue of the self, to the loose adjacency of autonomous, independent, and diverse voices and lived moments and moods that we seem to be, perplexingly excessive, displaced, fragmented, scattered, and abundant.

Among the shaping voices and influences on the child's mind are predominantly the mother, father, and grandmother. The father, mostly absent and longed for, is a sympathetic, but quirky and contradictory figure. Associated on the one hand with the modernity of machines, the smell of oil and gas, motorcycles and the radio, objects in which the child has certainly more interest and faith than in weaving (p. 43), he is on the other hand fixated in a naive and somewhat narrow idealism that recalls the pre-romantic belief in goodness and nature, and Candide's resolve to cultivate his garden. The father's philosophy and moralism is contained in a matchbox, the one in which he carries the apple tree seeds that ought to be planted everywhere at every opportunity so that world may be returned to a garden of Eden. "Perhaps it is only with the aid of machines and oil," the child speculates, "that one can be freed of the power of the soil and the trees" (p. 153), but the father is not part of any liberation. The final portrait of this somewhat quixotic and monomaniacal, though gentle and well-meaning man and his "sorrowless gardening" tells us that he has always been somewhat out of touch, a marginal figure, irrelevant and ineffective, one living in a private faith (p. 156).

The mother too, though loved and needed, and patient and loving, emerges pale and colorless, dependent and insignificant. In her constitution there are streaks of silliness, pettiness, narcissism, and moral smallness. She tends to cry and complain in situations where the grandmother curses and prophesizes. She does not know how to cast spells; she too is powerless.

The matriarchal voice and being, the other, that the small female protagonist has to contend with is the grandmother, the one who sits at the head of table, her face looking out of her scarf as out of a church window (p. 16), the one to whom everything belongs, including the food that they all eat, a luminous, archetypal figure, a kind of Moses or Niobe, for the child fantasizes that she has turned to stone and for restoring her to life, she is given honey (p. 96-7).

She is the only one who truly arouses the child's imagination — in the way that the forest and language also do — and thus ultimately in the text, language, the forest, and the spirit of the grandmother fuse. Although she never learned German

and knows only eight words of Russian, she is the child's access to other distant times and values: the first world war and 1905, the year of her communion when she saw the devil (a figure in whom she tends consequently to believe more than in Christ who has not appeared to her), and more distantly the time of the czars and of slavery. She is the one from whom the child learns to cast spells, to curse, and to think in the apocalyptic mode. She believes or fears historical cycles and repetition, above all that of hunger. The memory of hunger is one of her constant themes; and bitter and eloquent is her lament when the very bread baked on New Year's Day from rotten flour tastes no better than "cow dung" (p. 152). She has a reverence for all life, plant and animal, and even prays for the heifer when it is slaughtered (p. 123). She is the "toil and suffering," words the child wishes to disregard, that are part of the old farm and village culture of which the grandmother is the representative. The grandmother's death (in 1978) means that no one any longer warns her about the end of the world: she can lie, cut pictures out of books, use a brand new pillow case as a rag, throw away food, rip off a friend, strike a dumb animal with a stick, scoff at others, and give stones instead of bread (p. 16).

The grandmother's values are physical work, physical endurance, and self-reliance. When the old farm houses are to be literally uprooted and transported to the collectives, she seeks the help that she says she would like, from the Bible, but then, she gets her scythe, and stands defiantly in the doorway, "like an old soldier", daring anyone to move her house (p. 166-7), an old Estonian warrior woman, grand embodiment of the nineteenth century definition of the body as productive labor and military force, as solid object in a world of objects and site of the ultimate assent or dissent to social-political reality.

The grandmother is the representative of a yet body-centered world, which doesn't comprehend that the link between the body and reality, which is more primal and older than democracy, has been loosened, perhaps even broken, made obsolete by a bureaucratic information-culture coming to dominance via technological communication and technological strength, via tractors and the radio, the voice that coerces by stereotypical values and images, images such as those the child also sees in the journal, "Estonian Woman," of happy woman in pants, carrying shovels, going to work smiling versus the meek, unhappy woman of the past who sat in furs at their coffee klatches.

By technology — automation, bureaucratic formalization, and the technologized voice, the radio — the new culture violates old ideas of personal, direct dialogic communication, (as evidenced in the scene between the grandmother and the two women of her mother's generation who come to take inventory of her possessions) and old ideas of the importance of physical strength and skill, and the laboring self. The bodily self, both as worker and as soldier, becomes obsolete and together with that certain historical notions and beliefs in the possibility of bodily rebellion and resistance also die. A nuclear war, as Elaine Scarry has pointed out, needs neither soldiers nor an army to occur, for it would be an unmanned exchange of weapons, which requires no portion of a population's assent or participation to begin.[16](#)

The new social order and culture with its stern and breezy stereotypes of new levels of achievement and happiness,, contradict the darker and more negative psychological reality of her grandmother, which is the consequence of her historical experience. The grandmother's concern with hunger and death and worry and suffering casts a shadow on her world which the child would like to dispel, but which the child brushes aside more easily than the adult writer can. The new social order and culture has fundamentally demoted the old farm and village culture and class to second class status, something brought home to the child when she is rudely told in the city that notebooks are not sold to farm children (p. 39), and this awareness makes the child wish that she had another, more important mother, one who was at the least secretary of a village board or council (p. 138). She wishes naturally to be part of something new, different, and more hopeful, which is why she prefers to be photographed with the bicycle pump rather than her grandmother's flowers, although she had no bicycle (p. 52).

The child is naturally on the side of the new, the future, the life force in general. It craves adventure, admires authority, and resists being pulled into the past. The child changes angel wings to airplane wings, modernizing her grandmother's Bible and reality, and she writes figuratively over her head the radio's admonition: "now we can no longer proceed in the old way" (p. 161). Pluralistic moral and ideological conceptions are too complex for her mind, and she only as yet dimly senses the distinctions between the merely authoritarian and the authentic, or the authentically novel and the merely stereotypical. On the other hand, because the child is not yet ideologically fastened to any set of belief, but curious and flexible, she is an ideal medium for the representation of a highly complex historical situation. She has besides a beautiful kind of passive autonomy, that is, a functionless and meaningless autonomy, but one undocctrinated and free. Thus when she plays that the farmhouses are being moved, an idea she finds exciting, she assumes both roles, that of the collective leaders, who organize the moving, and her own defiant grandmother, shouting, "cut off my head! I fear no one" (p. 167, 181).

The grandmother talks to the chickens (p. 13), the boiling potatoes (p. 41), the child, the madman, and the world at large, because all is ensouled. Her verblativity puts the child's parents in the shade. If languages too have an unconscious, as Kristeva once suggested,[17](#) then her speech is the unconscious of Estonian, the oracular and untranslatable.

With her we come upon expressions for which there are approximations but no equivalences. She swears and curses and scolds and prophesizes. Our last image of her is as a sorceress or archetypal witch, binding evil with her spells. Her language is fundamentally a mixture of incantation and curse, a kind of desperate, angry, revengeful, often graphically bloody and physical language, one that seeks to fix and to fasten, to immobilize and stabilize, that is, to have power over an uncontrollable world, probably because it was and is the very language of the powerless. It is a language with a range of expressions that whip, and lash, and punish, and cut, perhaps in order to do verbally what couldn't be done in reality. Its

roots go back to a slave culture. Thus the child hears, inmixed in the grandmother's speech, old and bloody maledictions, and on the edge of the bed, she sees dead slaves, who nod their heads and move their feet to the beat of her grandmother's imprecations (p. 153).

Ultimately the grandmother's voice becomes one with Estonian myth and the darkness and sounds of the indomitable, primeval, forest landscape itself (p. 182). The child wants to distance herself from the shadow that is her grandmother, but already the child sounds most like her grandmother and talks as much and as forcefully as the latter. She can curse and boss, and she talks as readily to herself and things as to people. Thus in the spring she bends down and speaks to the snow flowers, while stroking their heads as if they were dogs (p. 179), just as her grandmother might, and she is bewitched by spell casting, the art her mother does not know (p. 140).

She is full of ambivalence towards her grandmother, angry and capable of being ashamed of her, and eager to change her (p. 13). She wants praise from her that she does not get (p. 96) and she puts sweet words in her mouth that she doesn't hear (p. 185). Yet the child dearly loves her because the child sees that the self needs words, and although her grandmother's may not be her dream language, it is what she gets and inherits or it is what bewitches her more than any other voice, more than the disembodied voice of the radio.

In her interview, Luik was asked: what is home? She answered that it is the all too familiar from which we want to escape. But she added: home is love.¹⁸ Similarly one's linguistic home may be that which is all too familiar, which one wishes to escape, yet inexorably, it is also the very material, vocabulary, and rhythm one most deeply loves.

1 Viivi Luik, *Se/elses Rahukevad* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1985). All future references in the text are to this edition.

The novel, which Toomas lives in is in the process of translating into English, covers the time span from the fall of 1950 to the early spring of 1951. The title is ironic, since seven years have indeed passed since the end of World War II, but almost nothing that characterizes peace or should — plenty, a sense of security, happiness, and freedom from worry — has as yet arrived in the farm community described in this novel.

2 Michael Holquist, "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Trans-Linguistics", *Critical Inquiry* (December 1983), p. 307.

3 See especially "From One Identity To Another", in *Desire in Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 133, 136.

4 Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 11, 12.

5 See Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, Book I, lines 425-463.

6 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 137, 140, 143.

7 Viivi Luik, "Vastused 'Loomingu' Kusimustele," *Looming*, 2 (1983), pp. 256-257.

8 Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *New French Feminism*, Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 245-264.

9 Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 13.

10 Julia Kristeva, "The Speaking Subject", in Marshal Blonsky, ed., *On Sign* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) pp. 215, 214.

11 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 178.

12 James M. Edie, "Foreword", in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. xiv.

13 Milan Kundera, "Afterword: A Talk with the Author by Philip Roth" in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 237.

14 Bakhtin, quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) p. 52.

15 See the following reviews of Seitsmes *Rahukevad*: Mali Unt, "Ajast Ja Tudrukust," in *Keel ja Kirjandus* (no. 10, 1985), pp. 629-632. Joel Sang, "Tulevik Eest-ja Tagantvaates," in *Looming* (7, 1985), pp. 985-6. Rein Veideman, "Neljakumnendal Rahukevadel Seitsmendast," in *Sirp ja Vasar* (17, 1985). Olo Tonts, "Inimesed Ajas ja Aeg Inimestes" in *Rahva Haal* (November 3, 1985).

16 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 154-157.

17 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 241.

18 Luik, "Vastused 'Loomingu' KOsimustele," p. 258-9.