

IN MARSEILLE
by Thorvaldur S. Helgason

In Marseille the air is warm, but the wind is cool. It is September and summer is close to an end. In my country it is already autumn. Harsh winds have no doubt begun to blow dust and leaves through open windows. But that is an ocean away and here there are still warm and quiet moments in the sun. I walk through streets brimming with unfamiliar faces, trying my best to make an impression. At the bar I break the ice with mundane questions, trying to gain a foothold of connection.

„When is the bar closing?“

„Is it usually so crowded?“

I end up with a group of young hipsters, they look my age and welcome me in their conversation. I could have met them in Copenhagen, Reykjavík, Berlin or Tallinn. After a few minutes I try to recall their names but I can't seem to distinguish their faces apart. Then I realise that they all have my own face.

I walk out questioning my level of sobriety but everywhere I turn I see myself. I go back home with the aim of sleeping it off but can't fall asleep.

I am alone in a foreign city but I see my face in everyone I meet.

Here I am a 25 year old Icelandic boy sitting in front of my computer drinking beer.

Next door I am a 62 year old French woman making bacalao salad for my husband.

Over in Cours Julien I am an 80 year old Jazzman assembling my saxophone for one last gig.

In L'Estaque I am a 6 year old girl tugging at my red ponytails, waiting for my dad to finish his coffee and take me home.

In Niolon I am a 55 year old Englishman quietly patching up my sailboat for the morning's expedition.

In Lycée Saint-Exupéry I am a 16 year old Tunisian boy trying to get the attention of the girl I have a crush on.

I am all these people and they are me.

But yet I am also no one.

And right now that is plenty.

(Boulevard Henri Barnier, September 12th 2017)