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Dedicated to Mary

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dominique Christopher Albinski was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1975. He was the son of Polish immigrant parents, Wojciech Wacław Albinski, a land surveyor, and writer, and Wanda Helena Albinski, who was a Charity Foundation Worker and chemist. He started sculpting as a young boy, at the Art classes of Mercia Desmond. From the start, his expressive work, reflected the African themes; that would inspire him, his whole life. At high school, he developed an interest in literature, and the classics. He devoured books in his free time. He started to write, and was Editor of the school creative writing magazine, 'The Scribbler'. After finishing St John's College, he left for Paris, where he studied Political Science, and later Literature, at the Sorbonne. In Warsaw, he studied sculpture, at the Academy of Fine Arts. He was Professor of English, at the "Ecole Française d'Attache's de Presse" in Paris. His sculptural debut began, in Normandy, France, and at the Canadian, and South African Embassies, in Warsaw. Later, he exhibited in the Trocadero Centre in Paris, and in Le Mans, Tours, La Rochelle, and Bordeaux, in France. He had an exhibition on Mandela Square in 2004, in Sandton, South Africa. After that, he multiplied his exhibits internationally: in France, Poland, South Africa, and the USA. His most recent shows were in: the Amsterdam Whitney Gallery, and the Grimandi Galleries, in New York, at the Royal

Castle in Warsaw, and at SculptX in Johannesburg. Dominic's sculpture "Madness" was presented, in Italy, at the Biennale in Florence, in October 2023. He received many international awards, including: the ATIM top 60 Award, Artya Award, and Artist of the Decade Award, by Art Tour International Magazine in New York in 2019 /2020; as well as Artist of the Future Award by Art Curator Magazine. Dominic's first autobiographical novel "Stories my Father Never Told Me" Volume 1 was published by Editions St Honore, in 2021, in France. It retraces Dominic's journey as an artist, in Europe, Africa, and America. It is a tale of crime, passion, love and betrayal. Volume 2 is the sequel, to the first book, and combines romance, crime, suspense, and art, in a hypnotizing mixture.

INTRODUCTION VOL.1

Characterizing the first part of Dominic Albinski's short stories, entitled "Stories my father never told me", it should be emphasized that this is the literary debut of the artist, so far known for another field of art – sculpture. It is certainly worth pointing out the engaging action and surprising punchlines. This is the case, for example, in the subversive novella "The bust" – here the sculptor Conrad meets with Lucy for sessions and meticulously prepares a bust of the girl. A mistake made when storing a practically finished work leads to the cracking of the material and the destruction of the creator's efforts. The thing is that the bust was supposed to go to auction, and there is no time to start again. Conrad decides to choose a random sculpture from his studio and put it up for auction. What effect will it have on the recipients? Albinski asks questions about conventions in art, the debatability of assessments and the value of individual works.

The short story "The Painter and the Elephant" proves the author's literary skill in grading emotions and tension. We move from the idyllic scenery of a painter working on a canvas in the open air to a clash with the wildness of African animals, to find ourselves again in a peaceful atmosphere that leads to a surprising punchline. Only a bloody canvas will be a proof of the tragedy that took place in the national park. In this story, Dominic Albinski shows his

abilities in building the atmosphere of the story, which magnetizes the reader while reading.

A characteristic feature of a large part of the stories is also the focus on relationships, especially between women and men. There is a lot of truth in the dialogues and we feel that these exchanges were made in the real world, perhaps overheard by the author, or perhaps known from personal experience. Like the confession of Joe, the heroine of the story "The Rose", a girl Conrad met at the Morgan's Irish Pub: "I love cooking, but there must be someone for whom it is worth doing. I don't enjoy cooking for myself." How many guys have heard such a statement? However unfeminist or politically incorrect it would be today. These feelings and relationships born in Albinski's novels are full of romanticism and freshness, although sometimes they lead to disappointment and despondent feelings. Rejected by her chosen one, Magda from the story "Seduction" will tell her lover seemingly with understanding, but in a way reproachfully: "It was only because of sex anyway."

It is not surprising that the action of a large part of Dominic Albinski's stories takes place in the environment of artists, sculptors, at the Academy of Fine Arts, in relations with art collectors. You can clearly feel that this world is close and recognizable to the author. The short story "The Professor" proves that the relationship between masters and adepts of art can be hurtful for the latter and full of disappointment. The ironic punchline of this story shows one of the professors who, even in Rubens, finds only "fragments of works that carry some hope". We can only sense that Dominic Albinski himself as a sculptor experienced harsh and perhaps cruel evaluations and behaviors from the professors who trained him.

Albinski also demonstrates knowledge of the bitter economic and social results of the political transformation initiated after

1989. A perfect example of this is the short story “Foundry”. German investors, through their capital, are to lead the eponymous Polish foundry to flourish, and to enable artists to develop for a bearable price. After all, a cast of a several-kilogram bronze sculpture is often a cost that exceeds the budgets of novice sculptors. But as is often the case in the history of the pathology of transformation after the communist period, instead of flourishing, the foundry is driven to bankruptcy, and its owner meets the sculptor Conrad (is this the writer’s alter ego? We are left with the realm of conjecture) on a bus heading to France. Except that the former director of the foundry is going to France to... take up work as a builder on a construction site. And this is not an abstract story at all. Many identical stories can be told by employees of bankrupt state farms or industrial plants led – often deliberately by foreign capital – to bankruptcy. Why compete on the European, supposedly free market, if a competitor can be destroyed first.

For the European reader, a great value of Dominic Albinski’s literature will be the presentation of the world of South Africa, in which the action of some of the stories takes place. It is far from stereotypical images. It is easy to harm the spirit of guilty autochthons to God with such prejudices. Like in the story “Consolation”. The master of the house orders the immediate dismissal of the servant – devoted to the family and excellent cooks – when he discovers that 1000 rand has disappeared. After returning from a short vacation, the family finds the house ransacked and the dog poisoned, but the policeman easily finds the missing money. With such stories, Albinski wants to tell us – do not judge the inhabitants of the Dark Continent hastily, do not repeat the mantra about “wild Africa”, here the vast majority of people feel the same way as you do – they experience love, want security for their families, work hard to support them.

However, South Africa is still marked by the period of apartheid and there are acts of brutal revenge, also politically motivated. This problem is shown in the story “The Demons”. The main character organizes a TV interview with a local politician Mangomani. During the recording, he reveals that he was kidnapped by the South African Defence Forces in the past – he was tortured to reveal his connections. After signing an agreement with Mandela, he was released. However, the revenge of the titular demons catches up with Mangomani, just when the press materials are made public.

Albinski proves that cruelty, deceit, and the desire for revenge have not been attributed to the inhabitants of the Dark Continent, and the Europeans are free from them. In the short story “Wine Farm”, a professor of anthropology at the University of London, looking for a soothing place on earth to move there in retirement, falls victim to a cunning acquaintance Paul – also citizen of Great Britain.

In the short story “The Long Road Home”, Albinski signals another problem – the clash of parents educated in Europe (even if they lived in South Africa for up to 40 years), sending their children to European universities, with the aspirations of young, often rebellious people. And in a way, it poses the question: doesn’t everyone have the right to go their own way, even if it is bumpy, and live at such a latitude under which they feel that this is their place on earth? Or maybe it is better to follow the voice of parents’ experience, after all, wisdom and proper discernment sometimes come quite late?

Reading “Stories my father never told me” we know that countries such as France, Poland, South Africa, are well known to the author. In these places he grew up, educated, worked, built his first relationships. This is an additional advantage – we are sure that Dominic Albinski is based on his own experiences and

conversations, and does not create an imaginary world. This – apart from the attractive literary language – is an additional advantage of the stories. After finishing the book, you want to get on the next plane to see the suburbs of Johannesburg, feel the breeze of Cape Town, see wild animals in one of the national parks and – think about it: maybe this is where the story told by Dominic Albinski took place. One of those he had not heard from his father.

Christopher Swiatek, 2024
Polish Journalist, Radio and TV presenter
Editor of Solidarity Weekly

**“WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU TAKE
YOURSELF WITH YOU.”
NEIL GAIMAN , THE GRAVEYARD BOOK**

Dominik Albiński's sculptures are figurative, based on the observation of nature, and its processing. Made in various techniques - bronze, ceramics, plaster, often painted, patinated, and glazed - they depict people, and animals. The latter, occupy a large part of his oeuvre. Although, sometimes imprecise in detail, they are extremely suggestive in expressing movement, and energy. Instead of focusing on precise anatomy, Albiński emphasizes dynamics, and expression, capturing fleeting moments, that make his animals seem almost alive – frozen in motion, jumping, or captured at rest. Like photography, they try to capture, and freeze the uniqueness of the moment, and this is the main theme of Dominik Albiński's works. Light plays an important role here – reflecting off rough surfaces, it enhances the impression of changeability, and dynamics. Albiński does not strive for literal reproduction, but tries to capture the emotions, temperament, and character of animals, which in his works seem to be aware of their strength, and presence. This approach is close to impressionism, where capturing emotions, and impressions, is more important than the most perfect copy of physical, properties. Albiński, through his works, freezes a moment in time, making the animals seem ready to move on, as if

captured in a split second of their natural cycle. Each animal in his sculptures, although, it may be part of a larger series, retains its unique individuality. Moreover, his works are not limited to the physical representation of animals – through characteristic postures, and expression, he gives them an almost metaphysical dimension, suggesting that they are not only part of nature, but also have an inner spiritual strength, and individuality.

A separate category, are sculptures dedicated to the female nude. In various scales, from life-size, to intimate sketches of several dozen centimetres, in bronze, or ceramics. Their common feature, is a special kind of sensuality. Unlike, in the case of representations of animals, these works do not refer to the uniqueness of a single model, but to the phenomenon of “femininity”, as the author feels, and perceives it. Strong, austere, and sensual, forms, upon closer inspection, reveal to us the meticulousness of touch, that contributed to their creation. This procedure irritates our sensuality, enhances the play of emotions, and subtle eroticism. The originality of the form, its calmness, mystery, and sensuality, have something close to Modigliani's painting. Similarly to him, the aim is not only to capture the corporeality of the model, but also the mystery hidden within her. As if the artist wanted to capture, not only the body, but also the soul of the model. This combination of lyrical, sensuality, and mystery, makes the sculptures moving, intriguing, and provocative. Contact with the work of Dominik Albiński, is not only an aesthetic experience, but also a chance for deep reflection on authenticity, individualism, and the need to create. His works have a mysterious power, to make the recipient ask themselves questions, about what it is to "be yourself", and how to show, and maintain this value.

Roman Pietrzak, 2024

Professor of sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw

PART 1

THE ONE LOVE

MORGAN'S IRISH PUB

Conrad woke up in his room. He gazed around, through the window, and reached for a cigarette. Outside, it was dark, and slush, lay on the pavement, from the snow, that had thawed. Two ominous, black, crows, stood perched, on a rugged, old, trunk; that had been beaten, grey, by the elements.

“You’re waiting for me to fall out the window, so you can peck my bones dry.”

The bird chirped, and shifted its legs on the branch, where it was resting, uneasily.

“Well, you haven’t got me, yet.”

Conrad made a concerted effort to get out of bed. On the one hand, he would be able to boil some water, to make some coffee. But on the other hand, what was the point? He had nowhere to go, no one was waiting for him, anywhere, except those two, grey, birds, peering at him, through the grey, morning, gloom.

He decided to stay in bed, and finish his cigarette. He stared at the ceiling, where the paint was peeling slightly. He placed a few of his sculptures on a shelf, while the others lay scattered on the floor, around the room. On the wall, a faded picture of Pope John Paul 2 stared, at him blankly, from behind the frame. The smoke drifted up, towards the ceiling, and suffused the room, with its dim odor. *Time to get up!* he thought to himself, as the cigarette got smaller. He tossed the butt into a mug, with some leftover coffee. The cigarette made a sizzling noise, as it slowly

extinguished itself. No, he changed his mind, better light another one. What time was it? 9 am. Why was it always so damn dark in this God-forsaken country? Okay, he would go relieve himself, and then make a cup of coffee. And then? What then?

The future would take care of itself later. The main thing was to get out of bed, and get dressed. Then, he would get some coffee. And maybe, he would go back to sleep. He got out of bed, sweeping the sheets off his body, which fell, collapsing into a lump, on the floor.

Okay, now the bathroom, and then the coffee. Or maybe, he could switch the water on to boil, go to the bathroom, and by the time he finished, the water would be ready. That was a good idea. He turned on the tap to pour some water into the kettle. A dark, brown, liquid came out of the tap. *Damn I'm not going to drink that. Oh, now it's getting better.* After a few minutes, the running water grew clearer. He sighed with relief, and turned the kettle on.

Then he went to the bathroom. He looked at the phone, *What are you there for? I haven't heard you ring, for the last three months.* The phone remained stubbornly, silent. What could he do that day? Well, he could get dressed, and go for a walk in the park. But the weather was so awful that he couldn't brave that!

Conrad walked down Nowy Swiat; the largest street to be rebuilt after the war. The houses give you a particular feeling of emptiness, and space, as you penetrate down the street, and you pass the statue of Copernicus on Krakowskie Przedmiescie. Then, you take the street leading down towards the river, and you pass a few large, more modern, buildings, built in Communist times, and now repainted and renovated, and still, you head down towards the Vistula, the river that divides Warsaw in two – the left bank from the right bank –, you come across a small elegant palace perched upon the hillside, the Chopin Palace. Just underneath the palace, in the basement, surrounded by irregular,

red, brick, on which moss is growing, is a heavy, black, doorway, with a large, black, sign, and a lantern. The sign reads in bold, gold, lettering “Morgan’s Irish Pub”. If you are in an adventurous mood, and feel like a few beers, you grab the heavy, door handle, rubbed clean, of the black paint, through which the brass shines, push open, the heavily, ornamented, door, and enter.

This is what Conrad did, on one cold night in October. The pub was filled with smoke, and people, and Conrad felt a bit claustrophobic.

“Who wants a Vodka?”

“Thanks” Conrad said taking the tumbler from Mitch, a big American.

“Let’s down them”

“ONE, TWO, THREE”

Conrad grimaced, as he felt the clear, cold, liquid, scorch his stomach.

“Nothing like vodka,” Mitch roared

“Yea nothing like vodka,” echoed Conrad.

“So are you going to drink tonight?”

“Yes let’s, you first.”

“Go on, I’ll join you later on the dance floor.”

“OK, you coming?”

“Yea, suppose so”

“D’ you know any girls around here, Mitch?”

“No, I don’t. But the French guy knows a few.”

“We’ll go talk to some girls later.”

“I’m going back to the bar.”

“OK, I’ll join you just now.”

“What’s the matter? Can’t you find anyone to dance with?”

“Mitch says that you know some girls? Don’t you?”

“Yea, a few. Come, I’ll introduce you.”

"Hey, Mitch, I haven't seen you in a while. Where have you been?"

"Hi, this is my friend Conrad."

"Pleased to meet you, Conrad. My name's Cindy."

"So where do you know Mitch from?" asked Conrad.

"We used to work together."

"Excuse me a minute, I've got to talk to Mitch for a moment."

"Hey Mitch, she's amazing!"

"That pretty, hey?"

"She's one of the best-looking girls I've ever seen!"

"Well, go talk to her."

"I... I don't know?"

"Just, go, and talk to her."

"Do you think that if I talk to her...?"

"Well, if you don't, you won't know, will you?"

"Yea, I suppose, you're right."

"Hi, Cindy"

"Nice music here. Don't you think?"

"Yea, it's OK."

"So Cindy, where do you know Mitch from?"

"I work at the same place, with him."

"Geel!"

"Do you like him?"

"I suppose so, I haven't really thought about it!"

"Well, I'd better be getting back to Mitch now."

"OK, nice talking to you."

"Yea, nice talking to you too."

"So what do you think?"

"What do I think?"

"Not bad, hey?"

"Not bad, at all."

"Did you talk to her?"

“Yes, but we ran out of conversation.”

“That’s a pity!”

“Here’s another vodka.”

“Nothing like Vodka, hey?”

“Don’t you know, it’s impolite to speak to strangers?” Mitch, addressed Cindy, letting out that same loaded, vital, guffaw. He changed the subject, “Let’s order another one”, he suggested, looking down at his empty, beer glass.

“Oh, Mitch, that’s your fifth!” squealed Cindy.

“Do you guys want something to drink?” he asked, looking at us, ignoring Cindy.

“No thanks, not for me”, answered Conrad.

“I’m fine, too”, Cindy replied, when he turned his fierce gaze on her.

“Don’t tell me that you guys aren’t drinking,” he protested.

“Not everybody is an alcoholic like you Mitch”, Cindy chided.

“Oh, I’ll have a vodka with you,” Conrad after some deliberation relented.

“I’ll have one too.”

This is how we struck up a friendship, with Mitch. From his manner, it was impossible to deduce that Mitch had had a few drinks. As Conrad got to know him better, he realized, that vast quantities of alcohol had very little effect on him. In his rough, open manner, he ordered a toasted sandwich, from a waitress with an ample bosom, and heavy tray of beers, who had appeared at our table. Seeing a friend at the other side of the dungeon, (tonight we were seated in the last dungeon, of the bar, made up of three low, vaulted, rooms), he called over to him.

“This is Conrad,” he introduced us to the short, middle-aged bar owner with shinning eyes, a face, wrinkled, like a dried mushroom, with graying hair, that had come over to where we were sitting.

“Wimmeen, ‘we must find some wimmeen’ tonight.”

“Let’s drink to that”, the bar owner retorted, and ordered a round of vodkas.

“Not for me,” Conrad objected.

“Why aren’t you drinking tonight?” Mitch asked Conrad.

“Yes common!” chided Cindy.

“Well, okay”, Conrad conceded, weighing up the clear liquid, that had been deposited in front of them, by the sober-faced waitress.

“Jees’ the women are cute here. Aren’t they?” argued Mitch, looking in the direction of the dance floor.

“Could you arrange a girl for me?” Mitch winked at Conrad.

“What, tonight?”

“Yes, now.”

“I know where we can go. C’mon, finish your drink!”

Mitch downed the rest of his vodka, while Conrad emptied what was left of his drink, quietly on the floor. They took their jackets from the cloakroom, and hurried outside the club. It had been raining outside. As they left their premises, the street glistened after the heavy deluge. The music from the club, followed them outside, onto the street. Conrad hailed a taxi. Mitch was excited, and rubbed his hands together. Conrad gave the driver precise instructions. The driver drove fast.

“We’re not in Kyalami!” shouted Conrad, trying to be heard above the sound of the engine.

The driver ignored him. He told the taxi driver to stop. They halted near the entrance to what looked like a disused apartment block. They paid the taxi driver. Conrad was left with Mitch, at the bottom of the building. Mitch mounted one of the curving staircases. He came back with a girl, in her twenties, in a denim jacket, and light red dress.

Cindy and I waited at the bottom of the stairwell. A black cat crossed the empty street, and disappeared into one of the crevices of the courtyard. We waited for what must have been half an hour. Mitch came back, beaming. He chafed his hands together, and he phoned for a taxi to take us back to his place.

“By the way, how are you getting home?”

Conrad shrugged his shoulders.

“I can give you a lift.”

“Okay.”

Conrad started to veer in the direction of the corner, where the taxi was parked. They got into the small convertible. Conrad lay down on the back seat, while the taxi driver took the steering wheel. Cindy sat down next to him, in the front. As the car moved off with a jolt, Conrad felt his stomach churn.

“Nothing like vodka,” he murmured.

“We’re going past the ‘Palace of Culture’, the building that Stalin built, as a gift to the Polish nation in 1955,” Mitch explained, for general information.

Conrad was swooning in the back of the car. He tried to keep himself steady. His head was spinning. He tried to hold back the vomit, that was welling up in his stomach.

“We can drop you off here, if you like?”

“What?”

“We can drop you off here, if you like?” Mitch did not seem like someone who enjoyed repeating himself.

“Yes. Okay.”

Conrad got out of the car in front of the huge edifice. The “Palace of Culture” with its heavy, concrete, raw, cement, facades, looked like a construction out of Hollywood set. A single spire, rose out, above the bastions. The pinnacle was covered in cloud. Conrad staggered from the alcohol. The car left, and Conrad started to look for a taxi to take him home. But, the

weight of the alcohol, was proving too much for him. He started to sway gently, from side to side. Finally, he fell to the ground. He felt a pain in his back. He stayed on the asphalt, for a while. What seemed like five minutes, had actually been an hour. He got up again, and started to limp, looking for somewhere where he could rest, until the effect of the alcohol wore off slightly.

Seeing a bench a few meters away, Conrad slowly made his way over, dropped down, and fell into a deep slumber. His sleep was interrupted by the sound of a car engine cut, a dozen meters away. Conrad turned his head to look. It was a blue car. Two men got out of the van. *Good, a taxi* thought Conrad. He rolled over on his bench, so as to be able to get closer to the vehicle.

He got up, and stood on his two feet. Then, he fell down, on the dull concrete pavement again. A figure approached. *Good* thought Conrad, *the taxi driver is coming to help me.* Then, another figure appeared. The men walked over to Conrad briskly, and took him firmly under their arms. They dragged him over to the car, seating themselves on either side of him, in the back seat. There was something about the men, that made them seem familiar, something about the way they were dressed. Then Conrad realized-They were policemen.

“Are you the cops?” Conrad inquired tentatively, in a hardly audible whisper.

The men did not answer.

“Are you going to take me home?” Conrad stuttered.

“Yes, Yes, we’re going to take you home. That’s just what we’re going to do. We’re going to tuck you into bed.”

“Good, I won’t have to pay for a taxi – you’ll take me home for free.”

They drove on, and on, and Conrad relapsed into a gentle slumber.

When Conrad regained consciousness, he was sitting slouched, on a bench, in an office. There was a calendar, with a picture of a bare-breasted woman, on the wall. A man was emptying Conrad's pockets.

"What's your name?" the woman who was seated behind a counter, staring intently, demanded.

She held a pencil in her hand, and was absentmindedly filling information into a notebook.

"Conrad W."

"Address?"

"Muranowska 1."

"Occupation?"

"Artist..."

"What?"

"Well, in fact, I'm not really a sculptor yet....."

The next morning, Conrad awoke in a large white room. Men were sleeping, around him, on beds. Some in white apparel were walking around the room. As they turned around, he could see their bare backs. Conrad was dressed in a white pyjama, and was lying on a mattress. His bunk was facing the window. He looked outside through the barred windows, to where the sun was shining. A big stout man was walking around the room. He had a big scab on his cheek, and a fresh red scar ran down his neck. He had a flat, squashed, nose. Conrad looked at these people in despair. At first, he didn't know where he was? Then, the events of the previous night came back to him, slowly.

"How long are we confined here for?" Conrad asked the big scarfaced man who scratched his buttocks, as they protruded from the apron.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"A few days, perhaps!"