

Buchvorstellung: „In the Air“ von Ariel Wagner-Parker

## Mit englischem Humor auf Wolke 7



Fotos: Alain Rischard

Vertraute Zweisamkeit: Guy Wagner und Ariel Wagner-Parker lesen aus „In the Air“

### Janina Strötgen

Sie hätte sich keinen schöneren Geburtstag vorstellen können als ihren 60. am vergangenen Montag. Dann nämlich konnte Ariel Wagner-Parker ihr frisch gedrucktes Buch in der Hand halten und gleich ihren Freunden und Bekannten daraus vorlesen.

„Ich hätte mich niemals getraut, vorzuschlagen, meine Texte als Buch herauszubringen“, meinte Ariel Wagner-Parker in ihrer Begrüßungsrede am vergangenen

Montagabend im Escher Theaterzelt. Doch zum Glück war da Guy Wagner, ihr Ehemann, der, wenn er eine Idee hat, sie auch umsetzt. Und so konnte Ariel nun voller Stolz ihr himmelblaues Buch „In the Air“ in Empfang nehmen – „das schönste Geburtstagsgeschenk“, das es gibt.

Ariel Wagner-Parker wurde am 8. Februar 1950 in London geboren. Nach ihren Studien der Literatur und der Rechtswissenschaften in Oxford und London kam sie im März 1979 nach Luxemburg, um ihren neuen Job in der Personalabteilung beim Europä-

schen Gerichtshof anzutreten. Doch neben ihrer Arbeit für Europa fand Ariel immer auch Zeit zum Schreiben. Zum Glück, denn vor allem in ihren Texten, in denen sie sich mit Luxemburg auseinandersetzt, wird der Leser Zeuge einer Beobachtungsgabe, die nicht nur präzise und tiefgreifend, sondern vor allem auch humorvoll ist. Ob von ihren ersten Bekanntschaften an der Bushaltestelle im Frühjahr 1979 oder von dem langen Weg zur Luxemburger Staatsbürgerschaft 30 Jahre später – wenn Ariel erzählt, dann immer mit Details, die den

Punkt treffen, mit in Witz gekleideten Wahrheiten.

Eine kleine Kostprobe aus dem Buch gaben Guy und Ariel, als sie die Lesung am Montagabend mit dem Text „Home from Home“ eröffneten, ein autobiografischer Text in zwei Sprachen, gemeinsam geschrieben von Ariel und Guy. Der Text, der 2007 den dritten Preis *ex aequo* des nationalen Literaturwettbewerbs gewann, beschreibt die Suche nach einer Heimat außerhalb des Heimatlandes. Auch der Intendant des Escher Theaters, Charles Muller, ließ es sich nicht nehmen, einige Texte aus dem Buch zu lesen. Cary Greisch an der Gitarre sorgte mit Stücken von Heitor Villa-Lobos für die musikalische Begleitung.

smile and seem genuinely pleased. I'm not sure I understand why they do, but that really is welcoming“, lauten die letzten Worte ihres Textes „How to become a Luxembourger“.



„In the Air“  
**Ariel Wagner-Parker**  
Le Phare-kulturissimo 2010  
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### „We“ instead of „you“

Dass Ariel Wagner-Parker mittlerweile voll und ganz in Luxemburg angekommen ist, bezeugte nicht nur Danièle Fonck, Chefredakteurin des Tageblatt und stellvertretende Direktorin von Editpress, als sie die Autorin als Luxemburgerin willkommen hieß und als „femme engagée d'une grande générosité“ beschrieb, sondern auch Ariel selbst findet die passenden Worte: „Do I feel a greater sense of belonging since becoming a Lëtzebuurger? I didn't think it would make any difference - though I do sometimes enjoy saying „we“ instead of „you“. Yet Lëtzebuergers I've told

Interview with the author Ariel Wagner-Parker

## A book to dip into

Ariel Wagner-Parker is not only a writer having a new book out, but also, as many of our readers will know, a colleague contributing regularly to our monthly cultural magazine „kulturissimo“. We talked to Ariel about writing and living in Luxembourg as a native English speaker.

**Tageblatt:** You have a rather critical and distant view on Luxembourg. What are, in your opinion, the specifics and peculiarities of this country?

Ariel Wagner-Parker: „I like Luxembourg for not throwing its weight around on the world stage, for not making people in other countries suffer – unlike my country of origin! – and for its commitment to humanitarian projects. As individuals, I have found Luxembourgers to be – though I really don't like generalizing – straightforward, unaffected, generally tolerant and pleasantly stubborn. I sometimes wish they had a little more curiosity towards other people and were more open to new ideas. Being a small country, people tend to know each other, which makes many things easier and more human – but can also lead to a lack of objectivity and professionalism in some areas of public life.“

**„T“:** When did you start writing?

A.W.P.: „I've always been fascinated with language and have

written stuff ever since I was a young child, starting with a little newspaper for my parents. I've written all kinds of texts, several plays, stories – some finished, some not –, the beginnings of several novels, including an excruciating fantasy based on the Norse legends, journals, poems and satires. More recently, I've been writing stories, impressions and poetic texts, but never with any thought (or hope) of publishing them – until now! I wrote pieces for the Sociocultural Radio 100,7's English programme 'In Luxembourg', but my first texts to be actually published appeared in Tageblatt in the 80s. When 'kulturissimo' restarted as a monthly in October 2001, I began to write a monthly column in English, 'In the Air' – which is a very good exercise in self-discipline. And the other writing continues ...“

**„T“:** Where does the name 'In the Air' come from?

A.W.P.: The book takes its name from my 'kulturissimo' column, a selection of which forms its fourth part. 'In the Air' is a near translation of 'L'air du temps', or 'C'est dans l'air'. My column is very varied in form – there are satires, fantasies, 'thought' pieces, stories from my own life, anecdotes told by friends, feminist rants, reviews and so on – but they are in general an attempt to comment or reflect on contemporary events and issues – what the dreaded Margaret Thatcher termed our 'funny old world'.“

**„T“:** Your book is a collection of different kinds of texts. According to which criteria did you choose the ones to be included in your first publication?

A.W.P.: „I started with the 'In the Air' articles, choosing one or two out of the different categories mentioned above. Arranging them in order was difficult as they are so disparate, but I finally found a sequence where one text or group of texts leads into the next, either because of a similar general theme, or an idea that is developed in different ways. The prose texts in the second section are unrelated and not in any special order. But I think it's the sort of book you dip into rather than reading all at once.“

**„T“:** Is there, and if so, could you please explain, the overall message of your book?

A.W.P.: „It is difficult to reduce the book to a single message and I don't want to prescribe to people how they should react to the texts ... But several themes do crop up quite often: the vital necessity for humans to cooperate with each other instead of letting ourselves be goaded into competitiveness and distrust; to be aware of others and our surroundings, to try and behave ethically to humans, animals – all nature; the need to think for ourselves and stand up to people who want to tell us what to do – not let ourselves be turned into a docile



„The book aims to make people laugh“ says the thoughtful author Ariel Wagner-Parker

herd of consumers to please big business. If all that sounds very serious, the book also aims to make people laugh, which is a good way of achieving some of those ends!“

**„T“:** Are you currently working on a new book or any other new project?

A.W.P.: „I've got three projects at the moment: a long-standing one about Penelope, the wife of

Odysseus, one about my (difficult) relationship with my mother and a third one about working for the European Communities in Luxembourg! But first I have to write my 'kulturissimo' piece for March. It's about two sisters who have launched a campaign called 'Pink Stinks!', against current attempts to brainwash little girls into wanting to be princesses and fairies instead of astronauts and brain surgeons!“