

Digitur by Calin-Andrei Mihailescu

Contributed by Calin-Andrei Mihailescu

Digitur As he couldn't find his way home one night after the last ice age, Johanneo lost his shadow. That was one day after Peter Schlemihl lost his. When he came to learn of that Peter, he set out to journey to him; the time was ripe for Johanneo to play shadow to that poor German. He was an aspiring philosopher and his much respected teacher had told him in Kent about English philosophy being too proud to acknowledge that it was a mere shadow to what the Germans were thinking. What could a pensive Englishman do, but restore trembling Peter's shadow? Slightly Christian and gentleman to boot, Johanneo decided to embody Peter's shadow. "I'll be the first to do it, father" he said, asking for money and blessings as he was leaving for Germany. He was travelling at night, but never by himself. At nightfall would come out of the forest bozos, vampires kicked out of restored castles and as he was joining in mostly with these, why would I mention the two Russian low lifers he met close to Lille, who had been rejected from all the novels they tried to sneak in the novels were fat and full of them, anyway? Why mention the shadow-cloning tricksters Johanneo smelled from a mile away in Luxemburg? Or the happy goliards who had barely been able to hide their military formation and composure. At least, the bozos and the vampires were reliable they had nothing to share. Johanneo made his way across the Rhine as unnoticeably as any invading army. The fragrances vanished at once. Aha, he said to himself and to the reader. I love it here. Shadows don't smell. I feel ready. I must be in Germany. At night he would ask a goatherd or a drunk, in dialects neither of them spoke, where could he find Peter Schlemihl. He was getting more lost by question and happier by babbling sound (after babbling sound) coming as a response to his wanderings. And he kept East, just going, night after night and night before night, slurped in by Peter's desire to have-a-shadow. Had he gone too far? Were the Poles getting to muffle his steps? Johanneo's unavowable doubts grew oppressive one night, but his luck didn't let him down this time either. The moonlight pointed his dark eyes to a girl running mad over the fields, breathless with fear's daphnea. The moonlight was approaching threateningly fast; the girl stopped; knelt down; started something like a prayer. Johanneo ran towards her, but the moonlight was faster than him, an Englishman accustomed to long walks only. The girl hid behind the tree that she had become in prayer. The moonlight spat a storm of rays at her. To no avail. She was nowhere to be seen. Johanneo filled his lungs with air and rays. He walked to the tree. He turned his madly fearless face to the moon, laughed hard, and laid down, a tree's shadow.