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Josef Strau

The Non-Productive Attitude
Josef Strau

It was maybe a kind of transformed fetishism attitude to live the social life of an artist without actually producing any art, or at least without presenting any art. On the one hand, the motives of this attitude could have been simple fear of representation, but on the other they could have amounted a desire to practice in a radical consequence what many theories suggested by the death of an author or producer subjectivity. Certainly this pose of anti-production in the period of the late eighties, which for sure was already inspiring aesthetes art fashion, was a self-transforming attitude—even as its strong background of theoretical and radical conceptual art considerations were criticized by some as a bourgeois attitude of well-fed men. The substitution of the artist-as-producer with the artist-as-bohemian was a reaction to the work values of the eighties and necessitated a very dense social field in which to act out its partly theoretical impulse. Otherwise it would be no fun to resist that every opportunity to just do nothing somehow threatened the professional environment with a promise of a future real production. It is very difficult to explain the strength of this attitude, so obsolete and boring it may seem today.

For sure Cologne was the best place to be, if some considerations were granted. When I moved there in mid- to late-eighties, I was very quickly assured by my first impressions that at least some parts of Cologne would allow me some time to survive and to become an artist who did not actually produce anything, did not have much to show, and did not even feel the need to fulfill social life in any exciting way. There was a new necessity to practice a separation between the meaning of the artist's social participation and the representation of his production, in order to discover its old organic unity by creating another kind of social recognition—and in the best case to unnerve the repressive demands for legitimization.

And anyway, it was easy to gain social recognition without work in Cologne because the city had developed a wonderful audience that allowed—with the greatest of interest—this rather glib lack. Instead of pressuring the non-productive artist it inundated his or her suffering with loving honors and affection. For some time, it even became the place where such attitudes were not only observed but were bred and expressed and discussed. But behind this magnificent charity was a subjective void of fear, the narcissistic cultivation of insignificance and meaninglessness. In other words, this was a process of gaining recognition through a production of negative value.

In short, the popularity of anti-productive attitudes in Cologne was maybe a result of some iconoclastic tendency, the sympathy for an attitude which substitutes image qualities with narrative impulse. In the best years the non-productive artist got great recognition if he substituted his work for a good personal narrative. He could be a kind of island in the main art world, while securing continuity with the tradition of anti-visual art. The practice of including autobiographical personal references gave artists in Cologne the reputation for more "Referentialism." In that sense the anti-productive attitude was a kind of an iconoclastic-discipline.

But later the destructive effects of time were particularly strong on this frail and theoretically quite exciting attitude, creating a certain darkness in the art community. As usual, a liberating movement turned into a repressive force, exemplifying the mechanism in which forms stray from their original values that results in ugly and ridiculous political behavior. Qualities of embarrassment and subjectivity were replaced by demands for legitimization as individuals were forced to impose permanent judgments on others to create a position.

Since I haven't lived in Cologne for ten years and my social and artistic milieu in Berlin is quite different, Cologne became for me a metaphor of a certain kind of art attitude. Sometimes I miss it but often I am quite glad I have lost its weakness and influence and given way to a bizarre mode of memory. If I had to make an encyclopedic entry of these years in Cologne from the perspective of my present situation, I would characterize the prevailing attitude as a lack of interest in the procedures of production, with more emphasis on positioning oneself as an artist within the social fabric. I guess that, if I may be allowed to include myself as a former member of that territory, I might then have been a champion of that non-productive attitude. But my initial interest turned into an obsession with the social fabric of the art world and this became an attitude far removed from the earlier pleasure of theory.

Friesenwall was a perfect example of how even nine-tenths audiences were so interested in perceptions of social influence and public representation rather than "work" or its values. The strong attention we received allowed us to play with non-productive oral statements and fragments of work. Most of the time we pretended to show "models" for a space instead of actual work within the space. This created a mythology consisting of divergent theoretical, personal and critical narratives. I don't think we would have been able to create such public attention with this kind of "empty" space in any other time or place. Sometimes I think the theoretical shift of the main perception of art away from its product towards its social conditions was taken too personally, leading to the typical obsession of ex-Cologers with critique and judgment of others. I am very happy to have moved to an environment that is more relaxed in this way.

It would perhaps be mentioned here that when I moved to Berlin after these sometimes really wonderful wild Cologne years, I experienced a very different culture of art and politics. Everything appeared as a far away country to me, although maybe it is interesting to remember how the Cologne art scene was perceived there, how it was really hated so much by the members of the art-political bohemia in Berlin, mentioned always with unbelievable dislike and described as the hostile place par excellence, standing for all evil, perceived as the place of old-fashioned hierarchical structures, anti-authorship power-attitude, commercialism, anti-political art, anti-PC, male brotherhoods displaying open anti-feminism, altogether the place of the most reactionary art system in the world and a general fashion of Cologne snobism, but of course this has nearly disappeared over the years. Anyway, this Cologne perception seemed quite strange to me, since some parts of its art scene shared Berlin's desire for a return of political engagement, an interest in the interpretation of art production as political practice, including the interpretation of its power structures, stemming from the theories of Foucault and Deleuze, deconstructive ideology critique, feminism, the understanding of artistic work as text, and the critique of authorship. Not so different from the prevailing preferences in Berlin. If one is honest, in each city there was a hope for a transformation of art practice through a more theoretical approach and a desire to shed the strongest focus on the social construction of the artist's personality. It is just that the latter, more artistic aesthetic focus left more traces in the public memory, while the more theoretical, political discourse did not leave much behind. Many of us used these dialectics of the political and the aesthetic as the diagnosis of nearly everything, its synthesis was the great final aim, the claimed last accomplishment of any cultural production. In a maybe too-heroic narcissistic interpretation of my "non-production" of that time, I could now say that I unfortunately loved both opposing strategies for the evasion of production: the delay of production caused by theoretical engagement, the commitment to theoretical studies which "allowed" for the production of an art object only as deferral, such that theory would itself become the production; but also the opposite, the non-theoretical, non-political artistic maneuver of constructing the artist as a personality who could gain social recognition without having made any work. Perhaps not unsurprisingly this double affection led to a kind of creative death.

To speak about anti-production attitudes quickly becomes something really very vague. A general description of non-productive attitudes even more so. Yet the term "non-productive" describes a bit more strongly than "anti-productive" the implied individual psychology involved—the possible laziness, indolence, inability or refusal of production as a result of talking too much before doing. I guess this was all part of it, not just intentionally but its causes and effects. I think, in fact, from a vintage of so many years later, one shouldn't seek to formulate something regarded or obsolete only, but try to consider an image that helps understanding by deconstructing the extreme production-oriented values so common in art today. The non-productive attitude should be seen as a refusal of production values, but not as a refusal of expression as such.

I am attempting the difficult task of describing the change of an attitude and its consequences. There is much psychology involved, a lot of fear of representing expression, a dream of use all the opportunities of being an artist to avoid the involvement of production. Over time, practices of expression were substituted by those of organization, especially in the more alternative project-making activities of institutions. In the beginning these organizational activities were designed to fulfill more theoretical desires for independence from production structures, which were "trend-bohemian", or, let's say, perceived as "alienating." This was perhaps a wrong perception since the alienating powers of organization became even stronger than those of the "real" art world. For me, Friesenwall was a perfect example. In my capacity there, in my capacity there, I turned from being an artist to being an art-organizer, but it should not substitute for practices of expression. Giving organizational values so much space was a general social development of the nineties. Chaos, vagueness, indifference—what were actually the driving qualities of a space like Friesenwall in the beginning—became impossible, substituted by mono-thematic meanings. With this turn in alternative art practice, all power concentrated in the organizer's values of influence-making and envy of expression instead of turning to independence of expression or to an art that could support narrative qualities.

I am trying to explain a very personal phenomenon. I felt my first years in Cologne to be the best time of my life. But remembering the same time now, suddenly I have the feeling they were one of the worst. When I told a friend about this Cologne period, about how I am trying to formulate this Cologne memory problem, she replied by asking me if not everyone participating in this special time was suffering from a similar situation?

Maybe I feel this change of heart because so many psychological tendencies behind Cologne's semi-glamorous attitude, which I enjoyed so much, remained latent and hidden—or, as I said, because of fear of real expression, fears of all kinds which I could never express, were denied by collective self-censorship.

The non-productive attitude of anti-constructing artist personalities were absolutely in the wrong place from the beginning—a face—if considered against the context oriented art-practices of politically aware alternative art structures. Nevertheless, in a weird maneuver, they could have supplied this whole alternative art context some missing glamorous appeal, a necessary stylistic contribution to itself. The big dream, which many things were obsessed with for many years, was the fusion of glam and politics. This was the mega-representation. I completely forgot about it, since no one has sought it for so long, as if it were a passing fashion, which, if truly good, becomes unnecessary for the next twenty years, so embarrassing would be its return.

My light.

AC.

I have given you all and now I am nothing
When will you take off your clothes,
when will you look at yourself through the grave,
Cologne, two euros and twenty something,
I am sick of your insane demands."

For weeks now we have planned to go out at
midday to search for a bit of light.
The staircase is so dark, but you can see a bit of
light behind the window. The light has become
too weak and too lazy to even go through
the glass into our house.

When we meet in the evening I mostly talk about
what colour the little light which remained for us
actually has.
We say there is light but not for us and I believe
this is the most positive sentence possible
actually.

I used to say that if the sky has a colour
sometimes it is yellow like nicotine but that is
wrong for the metaphor, maybe because others
compare this no more magic-of-the-moment
weather with the yellowing papers and fading
texts, but rather than
that our sky is a wet fur, which tries to keep us
warm and on the cold days the fur comes down
very low and the empty trees look like supporting
pillars for it when it is getting too heavy and wet.
With our light all sense of time disappears,
fulfilling utopian desires just twisted and unkind.
The only break we have in these endless periods,
in these timeless periods I must say
is hoping for the next soccer game
in cold rainy stadiums or at home we watch
the stadium lighting being broken by the misty wet
frozen air.

Isn't it like telling us to be finally loud and angry
again with all the power we had when without
narrow minded restrictions and silly offers
for favors.
God save him and we will kill the rest."

The old poplar is swinging
and getting wet from brushing the fur.
It is never really raining but the dark shiny spones
on the street never get dry.

Looking at my new friend, his hands, pale
resistance is fading and he is saying:
"My hands are big and my fingers thick
and swollen, twisted and unkind.
No knives no metal sticks, my bag is full
of poisonous snakes"

For sure this place was the best place to be
It was
Non-production, Refusal, Habitus
Soziales Leben, the field, the influence, negativity

scary lack of work,
It was the place
providing suffering artist with lovingly honours
and affections

C.

Your old broken black suitcase was stuffed
with subjective void of fear, the narcissistic
cultivation of insignificance and meaninglessness
and most of all with anti-visual heresies.

"I have given you all and now I am nothing
When will you take off your clothes,
when will you look at yourself through the grave,
Cologne, two euros and twenty something,
I am sick of your insane demands."

Didn't you become for me a kind of metaphor
for a certain kind of art attitude, which I sometimes miss here
but sometimes I am quite glad it lost
its reality and influence and turned into a mode
of sometimes almost bizarre memory.
With your "typical" obsession of critique and
judgment of others, which I only observe
when being with you.

But maybe the motives of this could have been
simple fear of representation, whatever,
Evasion,

Living, screaming,
Real,
theory of telepathy curating

evasion of common production curating

For sure you were the best place to be,
Instead of pressuring the non-productive artist
it inundated his or her suffering with loving honours
and affection.

C.

You are the errand boy, errand boy of
the melancholy,
You are the breakable planet

we could play with kind of non-productive statements,
with the use of fragments of work,
but concentrating on our oral statements,
pretending most of the time that we show
models for a space and not certain work within the space.
I don't think at any other time or another place
we would have been able to create such public attention
with this kind of "empty" space.
Sometimes I think that the theoretical considerations
to shift the main perception of art away
from its work or product to its social conditions were

For sure Cologne was the best place to be,
if some considerations were granted -

Leaving Cologne.

Like the writing process. When I had to do it, had to do something, means I was lucky that I had been given some time to write about for something, the non-production attitude given by the curator, but so I got into some tricky process with myself, which was long enough quite mysterious. To explain it simply: I must write, by having to forbid myself writing. I was supposed to focus on something and that took a while for me and my unperceived production abilities. Following meaning to get rid of everything else, meaning to stop me before I would go. And to repress my desires to be somewhere else instead. Like writing about the music in the background, but the scenarios and associations implied by it. So I would say I had to stop writing before writing, that one day I changed the process. I was invited to write about some theory about photography I had mentioned in a conversation. Some school book photographic books in reference to Roland Barthes. But as well just too complicated. For days I did not write, apart from some notes. I kept reading it. So the very last day I set down with the decision to do something. Whatever was. I started: "Knocking on the kitchen floor, I got a little of the most expensive cat food in my mouth, but didn't swallow it. The cat was looking me, because of the good smell of food. I put the mush back on the floor and the cat immediately ate it. Then I tried to stand up again. But I had drunk too much. It was December 24th. Besides me was the bench. I lay on it. Then it occurred to me that in the last few days I was trying to make something of an unpleasant sentence but hadn't got anywhere with it. Only, if stupid calculation to keep repeating it played me, so I said, "Frisenwall, wake up, wake up, but wake up only in me." In the morning, when I had just got up, I caught sight of myself in the round mirror, and for the first time saw something really unusual. I saw not the normal face, which now and again had perhaps just got a bit older - this time it was a quite new, unknown face. And I knew, he's a bohemian, this is the face of a bohemian. But that's something I certainly never wanted, never yet, never had I thought myself would ever experience the vic de bohème or anything like it, and for less, it's certain, did I think then, that I myself would suddenly assume the face of a bohemian in the mirror? I was so amazed of course. Who wrote this? Not exactly me, not exactly someone else. Who is it, someone I know? Someone ambivalent, between different selves? Whatever. Not so interesting. But someone, who could be only acknowledged, if accepted as fictional author. Then the rules will be different, the writer is not responsible of the author, it was not planned to be written. But I knew I had to use it, and continued to let it write, just with the slight tendency to come back to the given theme, realizing I was already in the some ways, and as if coincidentally, in the theme and I was actually, in an ugly way for sure, but I was in a way coherent with the great Roland Barthes as well, a little bit making hope that his theory of the pleasure of the writing could be practiced one day, and here, there could be the beginning of this process of pleasure. So I thought, for sure with all misery possible, that I had expressed some voice and I have my Colonial path of non-production and I wanted to repeat from now on this new, old exercise. And I knew it was not exactly my voice. I had left Cologne, but now I have reached finally another place and what I have done in the sea, just to continue showing off, was surely a connection to some very old voice of the new place - Berlin. Only there this voice is called directly again. Like in ETA Hoffmanns or for instance... (he cut, of course, is unable to write by his nature. Some artist, writer finds the writings of Roland Barthes, the cat author cannot explain it) By a strange coincidence I was directed to Roland Barthes again, while telling a friend about my effort to describe the non-production effort during my Cologne years and about the great willingness of some people who represented Cologne so much for me then, to allow this bohemian experience of the artist without production. One could be still a non-productive artist, just giving some production, the production of the fictional author. My friend said he remembered a text by Barthes and he read it out loudly to me.

White Nights

The first night. It was a non-existence, which I inhabited, so to speak, since I had left existence. At such nights at home, I left the flat and sometimes walked about in the city without going for drink anywhere. The slight absurdity of these actions is known and one observes it as something like a dream. After having left, just in front of the building, however, these occupations are repressed, one is freed of any reservations, like a bad conscience and fears of not being completely in control. Only later, back at home, the bad conscience returns. This is probably true for other crimes and misdemeanors too. Almost two weeks ago, I was out and about again for maybe an hour. I was about to give up and catch a cab to drive me back home. In this situation, the most embarrassing thing I can imagine happened. It was totally banal and laughable to almost disgusting. I in one walk, in whose completely uninteresting. Everything over relatively delicate during that night from Monday to Tuesday after one o'clock, and it was still quite warm. At one of the big streets I was about to cross over to the other side because of the cab in my direction when from the opposite direction a young woman on foot turned into a smaller street. She walked very fast, almost ran. This fast walking in this nocturnal situation was strange and noticeable. I had to look whether or not I wanted to, and my looking even now seems to me rather disgusting, because this is how sin begins. With looking. Never mind, I followed her. A few buildings later there were some typical men eating behind scaffolding at a snack stand. She leaned into the scaffolding to say something. It seemed to me that she reacted in an unfriendly manner and I leaned back. She reached the scaffolding just before I reached the scene, she walked on. While walking, she turned briefly and said something to me. I didn't understand her. So I said Hello to her. She waited for me and said that wherever she went, she was being sent away again, just like now. I thought she meant the guys behind the scaffolding, so I agreed with her, understandingly, but if you are dealing with people like that, it is just as well. I couldn't think of anything else to say. But I had to stretch out the moment in order to keep this completely unusual conversation with this stranger going. Why could she be treated as badly? Now I can't describe her face anymore, but she did not seem strange. At any rate, she had certain something of the down and out, and that always looks good. The conversation continued on its own. Should I have prevented it, how we talked, on the broad, empty street? It was two o'clock at summertime. The unexpected conversation attracted me terribly, overwhelmed by the serious exhibition of her state of being alone. The social distance, which up to that moment had separated me, was hardly present after the first few minutes of the conversation.

Now, however, opposite her, I saw my outsider role, not hers. Next, I remembered that I had already noticed her a few days ago somewhere on the streets. She had stood there with two other rather miserable looking women, speaking pretty loudly. But in passing I had not been able to understand anything. But I remembered it, because her clothes were also quite wrinkled, but in contrast to the two others her face had been noticeable, very typical of something. Her eyes were the most noticeable thing, but it seemed to me as if they were rolling towards each other. Now that I was in conversation with her, I saw how direct her gaze was. I wanted to interrupt and dismiss the desire to keep going. Typical, what happened inside of me was not exactly what I would have wanted to see of me from the outside.

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Saturday

Saturday was always a special day for me. The day on which one could, without a terribly bad conscience, recover from the drunken excesses of the night before. This hour it used to be, and I am still programmed that way, even without going out and drinking. Going out still happens, but it has deteriorated into social work. Today, after waking up, I didn't think of anything at all at first, instead of thinking as usual - almost before waking up - of work, of the obligations, of the tasks, in short, of everything that I had made into my profession, many long years ago and out of my free will, way back when, a free will that had been fought for - against the will of my family. After a long struggle that destroyed all familial relations I seemed to have made up my mind. The decision was a typical free decision, and I was proud of the struggle, but not of the decision. I had forgotten the struggle through which I had stood completely in the shadow of the family struggle, the struggle against the family and its priorities, which however had not been a decision for anything. So I picked some complete nonsense and had known that I was unsuited for it, or at least less suited than for most other things. Nonetheless I thought it would increase the ruthlessness of the struggle, this struggle which destroyed the whole family for my free will and for the right of making my own decisions and then to choose some complete nonsense, for something which one actually considers completely worthless and indeed contemptible. I had no way of knowing in advance just how worthless and contemptible this profession would turn out as an actual life praxis. I did not think about all this the morning, rather, and that was special. I did not think of anything at all, not even of all those bitter painful tasks which I have to fulfil in order to organise my life in this profession, in order to be able to start the day not with pleasure but with bitterness. The special thing today was that I did not think of it immediately and I was not even happy, I was nothing, and therefore especially happy, incomparably happy. After a few moments, the first thought of the job appeared, the appalling unhappy job, of which I had not thought for more than a minute. So I rose from the bed, on this Saturday and wanted to forget that empty mind and poured the coffee into the coffee cup, the one I started with an African tiger, and put it down next to the computer. But it was too awful and appalling to work on this Saturday, where everything had started with this sudden and unexpected free minute. I thought, I decided I did not want just one empty minute, I wanted a whole empty day, as empty as the minute. I wanted a whole 24 hours, a single free day, and after all, today was Saturday and I, who does not believe in God, thought that today is a special day and God should give me the day off. Actually, I just thought "God give me a free day today, surely you know what a free day means, it doesn't mean that I don't have to work at all, it means that I don't have to work because I don't want to - from the bottom of my soul. It means that today, I will work, but only on what I choose, on what I want, on what I really want. I thought nobody would understand this simple question, but perhaps he will understand, God, he should be able to understand that, actually. Besides that, after sitting down at my computer, I thought the same thing with a different metaphor. I thought God, you know what kind of hell this profession has become for me, a cold hell of Sisyphus, give me one day when I may leave this hellish place and when I may enter your heavenly place and do what I really love, let me into that heavenly space, 'open the door'. And indeed, I felt that the doors were opening and I realized that this place actually exists and I had entered. I knew perfectly well that I would have only 24 hours, but at that moment, when I called out to God - although without any belief he had heard me - at that moment I had but one wish, namely these 24 hours without this Sisyphus work and where I could do what I really wanted, which in all likelihood won't get me anywhere, probably. That is how that happened and I concentrated because I had known for months what I wanted to do, basically to continue writing down this story, the story of S. - whom I met again after a few months - and apart from that I wanted that nothing else should exist on this Sabbath.

The Money

On the table next to the computer stands the expensive coffee cup made of French Glen porcelain, from the series 'Kenya', with a tiger painted all around. Its fur is light brown with dark brown spots. It stands in front of a sky in light ochre with his black shadow, with a lowered head he looks with large pupils from his cup. My dear little tiger, my Saturday, and I am jotting down quick notes for the preliminary fragments of the S-story:

What was I supposed to do? It was S. We had not seen each other for almost six months, and in the summer, after great depression, we had had the best and most interesting conversations in a long time. Winter beginning, I sat in the U-Bahn and suddenly she stood near me, I heard her voice, could hardly understand her, too many passengers around between her and me. I was so excited I could barely move. She hadn't noticed me. We almost passed each other. She had made her way through the subway car and disappeared onto the platform, apparently she had got at least a little money. No wonder, she was just a little arrogant and served the newspaper like a somewhat indifferent stewardess in a strange costume. The paralysis in my limbs passed and I jumped after her and reached S. before she could get into the next subway car. There you are - could not find your telephone number? First completely speechless, then still hardly able to speak, I didn't know how to go about it, how to get her to arrange a time when we could meet properly.

24 hours later I arrived at the appointed place. The beginning of December, the rain had left small brown lakes on the square. I wanted to stop in front of a huge puddle, so that S., when she arrived, would have to stand opposite, and I would first see her mirrored in the surface of the brown water. Right now all that was mirrored was the heavy Prussian administrative building, the Schloss, which gently swayed in the wind. I was early, and there were still a few moments to work myself up to the absolutely most singular situation of this, for me, rather unusual meeting. I hurriedly listed the advantages of my new location, in the mirror of the stone floor of this brown puddle which in any minute would be cut up by S. approaching, the figure of pure life. The rotten leaves looked like those huge pupils when looking at the fate of a longed for depravity and neglect which hopefully would start with this meeting.

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The Bad Conscience.

S.-Dream, Dream 1 S. appears to me in a dream and she wants me to stay with her. She is waiting for someone. We wait together in a staircase in front of a half-open door. I thought that she used me as something in-between, for her entertainment, but for me there was something else, something deep and serious. I see myself standing next to S. in the monumental staircase, watching her in my calculated, melancholic ironic role, solving her mystery. We wait and when he comes, I preferred to go immediately and that now seems fine with her. Finally she smiles a little about the painful separation. I go down the stairs and then I hear how it immediately gets violent between her and him. The way he looked I really didn't want to have to intervene. He was built like a brick and acted as if in a bad mood when he came up to us. And now I was supposed to put him in his place. I turned away and continued slowly going down the stairs. I was thinking. It was still dark outside. I didn't know how late it was. A for me "new"-but otherwise old term came to mind: demons- and the description of demons: that they are something between us. Although I've always sought out demons, I was never really interested in them. They are for sure attracted to passivity, daydreams, simply thoughts. The hard working peasant remains untouched by them, but can the text protect the writer, in making himself invisible, in making himself stand back?

S. turned on the light in the bathroom: S. turned on the light in the bathroom, and locked the door behind her as far as that was still possible - the lock was halfway ripped out already. I had rented the apartment mainly because of the bathroom. The light could be varied. You could lie in the bathtub and observe the reflection of the water's surface on the ceiling. S. had moved in a few days ago. To get to the bathroom she had to pass through my room, and this was now her second time. It was still very early and she passed me, silent, quietly and as if invisible. I was alarmed, she might have a plan. She tried once again to close the door properly. I listened. She ran the bathwater, but then didn't use it after all. She undressed and tried once again to close the door. She lit a cigarette. Finally she took the cap with the cannabis leaf off her head. She wore her hair as a great bush of delicate hairs that had grown together, like felt, which she now, using the humming haircutting machine, separated from her head in one sweep from front to back - she could almost hold all of the cut-off hair in one piece - and buried it in a small plastic bag. In certain spots she remained a little unsure. On the entire back of her head up to shortly before the hair line, only short hair remained, and the little rest had the same length as before and could hang down in slight waves in front of her face and also a bit on the sides, in front of the ears. Afterwards S. opened the door, picked the rest off the floor, and no longer paid any attention to the new face. She turned away from the mirror and noticed that the Venetian blinds were down, but not properly closed. She could have been observed from afar in the small, brightly lit modern bathroom. It was late at night and the sky was still partially dark blue between the slats of the blinds. She pulled the stopper of the bathtub and left through my bedroom, holding the bag with her buried hair in her hand. I was still in bed with the books of demons. She tried to get past quickly. I had noticed from the sounds that she would come out at any second, and switched on the lamp - with my invention for turning it on without having to move much, of which I was particularly proud. When I had money and had moved into the new apartment, I finally bought a large floor lamp, a design by Schinkel with porcelain glazing. I had placed the pale beauty next to the mattress, and only months later came up with my invention. I had taken two of the long green velvet ribbons that S. once brought home, tied them together, and attached this to the old fashioned but much too short metal chain that switched on the porcelain lamp. The chain had the right length only for someone standing up, but I wanted to turn it on from the bed, without having to move. As my invention on the green ribbon became a green velvet leash and as I laid in bed and pulled the velvet leash before S. emerged from the bathroom, it was without having to get up. Now I saw, instead of the external drug cap, her short hair and the small bag in her hand. The large round cylindrical lampshade was gilded inside and the fragile construction looked like a dome with a golden sky to which no stairs led, only the green ribbons.

The lamp with the leash. The lamp was on its leash. Its green leash was my greatest invention. It led deeply into the lethargic inner life. The leash lay next to me and I was able to turn off the light and, for example, hear the new familiar sounds from the bathroom that enlivened my apartment, instead of fleeing the empty apartment or taking long walks on the streets outside, or meeting S. in 24-hour takeout restaurants. Simple literary narrative forms are structured by descriptions of urban architecture, the form of the streets, etc. But I can keep telling the story and have lamps, cushions and sofas speak.

S. thought the white king-size stuffed tiger was a sofa or bed tiger. But it was a king-size rear-window-sill tiger, much too large for normal cars - but maybe it just about fit into the extra-wide reunification S-Class Mercedes. It now usually sat on the sofa next to S. She called it David. She then seemed to be completely apathetic. At least for certain periods of time. That was at least the impression she gave. But at the same time, I could have been mistaken. This apathy calmed me and thus made me even more dependent on her presence. Or rather her absence. Whenever we were not together, I was also absent from her thoughts, I think, up to the moment when she suddenly thought of me again, and then would phone me immediately, or better still come over right away. But then I was 100% present for her, and she for me. So this emotional life had quite a few advantages. And because I had analyzed her apathy in this way, it was also the key for an inner discovery. I could at least partially explain why I didn't want to give her up. It would probably have been very easy to tell her that I had no time for her anymore now, and to explain to her with some philosophical-sentimental reasons that our beautiful paths would have to separate again. She would have come once or twice more, probably to ask for money... Her apathy resulted from a higher ability to take things wholly as they are, as a strategy for survival, in order to be able to recognize them better. She read every text, every book fast, and yet totally thoroughly. She could remember every passage. You could say that she had the special ability to abstain from judgments. Only few have that power of indifference. The effect is thus great, when she suddenly left the continuity of the narration of facts, to make a judgment after all.

Sometimes we still met outside somewhere. She would then call me on the phone and suggest a place to meet. Unfortunately those were obviously strategic suggestions, with the aim of activating money from me without me noticing that. That was a difficult procedure for her. There was no reason anymore to steer me outside the apartment in order to see me. We were both tied to the apartment, with the difference that I particularly loved those outside meetings. It was the formal apotheosis of my new sense of family. That was the greatest, the family form without a role, without a relationship, without a natural tie. Part of a family city outing is shopping.

First greeting, then waiting separately; at the stairs she tried to ask passers-by for a few euros until we went off to the late dinner. This time we started to argue during the trip, I was aggressive; her shabby, neglected appearance had suddenly become embarrassing to me in the subway car. I was annoyed and aggressive towards her. Then she calmed me down in an instant. S. declared I was on time. I didn't know right away how I would react to this situation, so I asked myself first to observe first the reaction. I observed my reaction to the sentence that up to now I had always assumed was absolutely impossible to apply to me. I reacted highly ambivalently. First of all, I noted that she was right, that she also must be right, that was the power of her form of speech, just as she almost always was right, and was the power of her rare judgments that shone next to her obsessively judgment-free style of speech. The next thing I noted was that precisely because of her rarely deployed form of judgment, her speech had gained a weight that I could not escape from. To the person who I believe is capable of always speaking the truth, I gave the power that I had to believe her word and subject myself to her word. In that, I had yielded to a typical strange relief, which often happens in a real crisis, or when you give yourself up, or better: when you give up your will and your habits which you had maintained up until then... In an instant, in a few minutes and at the same time, in a seemingly independent life, in one go I had discovered two dark dependencies.

"Do you think I should continue to describe the meetings and living together with S. like a dream? Turn that life together, of which I haven't told anybody, into kitsch? Or blur the image with the dreams." The novel comes about when something can't be told any other way. But should be told. Out of a predicament in the best case. In this way, the dream would be legitimate. Of course. But it was no dream. We are not the real people who try to have dream experiences, but we are dream existences who try to have real experiences. That is especially true for S.

S. had all sorts of special abilities. The one I liked best was her ability to narrate, her unbelievably precise, long, you could say de-subjectivized reports about what she observed. It was the first time that I was completely certain that someone could write simply unbelievable texts. I made the questionable decision to start her text myself. I dreamt of writing about S. to get her to busy herself and write too. And also probably in order to discuss her text with her, to interpret it, revise it until the entire text would become a shared text. Just with slightly different parts for each of us. I would probably have had to start the process first, writing texts that would be empty, to be filled in by her. Texts, they say, with blanks. Texts of absence. How unique too - I could have written badly, or embarrassingly, in order to get her to have to write, to have to correct them.

Unfortunately it didn't happen, and I was left alone with my plan. Or let us say I had taken on her legacy. I had to make the notes alone. Those of the first chapters. However, with time the connection with the emotions that led this project on a leash became lost, and I stopped my part as the one reporting. And I suffered terribly from a bad conscience. A bad conscience is after all the will turned against itself. Bad conscience! Scoff.

And perhaps nobody really likes the text that has been written with him/her in mind, but rather the text in which he/she can find something unknown, find/feel. A different reality, an independent spirit, which can change him/her and which he/she can use as a model for changing him/herself. I didn't know anymore whether I had to play the part of the passive writer or the active reader in S.'s and my game. S. would now say: "but yet you write anyhow: you write incessantly, you reveal to me what I dictate to you, and you disclose to me what I know."

I have a bad conscience because I still write about S. For example about her hair, her face. The face-the facade in organic theories of architecture. I write about her like I would about houses, bridges, railway stations. Romantically. I would be buried alive. In the thoughts of Romantic writer staring into a fireplace. The bad conscience, definition. A negative tie to that on which our existence depends, the torturous sense of being ruled by an apparently exterior power - the subjectivation of the dependent. Dependent on that what actually negates them. A fundamental dependence that actually fixes the ability to act, that remains permanently uncertain. So the bad conscience is supposed to be the opportunity to relate to something that doesn't properly exist, to describe dream, dependence, to receive the power of subject formation and not have done enough for the illustration of the overall term. And I had plenty of bad conscience.

I can't ask like at the beginning when I started writing, and thus I also can't maintain the original plan of always writing down and tracing what she thinks about it, how she would act.

S.'s self-destruction was unavoidably real. The text too is real and remains acted, seems acted, semi-theoretically acted. Even in the most despairing situation it always becomes lyrical, torturously unrealistic, not really readable.

S.'s self-destruction wasn't any different, it also often looked acted. At first. But it was real, so unavoidably self-destructive like nothing else in my world up to then, not just in my world of experience, but also in the text world that I had read up to then. And yet...

Just when another train came in, she ran over from the stairs and shouted hysterically that we had to get onto it. I thought this time she had her own money.

I always look for clues about her relationship to me. What part did I really have? Was perhaps everything only a financial relationship? There is plenty of evidence for that. I found it difficult to confront facts. But I also found evidence of her very special trust, of a principled moral trusting relationship with a person like me, which surely must have been very hard for her when it involved people who were not really typical for her scene. I have kept enough of this evidence of trust in my memory. I would like to list all of it, as well as the evidence of a purely materialistic relationship with me: a text of lists of the large mystery that came about entirely from the facts of reality. The torturous module of the familial structure remains hidden, in the glow of indifference. In the one, the prosecutor speaks, in the other the defense attorney. No, that would be too much.

We sat right in the middle of the subway car and were both restless and loud. She held her stomach and leaned forward. I thought it was a trick to get some money. I didn't like that much, especially not while the subway chugged much too slowly from stop to stop. Everything got on my nerves and I couldn't hold back. I hissed at her, as the aggressive person I had become in the last hours. I just hated everything, by the time we finally got out of the subway car. Subliminally I knew that just now we had established another connection, that the new aggression brought me almost physically closer to her, even though otherwise there was no physical closeness at all. Just as I felt a physical closeness to her neglected state without touching her. Most of all, I just wanted her to run off, but I also wanted her to stay close and not get away from me by even one stop and that the rest, everything external to us, should become even more disgusting. Like the other travelers on the subway whose objects of desire I had seen in a new emotional link had been discovered. Although before I could have imagined such sentiments, to experience them, was new for me. S. taught me in everything that was authentic. Through her I gained experience. The mediator. S. is mediation personified. And indifference personified, a quality that I imagined could help lead me out of the social context. Probably, the decision to leave your social context, this helpless attempt to survive, has an auto-destructive element. I in turn taught her with pleasure, whenever she asked about anything. She almost always was interested in precise details. I was emotionally interested in all sorts of things. Up to then, I had not known that. We had to wait on the platform. When we finally had everything, we left the subway station, since it was not the one going in our direction, and walked across the square to where a taxi stand was. I acted all along as if my intention was clearly to take the train home, only so I could blame her for our eventual taxi ride, and vent in general about money. The square up there looked once again like an old photograph, a photograph of grey snow stains on the edge of the park. We took the taxi. At home, things seemed different - the same furniture still, but now with the slight echo from the external world we brought with us; and David, and the green lamp leash. I calmed down and S. forgave me after I had asked her to. I could not imagine that even the tiniest part of my soul could be anything than loving towards her. I sat on the black chair and waited until she lay down next to it on the sofa and then we just looked into the television.

The dog. The dog she used to have was taken away from her at some point because of the danger of neglect. He once suffered from bite wounds, and it took pretty long until they had healed. On the spot he had been bitten, his fur didn't grow back properly; she often said that how you could recognize him from all other dogs. That is why I was always a little afraid that during one of our walks S. would at some point meet the dog again and flee with him. Her love of animals was greater than everything else.

