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Catalog of Everything and Other Stories

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Introduction

Peter K. Wehrli was born in 1939 in Zurich, Switzerland. His father, Paul Wehrli, was secretary for the Zurich Theatre and also a writer. Encouraged by his father to respect and appreciate the arts, the young Peter Wehrli enthusiastically rushed through homework assignments in order to attend as many theater performances as possible. Wehrli later studied Art History and German Studies at the universities of Zurich and Paris. As a student, he used to frequent the *Café Odeon* in downtown Zurich, where many famous intellectuals and artists used to meet. There, Wehrli came into contact with some of the artists who had founded the Dadaist movement in Zurich in the year 1916. The teachings by his father, the experiences at the Zurich Theater and his encounters with Dadaists stimulated Wehrli to embrace the life of an artist. He admired the ability of artists to live emotionally fulfilling lives. They also inspired him to deconstruct the boundaries between artistic genres and to combine various forms of media in his early artistic performances.

From 1965 until 1999, Wehrli worked as a cultural editor for the Swiss National Television. As a reporter, he spent much of his life traveling and exploring little-known parts of the world, from the Sahara and the African island São Tomé to the Guyanas and the Falkland Islands. The first journey that decisively shaped his sense of the world was an unforgettable road trip in 1964 through twelve countries from Zurich to Madras, India, in the company of Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the youngest daughter of famous German novelist and Nobel Laureate Thomas Mann.

Wehrli maintains a special connection to the Mann family up to the present day as board member, in cooperation with Thomas Mann's grandson Frido, of the *Julia Mann Euro-Brazilian Cultural Center* in Paraty, Brazil, dedicated to Thomas Mann's Brazilian mother.

A remarkable publication associated with his name is the 1972 *Gratisbuch* ("Free Book") which he edited together with Theo Ruff. It all started when a student inherited a large sum of money. Since he felt that it would be immoral for him to keep the small fortune he had not earned via his own work, he contacted Wehrli and together, they decided to use the money in order to bring as many people as possible in touch with literature. Several Swiss authors thereupon submitted writings for the publication of the *Free Book*, of which forty-thousand copies were published and distributed for free on the streets of Zurich.

His many travels, his artistic upbringing, and his experience as a television journalist and editor had a strong influence on his own work. Wehrli's oeuvre includes essay, prose, film, poetry, and theatre productions. His most famous work, *Katalog von Allem* ("Catalog of Everything"), defies traditional ideas of genre. By far his most curious and interesting piece of prose, the *Catalog of Everything* is a mixture of poetry, short stories, anthology, diary, and everyday observations through which Wehrli escapes the constraints of modern journalism. Realizing he had forgotten his camera at the beginning of a long train journey, he took the opportunity to put his experiences to paper, systematically poetizing his perceptions of the world around him as he traveled on the Orient Express from Zurich to Beirut, in Lebanon. The result is a vivid

description of the observations and first impressions he made during his travels. The simple mistake of forgetting one's camera generated a wholly new literary style. This method of storytelling, characterized by small and succinct vignettes describing impressions of our huge and remarkable world, embodies Wehrli's literary style. He is interested in coloring the world around us, whether it be through short stories or through audio/visual media. In his *Catalog of Everything*, Wehrli strives to emulate a photographer, using text to describe fleeting moments in time. He explains the inspiration for this work as coming from a place of wonder and amazement of childlike origin: "I made the discovery that the effect of observations, excitations and experiences were always the greatest when I saw a place, scene, or whatever it may be, for the very first time. This first impression is of the same kind as that of a child exploring the amazing world." Started in 1968, the *Catalog of Everything* is an ongoing project that Wehrli has been expanding year after year. The entries in the catalog range from profound, astute, thought provoking, and exotic to poetic.

This anthology presents a selection of texts by Peter Wehrli, representing over forty years of writing and traveling. It covers diverse experiences, from the author's early relationships with the avant-garde Swiss Dadaists in Zurich to an unconventional night at the theatre and a conversation in Brazil that is surprisingly revealing of Wehrli's homeland. While meandering through the vignettes that follow, readers will savor the author's new perspective, one that reawakens the child inside us and

encourages us to view the world as if it were for the very first time.

The collection's first piece, *Everything is a Reaction to Dada!* written in 1998, is itself a reaction to and a reflection of the Swiss Dada movement that was born in 1916 in the author's hometown Zurich. True to its subtitle "A Capriccio," the piece dashes energetically from Wehrli's conversations with the dynamic figures of Dada's past to his exploration of its present legacy in Zurich and freeform contemplation of the movement's complexities, all enriched by a Calvino-esque enchantment with Zurich's urban character. Wehrli begins his narrative of Zurich's Dada history where the movement itself began, at the Cabaret Voltaire on the city's Spiegelgasse ("Mirror Street"). The house—and a particular plaque attached to it—serves as an important starting point for Wehrli's journey into Dada's past, once a home to radical, countercultural exhibitions and avant-garde performances by Dada artists, who protested the traditions, ideologies, and -isms that led to the 20th century's first global catastrophe. A rejection of the world logic that permitted the unspeakable violence of World War I, Dada had no prevailing rules, but in this piece Wehrli pays special attention to the idea that the "mutual embedding of opposites" is inherent in Dada's seeming randomness.

In Wehrli's short story *Robby and Alfred*, Alfred Strossman and Robby Driver are apparent opposites as well: actor and role, player and played. For Alfred, however, tempted to embody Robby's rebellious persona offstage, this dichotomy has become less and less certain. Perhaps the young Robby's striking visage and

unconventional attitudes suit him better, and impress others more, than his own seeming mediocrity. But Alfred, even as he is faced with the distinct opportunity to assume Robby's character in the real world, must ask at what cost to his own identity and Robby's this blurred relationship comes. In this piece, Wehrli perceptively expresses the inner conflict that unfolds when an individual, like Alfred, considers wearing another's identity.

Wehrli again touches upon the stage and shifting roles that result from performance in his story *Burlesque*. Derived from the Italian *burla*, meaning joke or mockery, the title of the piece describes a written or performed work meant to inspire laughter in particular ways. Burlesque performances, like the one depicted in this piece, tend to ridicule their own main figures, intending for the audience to laugh at ludicrous on-stage gags and the humorous struggles that face the poor "clown" character. Nevertheless, viewers empathize with this seemingly alienated figure, charmed by the pluck and persistence with which they manage to survive a series of unlucky situations. Sunny, a young man at the theater to see his favorite burlesque performer, might be that clown figure in Wehrli's story: he has experienced a series of unlucky circumstances, but arguably winds up on his feet in the end. However, in empathizing with Sunny, the reader—or audience—is left with the question: are his trials tragedy or comedy?

In *Hearty Home Cooking*, imagined scenarios of slapstick comedy play out as Wehrli and his friend Werner discover an ad for a small, secretive pub by the name of *The Happy Circle*. Unfortunately, the bouncer at the

location forcibly removes the two from the establishment. Werner, while standing in the street, compares their situation to that of famed American cinema comedy duo, Laurel and Hardy, famous for having physical arguments characterized by cartoonish violence and slapstick comedy. Wehrli - although at first confused by this statement - begins to daydream vividly, imagining how different situations would play out if he were to behave in the cartoonishly violent ways of Laurel and Hardy. He contemplates—out of frustration—what would happen if he were to throw a cream pie in the bouncer’s face. Upon arriving home, Werner and Wehrli discover a cookbook entitled *Hearty Home Cooking*, and they decide to prepare an omelet. Wehrli’s imagination runs wild: he systematically works through the inventory of the German language’s conditional forms, making the English translation difficult but nonetheless singularly playful. He imagines spilling milk cartons, slapping Werner in the face, shattering glass jars of jelly, throwing things out the window, and causing chaos outside on the streets. An entire Laurel and Hardy act plays in Wehrli’s mind as the two prepare this omelet. Once the meal is prepared, the two eat the delicious food in peace.

In *Travelling to the Contrary of Everything*, written in 1967 with a decidedly more serious tone, Wehrli documents his visit to Albania, a young communist nation struggling to rebuild and reorient itself within the radical political climate of post-war Europe. Albania’s dictatorship was the fiercest of Europe’s communist nations, perhaps only comparable with that of North Korea. As Wehrli crosses the border into Albania ("Europe’s China"), readers

are introduced to a society in the process of constructing its national identity amidst an environment of intense social and economic tension. From the generational gaps between the young and the old to the religious strain between individuals and the atheist state, Wehrli captures a unique period in Albanian history on his road trip cross country—a European version of the Chinese cultural revolution. With the reiterated promises of industrial revival from eager authorities and hints of a society on the brink of social change, the author leaves audiences captivated by the question of Albania’s future and progress.

The Conquest of Sigriswil is also an exploration of national identity and its borders. It consists in large part of the author’s illumination of the Swiss town of Sigriswil, a municipality in the canton of Bern. While on a trip to Brazil, Wehrli falls into conversation with a man named Nelson. Nelson’s surprisingly familiar description of Sigriswil, the hometown of Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars, lends it a mythical, even utopian quality. It becomes clear that Nelson, who had never visited Sigriswil, believes he knows the town after having read Cendrars phantasmagoric descriptions. He mistakes Cendrars magic evocation of Switzerland for the true image of the country. As Nelson’s narrative delineates his penetrating perception of both the Swiss and Sigriswilian character, Wehrli’s emphasis on connections and understandings that transcend national boundaries become strikingly clear. Swiss modernist poet Blaise Cendrars later becomes a focal point and Wehrli’s international tapestry of art, storytelling, friendship, and perception takes form.

The final chapters in this anthology consist of scenes from the *Catalog of Everything*, including Wehrli's very first *Catalog of the 134 Most Important Observations During a Long Railway Journey* and his most recent *Californian Catalog*. In the first section, Wehrli takes the reader with him on a journey from Switzerland to Lebanon through a series of foreign experiences while underscoring the commonalities we all share as human beings. From departure to arrival, beautiful landscapes, strange foods, and comical interactions are described through Wehrli's personal lens, which add to the charm of these 134 experiential observations. The *Catalog of Everything* continues Wehrli's passion for turning the seemingly banal experiences of life into astute and transcendental observations. Sometimes witty, somber, or enigmatic, these observations describe not only the world around us but what it truly means to experience life as a human being. The final section is dedicated to the United States. There, Wehrli worked with famous artists such as Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. His most recent collection of catalog numbers was inspired by a trip to California in 2011. In these catalog numbers, Wehrli documents his experiences with the idiosyncrasies of American culture—from its resident's attitudes and customs to the urban form of its cities and the looming significance of the automobile. In each snapshot, Wehrli gracefully embeds a succinct, sensitive impression of a huge and remarkable state, revealing glimpses of human nature that, like the subjects in much of his work, extend far beyond the mere symbolic boundaries of state or nation.

I. Everything is a reaction to Dada!

A Capriccio about Chance, Coincidence and Randomness

Not all cities have a center. But Zurich does. The center of Zurich measures around thirty-five centimeters in diameter. It is round and it sticks to the first house on the left-hand side of the Spiegelgasse ("Mirror Street"). You are in it as soon as you turn the corner from the Münstergasse into the steep narrow alley. This plaque is my city center. The focus of my attention during countless walks on grounds of its ability to channel thoughts and energies, reflecting them afresh, metamorphosed. And like the thoughts and images that keep coming back to me, I want Zurich to be just that: a city that insists on appearing novel and unusual with every day that passes, and which wants to be conquered anew every day, a city in which all that exists is measured against that which could exist, a city in which one is likely to give up doing certain things only because they are possible, a city whose citizens are capable of imagining things other than those that are given to them daily, a city in which one does not want to have more than one already has, but in which one wants just that which one does not have, a city in which everyone shares with the others the joy and the expectation of all that is possible, a city in which one fact is as rebellious as another, a city whose people prefer to live well under the aegis of Utopia rather than to live randomly in a given reality. For the adventure of perception lurks at each and every corner.

And whenever I look in the oval mirror that hangs on the wall—itsself a rebel, as though it were the mirror that lent the street its name—the thud of the disco on the other side of the wall fades out and the soft sounds let out by the instruments of the noisy rioters that once populated this house slowly give way to the ever more sharply outlined picture of a city called Zurich, of a city which could be Zurich.

A city whose river flows into another river, and the latter, in its turn, into a third one, a city where speech is stable currency, a city whose tram-drivers rejoice in the presence of their passengers, a city whose doorbells cry out to be rung, a city from whose central station trains venture into the unknown, a city whose river, the Limmat, welcomes whoever wants to soak their feet in it, a city whose emblem is constant change, a city in whose puddles Zambezi water droplets glitter every now and then, a city in which one eats whenever one is hungry and sleeps whenever one feels sleepy, a city situated in the world and not in Northern Switzerland, a city whose pavement aches to be trodden upon by human feet—"and every day, at seven sharp, as the conductor standing on the Great Cathedral Tower facing the Limmat raises his baton to start the ten-minute-passacaglia of all the freshly tuned car horns, the officer from the Bureau for Widening Horizons sets the lowering of the Uetliberg into motion." And when I walk away from the center, when I turn my eyes away from the oval mirror hanging from the wall of the house on "Mirror Street," Zurich once again becomes that which it really is, the biggest city of a country and the capital of the eponymous canton.

It is there, in Spiegelgasse 16, in this real Zurich, (where until recently there still stood the *Teens and Twens* club) that *Cabaret Voltaire*, the Institution founded by the Dada members as a place meant for celebrating a lack of propriety, was reopened in 2004. Dada has a new home now, a lab in its own right, in which avant-garde thinking, once held in contempt, is again subjected to testing in the fiery tunnel hosting the ceaseless work of visions lasting for more than nine decades now. Zurich has thus found a new home for Dada.

The city center on Spiegelgasse perpetually evokes images that are different each time I approach it. It is the center of that which could exist, the center of potentiality, a solid call written in stone for finally using one's own imagination in order to bring to Zurich all that lies beyond it, and to turn into desire that which is not yet there. As we accept the conviction that the navel is the center of the human body, we accept the certainty that the small plate on the first house on the left-hand side of Spiegelgasse is the hub of the universe. And therefore its center. And Hans Arp, from whose repository of forms the form of the navel originates, never detached himself from this certainty.

Even if guides hardly ever lead their tourists up to Arp's hub of the universe on the Spiegelgasse, to me this is the main goal of any and every sightseeing agenda, a landmark of all possible tours of the city, because it perpetually calls forth the image of the other. Because it renders elusive all that previously seemed tangible and makes tangible that which once seemed elusive. Because it reveals that other thing as so much more important than this

thing here. Because it wants to stand as a reminder of the fact that destruction and misery are, both of them, consequences of concrete, isolated, overly treasured reason, of that decreed reason which is at its limits inscrutable by the phantasmagorical, euphoric vision of the sprite.

As an active response to Isolation, to the overvaluation of prescribed reason, one of the Dadaists pointed to the potentialities opened up by Dada, and after all Hans Arp's navel-plaque marks the house in which Dada members would periodically gather during the evening Dada sessions from February 5th, 1916 onwards, just in that *Cabaret Voltaire*, the building which for a long while had borne the name of *Meierei*. To me, *Meierei* is the center of resistance par excellence against all these attempts at explaining away a phenomenon which set themselves up as rational, which pretend to legitimize international wars and war in general as a logically coherent phenomenon that accompanies human life and desire and which redeems the vulnerability of the wronged and violence in general, depicting them as necessary counterparts to progress. This is where my Zurich lies, there, on the Spiegelgasse, a street whose walls probably hosted the most powerful contradictions in 1916. For forty steps uphill from the defenders of the illogical, of spontaneity, of protest-generated creativity, only forty steps away from their abode, there lived a man who went by the name of Ulianov. A few years later, he became the leader of the Russian revolution under the name of Lenin. Every day, he would walk past the *Meierei* in his way to the central library, and he might have heard, on these occasions, the acute inflexions of Tristan Tzara's voice whenever the latter

ecstatically replied to the question "What is Dada?" by crying "Everything is Dada!" Lenin might have heard the organ-effect of Hugo Ball's sound poems, and the bustle of the Hülsebeck drum, as well as the piano drumming of Hanns Heusser, but what he thought of that he never shared, he, who, as the rationalist that he was, worked at a scientific system to explain the social revolution. Because of this, the Dadaists had their purpose.

And the memories of the Dadaists about their Russian neighbor are as diverse as their attempts to subsequently explain the origin of the word Dada. Marcel Janco, the first hour Dadaist, talked about Lenin's visits—frequent visits—to *Cabaret Voltaire*: "He came very often ... He wasn't into abstract art. He argued with us, he talked to us, he discussed. He was an adversary, but he knew how to take advantage of it. As the intelligent man that he was, he used this in his propaganda to fight the bourgeoisie in Leningrad." Is there a common denominator between the proletarian conscience of the Marxist and the anti-bourgeois attitude of the bohemian Dada? Walter Mehring—as a member of Berlin Dadaism, who was familiar with the controversies of his colleagues in Zurich—describes something completely different: "A little further, on the other side, lived Ulianov and he complained to the police about night noise!" and Mehring subtly adds: "Not without reason, because he did not want the proletariat to develop under such circumstances!" Two answers to the same question. Which of them is the famous fake news about Dadaism, promoted in the '80s? Spreading tall tales in relation with the media was among the hobbies of Dadaists as early as 1916.

Memories about such conversations, about such questions and answers, are stored in the navel plaque on Spiegelgasse, on this memory disk that offers up images when you click on an imaginary directory or CD system: the image of the room in the Opera Hotel where Walter Mehring lived, the image of that afternoon when, with shrill voice caused by emotion, he evoked the enemy the Dadaists were fighting, omnipresent even today: "It was philistinism, the eternal philistine who maintains his power in the economy as well as in social life!" And then he added with iced intonation: "Philistinism is for me the only life form the masses know, any type of masses, capitalist or socialist!" And then, when I wanted to find out exactly who the promoters of this class of philistines were, this phrase followed as an answer: "All those who are against the individual; any state and in particular the dictatorships that constitute a conspiracy of the community ('Gemeinschaft' in German)—but I had written of 'meanness' ('Gemeinheit' in German) against the individual. And this lasts from birth until death." The vehemence with which Mehring gave this answer impressed me more than its content—I should have expected it from him, because I heard Mehring, this solitary militant against the obedience of the subject and the collaborationism, voice this severe sentence too, that is, "Dadaism is Individualism itself!" And as always, when examining the navel, when the sight of the navel brings about remembrance, there are two memories, one and the other, the memory of Marcel Janco's observation: "I must tell you that I directly fought individualism!" And after the description of Dadaist hope, to discover an omni-intelligible language of art, therefore

"capable of uniting nations," he continues: "This was the protest against the lack of humanity of the preceding culture, and I thought the artist should also take a little responsibility for it. This is why I search for an international art, one that anyone anywhere can understand, exercise and appreciate." Here again are two opposite answers to the same question. Dadaism as an aggressive celebration of individualism and Dadaism as a fight against individualism. Does Dadaism mean both things? Can we also identify in the two answers hidden signs about the different tendencies of the Dadaist groups in Zurich and Berlin? The play of the confusion of opposites erases the common denominator that could once be identified.

Two weeks later the mirror-like reflections of the whitish table on the Spiegelgasse form another image: the morning of the 5th of February 1966 at Odeon Cafe—known then as hospitable refuge for many prominent artists—which in those days was still decked with balloons and paper wreaths as carnival decorations, as if they were intended to garnish it for the 50th anniversary of the birth of Dadaism. At the table with Peter Schifferli and Jean-Marc Seiler, Walter Mehring observes with challenging playfulness in his eyes: "It wasn't by chance that Dadaism appeared in Switzerland, predestined to be neutral, in the Seldwyla of geopolitics." The word "chance" was the keyword. With a gesture of his bony fingers, Mehring dispersed the giddiness in his eyes: "We just could not admit that something could be by chance. We did not acknowledge absolutely anything, except each oneself!" And, unintentionally, this assertion about chance became a post scriptum to our discussion about individualism. (Now

I assume a Dadaist right and I don't admit that the dialogue at Odeon Cafe took place eleven years before the meeting in the hotel room at the "Opera." Because in this memory, this phrase remains a post scriptum.)

This time it is not necessary to place myself before the stone navel. The word "chance" itself takes me back to the cold sun in Ticino on the 22nd November 1965. It was not by chance at all that at Locarno I witnessed a discussion between Hans Arp and Hans Richter, both Dadaists of the birth of the movement. Arp in Zurich, Richter in Berlin, I knew Arp's collages were made "according to the laws of randomness," but I was still surprised by the absolute dimension with which randomness was declared in this discussion the proper cause of creativity. As if he wanted to prevent the artist from becoming the mindless instrument of chance, Arp insisted on his observation: "The man is the one who makes this randomness." The man is the one who throws the dice, so that they can fall, just as he is the one to spread the pieces of paper on the surface so that they can combine into an image: "Yes, chance is what happens to us" declares Hans Arp, and he illustrates the complexity with which he understands what has been given and will be given to us with the example of a landscapist: "You don't go into a store and ask: "Please, give me ten landscapes," instead you find a landscape and you choose within that landscape." We cannot find something without chance putting that thing in front of our eyes. And when Richter reminded Arp that he, Arp himself, painted a landscape, at least one painting that was named "Landscape," Arp explained: "While I was painting those things, I was telling to myself, yes, this could be a landscape. Valleys, rivers,

lakes. But things are not so that anyone could say, here is a landscape— it's all the same to me... It could be called... Whatever... 'Cloud'... or something like that." Randomness thus established is not unleashing an uncalled force, but rather the unintentional result of some decisions taken by people. This is what I learned during that cold November day in Locarno.

Two Dadaists and two conceptions about chance and, moreover, two definitions of the same notion. And both of them are Dadaism, can be Dadaism, because Dadaism does not mean one, but *One and the Other*. Because Dadaism is not a doctrine, but an attitude. Thus there is not one Dadaism, but as many Dadaisms as Dadaists. "Chance depends less on our acknowledgement than we on it!" said a jester at a nearby table at the *Odeon*: "It's probably a peculiarity of randomness to show up even when you don't recognize it!" This is not what Mehring would have wanted to say. Two poles and one and the same rebellious attitude, tabula rasa and a new beginning, destroying rigidity to build the future.

"He who thinks of war, does not think!" in such a sentence Mehring's bitter scornful cynicism meets Tristan Tzara's radical terseness, Hülsenbeck's nihilism with Arp's or Richter's search of the truth. Richter was the one who confessed that day at Locarno: "Dadaism opened a door for me towards a new vision of life and art, in which the opposite poles of the oppositions were not in contrast, but they polarly sent one towards the other, that is, they remained together. This sentiment of life, therefore the inseparable of the oppositions, of yes and no, of destruction

and construction, of faith and infidelity, I owe this attitude towards life to Dadaism." The wall into which the navel of the world is embedded, this deposit of phrases and images, this wall I wanted to see from the other side too. The reverse of the medal. I saw the wall; its venues, its structure dissolved in stroboscopic light, speckling the darkness in the *Teens and Twens* club. My eyes had to search for support in objects and faces in that effusion of light, whose waves and reflections were regulated by the rhythm of the music and the phonon count in the boxes of the loudspeakers. And Ursula, who dragged me towards the dance floor, was probably not aware that she was dancing in the house of Dadaism, but surely not all the Dadaists would have disliked what she said, that I was much closer to the essential here, in dizziness, than in my repeated attempts not to lose my direction in the ups and downs of sound and light, that you must lose your direction in order to be able to measure the degree of your independence from things. The lesson of that evening was formulated by Dadaism too. The closing hour ordered by the police came and lights went out, the music was turned off. In 1916, it must have been so that at the closing hour the police entered the house. Marcel Janco described that hour to me, but he must have been confused about the time when he said: "After five weeks we had to leave *Cabaret Voltaire*. Why? Because at 9.00 p.m. the police came and knocked on the door blaring: 'This is the police, you have to close the house!' I fought people...four, five weeks...and one day we had to leave our entire work, all the paintings on the walls, everything was carried away from there and we had to find another place."

The fact that Dadaism did not die out at closing hour was due to a patron of the arts, Han Coray. He offered the Dadaists a gallery space in the house of the Sprüngli chocolate shop on the Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich's famous shopping street leading to the city's main train station. No doubt, this was a noble address even then, and for the Dadaists it was the chance to begin between the jaws of the lion by extracting the teeth, to yell the huge "Anti!" in enemy territory, to make art in the eye of the storm: "In the middle on the Bahnhofstrasse, in one of the most beautiful buildings in the center of Zurich," raved Marcel Janco, "Imagine what a riot it was, when right in the center of the city we could carry out our demonstrations every night, just like before at Cabaret Voltaire, at an even higher, better level." And if in 1916 the police spoiled the Dadaists' creative pleasure in the outbreak of fury with its firm closing hour, exactly 50 years later the police seemed to be reconciled with the promoters of disorder. Otherwise they wouldn't have lent Gianni (obviously: against receipt) the two "voice-guns", those trumpets with which we bellowed, already starting on the evening of February 5th, 1966, Dadaists' poems over the noise of the street, telling the passers-by with maximum volume about the arrival of the great *Derdiedas*.

The following day, with the finger on the trigger of one of these "voice-guns," the President of the municipal government, Emil Landolt, delivered the celebratory discourse from a window on the third floor of the house where exactly eighteen thousand two hundred sixty-two days or 50 years before, Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball and their comrades came together at the first riotous Dada

manifestation. I don't know who wrote that discourse for our President about the essence and the effect of Dadaism; but he added his own afterword: when, after delivering the speech, he turned in the staircase that actually shook and he finally reached firm ground, he summarized his bewilderment: "If I had known what the Dadaists really wanted, I wouldn't have delivered this speech." So something positive did come out of this speech: while he gave it, the President learnt about the essence of Dadaism.

For decades it remained unknown that we—because none of the surviving forefathers of Dadaism could have afforded to travel to Zurich—had to find replacements for the founders of Dadaism to celebrate the jubilee that took place at *Odeon*. To Hans Curiel, a pioneer in the theatre world, I'm grateful even today that he did not recant me when I introduced him to the audience as Richard Hülsenbeck. Initially, in my speech about Dadaism I wanted to declare Hülsenbeck as some guest in the mass of people in the congested "Odeon." And it wasn't until I presented a guest at a crowded table with the bouquet of "dadahlia" that I realized that he was Hans Curiel. Smiling slyly, privy to the rules of Dadaist behavior, he waved with the bouquet of paper flowers towards the storm of applause. The memorial celebration of Dadaism had to do without the real Dadaists also because the Zurich that celebrated Dadaism at that time was the official one... Dadaism actually became a national treasure towards the end of the '90s, when the Swiss National Bank put the head of Sophie Taeuber on the fifty Swiss Francs banknote. The rebellion, fully tamed, now changes hands.

Dadaism and the officials, this relation that resembled from the beginning the interplay between man and woman in the meteorological observatory—it was impossible for the two of them to look out the little window at the same time—this relation between aesthetic rebellion and official constraint of order seemed to reverse itself ten years later, when the last of the surviving Dadaists together with its sympathizers started to ask that Dada, the declared anti-art, Dada, the protest gesture against the bourgeoisie-sanctioned art business, Dada, the campaign against the museal, this Dada needed its own hall at the Zurich Art Museum. And as Dada entered the museum, reconciled with the once hostile authorities, mischievous young rebels tore the Dada art, bringing it loudly back into the street. The movement of the young people in the 1980/81 referred in many of its actions, slogans, demonstrations to the defiant absurd of the movement in 1916. From the clatter of the glass in the Windows and the tracks of the tear gas on the walls, there suddenly appeared among the many sprayed tirades inscriptions such as "Dada lives!" "An unfortunate abuse! Unlawful pretense and invocation of a court ennobled by history! Ravings stolen from the spiritual goods of others!" the administrators of order and pure spirit harshly cried. The profanation was rebuked. When I showed Marcel Janco the spray inscription "Dada lives!" on the wall at the Central, I didn't know whether this reminder would revolt him or cheer him up, him, the predecessor, if he would decide it was abuse or use of the spiritual material that he himself invented 65 years before. And Marcel Janco was glad: "I'm happy that in this little country, where we first expressed our revolutionary thoughts, they still exist

today, worldwide and in Zurich. Then I just say that Dadaism is not dead. The spirit of Dadaism is alive, not only in Zurich, but also worldwide." That the relation between the art of the art museums and street activity—the protection of monuments and the revival of a rebellious gesture—will be triggered at the same time from both parts, Hans Richter could not have been thinking about this yet when he talked about the mutual embedding of opposites. One Thing and the Other: it's not just the witnesses' weaker and weaker capacity to remember that leads to two answers to one question. An "or" is never between them.

One and Other: For more than ninety years experts in art history tried to find out how this movement ended up with the name "Dada." This question (of course!) never bothered the Dadaists. Because—as it should be expected—to this question too there are as many answers as Dadaists. And each has his own explanation. Hans Richter once said, very self-understood, that for him the origin was clear, since he had heard the two Romanians, Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara, confirming every phrase in their discussions with "Da, da!". As fantastic as some of the Dadaists' attempts to explain it might appear, metaphorical or parodist, at least one fact should be considered: three years before the group of artists would meet for the first time in Zurich, advertisements from the Bergmann perfumery for its hairspray "Dada" began to appear in newspapers and magazines. It's hard to imagine that the future Dadaists had not seen Bergmann's ads and posters, that they could have missed the characteristically small bottles with the label "Dada—hairspray for keeping hair stiff" in the windows of the Swiss barbershops.

That two answers do not necessarily need two respondents is confirmed by the dismayed exclamation "This cannot be said like that!" with which Walter Mehring reacted to the phrases I showed to him in September 1974, neatly typed on a sheet of paper. The phrases were his answers to questions I had asked him, on tape, during our daily meeting for a five o'clock drink at "Kronenhalle," always with the same spritz of Fendant wine and always sitting at the same table. "This cannot be said like that!" The exclamation sounded as if someone else had said those phrases, not himself. Because Mehring thought that much of what had been said could not be said like that, the transcription was now decorated with pen-written corrections. And because he insisted that the pronounced word "*rebellion*" should be substituted with the written notion "spiritual activity," one of my favorite sentences in the text of that conversation now sounds like this: "Any spiritual activity is of course a protest and a challenge!" What had been attuned to Dadaism, fits Dadaism exceeding. Now I am glad that it couldn't be said like that. "In this case any spiritual activity could be Dada?" I arrogantly asked. "Yes," was the answer, "as long as the spiritual activity incites more vexation and anxiety than dumb stagnation of thought!" The plate on Spiegelgasse is the monument of vexation. And in front of this monument, in front of the opening at the ending of the life-giving cord, I also remember that sentence with which Hans Richter reacted to my state of slight confusion at the of the lack of unity of means, of the dissonance of styles in Dadaism: "That's just it, Dada was not an artistic movement, but a new way of thinking, addressed to new people." Is there a

greater threat than a new way of thinking for those who search, terrified, for protection under the shield of habitude, full of holes, protection against any new and daring thought which also requires a new way of action? Both together. Both together make the whole, a single part will always remain a half. Finally, now I know again where this so oft-used expression comes from. "Both together," these words bring to my mind the memory that Hans Richter preceded the expression above with a digression about nihilism and the exultation of life, which melt together in Dadaism, and by listing all those things, forms and styles that had been stored up at the two extreme poles of the Dadaist spectrum: "Positive and negative: these are the two poles that mutually conditioned each other and out of which sprang the diversity of artistic means."

The Dadaists were those who, and now when I write, this becomes clear to me, taught me not to isolate the opposites, but observe them in their antagonistic game, to catch the trace of the particularity of the whole, and it must have been Walter Mehring who prompted me to imagine always anywhere and for anything also its opposite: "Up and down, black and white, weak and glorious, left and right, industriousness and self-accomplishment, Superman and Peter Pan, climax and loose, plastic and clay, the musty and the sublime, speculation and conviction, the usual and the good... Because you cannot opt only for one of the poles when you know the other. One alone always remains a half!"

And so that Zurich does not remain only a half, when I look in the depth of the navel on Spiegelgasse I

always see the opposite of Zurich too: "...a city where the youth is an age class and not a purchasing power class and age is a form of life and not a branch of industry, a city where progress doesn't necessarily bring progressive racism and increasing violence as apparently unavoidable consequences, a city whose windows are witnesses for the multitude of manifestations of life and not just for the necessity to dress up, a city that doesn't give to any wife of an Air France director the occasion to discover that Zurich is protected by a gold armor that doesn't let it breathe, a city where there is no talk about friendship when it's about clients, a city where hospitality is not measured by the turnover of restaurants and bars, a city that knows that Dadaism is available for us to use and that this Dadaism was far more hypertrophic than the Bergmann hairspray of the same name."

And because I am allowed only one post scriptum, I would like to tell you in short about the jesting smile on Hans Arp's lips when he corrected the frequent confusions stirred by Tristan Tzara's exclamation "Everything is Dada" by adding "Everything is a reaction to Dada!" Only now, during the conversation with Hans Richter, did he give back to Dada the subversive monstrosity taken from it by art history experts, only now did he celebrate the reactions whose source was Dada. Better said: *is* Dada.

II. Robby and Alfred

He tore the mustache from his face, dropped it into the cardboard box, and closed the cover. Since the beginning of his tour, he had followed the same ritual every evening, accompanied by a soft sigh of relief. He put his fingers in the jar with the almost completely transparent cream and smeared his face. As he rubbed the cream over his face, it transformed the reddish-brown make-up on his chin and forehead into an unsightly mess, a dullish plastic mask on his skin. The bright rouge on his cheeks didn't dissolve as easily, and he had to rub more vigorously to loosen it from his skin. Then he took a tissue from the box and wiped his face. With each stroke of the tissue, his face became more familiar again and he was able to recognize himself more clearly in the mirror above the make-up table in his dressing room. Hello!, he said to himself, here I am again, and dropped the fourth of the dank, gelatin-soaked tissues in the wastepaper basket.

The procedure had aged him by a good fifteen years: after the performance, time always passes more quickly than before; the ageing process always takes place more rapidly than the transformation into the twenty-two-year-old rebel Robby who wants to abandon his recently started studies because he has big plans in his head. He wants to change the world and knows how. But right now he is back in the world he knows, in the musty dressing room with the dreary light. Soon he will be back out in the familiar streets and the neon signs will be the same as always and the buses as well.

The applause was stronger yesterday; I should have slept longer last night, he thought while wiping the last remnants of black liner from his eyes. Why are they always giving me parts of characters so much younger than I? Emil has been getting older roles for a long time; he's only thirty-five and they're already giving him grandfathers to play. Perhaps I'm just younger than I really am. It was a comforting thought.

He had already pulled on his coat when he realized that he actually preferred his theater face to his own with its bloated skin and the pimples. By the time he entered the *Cafe Miami*, he was convinced that Robby's face suited him much better than the ordinary, post-performance distinctly tired-looking visage of Alfred Strossmann. Robby's face remained fresh and bright throughout all the acts of the play—spanning more than a decade—and the skin stayed firm and the eyes wide and alert. Although he had wiped Robby's features off his face, he wanted to carry the flashy, rebellious demeanor of his character into his own daily life, across the years. Robby can't do without me, he needs me, no one else.

"A beer," he said to Eva, the waitress at the *Miami*, as he did every evening after the performance. He brushed his finger across his upper lip, as if he had to wipe the foam from Robby's sparse mustache.

"Hey, Robby!" a girl called to him from among a group sitting a few chairs further along, where the bar curved into the reddish room. Alfred Strossmann stared into his glass, ignoring the greeting. The girls giggled and whispered about the play they had just seen in the theater. He felt scrutinized. He took a gulp from his glass.

"Hey, Robby!" the girl called again. He found it easy to pretend that he didn't hear her. He watched the girls from the corner of his eye. The blond one looked very appealing, obviously not one of the rapturous teenage fans; he felt she might have been able to understand his character. Then he saw that her laughter came from deep inside. He sipped his beer.

"Hey, Robby!" he heard one of the girls call to him again.

"Are you talking to me?" he asked across the bar. "My name is Alfred Strossmann." But the girl continued as if he hadn't said anything. "I think it's great that you fight against your parents and the teachers and the officials who want to make you into computer fodder. You're not a number; you're Robby. You're not just a code; you're Robby. What goes on in your brain would overload any chip. You want to experience life, not watch it on the screen." He brushed his hair with a gesture of embarrassment and stared into his glass.

"Hey, Robby!" the girl raised her voice so that he could no longer pretend that he didn't hear.

"I am Alfred Strossmann," he said dryly. He forced himself to be friendly and turned towards the girls. The blond one nudged her friend, then continued: "Hey, Robby, we think alike, you and I, the electronic cannibals bore me as much as they bore you. I want to feel myself and the world around me. I shudder when I think that it's possible to create a true-to-life clone of every human being as long as all the characteristics are keyed in properly. Let's go, Robby! We'll show them that they can't do that to us! I shudder when I imagine how hordes of highly-trained

computer programmers will soon come marching six abreast out of every school in the country. This panic we have in common, you and I."

He turned away again and reached for his glass. He rubbed his finger along the rim to indicate he was thinking about something else.

"Hey, Robby!" the girl called again, a touch of familiarity in her voice. His index finger continued to circle the rim of his glass. "Please do me a favor, will you?" He turned to face the girl. "I'm Bettina. Please, Robby... I have a collection. And you're still missing." His glass was empty. "Well," he said, as if it were a word of farewell. He pushed three coins across the bar. "Please, do me a favor!" He felt an uncomfortable pressure in his chest, wanted to say, "I am Alfred Strossmann." The girl took a piece of paper from her purse. "Please sign here. I collect autographs ... of celebrities. I would be really happy if you did." Then he remembered that he had wanted to say, "I am Alfred Strossmann." The fingers of his right hand twitched nervously on the bar. The girl continued, "I saw you at the theatre today. We have much in common, you, Robby, and I. Tell me you know that. Sign my paper, please." Her voice was full of urgency. She thrust her hand with the piece of paper towards him. He stared blankly at the paper. When he realized what he was doing, it seemed to him as if he had been staring at the paper for a long time. He tried to think the piece of paper out of his life.

He wasn't aware that he reached for his pen; in his mind he was already standing outside where the taxis were waiting, he didn't want to put his pen to the paper, imagined himself in a taxi driving past the shopping center, and, as

his hand was writing, climbing out of the taxi and walking towards his front door. "Alfred Strossmann," he had written on the piece of paper. As he walked away from the bar and towards the revolving door, he could see in the mirror reflecting the bar how the girls were trying to decipher what he had written. He heard, as if from a great distance, how the brunette said to the blonde, "That wasn't Robby at all." Bettina's friend took the folded piece of paper from her. "You're right," she said. "This isn't Robby Driver's autograph." She unfolded the paper. And gasped. The top half of the paper was covered with typed lines, lines about fever and nausea, about the flu and the fact that Bettina wasn't able to attend school that afternoon. Bettina nodded self-consciously, suddenly embarrassed by her friend's unexpected discovery. She took a sip from her Pepsi. "It's a note. I didn't go to school this afternoon... I went to the cinema. I wanted to see *Absolute Beginners*. It has a lot to do with me and my life. And since the play with Robby Driver seems to be the talk of the town these days ... I wanted..." she brushed nervously through her hair, "I wanted... Robby to sign the note. He is like a friend, he understands me. Robby's signature would have impressed my teacher a lot more than my father's. My teacher would have known with whom he was dealing... with Robby Driver, who thinks exactly the way I do... and who supports what I do." She crumpled the piece of paper in her hand. "Funny," she said. "The guy seemed to look like Robby."

"Why did I let myself get so involved with this character?" Alfred Strossmann asked himself as he stood by the curb underneath the taxi sign. "He's become like a

friend, but I'm sure he wouldn't like it if I passed myself as him... if I took his place. I am Alfred, and Robby is someone else. I play his character, give him my body and my voice. I can't be Robby... I can't allow myself to be Robby, not even in front of the girls. I can't do that to a friend."

A taxi pulled up, and he said to himself as he climbed in, "Perhaps it isn't all that bad that the teachers train the young people to be competent computer programmers. The world needs computer programmers, that's for sure..." the taxi driver revved the engine, "...No matter how much Robby protests that it doesn't."

III. Burlesque

The music crescendoed as Dr. Seward carried the two candelabra towards the crucifix and as "The End" appeared on the screen, superimposed on the image of Count Dracula slowly disintegrating to ashes. The Cinema Ambra Jovinelli becomes agitated. The spectators rise from their seats, not to leave, but to secure themselves a new seat in one of the front rows, the luckiest ones in the very first row. The change has to take place quickly, before the people come for the next set of trailers and the new movie.

The cinema fills up quickly; hardly a seat remains empty. Suburbanites, farmers distinguishing themselves by the way they glance around as they sidle into the rows with awkward agility, soldiers in smelly uniforms with some time on their hands before roll call at the barracks sprawl into the seats. Some put their feet on the back of the seat in front of them and only reluctantly pull them back for someone else to sit down. Above the railing of the balcony, the shoe soles jut out of those whose pocket money wasn't enough for a seat downstairs. Elbows are fighting for possession of the armrests separating the seats. Clouds of cigarette smoke hover above the rows in semi-darkness. The beam of light from the booth above loses much of its intensity as it penetrates the fog to project the commercials for *Baci Perugnio* and *Campari Bitter* on the creased screen. In the aisles on both sides of the rows of seats, those with tickets for standing room only are jostling for the best views of the screen. Hardly anyone responds to the ice cream vendor's constant calling with a hand holding out a hundred lire coin. Only two or three spectators express a

desire for his wares, and they engage in the ritual of passing money and receiving the ice cream bars with such pointed nonchalance as to indicate very clearly to everybody that the anticipation of the impending spectacle isn't distracting them in the least. Others hide their anticipation behind a newspaper, staring at the pages with feigned concentration as if they hadn't read all the news before already.

Then the screen jerks upwards and slowly disappears into the theatre heaven. The hum of words, which has been filling the cinema like the drone of a swarm of insects, is silenced for a few moments. But it starts up again almost immediately because no jerking of the washed-out red material of the descending curtain can relieve the atmosphere of expectation. Even those who, in anticipation of the band's fanfare, have folded their newspapers, open them up again as if nothing had happened.

The whirl of voices ebbs again. Three men in white shirts with open collars—a tie would have made playing an instrument a torture in the sweltering hall—are squeezing themselves into the pit in front of the stage and clamber behind their music stands. The casual sounds of the musicians' tuning the piano, the trumpet and the drums are drowned out by the renewed murmurs and an occasional shout from the audience. Suddenly there is silence. The footlights flicker on, throwing beams of light across the curtain. A thousand pairs of eyes are fixed on the bright strip of light above the apron, those two inches of space between the stage boards and the curtain. Everyone tries to guess from the shoes and the cuffs visible in the strip of light what the long-awaited surprise will be.

Eight pairs of high-heeled women's shoes and a brown cuff are lining up center stage. A fanfare explodes in the pit, *the trumpet slavers with anticipation*: the curtain yanks open. The dancers scurry to the front of the stage amid the cracks of a whip.

The girls jerk their legs up and down, providing the rhythm for the scattered applause greeting the opening of the show. The dancers are clad in blue army jackets with broad red collars and gold epaulettes. Medals with colorful ribbons have been pinned to the jackets where they stretch over their bosoms. On top of blond wigs tower tall blue hats adorned with purple boas whipping to the rhythm of the dance steps. Neither the bunched-up net stockings nor a few missing buttons on the jackets diminish the pleasure the adroit dancers provide.

The clumsy ineptness of the greying gentlemen in the brown suit who, flanked on either side by four of the plucky soldiers, futilely attempts to mimic the fancy legwork the roguish soldiery displays, earns roaring applause. The clapping almost drowns out the words the dancers are trying to sing. If one hadn't seen the bright red lips of the girls move, nobody would have realized that they were singing, "We are the army of frivolity, our weapon is sex." That the gentleman at the center is a comedian can easily be discerned by the fact that his trousers are much too loose.

The soldiers disappear into the curtains on either side of the stage amid leg shaking and hip swinging and leave the comedian alone on the stage. He winks at the audience and thanks them for the applause, which he manages to renew again and again with his awkward

gestures of appreciation. The applause stops. A young man enters stage right, wearing a well-fitting though rather threadbare blue suit, lanky and youthfully bouncy, befitting his role. He calls out, "Ciao, Cece!" and is surprised to be meeting Cece here, of all places. Cece tells him with a rather well-rehearsed wiliness in his smile that his wife has gone to Naples and he wants to land a playmate for the evening. "How does one do that?" the young man asks. Cece answers him with gestures: a polite bow, holding out a hand, hooking arms, a quick thrust of the lower body, everything in gestures because his words are drowned out by the "Ooooooh!" of the astonished audience as the soubrette makes her coquettish entrance through the curtains on the left and positions herself at the edge of the stage, swaying her hips seductively as if waiting for a street car. The muttering changes into applause. Yes, it is she, the soubrette, whose name "Wanda Sirel" graces the billboard above the entrance to the theatre. Each flicker of her long eye lashes is greeted with renewed applause, and when she thrusts her hips towards the audience from her waiting-for-a-street-car stance, the audience breaks into an enthusiastic "*Aah, la mossa!*" Cece becomes agitated by the sight of the short, tight skirt revealing the onset of sensuous curves above the thighs. With a quick gesture, rewarded by an outbreak of laughter, he indicates where he itches.

Proud to be able to demonstrate his seductive abilities to the young gallant, Cece approaches the soubrette and awkwardly executes his gestures in front of her, a polite bow, holding out a hand, hooking arms. The soubrette mimics indignation at the obvious suggestiveness, her slap in Cece's face accentuated by a drum roll. The

audience breaks into raucous laughter. While Cece rubs his seemingly burning cheek, the young gallant begins to execute the same gestures in front of the attractively attired young woman. But this time, her reaction is quite different. The sweet young thing reciprocates each of his gestures, the bow, the holding out of a hand, the hooking of the arms, the blowing of a kiss, and the two disappear arm in arm into the curtains with a mimed suggestion of things to come. Cece stares bewildered into the audience. The fanfare from the piano, trumpet, and drums initiates renewed applause.

Eight cancan dancers rush onto the stage, dancing around Gigolo and Gigolette, the red wings of the *Moulin Rouge* rotating in the background.

The loudspeaker announces the *piu grande cantate del teatro italiano*, and a young tenor in a white tuxedo leaps buoyantly into the floodlight. The audience isn't satisfied with just "O, sole mio!" and "Luna chiara." With exaggerated gestures, his mouth wrenched wide open for a short-winded bel canto, the tenor belches "La donna e mobile" into the microphone. The audience rewards his generosity with a lengthy round of applause.

Two clowns rushing onto the stage to perform their skit "The Merry Painters" apparently can't compensate the audience for the departure of the singer, despite a considerable repertoire of comical tricks and jokes. Only the ballet manages to do that with their performance of "Goldfinger," an enactment of a jewelry heist by eight gangster brides. The play comes to an abrupt and surprising end when the soubrette in a black James Bond tuxedo fells the felons with eight shots from her wooden revolver. But

the applause is premature: with two quick gestures, she rips the James Bond costume off and transforms herself into Jet Set Supergirl, grabs the jewelry from the dead hands and drapes the glistening strands lasciviously around her body. "Glitter corrupts!" she breathes into the dimming floodlights.

The sketchy applause intensifies immediately when Cece reappears in front of the curtain, his knees knocking unsteadily as it behooves a comedian. Together with his partner, he performs a skit announced as "The Secret Lover in the Wardrobe." Wanda Sirel plays the wife with the rolling pin. The rolling pin is made of styrofoam. Then another trumpet, piano, and drums fanfare announces a second appearance by the ballet troupe. A billboard indicates that the scene takes place in a city street. The eight dancers parade up and down in front of the billboard, waving their arms to the rhythm of the music, speeding up their steps and jumping up and down as the music swells. They separate into two groups of four, each quartet moving to one side of the billboard and linking their arms, and try to kick their rather heavy legs into the air. The musicians break into another fanfare. The billboard tears into shreds to a crescendo of drums, and Wanda Sirel steps brazenly through the torn paper. As the final notes from the trumpet echo through the hall, the star of Trottolino's burlesque places her hand coquettishly on her swaying hip to become the focal point of the climactic tableau freezing into a still life among scattered applause.

The comedian, holding a microphone in his hand and pulling the cable behind him, interrupts the applause. He is surrounded by the eight dancers still flanking Wanda

and trying to relax their strained muscles with occasional discreet movements of their legs. The stage light changes. Everything is bright. "And now, our contest!" the comedian announces. With an unexpected urbane nonchalance in his voice, he adds, "Everyone has a chance. The grand prize is very alluring." He enunciates without emotion, as if there weren't nine enticing temptresses standing behind him, and explains, "The contest is very simple. Whoever gets up on the stage before anyone else, is the winner." Then he quickly glances at Wanda, gesturing with the elegance of an experienced showman, and winks at her with a knowing and promising smile. "The prize is sweet," he says. "No, not candies. The winner gets to kiss our soubrette!"

The audience responds with a deep murmur, sounding more like a sigh, from the darkness of the hall. "Now we'll see who's a real man. We'll start on the count of three!" He lifts his right arm up in the air, his left still holding the microphone. The darkness echoes with the sound of wooden seats snapping back, words flying back and forth, the clamor of commotion. "One... Does everyone understand the conditions of the contest? All right, one... two... Everybody up now! One... two ..." he drops his hand: "Three!"

All hell breaks loose. Dozens of spectators rush towards the stage in the darkness. Somebody complains that those at the end of the rows have an unfair advantage. People with seats in the middle scramble towards the aisles, clambering over those who have stayed in their seats. There's no time for apologies. Everywhere people trample over each other, push and shove and shout, as if the theatre were being evacuated. In the vestibule, spectators from the

gallery storm down the staircase. Many are running, hurrying, flying; others are throwing their bodies stagewards. It is as if the entire hall were flowing towards the stage: the hollow boom of feet on the wooden floor, the thudding of arms and hands shoving their way through the heaving mass, the hue and cry of fierce competition. Stageward, at any cost. Stageward, everyone against everyone else.

The stream of people backs up against the stairways leading to the stage across the orchestra pit on either side. More and more hopefuls press towards and up the stairs, and those who have managed to reach the second step from the top claw at those who have already fought their way to the top and try to drag them back down. Strong arms reach from the third step to grab the men on the second step and prevent them from climbing any higher. Someone tries to crawl to the top between the legs of the others and gets wedged between the steps and the mass of fighting bodies. Where the force of elbows isn't enough to fight their way through the throng, the men use their fists. Ever more daredevils throw themselves against the heaving mass, against the tangle of arms, legs, backs, stomachs, and heads. Everyone claws at everyone else, tries to get past the others, tries to fend off the ones clawing from below and behind. But the bodies are wedged so tightly against the stairways by now that no one can get away from anyone else anymore. It's become impossible to dodge blows; each one becomes the others' victim. The blows with which the ones at the top try to free themselves from the seething throng only incite the opposition below. A quick grasp of a heel and a yank topples the one who thought himself

closest to the prize. The words the comedian screams into the microphone above the teeming mass of people fighting their way up the stairs are meant as an encouragement, a teasing and cajoling enticement to be the first, not as an attempt at maintaining order in the hall. The shoe which belonged to the one who fell from the top becomes a weapon for a man on the third step who tries to pull someone else down the stairs. A mass of bodies in restless motion, screaming and cursing, the tearing of clothes inaudible in the clamor.

Nobody has noticed Sunny. He has been sitting on top of the teeming mass for quite some time, tossed hither and thither by the backward and forward motions of the bodies beneath him. Using his crutches as a ladder, he put them against the wall of bodies and climbed up.

Now he is up on top, sitting on the heads wedged tightly together. He can't remember how he managed to get up there. He is up on top. He only remembers the pain in his muscles, the heaving, the thrust of the bodies. He is riding the whipping heads like a jockey, his right hand holding on to a tuft of hair, his left leg wedged against a shoulder. He balances his body with the swaying of his hip. It takes strength to keep his balance, not to be thrown off by the multi-headed horse. From one tuft of hair to the next, from one shoulder to another, he moves slowly towards the stage. When a head suddenly disappears from underneath him, he grabs a neck with his right arm, anchoring himself so as not to get drowned in the heaving mass. He has to use his right arm to anchor himself. His left arm is too weak to accomplish much.

He reaches out again with his right hand. A cap covers the next head, and he doesn't have to worry about pulling out the man's hair. He presses a knee against a neck. Then he grabs a head again and pulls himself forward. Sunny feels a rolling beneath him, the sensation of being a climber on a steep scree falling away beneath his feet. This is what an earthquake must feel like, he thinks to himself, and reminds himself just in time not to lose his precarious balance. Then he moves another head closer to the stage.

Every time he grabs on to a head and the man below him gets thrown back by the throng, Sunny gets pulled back as well. One head forwards, two heads back, it seems to him. His torso suddenly tips forward. Someone has yanked his hand from the head on which it rested. His forehead bangs against a skull. The impact smarts. It seems to him as if he had been sitting up here for a long time, perhaps forever, up above the heads of those who are fighting their way towards the stage below him.

I have to get ahead, I have to get ahead, Sunny keeps telling himself. I have a right to the prize, I have a right to be with Wanda Sirel, more than anyone else. A few times he can actually see her. When he has the courage to look up, but only when he has a steady shoulder under his knees, he can actually see her, swaying her hips up on the stage, her tight gilded costume molded to her body like a skin. It would be a bathing suit, Sunny thinks to himself, if it weren't cut high in the hips to make her legs look longer. She must be seeing me, he thinks, how I'm coming to her, way up here. Then a sudden wave below him throws Sunny forwards. Just not back again, the thought flashes through his mind, I am the one who deserves the kiss and

everything that goes with it, not anyone else. And as he is being tossed back and forth by the heaving mass of bodies underneath him, Sunny remembers everything again, as if it were happening just now.

All the many visits, back then, to the *Ambra Jovinelli*, every time Impresario Trottolino's burlesque came to Rome and Wanda Sirel's name was on the poster by the entrance to the cinema. He always entered the cinema during the final scenes of the feature film, before the onset of the audience's clambering towards the front rows. That way he ensured himself a good seat every time, often in the very first row. Seven times he had to deliver coffee from the *Bar Americano* to the neighboring offices on those days to make enough money in tips to pay for the admission. When he sat in his good seat, neither the skits nor the vocal performances, clowns or magicians made any impression on him, nothing touched him, he was waiting for Wanda Sirel and for the fanfare announcing her appearance. For three years he sat at the front of the cinema and stared at Wanda Sirel whenever she performed in Rome, and that happened four or five times a year. He knew every one of her movements, new exactly how each gesture was executed and completed. He had never seen a woman move the way she moved.

He wished all the women who came into the *Bar Americano* for a coffee or a *Campari* with their husbands or lovers would wear clothes like Wanda Sirel wore, those outfits, cut high in the hips, that made the legs look so long. Some nights he dreamt of salamanders or martens who had Wanda Sirel's face. Once when he saw an anteater on television moving restlessly back and forth in its cage with

an aggressive kind of suppleness, he said to himself, this is how Wanda Sirel moves. And then he felt dejected that he couldn't think of anything else besides animals to which he could compare Wanda Sirel. He would have loved to compare her to a fir, a meringue, a cigarette lighter, soap, or a postal scale, but he couldn't think of any characteristics in these things that would have applied to Wanda. The only things he could ever think of were animals. Once he compared her to a *maraschino*, and his boss at the *Bar Americano* laughed at him. For three years, Sunny watched Wanda Sirel from his seat, five times a year, and the year before last he had the distinct impression that the swaying of her hips, her constant smiles, the glint in her eyes, the coy swinging of a leg or the reaching out of an arm were giving him signs, inviting him to go up on the stage with her. He knew every movement Wanda Sirel made in any given part of these frivolous stage performances. He knew her completely, and she should, he was sure, have known him also for a long time already. She just doesn't let on, he thought to himself, and then: what would the patrons of the *Bar Americano* say if he suddenly walked in with Wanda Sirel at his arm? He would want to drink a *maraschino* with her. She would be leaning against the bar in her glittery costume. And then she would have to hurry off to her next performance.

Sunny can see her now in front of and above him while his body is being rattled back and forth by the men struggling beneath him: the performance here in the *Ambra Jovinelli* in February of last year. He had been sitting there again, at the front where he had a good view, and had been staring at Wanda Sirel, never taking his eyes off her. Now

is the time, he had thought to himself, now or never. After the performance, he waited outside the side door, at one thirty in the morning. The last performance of the evening was over, and she had to come out through the side door. He was sure she didn't live in the cinema and perhaps, he was hoping, she would write something nice on the picture he had cut from the newspaper. A cold, drizzly rain soaked his clothes, rain mixed with snow. He waited. It was taking a long time for her to come, but it didn't matter that he was freezing. He wondered what was taking her so long, knowing the performance had been over a long time ago.

Then she came. She came through the side door with several of the girls from the ballet, and Sunny found it difficult to determine which one of them was Wanda Sirel. They all looked like ordinary girls. He stood quietly, without excitement, as if it were quite natural for him to be standing there. It surprised him that he was able to just stand there like that. He watched the girls joking with each other under their umbrellas; their laughter didn't bother him. When he recognized Wanda Sirel in the group, he wondered why he wasn't disappointed that she wasn't wearing the costume she usually wore, the one with the high cut in the hips that made the legs look so long. Her blond, curly hair was different, too; it was brown and combed backwards and tied in a ponytail. He surmised that was how it had to be. He observed her closely.

Wanda Sirel detached herself from the group, stepped to the curb, and hailed a taxi. Now's the time, now I have to do it, he said to himself, and walked towards the cab. He saw Wanda Sirel in the back seat of the cab, tempting and provocative as she snuggled tightly into her

dark coat. The car door was still open and Sunny saw that Wanda wasn't wearing the high-heeled stage shoes anymore, either. He stepped up to the cab. The engine revved, and he realized he had never thought about what he wanted to say to her. He leaned towards the window. Surely she had to recognize him. The door slammed shut. The spinning wheels sprayed his trousers. The taxi drove off.

The picture from the newspaper! Now he remembered. He had cut it out of the advertisement announcing Trottolino's burlesque in the cinema. She couldn't have recognized him in the rain and in this darkness. I have to declare myself, or she'll be gone. He pulled the picture from his pocket and ran after the disappearing taxi. Up there, at the red light, I'll catch up with them. Snow and rain whipped across his face. The neon lights on the facades of the buildings blurred, and the taxi's tail lights dissolved into large red blotches. He kept his eyes on the red blotches as he ran, out of breath, along the deserted street, streetlights reflecting from large puddles.

His rasping breath wrenched his throat as he thrust the picture into the open car window. He could hear an engine hammering behind him and the swishing of tires on the rain-drenched asphalt. The traffic light changed to green. All he could see was two dull red spots, and a green one above them. Then he felt a blow. The neon lights tipped sideways. Sunny didn't scream. He heard the screeching of brakes and felt that something had happened to him.

He was in the hospital for five months. He could feel his body under the layers of gypsum and bandages. He didn't know what had happened to him until somebody told him. Above all, he wished that Wanda Sirel would pay him a visit in the hospital. That would, after all, have been the proper thing to do.

Sunny changed. He was no longer the jovial helper from the *Bar Americano* who always hummed to himself as he juggled the tray loaded with coffee cups through the streets of the neighborhood and whose almost wanton joyousness his customers had honored with tips and with the nickname "Sunny." He had to get to know himself slowly again. When he stood in front of the mirror with his crutches, he could recognize himself by his face. His body seemed to belong to someone else. His left leg no longer responded to his will, the crutches had to do the stepping for him. He could still move his left arm, but it seemed to be drained of all strength. It dangled from a shoulder which itself was hanging downwards at an angle. He was having great difficulties speaking, and even when he pressed all his strength into his vocal cords, he could only manage a whisper. He was glad that his neighbors still recognized him and greeted him with "Ciao, Sunny!" when he dragged himself over to the gas station in the evening, the meeting place where his colleagues sat on their motorcycles and passed the time talking about girls. He hadn't dreamt about salamanders with Wanda Sirel's face anymore since the accident.

He didn't go to the *Ambra Jovinelli* for more than a year. He wanted to punish Wanda Sirel with his absence. But then he thought that perhaps Wanda Sirel didn't realize

that his absence was meant as punishment. Besides, he would have liked to know what she looked like now. He was going to see for himself.

Sunny's left foot has hooked itself under the shoulder of a man who has just been pushed back two steps by the horde. If he could only manage to lift the leg with his right hand he could unhook himself. Sunny has fallen two steps back down again as well. But he wants to be up on the stage, that's all he wants, he says, tells himself again. He has a right to be noticed by Wanda Sirel. A man who has managed to cut himself a path through the heaving and shoving mass with his boxer fists has unwittingly carried him a step higher again. Sunny's brown hair is matted with perspiration. Beneath the rider, a pair of glasses shatters. The curses are meant for the glasses, not for being squished in the rush for the stage. Someone hits someone over the head. Sunny can hear the impact in the commotion.

A young man, the youngest of them all, tears himself loose from the top step and puts one foot on the stage. That should be me, Sunny tells himself desperately, I have a right to that. Besides, I told my friends at the gas station I would kiss a girl before I'm twenty. A sinewy hand grabs the young man's belt and pulls him back into the throng. Sunny realizes that he can best move ahead by matching the movements beneath him, not to resist the undulations of the heads but to let himself go. That way, the movement of those beneath him would carry him up the steps. He lets himself go. He balances himself on top of the heads, he doesn't have to grab their hair anymore. He feels himself carried along by the waves under him. The sensation makes him feel good. Now and then the

colorfully-lit figure of Wanda Sirel moves across the horizon of heads. Just don't make a mistake now, Sunny thinks. Soon my wish will come true. While his right hand searches for a new head, pictures float past his eyes again.

The can of cocoa looms large before his eyes. Its content, this dark brown powder. He used to think about cocoa often when he was a nine-year-old. He couldn't understand that cocoa only existed to be sprinkled into warm milk. He didn't believe his mother when she told him cocoa couldn't be used for anything else. One has to try things, he had told himself. Why should apples only exist for eating, airplanes only for flying? A newspaper only for reading, a chair only for sitting? And why glue only for gluing? There were things which had not even been tried yet. And these he wanted to do.

On that morning, school was out earlier than usual. Luigi, who lived three houses down the street from him, always walked home with him. When they reached Sunny's house, he said to Luigi, "Come, I want to show you something." He knew that his mother was helping out at Moretti's vegetable stand at the market on Tuesdays. Luigi wanted to see what he had to show him. When they were climbing the stairs to the apartment, Sunny wondered whether it was right to show it to anyone. In the kitchen he took the can of cocoa from the shelf. The can was decorated with strange-looking figures, framed with interlacing bands.

He put the can on the kitchen counter and opened the lid. The powder was fine as dust, very soft, it would feel good to put his hand into it. Sunny didn't need any encouragement. He put both his hands into the powder. A

good feeling, even on the back of the hands. He began to rub the palms of his hands together, pulled the thumb of the right hand between the thumb and the index finger of the left, deep down in the can, and the cocoa felt delicious against his skin. Luigi watched and didn't know what to say. Sunny stroked the back of his one hand with the fingers of the other and rubbed his fingers together, as if washing his hands. "What are you doing?" Luigi asked. "I'm washing my hands," Sunny replied.

His classmates stared at Sunny when Luigi told them at school in the afternoon that Sunny had washed his hands in cocoa. Sunny liked the way his classmates looked at him. On Thursday, when his mother was helping out at the market again, eight of his classmates stood in the kitchen and watched as Sunny washed his hands in cocoa. More than eight wouldn't have fitted into the kitchen, Sunny told himself. A few days later, he showed it to eight other classmates. When they had all seen him do it, he regretted that there weren't any more people he could show it to. He never took any of the girls in his class up to the kitchen. He told himself it was better if they didn't see it. When the last spectators from his class took their leave he said, "I could also cook a newspaper, or paint a wall with soap." To himself he thought, "I could paint my face with chocolate." After that, he didn't wash his hands in cocoa any more. It wasn't any fun when there wasn't anybody to watch. I'll find something else I can show. Sunny was sure of that.

Weeks later, when his father was screaming furiously at him, "What a report card! I don't know what

will become of you!" Sunny answered, "I want a job where people can watch me."

His father didn't want to know what he meant by that. He had already made certain plans. His boss, the owner of a small automotive repair shop where he worked, had casually remarked one day that he could really use an assistant. The father immediately thought of Sunny. Assistant, that would be a good beginning; it might lead to an apprenticeship someday. He explained the opportunity to Sunny during lunch. Yes, Sunny pondered, if the customers would stay to watch him work, that would be a good idea. But nobody hangs around to watch somebody work in a garage.

Sunny tried to come up with some other suggestions. Stunt flier, people crane their necks to watch them, or water ski instructor, even motorcyclists stop along the shore. Pizza maker, all the patrons in the restaurant watch them when they throw the dough into the air and it circles overhead. Besides, he liked the smell of fresh pizza better than the stench of oil and gasoline.

On Sunday, the family drove to the beach. His father was always very proud of the progress Sunny made with his swimming. He stood on the quay and watched in amazement as Sunny shot through the water. "Like a dolphin," he once said. Now he was watching Sunny diving for stones and sea urchins. Now and then, Sunny also brought some mussels to the quay. Passersby stopped and admired the treasures from the ocean. A horde of street boys looked at Sunny and watched as he kept disappearing under water. Sunny felt good. The next time he surfaced, he

called to his father, "If I can't learn a trade where people will watch me, I'll dive and never come back up again!"

The can of cocoa disappears from his mind, and the sea urchins. Sunny sees the undulating heads beneath him again. He has the feeling that he is progressing more easily now. The motion of the mass of bodies under him has become more restricted. The men are pressed together so tightly that there is little room for movement. The large waves seem to have subsided. He is moving on top of a solid mass of bodies now, heads and shoulders. When the strongest ones among the contestants pull back one of the more aggressive younger ones, the whole mass starts to wobble.

Actually it's not enough, Sunny thinks, that people just watch, and he thinks of the images that had formed in his mind. Just watching wouldn't be enough, the act of watching him would also have to bring the people pleasure. They would have to be watching him with enthusiasm. That would be perfect. A pull from above has caused the mass of bodies to fall back. Some have tripped over the lowest step back onto the floor. But they persevere; the comedian makes sure of that with his encouraging cries. The dancers are staring blankly into the dimness, as if there were no dangerous pushing and shoving on the stairs crossing the orchestra pit to the stage. Are they so used to the scene?

As the wall of heads briefly parts and reveals Wanda Sirel up on the stage, Sunny thinks he can detect a strange smile playing across her pursed lips, and he doesn't like what he sees. She isn't enjoying herself, he thinks. Her smile is full of derision. I don't deserve that. During the sudden move back down the stairs, another surge of

pushing and shoving has come into the ball of bodies. The ball of people. Now there is room again for hitting and punching. Sunny barely prevents crashing down into a chasm which has suddenly opened up between the bodies by bracing himself against a forehead. At the same moment, there's a new thrust from below, and the chasm closes up again. People are rattling each other; there's nothing else that can be done. One contestant is spread out across the top step, held down momentarily by numerous feet and hands, then the pulsing mass sucks him back into itself. The whole panting bundle closes in. And with it, Sunny has also been brought a step closer to his dream. I'm getting there, he tells himself, and my left leg is helping along. Only three more rows of heads to go. He shoves his right knee another shoulder forward. He is happy that he has been able to move ahead.

He sees the drawings. He sees the heads of his classmates and his teacher's face bent over the drawing. They had been given an hour of class time. For the first time, their art teacher hadn't put a chair and a flask in front of his pupils. This time the topic was open: "Everybody draws what he wants." Walter drew a locomotive and Fernando the interior of a tobacco store. On Angela's paper was a giraffe.

Then Sunny had to show his drawing. He hadn't filled just one sheet but eight. Ah yes, Sunny, his classmates were thinking, always Sunny. They looked perplexed when Sunny spread the sheets in front of them. There was no locomotive, no tobacco store, and no giraffe. There were lines, bands, crossing each other, intertwining with each other. On each sheet, the bands were arranged in

different ways, the lines forming new networks, and where they crossed they divided into branches, pencil strokes forming a pattern nobody recognized. The class had never seen anything like this.

The eyes strayed from the sheets and looked at Sunny's face. "What is this?" the teacher asked. Sunny pointed to the lines radiating from the intersections. "This is a thing." The pupils knew their teacher wouldn't tolerate an impudent answer. "This is a thing," Sunny repeated without guile. "You don't know yourself what you have drawn!" the teacher shouted. "Yes, I do know," Sunny said. "This is a thing." "There is no such thing as a thing," the teacher hissed. "There are locomotives and giraffes and God knows what else." "I always wanted to draw a thing," Sunny said, and they all looked at his face. "And all this, these lines here, what's this supposed to mean?" Sunny didn't say anything. "What on earth were you thinking?" Sunny didn't say anything. "What is this nonsense supposed to represent?" Sunny didn't say anything. "Say something!" Sunny thought about what he should say. "I have my ways to get you to talk!" Sunny spoke. "I don't know what it is. I was hoping all of you would be able to tell me." "It's a thatched roof!" Angela blurted out. "Impossible!" the teacher hissed. "On a thatched roof, the straw runs parallel, and the roof is sloped." "It's not a thatched roof," Sunny said. "Corn stalks with wilting leaves!" Luigi shouted. Sunny didn't speak for a long time. Everything remained quiet, and Sunny liked that. Then he said, "It's not corn stalks." The teacher tried to bring the incident to an end. "An electric control panel with wires." Sunny knew it wasn't an electric control panel with wires. He said so.

The teacher lost his patience. "Sunny, if you don't tell us what the drawing represents, I won't take you on the class excursion tomorrow." It's strokes and things, Sunny wanted to say and he didn't say it because he knew that nobody would understand. "It's a tablecloth," Sunny said and he knew very well that it wasn't a tablecloth. The teacher shook his head. He had never seen a tablecloth with such a large mesh. It's things that can't be talked about, Sunny said to himself. He hadn't thought about the can of cocoa in five years, nor about the old-fashioned ornaments with which it was decorated. Not until now.

Sunny was allowed to go on the excursion. Far out of the city, on a hill side, the teacher and his pupils collected plants for the herbarium. Flowers, blossoms, and leaves. The pupils roamed the hill side, picking a wild rose here, a blackthorn leaf there. Sunny thought about the day before. He felt defeated, he had to say "tablecloth." While Sunny put an arnica flower between two sheets of blotting paper, he thought about the incident. He was already quite far above the path leading along the hill side. He was finding leaves whose names he didn't even know. He found a flower with gaping red petals and a bright yellow pistil. It could be a wound, he thought.

He could hear the teacher shouting. There was a swamp about a kilometer ahead. There they would find a completely different flora. From up where he was, he could see the pupils returning to the road and falling in behind the teacher, walking towards the swamp on the other side of the forest. Sunny stayed where he was. He liked the view and the plant life. Nobody could see him from the road. He didn't even have to hide behind a tree trunk. He watched as

the class disappeared into the forest. Then he headed for the top of the hill. He knew that there was a railway station in the valley on the other side of the hill from which there were trains back into the city. Just as he reached the hill top, he heard someone call his name. Obviously the pupils had been sent to look for him. But they wouldn't find him. He imagined how the teacher would abandon the search and return to the city with his class, to report the disappearance of a pupil.

The train arrived. Sunny climbed aboard. He had the return ticket in his pocket. There were only a few other people on the train. Sunny was feeling content as he watched the hill sides move by. He left the train when it reached the terminal in the city. He sat down on a bench. Sunny waited. Now and then he leafed through his note book and looked at the plants he had collected and put between its pages.

They can't do with me what they do with plants, he thought. He was glad that he wasn't a plant. He waited. When a large yellow butterfly danced past his face he thought, what's a butterfly doing in a train station? Then the other train arrived. Sunny could tell from his teacher's expression that he had been worried about him and he felt that his classmates were thinking, Ah well, Sunny, always Sunny. He didn't mind. He walked up to the teacher and shook his hand, and the teacher shook his hand quite casually as if nothing had happened. But he let him know that something had happened when he snapped, "What are you doing here?" Sunny felt it was better that he had waited for the class, rather than the class having had to wait for him. "I was waiting for you," he said.

Sunny's hand grabs hold of a tuft of hair. He is afraid he might fall down. The man on whose shoulders Sunny's knees are resting ducks, trying to dig a tunnel for himself. In a panic now, Sunny's hand frantically searches for a new head to support him. The man gets yanked back by the seething bodies, and he starts hitting the one who pushed him. Trying to avoid the blows, the man ends up pushing the mob behind him back down the stairs. The rest pushes forward with all the more fury, a veritable pile driver of bodies. One of the men tries to keep his competitors away from himself with a frantic swinging of his clenched fists. The others throw themselves into his circular motions. A giant of a man presses a youngster's chin backward. The thud of a fist against a face echoes into the tumultuous upheaval. A tall man with white hair has pulled another man's belt from his trousers and is looking for some room to lash out. He flings the leather belt around someone's body and tries to pull him backwards, but the other pulls forcefully in the opposite direction. A boxer with a square jaw has bent another man's arm behind his back to get up to the next step, and the other swings his free arm furiously into the horde. The swinging motion ripples down through the whole bundle. A twitching bundle of struggling men. A surge of shoulders and necks.

Sunny is sitting on top of it, like a frog on a leaf being swept along by the ebb and flow, that's how I feel, he says to himself. He is making remarkable progress... from shoulder to shoulder... head to head. In the heave-ho of the surging bodies, in the turbulent up and down of the heads, the billowing waves change direction: the bundle heaves from left to right. The broken surface of the human block

leans dangerously close to the orchestra pit. Frightened, Sunny tries to find a new support. His hand grabs empty air.

He sees a dark, gaping hole beneath him, and, like tiny stars in an abyss, the lamps on the music stands—they jump at him, rush towards him. A floodlight swishes past him, the spotlight hurls its garlands after him. The fall seems to last forever—Sunny doesn't cry out.

He hears the thudding noise and the shrill report of the piano when his arm hits the keys. For a brief moment, everything turns black, his wide-open eyes seemingly blind. He feels the wound on his head. He has hit the screw on the edge of the drum. Just don't lie still, Sunny thinks, or it's all over.

Then he sees Alessandra. Her face, the brown wavy hair, the flickering eyes, the faultless teeth behind slightly parted lips, the smile loom above him. Two years before, he had enrolled in a German course at the Goethe Institute, not because he wanted to study the language but because he knew she was taking the course. They often walked from the Institute to the bus station, and when he went to Civitavecchia with his friends over the weekend, he sent her a postcard. Not just any postcard; he selected the picture carefully, a picture of fishing nets or of a road winding down into a valley. He was sure these pictures would tell him more than he could write on the back. "Thanks, I received the postcard," Alessandra said the next time they walked to the bus station, and Sunny thought he could feel she was happy about it.

When he had to work Thursdays at the *Bar Americano* as well, he couldn't attend classes anymore. On

his last evening at the Institute he asked her to visit him at the *Bar Americano*. Sometimes she came Thursday evening after class, often with colleagues from the Institute. He didn't like her chuckles echoing from the bar while he had to carry wine or coffee to the tables. It was an unpleasant laugh, making him think they were talking about him. What other reason could there have been for her to chuckle like that? He was glad when she came alone, then he bought her a *Campari*. She must sense how I feel about her, he said to himself. Actually she should have sensed it long ago. First to sense and then to know. When she blew her goodbye kiss against his cheek in the doorway, he thought, perhaps I should pull her against me passionately, so that she'll know. But he didn't, because he was sure she must have sensed it.

One morning, when he saw a postcard from Alessandra from Dusseldorf on the bar, he was sure that she knew. "Thanks, I received the postcard," he said when she came back to the *Bar Americano* after a three-week language study, and he bought her a *Campari* even though she had come with two colleagues. I can't be more obvious than this, he thought. I can't go any further than this. Then he wondered again if she had really sensed it. One can't simply say a thing like this. "I love you." Millions have said it before me, he mused. The word "love" is the piece of paper in which something has been wrapped and which gets discarded in the process of unwrapping. It is a word that can't be spoken, but must be shown. And somewhere within him was the fear that if he would say "I love you," she would answer, "But I don't love you!" And so he felt it better not to say the word. I have let her sense it, he was sure. When he heard that Alessandra had a steady

boyfriend, he thought, I have to wait, that's all I have to do. He waited. When she came to the *Bar Americano* after that, he bought her a *Campari* every time. Whenever he drove out into the country, he sent her a postcard and mostly of nets or of a country road. I have let her sense it. He enjoyed it when the patrons in the bar saw him together with Alessandra.

There are other women, Sunny said to himself when he looked around the tavern one evening and saw the young men standing at the bar with their girlfriends or sitting at the tables, there are other women. And who knows if what I'm feeling is really true love? I mean, what if I were engaged to Alessandra and another really wonderful girl would come along and I would feel that this was the really true and genuine love? It's better not to be engaged to her. And if I were engaged to this really wonderful girl and another girl came along and I felt that my love for her was even stronger? I really do believe that the disturbing feeling I have for Alessandra is love—but who can assure me that there isn't a greater love, one that overwhelms me and makes my whole being tremble?

When he met Irma, he thought, probably this feeling, this iridescent magic is the truly great love. Irma usually came to the bar after work. They talked about the post office. Irma was sorting letters there, and many of them were destined for abroad. Then they talked about Libya, about America, Albania and about Malta. When Irma left saying "See you soon!" Sunny said to himself, there must be an even purer love that might be even better. I don't just want to be in love, I want to be completely in love, totally and with all my being. This kind of love must

exist, I have often read about it. After that, he only rarely wrote postcards to Alessandra.

He had read about this love, and what he was feeling had nothing to do with what he had read about. He had seen passionate love in movies, and what he was feeling had nothing to do with what he had seen. He had listened to songs about the great, all-consuming, dizzying love. One went, "When I saw you the first time, my whole world was transformed." And Sunny told himself, I don't know what kind of love my love for Alessandra is, but my world wasn't transformed. Then he was suddenly certain that it would be transformed as soon as Alessandra would show him that she had sensed it. Perhaps truly great love works like that, he thought.

His completed his schooling three years ago. Since then, he has stood behind the bar day after day, delivered coffee to the offices in the neighborhood. People called him "Sunny" because he was pleasant to them. He thought about Alessandra often but only sent her postcards at Easter and New Year's. I have to make myself scarce, he thought, so that she'll know.

Sunny always greeted his classmates with a "Hello, how are you?" and a glass of wine filled to the brim whenever they came to the *Bar Americano*. He was glad that they didn't forget him. Walter didn't come alone. "This is Angela, my fiancée." When they started to talk about their time in school together, Walter told him with calculated nonchalance that Luigi and Andreas were both married, Luigi even had a son already. Then they made some jokes about one classmate's fiancée and laughed about another's new boyfriend. Perhaps I should have

shown Alessandra more clearly, should have pulled her passionately against me when she kissed me good-bye, Sunny thought, then we would also be engaged by now. Yet whenever he had thoughts like that, everything he had been thinking of late welled up in him again, that the first love might not be the greatest love. Sunny was afraid that Walter would ask him questions, would want to know how it was with him. So he started to talk himself: "I don't know how love works, I guess there are different kinds." Walter opined that one couldn't know for sure, it was just a feeling. He had felt it, that's why he was engaged now. Sunny blushed. "I have felt it as well, and that's why I'm not engaged! I have felt one kind of love. There must be a better kind." Walter looked aghast at Angela. She replied with a questioning look. "If you hadn't listened to songs and hadn't watched love stories at the movies," Sunny burst out vehemently, "you wouldn't have taken this feeling for love right away!" Walter didn't know what to say. "Love, love, love," Sunny hissed. "You're just imitating what you have read about and heard in songs, and because the songs say marriage is beautiful, you'll get married as well." Angela put her arm around Walter's waist. "You fell in love. Excellent. You did the customary thing."

Walter and Angela left the bar without a word. After that, they didn't call him "Sunny" anymore. But Sunny felt it had to be said. He was convinced that he had made an important point. Ordinary love, standard love. What he was waiting for he didn't dare to just call love. He decided to wait for it. And thought of Alessandra. All he needed was a sign from her, and when it came it would be the great, wild, complete, all-encompassing love, the kind

he had seen in the movie *Black Orpheus*. Sunny waited for the coffee to brew and put a cup on the bar for a patron.

Just don't lie still, Sunny thinks, or it's all over. It's now or never. He touches his forehead and feels blood on his fingers. He wonders why the wound doesn't hurt. A searing pain shoots through his knee and his shoulder. Sunny wants to win, he desperately wants to win. His efforts can't have been in vain. He straightens his body, pushes himself up from the floor, Sunny clenches his teeth. He realizes that they are chattering. Tremors shudder down through his body, way down to the tips of his toes. The trumpet player has grabbed him under the arms, he wants to support him. Sunny pushes him away forcefully. I have to forget the pain, he tells himself, and reaches out with his right arm. His fingers touch the bridge across the orchestra pit. He manages to hold on to the bridge. But he doesn't have enough strength in his one arm to pull himself up. The searing pain in his knee! I can't think about it, I want to forget the pain. He lets his body sway back and forth, he causes his body to sway back and forth, back and forth, with as much force as he can muster, until he feels like a bag of meat swinging from a crane. He manages to swing his right foot onto the balustrade. And then Sunny buckles down on the floor of the theatre again. I have to get up there, he hammers into his brain, I want to be up there. Perhaps she remembers me. She has to remember me.

"Look at that cripple over there," one of the spectators who has remained in his seat in the center of the cinema says to his friend. He is pointing at Sunny. Others are looking in Sunny's direction as well. They can't believe their eyes as Sunny drapes his right arm around a neck in

the mass of people looming before him. I have to get up there, I have to be the one, he tells himself. He somersaults his legs over the heads of the men wedged into each other. Now he is lying on top of the heads, Sunny is on top of them again. He is breathing heavily. "Like a chimp," the spectator in the center of the theatre says. "Like a specter," his friend replies. "Like a frog," they agree.

The men on the stairs are crushed together as if in a vice. The thrashing and hitting have subsided into pulling and shoving. The ones at the top can't make the final step onto the stage, the vice holding them together is iron strong. They can only squirm, try to jerk themselves free by fits and starts, nothing more is possible.

Sunny can see Wanda Sirel again. Her blond curls, the soft neck, the gold lamé dress which curves over her bosom and is cut high in the hips to make her legs look long. Sunny is surprised how easily he is getting ahead. By putting his arms on the nearest shoulders and arching his back like a snake, he can pull his aching legs after him. He can also see the big black-lined eyes and the sensuous red lips. She turns her head towards the stairs. Her smile collapses. Sunny knows she has seen him. The eight dancers are staring in the same direction, the smiles on their lips remain fixed and lifeless like a photograph—disembodied: a monster is moving towards them... high above the bodies it crawls forwards across the block of men... like a snake... like a frog. They watch it coming closer. They look, they are looking at it. They see me, Sunny thinks, they see me coming. Her look pierces his body, gives him renewed strength.

The heads of the men on the top two steps are moving, shaken by the grim pulling and tearing. Sunny finds it difficult to maintain his balance. He grabs for hair, ears, necks. "Forward!" the comedian shouts. "Forward! There must be some real men here!" Sunny clammers ahead. He manages to get his head beyond the top row of bodies. Beneath him, something begins to seethe. He can feel someone grabbing his calf, he feels a pair of hands on his hips. The heaving mass tosses his body up and down, throws him high like a wave, its foam, making the somersault easy. With every ounce of strength he can muster, he flings himself into the air. A piece of brown material from his trouser leg remains in the hand grabbing his calf. Before the pair of hands can close around his hips, Sunny sits on top of the heads forming the uppermost row.

He concentrates all his strength into his muscles, but the leap to the stage is too much for his body. Sunny sees himself jump, the way he used to jump from the cliffs high above the dark sea. He sees himself fly, high up into the air. Sunny drapes his healthy arm around a neck, climbs downwards along the bodies, lets himself glide downwards. A lapel tears. Sunny falls, wants to let himself fall. And feels the planks of the stage under his body.

The orchestra's fanfare booms in Sunny's ears like a triumphant roar. I've won! Sunny's thoughts hammer into his brain. I've won! Leaning all his weight into the right half of his body, he scrambles to his feet, twisting and winding himself upwards until he stands on the stage.

"One minute and 59 seconds!" the comedian bellows into the microphone, pretending he had been timing the whole thing. The sluggish loudspeaker voice

echoes from the darkness, "...fifty-nine seconds!" It couldn't have lasted for much longer than that, Sunny says to himself. Thunderous applause fills the hall. The comedian encourages the applause with a vigorous flaying of his arms. The applause is for me, Sunny thinks. He collapses on the stage.

The applause is indeed for Sunny—and for the young man who, on the opposite steps and almost at the same time, spurned by Sunny's progress, heaved himself over top of his own adversaries and pushed them back. Now he stands on the stage across from Sunny, beaming and waving into the applause. Sunny can't believe what has happened. He doesn't want to see the other man. The bright light flooding the stage is blinding him, Sunny thinks, the colorful lamps, the short skirts, the posters, the legs, the wilted brightness of the backdrop, Wanda's lips, the girl on the comedian's tie, the frenzy of the music, the hips, the glitter of gold, everything swirls together, a whirl of colors spins before his eyes. Sunny braces himself against the eddy; he doesn't want to be sucked into it. Sunny shuts his eyes tightly. The whirling stops. Then he sees how Wanda shrugs her shoulders and spreads her arms in a gesture of disappointment. She must have been taught to do this, something thinks inside Sunny.

"Two winners!" the comedian shouts. "We can't have two winners. That's one too many!" And Sunny sees that Wanda's disappointment can't be genuine. She probably reacts like this every time, he says to himself.

"We can't have two winners!"—one of them a lanky young man, standing tall and straight and sure of himself the way winners are, laughing—the other, Sunny, crouched

on the stage, bracing his right leg forcefully against the boards, the leg that has to support his whole body, his knee buckling already from the effort, his one shoulder hanging at an angle, his left arm dangling back and forth like a pendulum, his face contorted, bewildered, feeling terrible, betrayed. "A frog," the man in the fourth row says quietly to himself.

Sunny sees that the comedian is thinking about the dilemma. He isn't thinking about it, Sunny says to himself, he's just pretending to think as he probably always does every time something like this happens.

"We can't have two winners, we have to have a draw," the comedian complains and pretends to think some more. "I have it!" he shouts. "The two candidates have to declare their love for our soubrette, and it has to be good enough for the stage!" Then he gestures into the audience and adds with a cunning smile: "The one who makes the better declaration will be pronounced the winner. The decision is in your hands. The audience is the referee and the jury. The one who gets more applause will win!"

Sunny doesn't feel anything. It seems to him as if he had left his body a long time ago. He sees it crouching up on the stage. I don't have a chance, he thinks helplessly to himself. The comedian takes the young man by the arm and leads him center stage—his name is Raimondo, he says in reply to Cece's question as he crosses the stage—then presents him to Wanda Sirel. She assumes her inimitably alluring posture, her left leg saucily in front of the right, her hips thrust forward, she pats her hair with both hands and lets her arms come down at a perky angle, palms turned outwards, the gesture of welcome. Raimondo, his back to

the audience, spreads his arms before her, curtsies shyly—"He seems to have experience in this," Sunny thinks—and says with only the slightest tremor in his voice: "I love you." As if he had memorized it, Sunny says to himself. Wanda relaxes her stance. Embarrassed chuckles from the audience, then applause. The comedian spurs the audience with circular motions of his right hand and the applause swells.

Sunny's body is empty. "Something's going to happen to me soon." Sunny is going to let it happen. Then a word Alessandra once uttered flashes through his thoughts. He brushes it from his mind. He finds it annoying that the word has chosen this very moment to surface. The comedian approaches him. Sunny is ready to let whatever will happen to him happen. Cece reaches under Sunny's right arm and tries to lead him across the stage. I don't like being helped; I hate it when people try to help. He sets his body into a swinging motion, his left leg buckling with every step, and drags himself center stage, in front of Wanda. He sees her as if through a cloud of smoke.

Suddenly Sunny feels again who he is. He looks at her shoes, then slowly up. He sees her face. The cloud of smoke has dissipated. Wanda assumes her posture again, her left leg saucily in front of the right, her hips thrust forward, she pats her hair with both hands and lets her arms come down at a perky angle, palms turned outwards, again the gesture of welcome. Sunny crouches in front of her and Wanda smiles. She's recognized me, it flashes through his mind, and a surge of hot blood rushes through his body. "Now," he thinks, "now!" He spreads his arms. His left arm

cooperates, obeys his will, Sunny feels it. The floodlights are blindingly bright.

His vocal chords begin to vibrate. There he crouches, flung on the stage like a frog, his arms spread out. The sound wells up, not from the throat, the sound comes from deep within his body, gurgles its way up; Wanda shudders; a bloodcurdling croak, and Sunny sputters, "I love you!"

It's over. Sunny drops his arms to his sides. A spattering of laughter rises up from the audience, and then applause, thundering applause welling up, again and again. Mocking laughter resounds from deep within the applause, then a howl, again and again. Sunny emerges from his stupor. He can hear the shouts and the laughter. Still he crouches on the stage, bathed in the applause surging over the ramp across the stage, his face turned up to Wanda's as if trying to fixate her with his eyes.

Wanda isn't looking at him, she has resumed her noncommittal stance of detachment. The comedian stands by the ramp, trying to control the uproar with calming gestures, he doesn't want Sunny to hear the scorn and the derision lacing the thundering applause. "The winner has been chosen," he shouts. "This gentleman is the winner!" He bends over, reaches out his hand: "Congratulations!" I've made it, Sunny thinks. "The triumphal march!" the comedian commands, gesturing towards the orchestra. One after the other, the eight dancers grab Sunny's hand, "Congratulations!" and parade past him to the rhythm of the march. Sunny can see their knees and their thighs and the black-veiled spots where they part. He doesn't look there, he looks at Wanda. He wants her to recognize him. It

was I who a year and a half ago thrust the picture from the newspaper through the window of the cab, at the red light in the rain, and Sunny is convinced that she knows. My victory kiss should brand an indelible mark on her lips.

"And now the awarding of the prize!" the comedian shouts. The hall falls silent. He signals the drummer. A soft drum roll, intensifying slowly. Wanda Sirel steps towards Sunny in her high heels. He crouches in front of her and cranes his neck. Sunny sees her legs in front of his face, beautifully tapered pillars, threadbare netting hugging the curves. The drum roll swells. Wanda bends at the waist and leans over him. Sunny pushes himself up; she could kiss his hair.

The intensity of the drum roll abates. Wanda straightens up. This can't be the end, Sunny panics, but the drum roll swells again. Wanda's knees bend towards him. He watches them coming closer. Her body follows, and then her face, moving into his field of vision from above. Wanda crouches down beside him, she moves her head towards him. Sunny can feel it coming. The drum roll changes into a frantic vibration... the vibration into a persistent tremor. He can feel the throbbing of the drum skin. Wanda's face is next to his. He feels her hand on his shoulder, then a pair of lips on his cheek. His cheek is a drum skin. Sunny purses his lips, sucks in a gulp of air, then closes the tiny hole his mouth has left open, a sucking crack, that's how his kiss sounds. His lips smack into emptiness.

Wanda disengages her lips from his cheek, and the drum roll stops abruptly. Renewed applause, then a resounding fanfare from the orchestra. Immediately, the

resonance subsides. A grey shadow swishes across the stage. The curtain shuts.

"Now I've earned myself a beer!" Sunny hears the comedian's voice. He sees the girls disappear from the stage. Wanda has already left; Sunny didn't see her leave. The floodlights dim, the dreamy scenery pales, two miserable lamps cast an eerie half-light across the stage. Sunny is alone.

Alone in this space of bleached cardboard and threadbare canvas. So this is how it is, he thinks. Moving his left leg with his right hand like a lever, he gropes his way towards the curtain. He gets tangled in the material. When he finally finds the partition where the two halves of the curtain meet, he pulls back the pale velvet: the hall is empty. Two ushers are gathering cigarette butts stubbed out between the rows of seats.

Sunny's right foot feels its way along the ramp. A theatre looks so different without the floodlights, he thinks. There are the steps. Backwards, legs first, groping for support along the railing with his hands, step by painful step he works his way across the orchestra pit down to the floor. He finds his crutches. One of the ushers leaned them against the stage during the clean-up.

She kissed me, Sunny thinks. She kissed me; everybody saw that she kissed me. I'm the winner. Everybody knows I'm the winner. He watches the ushers as they sweep the cigarette butts and the ice cream wrappers from between the rows. They saw it, too, he says to himself. He looks out into the *Cinema Ambra Jovinelli*, looks across the rows of seats. He realizes that the wooden seats are arranged diagonally one behind the other.

Somebody was sitting in every one of these chairs, he thinks, and everybody watched me. Not everyone can be a winner. Then he hobbles out of the cinema on his crutches.

Sunny is standing on the sidewalk outside the cinema. He sees a group of girls laughing by the tiny stage entrance at the side of the building. They must be from the ballet, he says to himself. He hails a taxi. He knows he has enough pocket money. A winner can't squeeze into a crowded bus together with all the others. His crutches always made it difficult boarding a bus. Twice every day he had been struggling up the three steep steps into the bus. He always declined whenever anybody tried to help him, tried to hoist him up the steps, hands under his arms. And the rattling of the old buses always made standing difficult and painful for him.

Not today, Sunny thinks, not today. He feels comfortable in the backseat of the cab, he can stretch his legs. I've never seen a winner take a bus, Sunny says to himself. He hasn't been in a taxi since the funeral of his godfather, and then his whole family had been with him. Alone is a much better feeling, Sunny thinks. One has the whole cab to oneself. That's only fitting for a winner. Sunny feels deeply satisfied inside.

"Where to?" the cab driver asks. "To the *Via Aurelia*," Sunny says. When he whispers, he can be understood quite easily. "To the *Bar Americano*. It's only twelve kilometers away."

Sunny is the only patron. "What are you doing here?" Arnaldo the waiter asks. His white jacket is hanging on the wall. The lights had already been turned off when Sunny entered the bar on his crutches. Arnaldo switches on

the light over the bar. The light isn't bad for my purpose, Sunny thinks. "I would like a bottle of *Asti Spumante*." He wonders why nobody is here to greet him. "I'll pay you tomorrow." Don't use too many words, Sunny tells himself. The words hurt his throat. It takes the waiter quite a while to loosen the cork, and when it pops, Sunny thinks, this is exactly how it has to be.

He stares into the darkened back portion of the restaurant, where the chairs have been put up on the tables. "Is it your birthday?" Sunny doesn't answer. "What do you want all by yourself with a bottle of *Spumante*?" Arnaldo asks again. Sunny raises his glass, takes a sip. "I want to be a patron," he says. "I have something to celebrate."

IV. Hearty Home Cooking

A Gastronomical Apocalypse as Introduction to the Conditional

*Dedicated to the Memory of Alfred Hofkunst's Cuisine
in Montet sur Cudrefin*

The evening didn't end at all the way it was supposed to. All our expectations had been disappointed. While Werner and I, set into involuntary motion by the bouncer's persistent pushing and shoving, thudded down the stairs from the first floor, and only when one of us managed to grab the banister were able to flee in a more or less erect position though with buckled knees, during this—delayed only by our desire for a somewhat dignified departure—stumbling down the stairs, Werner said, still capable, despite everything, of viewing our situation objectively, "Just like the movies..."

When we picked our bruised selves off the floor at the bottom of the stairs—our self-confidence slowly returning—and straightened our rumpled clothes, I wanted to know more specifically: "What do you mean, just like the movies?" Werner pursed his lips into an impertinent grin and, with a look of newly-regained composure on his face, as if we had descended the stairs like anyone else, putting one foot calmly in front of the other, said with a tone of superbly expressed nonchalance, "Just like Laurel and Hardy."

We were standing in front of the entrance to the apartment building on Thomas Mann Avenue, on the first floor of which "The Happy Circle" supposedly met in

secret, "The Happy Circle" which didn't have a name plate in the lobby, no publicity, not even the smallest of signs on the door. We agreed: one has to expect unexpected developments like this when one lets an ad in a newspaper, a phone number whose digits seem to weave a web of lusty secrets, and an anonymous phone voice from some seemingly enchanted place entice one to a supposedly pleasant evening out. A simple beer at the corner pub would have spared us the anger and the disappointment. "Cheers, then!" Werner has considerable experience in dealing with such unpleasant events. Throwing all the disdain we could muster into our deliberate departure, we turned our backs on "The Happy Circle" and stepped into the empty street, optimistic once more, our egos—and our steps—only slightly bruised... like Laurel and Hardy... Ah, well.

"...And incidentally, I don't find it humorous at all when Laurel slams his cream pie unceremoniously in Hardy's face... It should be made to look more like an accident, as if unpremeditated, perhaps because Hardy bent down awkwardly or because the folding door slammed open in the wrong direction, or something like that... Then, perhaps, I would laugh."

We were at home again, in the apartment, weary of course, but also full of confidence that we could still salvage the evening. "The cream pie... Just like that, I could have slammed it in the bouncer's face at "The Happy Circle" if I were Stan Laurel... out of pure revenge, that would have been the thing to do. I wouldn't have needed a pretense. Smack in his face, just like that..."

On the radio, the Czech Philharmonic under the direction of Karel Ancerl was playing Julius Fucik's immortal *Entrance of the Gladiators* with appropriate gusto and finesse. Yes, we needed some encouragement right now. There was nothing to drink in the house except a half-empty bottle of beer. Something nice for our stomachs would restore our vitality. And cooking relaxes, Werner knew that. Then he came with the book. He had found it in the library, wedged between *Constructive Concepts* and *The Marxist-Leninist Victory Over Revisionism*. The cover announced in prominent letters, *Hearty Home Cooking*. The jacket showed happy people.

Now we're both standing in the kitchen. Werner is bent over the cookbook, looking for a recipe matching the supplies on the shelves. "I know, we'll make an *omelette jurassienne*. That always works."

Add 10 deciliters of milk, 70 grams of flour, two eggs and a generous dash of salt into a bowl. Mix carefully to make the dough for the omelet. Saute 25 grams of cubed bacon in a frying pan. Add butter and less than half an onion, cut into cubes. Saute for 2 minutes. Cut 100 grams of carrots, peas, cauliflower, and spinach into small pieces. Add the vegetables to the frying pan, a few at a time, together with some cheese cubes. Pour the dough over the mixture and fry until golden on both sides.

Werner goes to the shelf beside the refrigerator, finds one of the round, deep porcelain mixing bowls with the brown glaze on the outside and puts it on the table. "Ready," he says. But we can't find the milk. It should have been in the refrigerator. Apparently I put it high up on one

of the shelves after breakfast. I reach up and get the milk carton from the top shelf.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, the milk carton would tip over while I'm trying to reach it, would fall off the shelf exactly where I'm standing, and would crash down on my head. Werner would be more upset by the few splashes that would have hit him than I would be as the drenched poodle. He would be so mad at me he would slap my face, or rather, he would try to slap my face but I would duck at exactly the right moment and he would lose his balance and fall down. He would grab the tablecloth on the side table and the jam jar would fall down and its contents—juicy red strawberries—would splatter all over his face. He would stand in front of me, looking totally bewildered, wiping the jam off his face and flinging it on the floor. Some of it would splash on my jacket, and I would just stand there and watch it all.

I pass Werner the milk carton. He doesn't have to cut it open. There's just enough milk left for the two of us. I watch Werner pour the milk carefully from the carton into the porcelain bowl.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, we probably wouldn't have made it this far. By now, the porcelain bowl would have been smashed to pieces because Werner would have put it down on the table with such thoughtless force. Even more intriguing is the probability that he would have banged his head on one of the shelves when he was bending down to look for the bowl and of course he would have thought I had pushed him and he would have smashed the bowl on my head in his fury. It would be my turn to react to that.

I open the door of the white kitchen cupboard. It takes some time to find the bag we need among all the various bags in the cupboard, the bag of flour. While I lift the bag of flour from the overflowing shelf, being very careful not to upend any of the other bags standing at the edge of the shelf, Werner has bent over *Hearty Home Cooking* again and calls to me, "Seventy grams." I pour the flour carefully into the dish of the kitchen scale. The running flour forms into a pointed little mountain and when the scale reads 70 grams, I hand Werner the dish.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, Werner would suddenly experience a slight irritation in his nose just as he would be holding the dish with the flour in front of him. He would sniffle, but the irritation would persevere. It would get more pronounced, developing into a strong itch. Werner would contort his face into weird grimaces, would wrinkle his nose several times to get rid of the annoying itch. I would see his face loom large in front of me as it would get more and more contorted from the threatening onset of a sneeze—and suddenly Werner would release an explosive sneeze right into the dish heaped full of flour. The white powder would rise up in the air like a cloud, would float around him and color his face white. Of course Werner would blame me for it and would punish me with a kick in the shin. I would lose my balance and grab the handle of the pot with the leftover soup from lunch. Falling to the floor, I would pull the pot down with me and its contents would splatter all over my elegant blue suit which I had put on expressly for our visit to "The Happy Circle." I would realize already as I would be picking myself off the floor that I couldn't possibly let the portentous kick in the shin go

unanswered, and while I would be wiping the soup from my face and out of my eyes with the inimitable motion of my fingers, I would immediately make it clear with my facial expressions that I was already working on a revenge. I would then pick up the empty pot and smash it forcefully over Werner's head. The sound track would resound with the hollow echoing of a giant bell. After three seconds of bewilderment, Werner would make it clear that I had gone too far this time.

Now I put the bag of flour back into the cupboard, between the bags of beans, sugar, semolina, and oat flakes. Werner is looking through the recipe for the next ingredient. The radio in the living room plays Franz von Suppe's exhilarating *The Light Cavalry*. I don't know why, but the piece seems appropriate to our activity. It causes us to forget, little by little, the accumulated anger of the evening's experience. Werner looks up from the thick cookbook: "One egg per person." I get the carton of six eggs down from the shelf above the stove. Carefully, because in such matters care is always advisable.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, one of the eggs would fall out of the carton and crash on my head. While the repulsive mess would be running down over my hair—carefully combed for the visit to "The Happy Circle"—I would put my hand helplessly to my head and would be feeling the sticky mess on my fingertips. "That can only have been Werner's doing, the rascal." An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. A trusted bit of wisdom. I would reach into the carton, pick out the nicest, biggest egg. Then I would scrutinize Walter's head intensely and carefully and smash the egg on his crown. At this point, Werner would

come at me in a state of highest agitation. But since he wouldn't be able to see anything because of the slime running down over his face, he wouldn't realize that the carton of eggs has crashed to the floor in the heat of the exchange and the floor is covered with a sloppy mess of broken eggs. Werner would lose his footing on the slippery floor and would get himself all tangled up in the curtains of the pantry shelf. The whole shelf would come crashing down. The floor would be covered with cabbages and cucumbers, spaghetti, packages of instant soup, cauliflower, and Maggi seasoning. I would be looking disapprovingly down at Werner squirming on the floor and would be shaking my head over his clumsiness. For Werner, the look in my eyes would be an insult. And that he wouldn't tolerate.

Werner has cracked the eggs carefully on the rim of the porcelain bowl and throws the four pieces of eggshell into the garbage can. He takes a wooden spoon and stirs the milk, flour, and eggs into a thick dough. Then he hands me the carton with the remaining four eggs. I put it back on the shelf above the stove. "And now a pinch of salt." I find the salt shaker on the cutting board of the kitchen counter. And just as the final notes of *The Light Cavalry* echo from the radio, I toss the wooden salt shaker to Werner.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, the blockhead would be twisting his body so awkwardly trying to catch the thing that the salt shaker would hit his forehead dead on. Ouch! What insolence! An all-out brawl would be inevitable. We would start with boxing each other's ears, then we would continue with blows to each other's bodies, powerful blows back and forth; thrashing wildly, we would be reeling

around the kitchen. At one point, my belt would get caught on the handle of one of the drawers in the kitchen counter; this would be shown in close-up, and then in full view again how we would both crash down on the floor—and the whole kitchen cupboard would crash down on us. The soundtrack would be an incredible crescendo of breaking porcelain and clattering pots and pans. We would pick ourselves awkwardly off the floor, would straighten our clothes and glance at each other with puzzled and bewildered looks—with that sardonic kind of bewilderment with which only Laurel and Hardy can look at each other.

While Werner carefully measures the salt into the omelet dough, I take a paring knife from the kitchen table drawer and start to cut some onions and potatoes into small pieces. That goes quickly; two and a half onions are enough for two people. There are some carrots in the vegetable drawer. Three will be enough. I cut them into thin slices for now. Afterwards I will cut them into smaller pieces.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, little pieces of carrot would periodically fly off the cutting board from the pressure of the knife and would hit Werner's face. At first he wouldn't realize what it was, it could be a fly buzzing around the kitchen. As soon as he would realize from where the unintentionally dispatched projectiles were hitting him, he would put on his piercingly accusatory face and look at me like that without letting on that another piece of carrot had just hit his face again. He would probably be saying to himself, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." He would reach for the salt shaker he had just put down and would throw it at my head from a safe distance. "That's too much!" Werner would be trying to

fend off my attack by picking up a shelf from the felled kitchen cupboard and swinging it around. During one of his powerful swings I would again—a proven technique—duck unexpectedly and the force of Werner's aimless swing would rip the faucet over the kitchen sink from the counter. A plume of water would shoot out of the pipe and soak us and our good suits thoroughly. All the food on the floor would be floating in a deepening puddle.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, it would be three o'clock in the afternoon by now and in all the commotion we wouldn't have realized that the salt shaker bounced off my head and crashed through the window down into the street. There it would have hit Mr. Soriano on the head as he was walking past our building quite by chance. Startled, he would have spun around: Hey, you, young man, what do you think you're doing? And before the young man would have known what hit him, Soriano would have slapped him full in the face. What on earth?? Do I have to take this? No! In a split second of highest agitation, the athletic young man would have grabbed Mr. Soriano by the scruff of the neck, but would have suddenly held Soriano's torn jacket in his hands. Damn! While the young man would have been bending down to pick up a piece of wood from a construction site, Soriano's next punch would have landed in the face of an unsuspecting passer-by. So those two would be getting at each other and pulling each other down, and as the young man would be swinging his piece of wood wildly in the air trying to hit the fighting pair, he would inadvertently hit the policeman running towards them from behind. The uniformed official would be swaying from the unexpected attack and, trying to break his fall, would upset

an ice cream cart and the ice cream, already soft from the heat of the afternoon, would ooze all over the street and over the two men fighting on the ground.

Ten pedestrians on the sidewalk would slip on the ice cream, each pulling down the other trying not to fall, and each would start hitting all the others. The melee would quickly spill from the sidewalk onto the street, and house painter Bachmann's van would come to a screeching halt in front of two of the fighting men. The van would skid against the streetlamp, cans of paint would be flying all over the place, the streetlamp would come crashing down and hit a second policeman, hurrying across the street to assist his colleague, square on his helmet. The look on his face would be one of utter confusion. And because the toppled streetlamp would be blocking the streetcar tracks, the blocked streetcar's angry conductor would be throwing himself furiously into the general melee. He would be hit from every direction, and his agitated passengers, emerging from the streetcar waving their arms excitedly in the air, would be hitting the fighting men in the street but soon also each other with umbrellas, purses, and walking sticks. All of them would soon slip on the ice cream, mixed for some time now with the paint oozing out of the cans, and in trying in vain to pick themselves off the ground would doggedly continue to fight.

One of the passengers would be thrown against the door of a nearby restaurant by an uppercut of unidentifiable origin and would bump into a patron coming out of the restaurant at the same moment. The annoyance on the patron's face would be obvious. He would turn back into the restaurant and walk up to the buffet to throw a well-

deserved cream pie in the passenger's face. But the pie would miss its mark. It would land smack in the middle of the face of a woman sipping a cup of coffee. The coffee would spill over the dress of another woman who would express her annoyance by reaching for a second cream pie which would end up like a hat on the bald head of a professor eating creamed spinach from his plate. The startled professor would end up splashing some of the spinach on the tie of a carefully attired man who himself would reach for a cream pie and soon there wouldn't be anybody in the restaurant without a glaring gob of cream pie on his face.

Outside in the street, the staff of the bank next door would be sliding and slipping around on the sidewalk, all the conscientious employees who hurried outside to put an end to the fracas. And all of them would be thrashing about as they slipped and slid and all of them would soon be beating up on everybody else in their own unique and individual ways.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, we would now—standing already up to our knees in water—be looking down into the street from the kitchen window and would be looking at each other in consternation over the extensive brawl outside. Just as a delivery boy would be attempting to smash a vase full of large red tulips over the head of a newspaper vendor, a 1925 Wollsley would drive up. A glass jar of yoghurt would fly out of a woman's shopping bag and hit the driver smack in the face. The driver would lose control over the car and, despite heroic attempts on his part to regain control over his steering wheel, the car would crash thunderously into a brick wall—just below the spot

where we would be looking out the window in absolute consternation if we were Laurel and Hardy.

Meanwhile, Werner has put the pieces of cut vegetables into the frying pan together with a few pieces of bacon and is browning the mixture lightly over low heat. Then he pours the dough over the mixture. The concoction is thickening in the pan. When he flips the omelet over, we can see that the yellow mixture has turned an appetizing golden brown on the underside. The sizzling in the frying pan makes a pleasant sound.

If we were Laurel and Hardy, I'm sure a shoe belonging to one of the rioters in the street would have come flying up to our window while we were looking outside and would have hit one of us on the nose, a good enough reason for us to grab the bowl of dough and cram it over the rioter's head as punishment. And while he would be looking out from under the bowl with an expression of utter bewilderment on his face, and while the wall of our building, seriously damaged from the crashing car, would be slowly collapsing before our very eyes, the picture on the screen would fade and the handwritten words *The End* would appear.

We are sitting at the table, the pleasant aroma of our *omelette jurassienne* still tantalizing our nostrils. A hearty meal, nutritious and tasty, to compensate us for the inequities of the evening. Especially the onions, they transfer their pleasantly piquant flavor to the other vegetables. "*Omelette jurassienne* always works," Werner says, "as long as you know how to season it properly."

V. Travelling to the Contrary of Everything

Remembering the Cultural Revolution in Albania

The landscape near the frontier has Wild West features: On unpaved road the Yugoslav bus is jolting and jerking over the plain of Titograd, towards the Albanian frontier. Roots, stones and holes force down its speed. Once every week the bus leaves Titograd and ends at the Albanian border point. The road is narrow. It is not much in use. As the possession of private cars is forbidden in Albania, no visitor is allowed to enter the country by his own car. If you can say of any landscape that it has a frontier atmosphere, it is this one: behind every bend you expect the barrier. At the frontier Station, at Bozaj, a Yugoslav soldier, armed, enters the bus. He accompanies us for a few miles to the Yugoslav frontier. The barrier is raised.

Our two bus drivers unload the passengers' luggage. Without touching Albanian soil, they place them all in a row, along the frontier line. The row of bags constitutes an artificial «frontier barricade». The Albanian customs officials now approach from the other side and, without touching Yugoslav territory, they lift one bag after the other across the line. We are in Albania. Customs inspection takes place outdoors. Every single bag is lifted on a bench under a tree and checked by an official in civilian clothes. The official does not ask whether we are carrying alcohol, tobacco or transistor radios, or jewels or other valuables. The Albanian searches cases and bags for pieces of

literature—and only that. Western newspapers, magazines, books are examined. Such publications, it would seem, must not get into the hands of the natives, who must not get acquainted with ideas not approved by the authorities. *Der Spiegel*, *Quick*, and *Die Neue Illustrierte* get confiscated. To our great surprise, cheap novels, paperbacks of the "Jerry Cotton" mystery series, even a sex magazine, may remain in the bags. A volume, entitled *Ottamanic Art*, instead, is fished out of my bag. The official, visibly disconcerted, thumbs through it and turns it this way and that way. Sketches and blueprints of palaces, churches and other edifices on the pages reinforce his suspicion. The text is German. A linguist proceeds to translate the first page into Albanian while the official listens. Then, somewhat relieved, he returns the volume to me.

There is a state of uncertainty and insecurity to which the traveler is continually exposed, presumably the fault of the Albanian Administration. Partly it may be because experience with tourism in this country is of very recent date. Whereas in most of the other Eastern-European countries the tourist is warned—on visa application forms, leaflets and pamphlets—that the importation of domestic currency is prohibited, or allowed only in very small quantities, the traveler to Albania is left in the dark about currency regulations and restrictions. Neither the Albanian Embassy nor the travel bureau give him any direction. No prohibition is ever pronounced, nor any explicit permission given. The same applies to the freedom of movement within the country. One of the travelers in our group managed to enter the country without a visa. Journalists are not welcome in Albania. When this journalist was advised

that his entry visa to Albania had been refused, he simply had a new passport issued, listing a different profession. When his passport was there, heaped together with fifteen other West German and Swiss passports on the desk of the Albanian official, the fact was simply overlooked that his name had been expressly canceled from the list. After a moment of confusion because there was one more passport than there were names on the list, they rubberstamped the supernumerous document and let it pass.

The bus, of East German make, with rather poor springs, rocks slowly into Albania. The dirt road is even rougher than on the Yugoslav side of the frontier. At first there are few hamlets and buildings; shrubbery and measly olive trees rise from the stony ground. A few miles after the frontier a poster shouts from the roadside: "*Down with Revisionism and Imperialism.*" And this in a zone with hardly any one who can read it! Beyond Kopluku, a neat row of farm houses. One exactly like the other, each one built in red brick: a socialist variant of the South-European *architettura minore*. The walls facing the road bear inscriptions, in white paint: "*Long Live Marxism-Leninism!*"

It turns out that our guide not only has the task of showing us country and people but that he also must see to it that we photograph only those buildings and places that testify to progress and development in Albania. Our guide does it masterfully. Through the bus window, one of the travelers has taken a snapshot of a farm house: not exactly modern, but highly picturesque, with some peasants in front of it, sitting on the ground and smoking. The guide bears

down on the photographer's shoulder. "What is it that you have just photographed?" "Houses and people," the photographer explains, "Is that so!" the guide goes on, "Houses and people. Are there no houses and people in Switzerland? Must you come to Albania of all places to photograph houses and people?" A few miles after Kopliku the dirt road becomes asphalted. "Come back in three years," our guide says, "then the road will be asphalted up to the frontier." This expression, "come back in three years, then..." we shall have to hear many times during our sojourn. It signifies that Albania is doing all it can to abandon, as soon as possible, its place as the poorest country in Europe. For the time being, that is still what it is.

Young corn fields begin to mix their tender green with that of the tobacco plantations. There is hardly a farm building whose walls are not adorned with inscriptions celebrating Marxism-Leninism, the party of its chairman. We turn around a promontory—and find it hard to believe our eyes: What up until now had occupied posters on the roadside now occupies the entire slope of a mountain. Letters, tall as houses, cover the mountain: *LAVDI MARKSIZEM—LENINZMIT* reads the gigantic mosaic of white rocks. A recurrent component of the landscape as we move farther into the country, in praise of the People's Republic, or the Party, or condemning revisionism and imperialism.

In front of us: a mountain, its top crowned with the ruined walls of an ancient citadel: the fort of Skutari. Soon we are passing through the streets of this city, called also "Skoder" by the Albanians. Most of the houses reveal at

first sight that they have been constructed only very few years ago. Great pains were taken, evidently, to give an imprint of modernism to this town, known for ages as the last bastion of Islam in Albania. But the center of town still harbors its ancient old houses, interspersed with wooden kiosks: The Oriental atmosphere is sticky. A busy market occupies one of the squares. Men with fezes on their heads are hovering in front of baskets and sacks offering bargains of pale green pepperonis and tomatoes, potatoes and black figs. In between the baskets donkeys are taking their naps, almost motionless. On their backs all this ware had been brought from the fields. Scant ware, however, not much abundance. The dazzling wealth of colors, customary in Oriental bazaars, is lacking here. Only a limited part of the spectrum is represented; and the cries of the merchants sound choked. The fascination of their transactions lies in their austerity. A market, more *chiaroscuro* than colorful and almost mute, as in a silent movie. Accompanied by music. Loudspeakers are fastened to lamp posts, telegraph poles and walls, on every street, emitting the exciting singsong characteristic of Islamic music. For us newcomers, Skutari is Orient. Off and on the glaring sound of this music is interrupted by brief communications. All we catch is one word, ever recurrent: *Marksizem-Leninizmit*.

At the hotel we are received by a group of six women, probably peasant women from nearby villages. Below their white skirts they are wearing light colored pants, down to their ankles. Red aprons, with white, vertical stripes are tied over the skirts. The blouses are white, almost all covered by a white bolero adorned with

embroidered ribbons. The women are wearing white flat hats, with veils streaming down over their shoulders. Folklore in this Republic of Proletarians? A dozen photographers have lifted their cameras, but our guide warns us: "If you want to photograph anybody in Albania, you first must ask his permission!" And how are you supposed to do that if you don't speak Albanian? The guide promises to help, but again, he waves his arms: "The ladies don't want to be photographed." Later we are allowed to buy drinks and change money. The money changing is a most simple operation. You hand the foreign currency to the sales lady at the souvenir shop, and she counts the Albanian Lek notes into your hand. No receipt, no document of any kind. Perhaps this is one of the consequences of the posters, decorating the walls of the post office building, making fun of a bureaucrat poking with his pen in a mountain of paper formulas. But the posters at the post office make fun not only of bureaucrats. One of them unmasks the degeneracy of the Russians. There they are: the vain, dress-fancy Russian woman, the criminal nonconformist youth, and the vodka-addicted male. Another poster derides the megalomaniac Yankee imperialists; and, against the background of a factory, an Albanian worker is symbolically disjuncting belfries and minarets.

We leave Skutari. The trip continues through the flat marshland along the coast. Besides corn and tobacco plantations, vast fields of sunflowers make their appearance. The bright yellow of these large flower wheels on their man-high stems breaks the monotony of the green plain. Villages, off and on, their new constructions all of

the same type, their only distinctive feature: the inscriptions on the walls. This standardization facilitates housing construction, so urgently needed, and thus is an integral part of the planned economy of this classless socialist society.

Our guide insists on pointing out industrial constructions. Here is a cement factory, there, a chemical productions works. Here we may take pictures. The Albanians are proud of their factories as there were no industries whatsoever at the time the People's Republic was founded in 1944. But the period of construction is not concluded! "You should come back in three years; then..."

On the road to the capital, Tirana, the bus goes limping and rattling again. A tire busted. We try to escape from the brooding heat as this bus has no Ventilation of any kind, and can't open the Windows. Our guide is unable to suppress a touch of irony: "The bus is the product of the revisionist East German Republic." A train comes along the tracks dividing the tobacco fields. The light green cars, made in China, are crammed with passengers to the point of bursting. Oriental memories: Even on the tops of the cars, troops of passengers are holding on. They stand on the platforms; some audacious individuals sit astride the bumpers. "Because it is Sunday," our guide explains, "almost all of Tirana goes to Durazzo, to the beach." The improvised stop on the highway gives me an occasion for a conversation with our Albanian companion. Preparing for this trip I had studied a book on Albanian literature. The book, which mentions the Evangelism of Gjen Buzuk of the year 1555 as the first piece of Albanian writing, was published in Eastern Germany. I ask some questions, about

the life and works of some contemporary poets, and how their books sell—those of Luan Oafezesi, for instance, or Sicbi Sake. The man says: "Sure, sure, these are all good authors, and there are many other great poets and scholars in our country... but their works are hardly published. At this moment the State has more important things to do with its money than to print books. First of all we have to build our industries, then we may start thinking about the works of our poets."

When I ask about Gjergi Fishta, well known author of the epic "Sounds from the Highlands," translated into many languages and advertised as the greatest poem by Albania's greatest poet, my companion answers: "No one reads Fishta today. There is nothing he has to say to our people. He was a revisionist. No, really: he was a fascist." Fishta died in 1940. It seems strange to me that an author, considered by a socialist publisher in Eastern Germany to be the greatest poet of Albania, should be considered a fascist by the Albanians. A symptom for the whole problematic relationship between Albania and the other countries of the Communist bloc. An Image explanation: Just before our car enters Durazzo, we pass a gigantic poster on the roadside, representing Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, "the red sun in the hearts of the peoples of the whole world." And above the image, in tall letters: "To the eternal friendship between the peoples of Albania and China." We settle in the ample but austere lobby of the Hotel Adriatic in Durazzo. Rubber plants grow in pale blue painted gas cans. We order beer and lemonade. We are surprised to note that the bottles, pouring sweet beer with little alcohol content, carry no labels nor identification. "There is only

one brewery in Albania"— which furnishes the whole country. Since there is no competition, why insist on labels or trade names. Beer is beer. The guide moves into the same room with us at the hotel. He joins us at the dining table at the restaurant, and as some of the travelers decide they want to take a swim on the beach, the guide too puts on his bathing trunks...

At the reception desk there are heaps of books and Pamphlets at the disposal of the guests free of charge. There is no such thing as the usual commercial travel guidebook. Instead, we are continuously provided with these Pamphlets which don't tell us much about landscape and landmarks but a whole lot about the political Situation of Albania. With titles like "The Marxist-Leninist Ideology will win over Revisionism." Then there are five hundred pages of a collection of editorials from the party's Journal, *Zeri i Popullit*; "The Truth about Relations between Albania and the Soviet Union," a polemical exposition of the ideological conflict which preceded the diplomatic break between the two countries. These books and pamphlets are available in German, French, English, Italian, Spanish, and Greek—which brings to mind our guide's comment on the place of literature: "The State has more important things to do at this moment than to print books. First we have to build our industries, only then can we think about the works of our poets..."

On the road to Durazzo is a large camping site. The tents are standardized: all blue, of the same height and width. Apparently there exists only one type of tent in Albania. And our guide explains: "Every camping

companion has the same tent as any other. No one should give himself an air of superiority by sporting a bigger or more beautiful tent. There are no class distinctions, not even on camping grounds." The next morning a bus takes us to Kruja. In tight serpentine the road winds up the slopes of Iskenderbeut Mountain, to this nesting place in the rocks. The main square of Kruja is dominated by the gigantic statue of the fifteenth Century hero, *Skanderbeg*, on his rearing horse. The natives move back and forth under this national monument: authentic old Skipetars, in their balloon trousers, colpred shirts and the typical Fez on their heads; aquiline noses and bushy moustaches.

In the lower part of the little street winding down the mountain is the bazaar. The dealers have their kiosks. Fruits and vegetables are laid out: 2 pounds of grapes cost 3 lek, tomatoes, 4 lek. The upper part of the street is lined with the workshops of artisans: cabinet makers, smiths, shoemakers. People are shy, and if you stick your head through the door of one of the shops—shops that are as yet very little mechanized—you'll find it difficult to elicit a surreptitious *Mirëdita* from the artisan. We learn from our guide that the shoemakers were the last profession to be taken over by the State, and this happened only a few years ago. There is no more private enterprise in Albania. The bus takes us to the capital Tirana. Any concept you might have of a European capital is stultified here. Tirana is a capital without any of the features of a capital. Even the center of town breathes village atmosphere. In some illustrated books I had seen a huge Stalin monument occupying the center of Skanderbeg Square. In its place now a hole gapes in the ground. Stalin's monument has

been demoted to a place on the Boulevard New Albania. In its place they are building a monument to Skanderbeg. Might this indicate that Albania is turning increasingly toward its own historic past while the cult of Stalin, imported from China, is relegated to the background? In spite of this, however, Stalin has a solid pedestal in Albania. There is no village whose main square is not adorned by a bust or statue of the moustached dictator. At Fieri, Stalin's monument is even goldplated.

The sidewalks along the broad streets are always teeming with pedestrians. But the roadways themselves are empty. There are hardly more than two hundred cars for the transport of persons, in all of Albania, with its population of 1.8 million! All passenger cars belong to the State, to the Party, to the Ministries. Albanians are not allowed to buy private cars. First of all, the possession of a car would be looked upon as a luxury and, secondly, any purchase of a car would devour foreign exchange, which is carefully avoided. As late as 1956, the East German author Herbert Ziergiebel described in his book the "two faces" of Tirana: that of modern men in modern housing projects, and that of the Skipetars in their Oriental garments, their narrow winding streets. From the minaret of the Ethem-Beg Mosque I get a bird's-eye view of the whole town: a neatly articulated, regular formation revealing only one of the two faces: the face of modern Tirana. The other face is fading. Only some of its traces are still recognizable. So, perhaps, it is really true that they tore down the famous bazaar of Tirana.

We discover again how tenuous communications are between Albania and the West. A conversation touches on the "anti-baby pill," and a "tourist aid," a dentist, wants to know: "Is it true that this pill makes it easier for women to get pregnant?" When we have enlightened him as to the real function of the pill, he declares, proudly convinced: "There is no need for such a thing in Albania. There are no illegitimate children in Albania anyway, and divorces are very rare." We ask him, how come. "In our country," the Albanian says, "we don't marry for pleasure, lust and egotism. We marry because of a sense of social responsibility." He illustrates his statement with an example: "No Albanian would ever dream of asking an unknown girl at a dancing place to dance with him. Any girl that accepted such an invitation would be thrown out as an immoral slattern." Now a West German traveler gets curious: "But, after all, you do get married in this country, don't you? How does boy meet girl if he can't ask her to a dance?" The Albanian explains: "Boys and girls meet at work, in the factory. Marriages contracted on the basis of an acquaintance made during entertainment are poor marriages. Only common work molds the character of the spouses."

The conversation passes to Albania's relations with China. The Albanian comments: "It is a good thing that we dropped the Russians. Otherwise, we would have become as dependent on them as Western Germany is on the United States. We are a proud people. The Russians have hurt our pride. The main reasons that encouraged us to move closer to China are ideological; but, in the second place, we did it because Chinese aid—contrary to Russian—is completely

selfless." Another "tourist-aid," a blonde fellow, who keeps his party line particularly straight, adds: "With the Chinese we do business. We don't have to beg for gifts. We furnish them with minerals and raw materials; they furnish us with machines." The Chinese presence is perceptible all over Albania. In hotel dining rooms Chinese guests hand out red Mao buttons to waitresses who smile and pin them on their aprons; the trucks for the transport of merchandise and passengers bear Chinese lettering on the hood; the only foreign printed matter exhibited in bookstores are some back issues of the Peking Review in French translation; the trains have plaques with the names of their Chinese factories. During lunch at the Hotel Daitj in Tirana the waiter asks us: "Do you like Mao?" In the port of Durazzo Chinese freighters are anchored. Their chimneys are marked CHAL (short for "China—Albania"), this being the name of their joint-venture shipyards. Thanks to this joint-venture enterprise—so we are told—Chinese ships, under the Albanian flag, may enter any European harbor that officially bars access to ships of the People's Republic of China. And if we are to take our guide's statement at its face value, there are today hundreds of Chinese technicians in Albania, busily building missile ramps from which rockets are aiming at the neighbor capitals Belgrade, Athens, Rome.

Together with machines and industrial products, Albania has imported also the Cultural Revolution from Mao's empire. In the spring of 1967, Party Chairman Enver Hodscha appealed to the people and, especially, to the Albanian youth organizations, "to exterminate religious customs." The most active phase of the antireligious battle

lasted only a few months: Already in the summer of that same year, the cultural revolutionaries stated with pride that all 2169 churches, monasteries, and mosques in the country had been closed down. Albania was the first European State to be "free of churches." The final act in the battle "with the sharp-edged sword of party ideology against religious ideology, superstition and reactionary customs" was the closing down of the Roman Catholic cathedral in Tirana, after the portals were plastered with anti-religious posters. But the fight is not only against the Roman Catholic Church, it is equally against the Greek Orthodox Church and the Islamic mosques.

An act symbolizing "the war against the remnants of religionism" is the breaking of belfries and minarets. The Church and the Franciscan Monastery of Arrandeh and Skutari were burned down. But most of the churches were converted into centers of entertainment and sport, or into factories. Last spring, a marmalade factory was moved into the church of Elabsan. There are now Ping-Pong tables amid other sports equipment in most churches. The icons and art treasures of most churches were burnt. Only "exceptionally valuable pieces" were transferred to museums, mainly to the *Museum of Atheism* in Shkoder as deterrent testimonies of a gone religious culture.

A young cultural revolutionary also takes us to Apollonia, a city that was founded by the Corinthians during the seventh Century B.C. and, after the Roman conquest of Illyria during the second Century B.C., became the capital of the Roman colony. An ancient-looking Skipetar, archeologist and philosopher, is curator of the art

treasures, excavated sculptures and edifices from Roman times. For this old man it is not easy to come to terms with the Cultural Revolution. He had learned a set of values which all of a sudden no longer count. When we enter the ancient Christian Church of Apollonia, our young cultural revolutionary does not take off his beret. The old man feels an urge reverently to bare his head, but does not dare. So he suddenly seems to feel an itch under his hair and must scratch his scalp. His cap accidentally slides off his head. The good old man has satisfied his religious instincts without arousing the suspicions of the cultural revolutionary. Outside of Apollonia archeologists have dug up and restored an ancient Roman mosaic floor. Our guide translates a sign: "Please do not step on the mosaic." With a sarcastic smile and heavy steps he walks back and forth on the delicate work of art. Then he tells us about the iconoclastic battle in his home town. "The students of the town assembled and agreed that religion is an obstacle in the way of socialist construction. Therefore, religion must be abolished. It was decided that a second meeting should be called, to which also the student's parents were to be invited. The attempt to explain to the parents the new position of the young generation engendered endless discussion. The parents finally recognized that the young were right. Even the priest is said to have finally exclaimed, "If you are convinced of the rightness of your way, I shall follow you!" Then he pulled out the key to the Church portal, and put it on the table, in the presence of the whole community. He was crying. The older priests were all pensioned. The younger ones were retrained for new jobs. Young Albanians attending priest seminaries at the time of

the anti-church movement were sent to teachers' colleges. The Journal of the Albanian youth party enjoined its followers, later, to watch and denounce those former priests and parsons who continued to celebrate their religious cults secretly in private homes, after the churches were closed down. The governments in the communist states in Eastern Europe merely recommend atheism; the Albanian government is enforcing it.

Another thing Albania has imported from China is the wall-newspaper. Anybody may write a wall newspaper and, in it, he may denounce anyone he may have caught in a nonconformist act or an unattested utterance. One of these posters accuses three teenagers of having listened to the "wrong" music, to decadent sounds from the West. In grave cases, the "wall newspaper" is illustrated with the photo of the "deviationist." Anyone thus denounced now must post his auto-criticism in a wall newspaper of his own, and repent his sins. But the wall newspapers dispense not only blame and accusations, they also praise outstanding work. Our guide translates one wall newspaper in which a woman train conductor exhorts her colleagues to return any extra pay for overtime to the State, to aid socialist construction.

An East German sailor explained to us that the defensive attitude of the Albanian population toward foreigners was due to fear of being denounced on wall newspapers.

Our young revolutionary—a teacher—told us: "My pupils have written a wall newspaper about me too. They accused me of being late in the morning for calisthenics. Carelessness and egoism led me to being late. In a wall

paper of my own I admitted that the pupils were right and thanked them for helping me to mend my ways." In order to teach them to readapt to socialist reality and work, thousands of "bureaucrats" were detached to agricultural work. Many artists, misled by urban life toward forms of decadence, had to go the way of the bureaucrats, to the fields and construction sites. At the latest party convention, young people were invited to move into the rugged mountains, to build terraces on uncultivated terrain and to construct roads. Between Roghozhina and Fieri thousands of "volunteers" are at work, all high school and university students; they are constructing a railroad line, about fifty miles long, that is to connect these two towns. The sight is really impressive. The plain seems transformed into an enormous army camp. Thousands of kids, with red scarfs, are levelling the terrain, carrying dirt to raise the dam for the tracks, without machines, with only axes and shovels. Whenever a span of the railroad has been completed, it is decorated with a red flag. One of our traveling companions comments: "When they built the pyramids in Egypt it must have looked like that." Another goal of the Cultural Revolution is to get rid of those variegated popular costumes that are still seen on village streets. The women, who seem most attached to national costumes, have to adapt at last to socialist reality, these fluttering shawls hinder the women in their productive work in factories. Our guide notes: "Women look much nicer in overalls than in national costumes."

On Sunday morning the bus takes us to the frontier where we are exchanged for another group of incoming visitors. As we cross the border to Yugoslavia, the

Albanian customs official returns to us—on his own initiative—the journals and papers confiscated at our arrival.

VI. The Conquest of Sigriswil

The room on the second floor of the Museum of Modern Art was empty in minutes, as if the floor had suddenly become porous and the crowd attending the gallery opening had simply oozed away. Theo and I had waited for the eight o'clock news and were therefore the last ones to arrive at George Walker's vernissage. When we shook hands with Mark Berkowitz and told him what the newscaster had just announced, the assemblage of art lovers became extremely agitated, spreading a murmur through the crowd, and soon everyone knew: "At 2:10 p.m., the Chilean president Salvador Allende committed suicide in the governmental palace *La Moneda* in Santiago by discharging one shot from an automatic revolver into his mouth."

We found ourselves alone in the empty room. Just as we were going to leave, startled still by the sudden disappearance of the others, a man stepped into George Walker's sculptures of colorfully painted, bundled and sheafed arrangements of steel rods. "Is the vernissage over already?" he asked, looking bewildered. "Yes," we said, and the rotund man replied by saying he felt that was a good enough reason to go for a drink together.

Five lanes of cars thundered past beneath us as we crossed the Avenida Beira Mar on the suspended walkway. The man was short and stocky, his head supported by his shoulders rather than by a neck. He had a flabby face, his unshaven cheeks dangling like bags. Yet it was a fierce face, and I didn't realize that he was limping until he tried desperately to keep up with us on the Praça Mahatma

Gandhi. He wanted to know how we liked Rio, and we slowed our pace to answer his question. When we reached the chasm of the Avenida Rio Branco with its towering walls of concrete and glass, he shouted over the roar of the traffic and asked the question which only surprised us because we had expected it much earlier. "Where are you from?" he asked. "From Switzerland," we answered in unison. "I see," he said, and fell silent. I could tell he was ruminating about something. He was still silent as we turned into the Rua Sete de Setembro, and at the corner of the Rua Gonçalves Dias I told myself he was probably thinking about Allende's suicide.

He was still silent when we entered the doorless façade of the *Confeitaria Colombo*. Theo and I found it difficult orienting ourselves: we were standing in a labyrinth, in a glass palace. Giant mirrors covered the walls, each of them five meters wide and probably about seven meters high and surrounded by dark brown, ornately carved wooden frames. Each mirror reflected the mirrors on the opposite wall, which also reflected the mirrors with the mirrors in the mirrors, creating canyons of glass in which the patrons were sitting at innumerable small tables reflected a hundredfold until their images were lost in the chasm of glass.

Yet the shimmering glass walls weren't gleaming. The vastness of their expanse was broken, muddy brown sections disrupting the play of the bewildering picture organ. It was as if their power to reflect everything itself had been broken, as if they had tired of their task after countless decades. The glass added a greenish background to the pictures it reflected: a festive interior against a vista

of ocean afloat with seaweed, encrusted with algae. Only the area around the entrance, where daylight streamed in through the opening in the facade, presented the appearance of an above-ground, refined, well-kept restaurant. The light of day fell across the bar to the right, where the waiters filled the glasses with fizzing *Brahma Chopp*, and to the left across glass cases filled with thousands of chocolate curios stacked into fantastic forms.

The waiter in the black uniform carried a white serviette draped over his arm. "*Mate gelado* and two *caipirinhas*, please." After I managed to pick out our new friend's massive figure from among the dozens of photographs he kept showing us, he said, "So, you are Swiss." He fell into a silent reverie again, though only briefly this time, for he added, "Switzerland, a curious country. Actually there are five Switzerlands, and the most curious one is Sigriswil. Ah yes, Switzerland; many different nations living together, and many different people." "Many different people," I concurred. "The same is true of Brazil." "So it is," our friend muttered through his thick, short lips. "So it is. Many things are the same there as they are here. Only in Switzerland, it's summer during different months." He scratched his head, covered with sparse strands of white hair. "There's one other difference," he added. "The houses are built much closer together than they are here in Brazil. You don't have to go very far until you come to houses and people again. There are people who speak French and make watches for the whole world, watches, I tell you, that look exactly like broaches or bracelets or amulets. But Switzerland belongs to those who speak German because they own the big industries. They

make chocolates until the world market gets saturated. They make chocolate animals, little tiny chocolate houses, toys, chocolate watches, and all kinds of other useful things. The most important thing for them is that chocolate doesn't look like chocolate. Everything has to look like something else, and the Swiss are the best craftsmen in the world when it comes to that."

It seemed to me that our friend didn't really believe his own words, that he was taunting us, trying to make us angry, because he was smiling provocatively to himself.

"My name is Nelson," he said suddenly and extended a broad, heavy hand. "How do you know about Switzerland?" I asked as I shook his paw.

"Everything is very orderly," he continued, "and rather tedious, in this giant city made up of millions of tiny houses, this city that covers the entire flatland. There are tiny gardens in front of every door. But even hibiscus and bougainvillea can't spread their fragrance into the air because the streets reek of chocolate, almost as intensely as the streets of Santos smell of coffee.

"When you climb the hills below the mountains... They're called something like the Andes... You come to the slopes where the jungle grows. There you find Sigriswil, its wooden houses inhabited by a curiously adventurous people. They know what they owe the earth. They are convinced that winter has to be burnt in order for spring to come. They shoot the ripe apples from the trees, and they have shooting contests and are true champion marksmen. They know that the soul of a beautiful maiden can fly out of the body in the guise of a cat for a few hours. They live in fear of the elegantly dressed gentleman whose feet don't

leave footprints in the snow. At night, they light fires in the forests to banish the ogre that devours little children. Their leathery faces reveal which ones have encountered the wrathful he-goat. Every time civilization banishes the old myths, the Swiss invent new ones, like the one about the gods landing their spaceships in the mountains during the night. Every century needs its own myths, and its own poets who create them. Our myths here in Brazil have been the same for centuries, and many have come from Africa, yet many people here already believe in the myths from Switzerland. In Sigriswil, everybody is busy living."

I had to wait for a break in Nelson's flow of words before I was able to interrupt him. An elegant smell of decay wafted through the restaurant, and the succession of pictures in the dim mirrors rendering the walls of the *Colombo* almost transparent made the faces look almost real in an eerie kind of way. They seemed to belong here, together with the tall, narrow glass cupboards with the elaborate wooden feet beside the pillars at the entrance in which whiskey bottles from various distilleries were displayed, together with the bushy palms growing in large buckets next to the swinging doors leading into the kitchen. That's how Switzerland must appear to them in Brazil, I thought.

As soon as Nelson stopped to take a quick breath, I interjected, "How do you know about Switzerland?" As if in reply to my question, the ageing noblewoman at the foremost table to our right said to her son with the smooth, puffed-up face, "Have you heard that Salvador Allende committed suicide?"

Nelson cleared his throat. "The watch factories," he said, "are situated in a part of the city called La Chaux de Fonds, or something like that, and every morning the entire population disappears behind the factory doors... That must look like in Chicago way back, when masses of people marched to work in those immense slaughterhouses, an image one would have to see in black and white, and in a silent movie. Work, work, work... It's obvious that real life has to be played out as a fantasy. That's how the myths of the gods in their spaceships are born, and other brave ideas, like the one Henri Pindy had, Henri Pindy, the famous son of La Chaux de Fonds, who worked together with Kropotkin and showed the populace the kind of freedom people could have if they only knew how to use it. He transformed the march of the workers into the factory into something heroic... That's what they have in Switzerland: work as an act of rebellion. Yes, that's Switzerland. They work, because it brings in money, and after hours they take off into incredible fantasies.

"Another son of La Chaux de Fonds, a hobbyist and experimenter, invented the automobile, or perhaps he only introduced it to Switzerland, one or the other, in any case. His name was Louis Chevrolet. It is this kind of common sense, this practical approach to material things, which differentiates the Swiss living in the flatland from those in Sigriswil.

"There was also a poet who wrote patriotic verses, a man who experienced all the adventures real life denied him in his mind, a fantasizer, and this attic poet invented the neon signs that flash the name of a company into the night. In another inspired moment, he culminated years of

experimentation and testing with the invention of a slot machine that takes money in at the top and delivers something completely different at the bottom, candies or chocolate bars or marzipan. Yes, that's Switzerland. Its capital La Chaux de Fonds also gave birth to another radical, an architect who designed the Ministry of Education building here in Rio—or did he only help design it?—and the city project of Pedregulho just outside of Rio is also based on his ideas. Or isn't La Chaux de Fonds the capital of Switzerland? Perhaps it's Sigriswil."

A flicker in Nelson's eyes made me realize that it would have been tantamount to a very painful disillusionment if I had corrected his error and had said Bern instead of Sigriswil, and so I asked again, "How do you know about Switzerland?"

He took a sip of his *caipirinha*, swivelled the glass gently and watched the green slices of lime float around in the cloudy liquid. "I met a Swissman once before," he said pensively. "What I know, I know from him. It must have been 1924. I was working as a photographer for magazines and journals. I think it was February, one of those glorious summer days... A friend called me, Graça Aranha, one of the journalists, and asked if I had time to come down to the harbor. Shortly before noon a boat from Europe was scheduled to dock, the *Formosa*, and among the passengers was a man from Switzerland, a friend of some friends, and he had been asked to organize a lavish welcoming party. I took my camera, an old Leitz, and when I arrived at the harbor..." he paused, as he always did when he tried to remember names, "...Prudente de Moraes, Guilherme de Almeida, and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, the father of the

now world famous singer Chico Buarque, were already waiting there, all of them members of the artistic elite who were trying to revolutionize Brazil together with the *modernistas*.

"We waited and waited for a long time, until he finally arrived, long after most of the passengers had debarked with their steamer trunks. The police had kept him back and exposed him to a rigorous interview, taking him for an illegal immigrant, a one-armed fellow from Europe not being considered a particularly desirable addition to the Brazilian workforce. But he finally did arrive, a man with a fleshy face and an impressive protuberance. He was wearing trousers with a distinctive Swiss cut that accentuated his manhood against his left thigh. I remember this quite clearly because I still now and then look at the photograph I took at the time. It's an impressive group portrait, posed against the warehouses down by the harbor behind the *Praça Mauá*, with the chic young men all wearing their straw hats. The Swiss visitor greeted us with a profuse friendliness as if we had all met before. He was a splendid fellow, overflowing with enthusiasm to meet the unknown, to incorporate it into himself. I assume that's how the Swiss are.

"Graça Aranha invited all of us to a welcoming dinner in a restaurant by the harbor, *A Cabaça Grande*. I remember exactly because Graça felt that no other name would be as appropriate to the Swiss visitor's physiognomy as this. The dinner, an elaborate *feijoada* with lots of meat and *farofa*, was a feast with excellent wine, broad friendly gestures, and lively conversation. So this was Freddy, about whom Oswald de Andrade had told us so much. Freddy

praised the red wine from Santa Caterina and didn't let on that he was used to better libations. We listened as the Swiss visitor talked in his clear voice that didn't seem to go with his knobby face. His manner of speech was effervescent and sometimes even swaggering, I still have the sound of his voice in my ears, and he talked much about La Chaux de Fonds and Switzerland. He talked about his homeland and about Paris, where they speak the same language as in La Chaux de Fonds—he talked about it all the time, every time he came to Brazil, we met several times, the last time in 1953. What I know about Switzerland, I know from him.

"He was very proud that he was always ready to travel and could be on his way to exotic destinations within a quarter of an hour of making the decision... and Switzerland seemed to him to be a good place for grand departures, the best, he said, because Switzerland is at the very center of Europe. The amazing thing, the generous thing about Switzerland is that departures are made so easy. That shows that Switzerland is a modern country. And the Swiss have a right which not everybody has, the right to feel like foreigners in their own country. Freddy couldn't emphasize that enough. To be a foreigner entails the possibility of creating one's own fantastic homeland. This wouldn't be permitted here. The widely publicized slogan *Brasil: ame-o ou deixe-o* forbids it.

"Nothing delineates the essence and the characteristics of the Swiss more obviously than reading a foreign newspaper on the train or in a bar. Freddy mostly used Algerian dailies for this purpose. You are suddenly the one who doesn't belong, and when you listen from behind

your newspaper, you can directly experience for yourself how the Swiss have developed their national hospitality into a perfectly functioning, lucrative industry. This proficiency is obvious in everything. Everybody is everybody else's customer. In this way, everything assumes a specific function which we don't have here. As I said, it's a modern country. Freddy was a Swiss who could feel like a Russian, a Chinese, a Frenchman, even a Brazilian, right there in Switzerland. That's what you can do there. The Swiss are the best foreigners in Switzerland.

"There is no *saudade* there. Freddy said he didn't know a translation for the word. There's no *saudade* there that sucks you like an octopus into your country and hooks your arteries to the circulatory system of your people. There you can live without any connections—and you live despite of it. That's what makes departures so easy. People come, people go; that's Switzerland. You can be completely yourself, pick your own music yourself... and if it's balalaika you like, you travel to Russia. Trains travel from the train station in Switzerland all the way to Moscow and to Portugal. He was a foreigner in his own country, he said. I didn't understand Freddy's observation for a long time. Now I know how he meant it. And Switzerland allowed him to mean it like that. A spirit like Freddy was able to utilize that possibility.

"He was very knowledgeable about music. That was his field. He was the organist in the cathedral of Switzerland. In the opera *Carmen*, he shouted with joy to the rhythms of the bullfighter's song. He played the piano in the darkened movie house unlike anyone else, and was able to feel himself into the film with his notes. During the

showing of the movie *J'accuse!*, he brought the audience to tears. People say to this day the movie is only half the success without Freddy's accompaniment. Yes, *J'accuse!* was the title of the film, I'm sure... For awhile, he was an employee at the Swiss consulate in Washington. I could never imagine him working there. What could a footloose traveler, an Amazon magician, a world swallower like him possibly accomplish in a consulate? Keep records of compulsory days spent in military training? Of course he miscounted, and he was thrown out. That's exactly what he wanted... yet he felt abased, somehow. But I beg your pardon... perhaps it didn't go past his application."

The constant drone of Nelson's voice sounded more and more muffled, as if his vocal cords were being used up as he spoke, and because he was speaking more softly now I overheard a waiter asking two patrons at the table next to ours, "Did you know that Salvador Allende committed suicide today?" The question was drowned out by Nelson's unobstructed flow of words. "The humiliation must have surfaced in his mind when he accosted a French entrepreneur he didn't like with a flood of expletives, You speculator, you racketeer, nouveau riche, war monger, you rake, you Swiss, you adventurer, gambler, you cynic, you! It must have happened on the way back to the harbor, this sudden outburst which embarrassed us all, or maybe it happened years later. In any case, we all walked back from *A Cabaça Grande* to the harbor with Freddy after dinner because his boat was sailing on and Freddy wanted to go to his cabin to finish reading the works of the Swiss novelist Spittel... or something like that. Freddy had twenty volumes of his writings in his trunk. The *Formosa* was only

stopping in Rio for four hours. Freddy was on his way to Santos where his friend Paulo da Silva Prado was waiting for him, the coffee king of Sao Paulo, and I was sure he had a cunning business partner in the impetuous Freddy from Switzerland. I understand the Swiss are shrewd business people. They are the Chinese of Europe."

The flow of Nelson's memories seemed to have come to an end. He was quiet for some time. While I let the lazy liquid of the ice-cold *mates* flow over my tongue, the words *Salvador Allende* kept rising from the sea of muffled conversations around us. "On the evening of that day," Nelson suddenly resumed his monotone, "I bought a copy of the evening paper *A Noite* from the street vendor. What a surprise! The newspaper carried a description of our dinner party, even the reception at the harbor, and above the article the headline, 'Visita o Brasil—Blaise Cendrars, de passagem para São Paulo, esteve no Rio algumas horas.' I didn't know until then that Freddy was a poet—and Freddy merely a pseudonym."

Nelson lifted his glass to us, drank up, and, after getting the waiter's attention with a sharp *psssst... psssst* pressed from between his teeth, asked for a second *caipirinha*. "When my photograph appeared in the magazine *A Idea Ilustrada* ten days later," he continued, "the caption contained that peculiar name again, Blaise Cendrars. But the name in his passport was Sauser, that I know for sure because I saw it there."

The lights went on in the restaurant and every lamp cast a shimmering garland into the drabness of the mirror canyons.

"During his next stop over here, in March of 1926, nobody called him Freddy anymore. Now everybody called him Blaise. How did he get this name? He once told me that *Blaise* is a secret coded French word containing the three Brazilian words *blandicia*, *blasfemar*, and *blasonar*. Indeed: no other three words would be able to circumscribe the recklessness and the amicable emotionality of this daring one-armed soldier more precisely than these three: *blaspheme*, *caress*, and *boast*. That's not to say that he was just an ordinary braggart. On the contrary. He had simply removed the boundaries between things for himself. He could go positively wild when someone questioned his phantasmagorical escapades, or if someone pointed to logic and attempted to squeeze the poetics pulsing through his veins into the vice of a finely textured truth. But that's how the Swiss are; they know that reality only becomes complete when it is juxtaposed with its opposite, that which goes on up here," Nelson tapped his fingers vigorously against his forehead, "underneath the skull. There we enact modern drama. Where else would we get the incredible legends of the mountain dwellers I told you about if not from there?"

"Yes," Nelson said after a noisy gulp into the magic of the lights, "I love Switzerland. I love it because Freddy Sauser was born there."

Noisily, as he had gulped his drink before, Nelson sucked in the air. Then he was able to let his vocal cords flutter for another quarter of an hour. He told us in great detail of his excursion to *Morro Azul*, the place in the jungle where Blaise was a guest on Oswaldo Padroso's estate. He was called there, he, Nelson, as a photographer,

to immortalize a legendary rattlesnake with his camera, the feared Maa-Eiffel who lived in the draperies of the four-poster bed in the guest room. Everyone for miles around had been talking about the magic friendship between Blaise and Maa-Eiffel; he had heard the story already when he was drinking beer with the villagers at the wobbly counter in the *Armazém* of the *Sacra Família* among stacks of canned goods, assorted wares, and rusty tools... and even before, at the crossroads of Graminha, the farmhands had been talking about a stranger from a country where they spoke the language of the rattlesnakes. "Yes," Nelson said, "they speak many different languages in Switzerland. One more or less shouldn't make any difference."

Yet what surprised him more than Blaise's fearlessness in the face of the infamous reptile was the fact that the Swiss poet didn't protest fiercely when Padroso once told him he was the first Frenchman to stay at *Morro Azul*. "Imagine the protestations pouring forth if one should mistakenly introduce a Brazilian as an Argentinian. No Brazilian would be able to ignore an affront such as this. But the Swiss are different. They don't insist obstinately on their rights. It's surprising to see with what ease they can avoid any impressions of pigheadedness and pompousness by not immediately correcting every sentence anybody utters. That's why Blaise just nodded pleasantly when Padroso called him a Frenchman. It's part of the character of the Swiss."

A horde of barefoot newspaper boys stormed through the slowly darkening Rua Gonçalves Dias. "Allende's suicide!" they screamed in a distorted chorus. The frail, well-dressed gentleman sitting two tables behind

us asked the waiter to get him the newspaper. The piccolo came back from the alley with five copies of *O Globo*. The opened pages of the newspapers stood like sails or curtains above the tables, concealing the faces of the guests.

"If I could travel to Switzerland," Nelson continued, "I would want to live in Sigriswil. Sigriswil is the whole world in miniature—whatever exists, exists in Sigriswil. During all his visits here, Blaise kept talking about the adventurous spirit of the Swiss colony in Leningrad, about Mr. Leuba who opened his eyes when he was a boy to the fact that the rest of the world was indeed larger than Switzerland, and about the conclusions he had been drawing from that revelation ever since. Several times he also talked about the great thoughts that had gone up in smoke because he kept the *Hotel des Wagons-Lits* in Peking warm by burning entire annual volumes of the periodical *Mercure de France* in the central furnace in the basement. During his last visit here in Guanabara he surprised us with the revelation that he could quite easily live without the thought of Peking, he could also manage quite well without La Chaux de Fonds, but definitely not without Sigriswil.

"During the first decade of this century, he used to stand in Spiez—that's the name of the town, isn't it?—and look longingly across the lake to the hillsides of Sigriswil. What doesn't exist in Sigriswil, doesn't exist. Nor is there a time continuum; everything and everything, he said, takes place simultaneously all the time. Only Switzerland can allow something like that. It must have been over there, on the opposite shore, that he felt his utopia to be, where the voice of his blood called to him. But it wasn't until October

1949, I believe, that he finally crossed the lake to marry his famous actress in the century-old church in Sigriswil. *The Ox or The Cow...* The restaurant, where they had the wedding reception, had the name of an animal. Blaise mustn't have been feeling very comfortable in his chic, dark wedding suit with the tie, because he differentiated himself so clearly from the farmers in their linen jackets. But as far as they were concerned, Blaise was one of them. They respected him and didn't hold it against him that he was wearing the accoutrements of the others, although he must have looked like a tourist on that day. Of course they knew that many villagers had the same name as he... Sausser is the name of the inhabitants of the settlement nestled against the slope of the *Rothorn*. In Switzerland, two people with the same name are friends from the moment they meet."

Nelson tapped the table top with his index finger, drew invisible lines as if there were a map of the Lake Thun region on the table.

I didn't get a chance to tell Nelson that I was on maneuvers in Tschingel near Sigriswil as a recruit, because a breathless youth in a mass-produced suit threw himself at the table of the elegant old lady at the front of the room, shouting, "Have you heard the bang? In the offices of the airline company *LAN-Chile*, over there on the Rio Branco, a bomb just exploded!" "I knew," the dowager said, "that Allende's suicide wouldn't be without repercussions," and shook her head, dejectedly, it seemed to me.

Nelson didn't leave me any time to reminisce about my army days. His voice bubbled on. "*The Conquest of Sigriswil* was the title of the novel Blaise was working on during his last visit here. In it he described the ruses and

tricks with which the citizens of Sigriswil, splendidly stubborn as they were, defended themselves against the soldiers who were supposed to affect their assimilation into the Canton Berb—there is such a thing, isn't there? The citizens of Sigriswil wanted to remain citizens of Sigriswil, and that's what they did to this very day. They have their own council, the village council, and they govern themselves. In the background of these historically documented events, Blaise plays out his own capture of Sigriswil.

"Together with his two friends, Bubendorffler and Kramer from the Canton Appenzell, he moves into this isolated enclave of simultaneity, in which life has been preserved in all its intensive externalizations, in sharp contrast to Switzerland where everything happens consecutively and according to plan... One thing after the other. It is for this reason that life in Sigriswil, as Blaise explained, is without history. The citizens work and are happy and nothing else. Because the people of Sigriswil lead a good life and have no worries, they can devote themselves whole-heartedly to the kind of cleanliness Swiss President Dr. Stein had decreed.

"I'm quite sure when Blaise talked about Dr. Stein's sanatorium in our circle he was referring to Switzerland. I could tell from the tone of his voice. In the Dr. Stein Sanatorium, the orderlies walk through the corridors and tend to the patients, just as the ruling councilors tend to the inhabitants of Switzerland. They take note of what happens to their charges, they keep lists of all the illnesses each patient has had, and they are concerned that no ill befalls anyone twice. It's a modern country, as I said before. In

times of nagging self-doubts Blaise confided in me that now and then he could have wished his country to be somewhat less modern. 'A bit less of everything, but of everything else a bit more!' That, too, is a topic of *The Conquest of Sigriswil*, as are the similarities between the Swiss and the citizens of Sigriswil, those blue Indians of Switzerland.

"I even remember that in this village life insurances aren't being sold. To insure themselves is the highest aspiration for the Swiss; the more beautifully framed policies grace the walls of your home, the greater your social standing. Blaise told me one evening out in Leblon, in my favorite pub *De Grau*, that it is possible to insure yourself against having unexpected experiences. The citizens of Sigriswil, however, and Blaise himself, actually look forward to the unexpected with great passion. It was this attitude to life he wanted to bring to the fore with his novel—and it was for this reason that in his later years he fought on the side of the citizens of Sigriswil."

The five students who had been sitting at the bar trying to imbibe some courage in the form of *cachaça* and *batidas* were leaving the restaurant on unsure legs. In the doorway they called out, "Long live Allende!"—their voices sounding short and dry—and dispersed inconspicuously into the crowd. Three guests at the back of the room took up the shout like a distant, tattered echo but cut it short it before it reached its end.

The muffled shouts had generated a general nervousness which also affected Nelson. He was speaking abruptly now, in short breaths, as if tempted to reveal a guarded secret. "I remember exactly the answer Blaise gave

me when I asked him in what ways Switzerland differed from Brazil. He thought about it for a long time. Then he said there were two sentences which he could never have written in Switzerland, first of all because the situation didn't allow it, and secondly because the national climate wasn't conducive. The moon in the sky swelled like an insect sting. The stars turned red like the lingering marks of a bite."

The force of the muffled conversations and the excitement vibrating in the room appeared to lift Nelson from his chair at our table. He held out his hand and added to his parting good-byes, "Have you heard that Salvador Allende committed suicide today?" He picked his way between the tables towards the exit. A hundred reflections followed him in the mirrors. A cavalcade of Nelsons faced us as he turned around and called to us without sound, "I love Switzerland because Blaise was born there." Theo looked at me and said, "The Switzerland I love is the Switzerland of Blaise Cendrars." Out in the street, the neon lights had come on, and the evening was very hot.

VII. Catalog of Everything I: Catalog of the 134 Most Important Observations During a Long Railway Journey

1. the leafing-through

the uncertainly searching, leafing-through of apparently never used price lists and route charts by the ticket official in Zurich station seldom having to issue a ticket such as this.

2. the soldier

the soldier who, in faded green and in fact looking like a good soldier, leaves his rifle to travel on with us when he gets off in Goeschenen.

3. the whole

the aimless turning of the watch-winder to move the hands an hour on, because the clock in the Swiss half of Chiasso station shows 10:23, the one in the Italian half 11:23;—aimless because always when I do this, I never know whether I gain or lose an hour—looked at as a whole.

4. the abolition

the abolition, undertaken spontaneously by the passengers, of the division between smoking and non-smoking compartments as soon as the train leaves Swiss soil.

5. the story-book cliché

the campfire of the gipsy camp by the sidings in Brescia which, because it has become a story-book cliché, was honestly not expected nowadays.

6. the temple

the advert-clean whitewashed Greek temple, that is the station of Lomazzo, where what baffles me is not so much the temple-station, but rather the way in which it flashes up within the window frame like an image on a screen.

7. the string

the voice, consisting of a string of vocal explosions, of the ice-cream seller, the only notable person in Verona station, which is to say it is the *Voice*, that makes this person notable.

8. the scab

the scab on the surface of the earth after Monfalcone, which someone tells me is called "karst."

9. the girl

the disturbed girl at Trieste station who clambers into our corridor over mountains of her own luggage and asks about ten passengers: "Mosca? Moscou? Moskau? Moskva? Moscow?"

9a. and the ensuing agitated departure from our carriage of this same girl.

10. the mother

the booted mother in customs uniform with the energetic Balkan face, who, in the station at Sezana, opens by herself the abandoned items of luggage standing in the corridor and, not at all carefully, rummages around in them.

11. the sounds

the incomprehensibly guttural sounds pounding out of the loudspeakers in Ljubljana station, and my realization that foreign languages out of loudspeakers in foreign countries sound much

more foreign than from the radio loudspeaker at home; and sound most foreign at night.

12. the Swiss Franc

the Yugoslav woman who says: "You ought to have Swiss Francs, not Dinars. With your money everything is cheap!"

12a. and my regret, that her observation is only valid if one has money.

13. the sentence

the sentence of another Yugoslav woman who, after the sleeping carriages had been disconnected at Zagreb, said: "Nice new carriages aren't for the people of Belgrad and further down south in the Balkans; they just wouldn't appreciate nice new carriages," and the reply, that only occurs to me much later, that perhaps the only reason those people don't appreciate nice new carriages, is because the nice new carriages are disconnected in Zagreb.

14. the color

the fading blue-green, the color of the labels of the tins of food that the waitercook in the dining car puts on a petrol stove and carries to the table with a knife and fork when they are hot.

15. the black man

the seemingly unreasonably euphoric black man who, looking up occasionally to command attention, feverishly leafs through a dictionary, looks up again and again, smiles at me, and, when he has found the appropriate page, says to me: "Dobri vecer,"

15a. and the disappointment of this black man when I say to him: "I am not Yugoslavian."

16. the tunnel

that three-hour long tunnel that connects Zagreb and Belgrade: the night.

17. being reminded of the sentence

being reminded of the sentence of the other Yugoslav woman when observing the knee breeches of the farmers, and the farmers wives in their black-and-red flowered skirts, who sleep between the heaps of bundles and packages on the floor of the waiting room in Belgrade station, because these are the very people who don't appreciate nice new carriages.

18. the Iraqi

the brown-skinned Iraqi in Belgrade who comes to ask: "Is this seat free?" and the guilelessness

with which, when I say yes, he adds: "I will fetch my wife and my five children."

19. the photo

my surprise that one cannot recognize the face on the photo in the passport of the Iraqi's wife, because it is covered by a black veil as is the Arab custom.

20. the Balkan houses

the layer of dirt on the carriage windows which makes it almost impossible to see the square squat Balkan houses with the pointed thatched roofs in Svetozarevo,

20a. and my satisfaction that the clouds promise rain which will clean the windows, which is regrettable only in so far as we will then be well beyond Svetozarevo

21. the feeling

the slightly unpleasant feeling of uncertainty that sets in when I try to imagine that, at the moment the Balkan train is thundering over the bridge at Nisch, a pig is *really* squealing in the cellar of Nuttke the butcher; however, my attempts to internalize the laws of simultaneity of all things are not entirely in vain.

22. the rush

the yapping hoot of the train, sounding like coughing, to announce the departure from Crveni Crst, and the precipitous rush with which all those who hurried to the water tap with empty water bottles, leap up again with them half empty.

23. the fugitives

the fugitives from civilization, who really only wear jeans and poncho, because they fear that skin as a form of dress would soon wear into holes, and who come together from all carriages of the train in the compartment of Michouette Keller to hear details about the menu in the spaghetti shop, the issue of student identity cards at the pudding shop, and the pushers, who Crazy Yener doesn't want to have in his dive, because he knows they are snoopers from the drug squad.

24. the Balkan operetta

the station at Pirot that looks like an archetypal peasant inn from a Balkan operetta, and that, apart from the sign whose wood has almost completely absorbed the paint of the name Pirot, shows no other trace of being a station; (in passing I must confess that I first mistook the name plate for an inn sign.)

25. the melodrama

the optimistic sounds of march music from the station loudspeaker of Dragoman, which convert the "Fuck Freedom!"-chant into a melodrama with which the hippie pair from Frisco, standing on the empty platform, take their leave from their fellow passengers on the departing train, because for reasons unknown to them they have been refused permission to enter Bulgaria.

26. the granite stones

the white granite stones neatly arranged end to end for miles and miles, which retain the gravel bed of the railway track right through Bulgaria: "We must have order!" explained the customs official.

27. the German

the German carrying only a toothbrush and an umbrella, but wearing a tie and neat herringbone suit, who is on his way to India and gets on the train in Sofia, explaining his hair had been shorn at the border before he was allowed to enter: "We must have order!" had been the customs official's comment.

28. the mistrust

the unmistakable mistrust with which the ticket collector asks every passenger, as he punches their ticket, for their nationality, which in fact only surprises me because I am not accustomed to hearing ticket collectors ask passengers their nationality.

29. the words

tovarishch, mir and moreshenoye, the only three words we can use to converse with the Bulgarian passengers on their way to Plovdiv, to which they react as if we had spoken hundreds of words.

30. the discussion

our discussion about what tricks to use in each station to persuade people the compartment is full, so as to be able to sleep stretched out full length, and my surprise that this problem is being discussed in a large number of compartments on the train.

31. the wooden chests

the painted wooden chests used as luggage by the old peasant women with crumpled faces under shoulder-wide headscarves who are being allowed to emigrate from Bulgaria, the chests

that you cannot climb over because the barricade in the corridor towers up as far as the carriage roof, and cannot move out of the way because peasant women and children are sleeping on them.

32. La Traviata

the whimpering of the babies sleeping in cardboard boxes on top of the piled-up wooden chests in the corridor, this whimpering, that really does not sound like the whimpering of babies at all, but rather like the last act of La Traviata—to be exact, at the place where my scratched record always sticks in the groove.

33. the hope

the desperate complaints of the peasant women who, powerless but still spurred on by some sort of hope, heave the twenty chests that have barricaded the corridor onto the platform at Svilengrad, because something to do with their papers is not in order.

34. the unsuspectingness

the unexpressed but still noticeable unsuspectingness on the faces of the sleepy passengers who do not know that the overfriendly, neatly blue-uniformed official who asks to see passports in the middle of the night

is a Greek, because they are not interested in the fact that here the line of the railway was fixed before the line of the border.

35. the rumble

the rumble of the wheels on the railway bridge over the river Mariza, sounding like file cards riffling through my fingers, cards on which every railway-bridge I have ever crossed are pictured, the biggest picture being of the Po bridge at Piacenza,

35a. and the attentiveness with which I note, despite the imposition of my image of the file cards, that the bridge is flanked at the northern end by a white masonry pile with the inscription "Hellas," and on the southern side by a decrepit army post with the sign of the crescent moon and in front of that the bust of Atatürk.

36. the chai-glass

the hot chai-glass that the passengers hold in their clammy fingers as they tank up a little sunshine on the overgrown gravel-heap in the ramshackle little station of Uzunköprü after the night in the train, settling themselves in the patches of light and clearly hoping that the train driver will not blow the whistle as a sign to carry on just yet.

37. the Turkish customs official

the paunchy Turkish customs official, who sang "Déclaration!" into the compartment like a moaning Muezzin, and who now—because I made myself conspicuous by shrugging my shoulders in pretended ignorance—greeted me again and again with his cheerful cry of "Déclaration!" on my wanderings through the train for the next ten hours until we reach Istanbul; although he could just as well say "Grüss Gott!" or "Guten Morgen!" instead of "Déclaration!" if he had any command of the German language.

38. the blue-jeans fashion model

the long-legged Belgian girl, the blue-jeans fashion model, who is on her way to see her father at the oilfields of Abu Dhabi, and who says with conviction and noticeable interest, after she has gazed at the tottering wooden shed with the nameplate Uzunköprü for some time: "This is the Orient!"

39. the morning mood

the morning mood that washes round the black mummified women like a fresh-filled bowl of water, as they emerge from between the huts with thick clay walls and straw roofs, and set out to market with gaudy baskets of fruit.

40. the surprise

my surprise that the friendly Turk who lent me money for the next part of the journey because the exchange office at Edirne station was closed, has translated Enzensberger and Peter Weiss into Turkish.

41. the rocket base

the yellow of the sunflower fields, bleached by the bright yellow morning light, from which a minaret, topped with a pointed hat, towers up like a deserted rocket base, because all Turkish minarets remind me of Cape Kennedy.

42. the unison

the unison of the Islamic music that the Turks in the compartments get out of their transistor radios with the almost barren, endless, hilly steppeland outside the window, across which a cowherd is driving his five cows.

43. the futility

the futility of the sharp cries of the children in the station hut of Cerkesköy who try to sell paprika-filled sandwiches, because: since no buyer appears, their cries are in vain.

44. the repetition

the repetition of the pronouncement "This is the Orient!" by the long-legged blue-jeans Belgian girl when a camel dozes so close to the track that we all fear the train wheels will sever the head from its neck; to which it should be added that the mere sight of the camel brings the Belgian girl to say this, rather than the fact that the camel was almost beheaded by the wheels of the train.

45. the observation

the observation that what I had till now considered a make-believe fairy-tale figure in fact really exists, namely, a keeper of geese, a goose herder.

46. the atmosphere

the atmosphere, known to me from Westerns, that is produced by the rattling train and its chugging High-Noon engine that goes uphill at walking speed and downhill faster, and the cheer-full presumptuousness with which the train calls itself the "Orient Express."

47. the completion

the unexpected completion of this Wild-West atmosphere, when, in front of the weathered

shack that is the station of Catalca a man—
unfortunately not called Rufus—pumps water
into the belly of the oily riveted locomotive
from an elbow lever pump (the sort no western
film director can do without).

48. the iron star

the lack of the iron star on the jacket of the
grizzled but still lively waiter who moves
between the worn wooden benches serving chai
in the dining car that looks like a Saloon,
because *with* an iron star on his lapel the picture
of the sheriff would have been complete.

49. the exchange

the exchange of the nice little steam engine,
whose driver surely must be called Lukas, for a
gleaming polished diesel locomotive, just as the
first pale watery-blue tongues of the Marmara
sea lick across the barren plain,

49a. and the seriousness with which my
Enzensberger Turk explains the exchange: "It
makes a better impression on arriving in town!"

50. the zealousness

the hasty zealousness with which a Turk
studying in Paris, even before the arrival in
Sirkeci station, teaches me how to count to ten

in Turkish: Bir, iki, üç, dört, bes, alti, jedi, sekis, dogus, on; which reminds me that so far someone in every country has taught me to count to ten.

51. the minarets of the Yeni Cami

the dirt on the windows, already thickly caked again, in which the postcard-famous symbol of Istanbul, the welcoming minarets of Yeni Cami, flicker in the slightly cleaner patches as through holes in a sheet of ice.

52. the sight

the somehow slightly unpleasant sight of the jumble of underwear and food in the opened cases as the customs check takes place on Sirkeçi station, at which it suddenly becomes clear to me that I only find this sight unpleasant because as a child I was told: "Always pack your case neatly! The inside of a case is like the inside of its owner."

53. the grasp

the thoroughly routine grasp with which the customs men dig transistor radios out of the chaos in the cases, and their sureness as to which corner of the case the transistor radios are usually put in.

54. the hedgehog

the hedgehog that the spiky skyline of Istanbul reminds me of, now it can all be viewed as a whole, cinerama-sized from the ferry across the Bosphorus to the station of Haidarpasa.

55. the cloth bundles

the cloth bundles that are piled up against the facade of Haidarpasa station a good four hours before the train is due to leave, and that remind me of the loads carried by walk-ons dressed up as coolies in the first act of Lotfi Mansouris production of "Carmen."

56. the solemnity

the solemnity that is lent to the train journey by the fact that every passenger has to enter into a thick book at the counter his name, nationality, address and ticket number; jet delusions: for this train there is a passenger list.

57. the climbing-in

the assault on the incoming carriages, the climbing-in through doors and windows, performed at such hectic speed that there is no one left standing on the platform by the time the incoming train comes to a halt, not even the old woman who was standing there cracking nuts just now.

58. the associations

the wildly proliferating associations with fairy tales read when young, aroused by the plate that is attached to the carriage with the destinations Ankara – Adana – Aleppo – Mosul – Baghdad, which I cannot describe for the reason that I cannot remember with what feeling my spirit reacted to the fairy tales I read when I was young.

59. the nagging

my annoyance, that I can only identify the nagging of the old toothless peasant woman who wants to commandeer a seat in our already full compartment as a string of sounds and not as a flood of words because I do not understand her language.

60. the women

the herd of women in the corridor, because the strong ones, the men, have taken the seats.

61. the disenchantment

the disenchantment, that the new buildings in the suburbs on the Asian side of Istanbul appear no more Asiatic than the new buildings in Europe.

62. the whimpering

the blubbering of the child in the cradle that an Arab woman hangs up between the luggage racks, straight across the compartment, which by the way reminds me of the whimpering of the Bulgarian babies that did not sound like the whimpering of babies, but rather like the last act of "La Traviata."

63. the space rockets

the fact that in the Turkish villages the mosques look no different from the ordinary houses, except that a minaret towers up out of the tiled roof, at which point I should really repeat that minarets that tower up out of tiled roofs always remind me of space rockets ready for liftoff; however that holds good only for tiled roofs, on domed roofs they remain for me as minarets.

64. the carriage door

the nonchalance with which an Arab opens the carriage door, sits down on the top step and lets his legs dangle out in the cool draught of the moving train; a picture that should really be seen from the outside.

65. the changeover

the changeover, gradually completed as we push forward into the interior of Anatolia, from brick walls of houses to clay walls,

65a. and my suspicion that such a change indicates a turning point in many things.

66. the frontier of civilization

the frontier of civilization indicated by the fact that before Pileçik a farmer is taking his combine harvester to the field, whereas after Pileçik an old woman rides on a board dragged by a donkey over spread-out ears of corn.

67. the result

the disconcerting result of the discussion with my fellow travelers in the compartment that, beyond the windows, the totally lightless dark that follows nightfall does not necessarily indicate the region is uninhabited.

68. the blow

the tough blow that my imagination has to suffer, because the Ankara station by night looks just like one of the new standard white-tiled Italian stations.

69. the benefactor

the eggs, the cheese, the bread, that are distributed among the people as a matter of course as though the railway administration had issued them along with the ticket, so that I am not sure who the benefactor in our compartment is – the Pakistani couple who live with their three children in Kuwait, the Iraqi from Baghdad, the Kurd from Iraq or the blue-jeans fashion model; it was not me, I know that.

70. the blankets

the thick woolen blankets that the women lay out on the floor between the seats in order to spend the night there (a sleeping facility that has never occurred to me on any train journey), roofed over by the legs of the men who lie straight across between the seats.

71. the bed

the bed of newspaper, that the Iraqi has prepared for me in the corridor, and the senselessness of my assumption that the only reason I slept badly was because I could not read what was in them; and the fact that the assumption presumably arises only because I consider senseless Teddy's phrase that dying of thirst on a desert dune is more bearable, if one knows the name of the dune.

72. the attempt

my unfulfilled attempt to follow the break of dawn over desertlike hills, on whose stony shoulders occasional dried-up sunflower fields are set, since I have noted only: "very pale translucent morning light."

73. the cigarette

the lightly singed cigarette in the mouth of the ticket collector who, when the train stops in the middle of some yellow-brown fields, calls out "Kayseri! Kayseri!" although neither the town nor its station are to be seen—to which it should be added that perhaps this town has no station.

74. the cloud of dust

the cloud of dust above the street and the roofs of the village of Basköy, which indicates that a car must have driven past there some time ago

75. the high polish

the old trader on the unpaved platform of Ysilkisar, who uses spittle and a cloth to put a high polish on the apples and tomatoes on his tray, although the train has already arrived.

76. the lichen

the lichen of stone that covers the hill because the walls of the village of Nigde grow so tightly together that they form a compact hill-cover.

77. the water tap

my flight from the compartment to the water tap in the toilet because the Pakistanis offered me their flat bread dipped in their chili sauce, and the memory that surfaces as I stand in front of the dried-up tap, that in Pakistan *that* time, it took several weeks before my tongue got used to chili sauce.

78. Leimbach

the feeling, strong for a moment and then gone again, that the chugging of this diesel engine as it curves round tottering haystacks piled on the red earth sounds like the stuttering motor of that murderous lawnmower that disturbs me every Saturday evening in Leimbach; but perhaps this feeling would be different if I had a different comparison at my disposal,

78a. put a stop now to these attempts to refute the saying of my Latin teacher that there is nothing new and that the new is always just a variation of the old, the familiar!

79. the incredibly long time

the incredibly long time during which the cloud of dust thrown up by a herd of sheep in terrified flight away from the train hangs over the almost naked red earth,

79a. and the stubbornness with which the nice but idiotic idea sticks in my brain, that if the cloud did not move, time would not move either.

80. the ribbons

the very different shades of green ribbons of vegetation, from which I can read the course of the streams in the earth-red desert, but only because the vegetation crawls along by the sides of the streams across the desert.

81. the liver

the chopped liver on a board that a peasant woman, looking for a buyer, shoves into the compartment; at which I really did not know, that the crap-brown heap was chopped liver until somebody told me it was chopped liver.

82. the rump

his own rump, dragged from compartment to compartment through the whole length of the train on his hands by the legless beggar; to

which I must add that I am as alienated by the fact that there are beggars in moving trains as I am shocked by the fact that this beggar has no legs.

83. the rainbow

the grey-violet-green rainbow in the rocks that sprout up suddenly out of the plain as the walls of Taurus gorge.

84. the urgency

the urgency with which a boy between the lines in Ulukisla tries to sell a bottle of water, and the remarkable thing that he evokes this impression of urgency with gestures alone.

85. the whistle

the whistle of the train, turned into a shrill drawn-out *Eeeeeee* by the narrow Taurus gorge, and my short-lived annoyance that I have no idea of the physical conditions that determine this conversion.

86. the watching

my watching for the bare stone hotel in Ciftehan, which I remember because (during a bitter winter night) five years ago, we warmed

the rooms by making a fire with worn-out chairs in the corridor on the first floor.

87. the pain

the pain, suffered with dignified pride, that a Turk brings upon himself by butting with his forehead the face of the fellow selling water out of an old petrol can to the train passengers for 10 kurus, as a punishment for his giving short change.

88. the arms

the raised arms that help to pass the wicker basket of the fig-seller over the heads of the passengers in the corridor, because the carriage is so overcrowded that there is no room for it at body height,

88a. and the loss of this same fig-seller's earnings for the day, because everyone who helped to pass the basket along picked off a fig.

89. the view

the view from the high plateau of Hasikiri station into the depths of the flood plain of Adana, a view that I find so confusing because the carriage windows have so far been walled up by the stone sides of the narrow Taurus gorge.

90. the transparency of the air

the thick glassy heat which is so oppressive that it reduces the transparency of the air in which we have been handed the first customs form to fill in at least ten hours before the border.

91. the fear of suffocation

the panic in the dining car, occasioned by the fear of suffocation in the tunnel of Muslimiye, as clouds of smoke from two steam trains pour into the carriage through the open windows, so that you would not be able to see your oft-quoted hand in front of your face, even if the dining car lights were switched on.

92. the style of building

the unified style of building of the stations between Adana and the border, the forts painted pink-brown in whose three-arched loggias there are always fairytale Turks in wide breeches sitting at chai, and my attempt to confirm, on the basis of facial features, that they are in fact different fairytale Turks in every station, although the station, apart from the nameplate, is exactly the same, or at least seems to be.

93. the walking pace

the walking pace at which the train chugs through the mountain gorges (on whose valley floor the tobacco fields glow dark green; a disparity between mountain and valley that would remind me of Karl May's "Across Wild Kurdistan" if I had read the book), and this despite the fact that a further steam engine was coupled up to the end of the train at Bahce station: twice as slow because there are now two slow engines?

94. the matter-of-course

my joy, which each time becomes more and more a matter of course, at the persistence of the Iraqi from Kameschli who at every station buys food from the trader: because he had a yearning for figs in Muslimiye, he bought two bags of figs—one for me; because in Bahce he wanted to eat grapes, he bought two tubs of grapes—one for me; because in Fevzipasa he wanted to purchase hard-boiled eggs, he bought four hard boiled eggs—two for me,

94a. this procedure which teaches me, that "*Thank you!*" is "*Teshekkür!*" in Turkish and "*Shukran!*" in Arabic.

95. the chorus of voices

the forest-fire murmur that runs through the carriage every time a passenger leaves the train, composed of the words "change address... change address...", a chorus of voices by whose volume you can gauge the popularity of the person leaving.

96. the robbers' den atmosphere

the robbers' den atmosphere, unrelieved by any stamp of civilization, of the mountain village of Fevzipasa which, if it were in southern Switzerland—an imaginable possibility to judge from the stone construction of the houses—which, if it were in southern Switzerland would long ago have had a car park for tourists' cars built up in front of it, which here is an absurdity because no tourists' cars pay a visit to Fevzipasa.

97. the wait

the sleeping, the praying, the smoking, some of the attempts of my fellow passengers to while away the two-hour wait, during which our three carriages stand without an engine outside the shack that is the Turkish border station at Islahiye; the father from Jerusalem who went to fetch his son, a student in Lausanne, circles the carriages uninterruptedly on a two-hour walk; a

few Syrian villagers brewing themselves chai on a spirit stove on the carriage steps, and then my surprised realization, that most people act as if they were doing nothing.

98. the thoroughness

the condescending, and in this isolation quite inappropriate thoroughness in the behavior of the police executive of Islahiye, who carefully turns every page of the passports, then signs them with his full signature and then, before we travel across the border, follows procedure and locks us up in the carriage.

99. the strange land

the growing feeling of really being in a strange land at last as I look in dull yellow light at the furrowed façade of the station of Meidan-Ekbes beyond the border, because the posters by the kiosk are printed in letters that I cannot read because their shape does not make me think of any sound and which really only seem to be letters, because I know they are letters.

100. the finger

the earnestly bent finger of the Syrian border policeman who thus beckons me to leave the crowded compartment and follow him; every five steps he turns round to make sure I am still

behind him, which makes me follow him haltingly and uneasily, because the whispering of the passengers in the suddenly endless corridors swell up to a deafening roar in the sound-box of my brain, from which I gather the passengers' suspicion that the policeman has just discovered an Israeli spy;

100a. then: after a long walk the sharp jerk with which the policeman throws open the door of an empty first class compartment, pushes me into an upholstered seat, sits down opposite me and stares into my eyes for minutes on end, a look that I cannot avoid;

100b. then: the question, articulated letter by letter, that is put to me by this policeman in brown uniform and horrifyingly shiny boots, while all the time—whether in friendly agreement or in accusation I cannot tell—while all the time prodding me in the chest with his finger, the question: "*You friend of Arab people ?*"

100c. then: the remarkable alacrity with which the policeman—after having cleared up the question – teaches me to count to ten in Arabic.

101. the awareness

the awareness, gained long since, which tempers my usual regret that on night journeys one can take in nothing of the changing landscape, so

that one has no proof of progress, that is, the awareness that this time the night hides nothing more than the red-brown desertlike burnt-clay steppe of northern Syria.

102. the men

the adventurous feeling of *being-over-the-border* because the men who charge on to the train in Aleppo station before a single one of the passengers can get off, because these men, instead of clothing I am used to, wear a red checked cloth on their heads, a white pleated shirt and a black shift, the costume that I saw the Bedouins wearing in the film "Lawrence of Arabia."

103. the sense of living

the noticeably more intense heartbeat which is presumably the cause of this heightened sense of living with which I, the only European in sight, wander through the streets of Aleppo, because I come to realize that this town has retained far more shapes, colors and smells from the Arabian Nights than, say, Baghdad whose name, misleadingly, promises the fulfillment of dreams from my childhood reading; Aleppos clay-brown boxlike houses, the teashops, the deathly hush in the bazaar, the smell of petrol seem to me such wonderful trivially Arabic adventure scenery that I wish I could come

across an unexpected friend from Zurich on some street corner who would reassure me that I am not on a film set, but walking round an Arab town—but that would not help: they do also make films in Arab towns.

104. the mirage

the question of whether a mirage would look like the reluctantly crumbling walls of the citadel and the related vertical line of the watchtower minaret of the mosque which—in the morning haze that cloaks the town like a sandcloud—do not look at all like the walls of a citadel and the minaret of a mosque.

105. the collar

my curiosity about the desert, which works up to impatience because the leaving of the town involves breaking through the ring of vegetation that surrounds Aleppo like a collar.

106. the difficulties

my difficulties in attempting to describe the color of the earth across which the train pushes forward after breaking through the belt of vegetation round Aleppo; the earth is: red—but not what one imagines when reading or hearing the word "red," one would have to say, "*it is rustemberbrowngreyred.*"

107. the correlation

my attempts to check the correlation between fantasy and reality, by comparing the associations evoked by pronouncing the name *Aboudoukour*, with a view from the carriage window of the clay-hut rectangles of Aboudoukour: what is built fits in, what is alive is something different,

107a. and the surprise that fantasy and reality are much closer in *Ummerdjim*, presumably because this name sounds less oriental and is therefore less loaded with images.

108. the landscape

my astonishment that the landscape really exists to fit my dream from years ago of a pointless arrival: the station of *Kevkeb* stands as lonely as a monument in the desert – an uncanny place for unexpected meetings; only the unusually indented line of the horizon betrays the clay-hut labyrinth whose station is this solitary monument.

109. the house

the observation that everything everywhere is different: when a Syrian describes a house he calls it house without regard to the fact that to a

European reader the image of a house is completely different, at least not those low clay cubes covered by a beehive-shaped dome.

110. the ground

the color of these beehive houses which, because they are made of clay, are indistinguishable from the color of the ground: villages are man-high protrusions of earth, and difficult to pick out because of the camouflage color.

111. the memory exercise

the capacity, never reached again despite many memory exercises, to distinguish the stations of Hama and Homs; in my memory therefore the towns grow into each other, the same uncolored formation of flat roofs; except that the waterwheels on the Orontes, carpented out of rough trunks and branches, that are clearly visible towering above the roofs, and their groaning squeaks that even drown the rattling of the train wheels – these are clearly Hama; but Homs is only a place that differs in two letters from Hama.

112. the station clock

the clock in the station of Koumhane that looks much more like a grandfather clock than a

station clock, whose face is swept only by a minute hand; thus one sees that time passes, without ever being able to tell what time it is.

113. my resolution

my resolution to observe the walk of the camels near Hadidi that go swaying towards the bare hills, and the subsequently confusing realization, that I have still not worked out how camels really walk.

114. the regret

my regret that I cannot record the differences in the behavior and goods of the traders in Syria and those in Turkey because in Syria, in contrast to Turkey, no traders loiter round the train.

115. the Bedouins

that wind that is only visible—since there are no trees—in the fluttering clothes of those who live in clay huts and who look like Bedouins, but who cannot be Bedouins because—as I have read—Bedouins are always on the move.

116. the coat of paint

the yellow-brown coat of paint on the facade of the border station at Akkari, which suddenly

makes me aware that all stations in Syria *had been* the same shade of yellow.

117. my astonishment

my astonishment that the station building at the Lebanese border post of Abboudien is an out of service railway carriage.

118. the story

my sly enjoyment that I am capable of construing the customs formalities at the border as a satirical spectacle, with which I play along ironically and I hope capably, because the entries in my passport are building up into the "life-story in code," that was reviewed by Dieti in the *Tages-Anzeiger*.

119. the hour

the turning of the watch winder to put the watch back not just by an hour but—one sees it clearly—by a large slice of the Orient.

120. the devotion

the devotion to their job, pursued with operetta-like laziness, of the customs men who line up all the passengers' luggage on the platform, and then call each traveler in turn out into the open, to make them look on at the opening of their

piece of baggage, executed with official customs solemnity.

121. the characteristics

the plain just after the border, either more fruitful or more intensively cultivated, whose riot of bushes, whose thick growth of maize, melons and tobacco makes me realize how rashly one is inclined to accept waste lands, desert, clay-hut oases and camels as characteristics of the Orient.

122. Italy

the blue-grey swelling waves of the Mediterranean that spread out before the carriage window, very shortly after I have observed that here one feels closer to Mediterranean Italy than to the Orient.

123. the civilization

the exotic change in the style of houses, which is now reversed as they are built in stone and mortar instead of clay, and my sobering admission that the living there is better than in the romantic clay-hut villages of the burnt-clay Syrian plain; although I would prefer to say that the living is better in a Bedouin village, because I believe that civilization has nothing to do with whether it can be seen.

124. the fact

the idyllic village station which in no way indicates that it is the station of the city of Tripolis, apart from the stated fact that it is the station of Tripolis.

125. the Land-Art

the strictly proportioned rectangular subdivision of the shore along the whole stretch of coast, squares that one cannot classify as Land-Art, because they are there to promote the evaporation of the sea Water in the making of salt.

126. the television program

the rusty reinforcing bars that stick out of the concrete of every new building, to enable the people (as soon as there is enough money) to add a new story, and not – as I first thought – to receive a television program.

127. the emphasis

the emphasis with which I persuade myself that date palms and a cement factory – despite all preconceived ideas about the Orient – are thoroughly compatible, since there outside the

windows stands a cement factory in the middle of a date palm grove.

128. the flag

the red flag that a man in trousers and shirt standing under an unexpected chestnut tree, waves as the train crosses the coast road, which makes me suppose that he waves it every time a train crosses the coast road.

129. the exactness

the incredible exactness of the simultaneity of movements as all the passengers at once cross themselves because, or when, the train passes under the arms of the mountain-high figure of Christ above Nahr el Kalb, and my surprise that the people I thought were Mohammedans also cross themselves.

130. the villas

the white-painted cubic farmhouses stacked on the slopes above the sea which gradually aggrandize into villas as the train approaches Beirut.

131. the movement

the well-practiced movement with which the slim lady dressed in mundane haute-couture

black lowers the black veil from her hair down over her face as she leaves the train; and my observation of how strongly the veiling of the face accentuates the sensuality of her appearance.

132. the suburbs

the loops and diversions along which the train crawls through concrete-jangled and washing-billowing suburbs towards the heart of Beirut; Mediterranean rather than Lebanese.

133. the casualness

the casualness of the arrival: without loudspeakers and departure boards it lacks the pathos of finality; after this Arabian-Nights-Caliph-Abdullah-Selim-Bassa-express-train has furrowed its way through several small streets, it stops at a house corner near the harbor like a tram; "Berrudh! Berrudh!" calls the ticket collector, but this call, where there is no station, sounds like a lie.

134. the arrival

again the observation that everything everywhere is different; that Beirut in fact is different from the way I had imagined it, different too from what the sound of the name had promised and from what the photographs

had suggested, it is like this: arrival means correcting prejudices.

VIII. Catalog of Everything II: 65 Selected Numbers

1. the scare

the illuminating scare that seized me when I read the well-known proverb "Hunger is the best sauce" in the newspaper and when I, continuing to leaf through it, discovered a picture of Africa which showed me that the best sauces are never served to hungry people.

2. the price tag

the careless remark "They are sweet!" with which I offered Peter Bichsel some of my freshly bought strawberries on the bridge of the train station, and the minor startle about the fact that I called the strawberries, which I had not yet tasted at all, sweet only because I had read the note "sweet strawberries" on the price tag in the store.

3. the horizon

the unforgettable answer that David gave me when I asked him whether he had seen James, this answer which said: "You cannot miss James; he is at the horizon"—and my observation that this sentence is not nonsense

simply because it was said in the middle of the Sahara.

4. abroad

the fervor with which patrolman Knellwolf held the view (in the restaurant "Hirschen") that we, the Swiss, were destined for teaching people abroad about order, thanks to our innate discipline and liking for neatness and tidiness—and my realization that patrolman Knellwolf was probably one of those Swiss who first had to be told that abroad is bigger than Switzerland.

5. the weather

to image the world without the weather, this unfortunate experimental arrangement for improving this frosty wet day in autumn, which I gave up when I realized that the world would not improve, not even if the weather were missing.

6. the subtitles

the politeness (—is it really?—) of the French, or simply the seconds that a joke takes from being dropped to creating laughter and that I am now counting attentively during the presentation of Fassbinder's movie *Despair* because each of the French subtitles appears on the screen approximately three seconds before the actual

spoken English and the French nevertheless wait with laughing until the text is spoken.

7. the birch tree

the confusion of role and actor, of which W.S. was a victim for many years, and the distressing shock he experienced when he—imitating his idol James Dean in clothing and hairstyle and in aggressive casualness—had to hear that James Dean had been discovered as an actor because he had enchantingly shown "a birch tree in the storm" in mime.

8. the phone

the sentence which I wrote down in the dark movie theater during the presentation of Jonathan Sarno's film *The Plants are Watching* in exactly the moment when Rilla and Robert sank onto the bed while embracing one another, this note: "They are lying down as if the phone would soon ring"—and the phone that started to ring now and scared me because I, thinking that the phone would have to ring soon, had not dared to expect it to actually ring soon.

9. nino rota

the feeling of which I do not know why it is coming to me right now while Pablo Stähli and I are honoring the recently deceased Nino Rota,

this feeling that must have something to do with our present behavior: Why am I less upset about an unfinished sentence than I am about an unfinished gesture?

10. the high-rise buildings

"Is that a movie?" this question which the child directed at me when it saw our movie camera in front of the concrete-rich development of high-rises at the St. Johann Street in Zug, and the suspicions it arose in me when it followed my "Yes, that is a movie" with the question: "A movie about someone who jumps down from the balcony?"

11. the swivel chair

turning the swivel chair inside the photo booth at the Bellevue, this raising and lowering to bring the head exactly to the level of the eye of the camera, which suddenly causes me to ask why one would actually have to photograph the head of all the body parts for identification purposes,

11a. and the mime who actually provoked this question in the photo booth, the mime whose hand, foot, thigh, one could as well photographed as his passport picture because for him these body parts had the same expressiveness as his head.

12. the habit

my habit to enter the date on the last page after reading a book, this habit which now upsets me while opening Henry Miller's *Nights of Love and Laughter* and discovering the date of 11 December 1958, horrified because the book is alive inside of me as if I had read it last week, while it is the date that makes me realize that I have become twenty years older since last week.

13. the frost flowers

the memory of the ecstasy with which I had stared into the blossoms of the frost flowers on the living-room windows with amazement as a child—and the playful curiosity of this child, which I would like to preserve for myself, to find out in this way, that contemporary heating technology, as equivalent for all the air-conditioned coziness in the winter-proof small rooms, has exterminated the many species of frost flowers.

14. the trees

the long talks with Anne Waldman after her reading in the Fourmière in Zurich about writing and writing ecstasy and about its necessity that led me to finally being able to express in words a desire that had shaken me for a long time: "I

would like to be able to write poems of which one could say that they are a good replacement for the trees that must be cut down to produce the paper on which they are printed"—and the liberating satisfaction about the discovery that one could never say anything better of a text than this.

15. meteorology

the sentence "Meteorology also determines the life of those who are not interested in meteorology," which captures the frequently denied inclusion of everyone in the arts much more precisely than if I say: "Even those who are not interested in meteorology get wet from the rain."

16. the powers of imagination

the week-long shock about the effects of the powers of imagination when the actress Bettina Lindtberg, following the première of Charivari said to me, the author: "I thank you. You invented me!" and the realization that arose only much later that the shock probably lasted so long since nobody had ever told me anything so threatening.

17. the future

the whining in the row of seats behind me during the presentation of Charlie Chaplin's film *Circus* in the movie theater in Vevey in May 1969, this siren-like howling that sounded as if it echoed into this day across wide plains and freshly scarred borders, and that is still reverberating in my ears only because a glance to the back revealed that it was none other than the aged Charles Chaplin, who was crying in sight of his youthful image on the screen, distressing in view of a past that awakens only the tears of a person whose future is already past.

18. the fright

the many experienced forms of fright that I had to retrieve like items on an inventory list in my memory supply until I could write down the sentence with a clear conscience: I have never seen a man frightened more obviously than the lonely pedestrian in Mindelo, at half past two in the morning, at the corner of the "Avenue of African Unity" and "Boulevard Ché Guevara," when I passed him and said to him "Good night!"

19. the consequences

the laconic dryness in the sentence: "Only the dead never die," with which the aged admirer of Greta Garbo answered my question in the "Esquinade" about how much his type of admiration had changed with the death of the actress, and my thoughts, flickering up only briefly, about the possibly horrifying consequences of his postscript: "With movie stars, it does not matter whether they are alive or dead."

20. the scar

the smile that was intended only for the cameras of the reporters and that the Tamil asylum seeker who was expelled from Switzerland forces upon himself, this smile which contains so much blazing pain that it is written on his face like a freshly crusted scar.

21. the misprint

the "n," which only catches my attention in the text about Trakl's poem because it is a misprint, and my assumption that it should not be a misprint at all since good literature is actually always literature.

22. the fishbone

the comb in the hair of the comb saleswoman, of which I no longer know whether it came out of a dream or from the Santomense reality, this comb that appeared to be so unpleasantly milky white only because it was the vertebral column of a sole with all its bones.

23. body temperature

this euphoric feeling that the edges of my limbs were in the process of dissolving, this permeability of the pores for the smoldering warm air, that is, being tuned into the surrounding world, for which Felix Mettler finally provided me the physiologically binding explanation during our walk through the Pernambucan market crowd of Caruarú when he said we were now in that part of the world in which the outside temperature corresponded to the human body temperature.

24. the Indian

the confusion that let me lose the thread in the text while reading from La Farandula in Santa Cruz after I had learned that the Bolivian Indian boy with the long black angel's hair in the audience visited readings by a poet simply because he cannot read himself.

25. the equator

the adventure of the encounter with Albertino Bragança at the equator, which awaited me, and my distressing insight that I was less looking forward to this adventure but, rather, to the future memory of it.

26. the trout

"I am working on a trout," this piece of information given to me by the writer W. during the many days on which he attempted to refine the description of a fish—and the fishing rod that he fetched from the closet at the conclusion of his description, and walked down to the banks to continue his work on the trout in this way.

27. the nose

the mysterious object that I picked up next to the bar of the hotel Viquingue and could recognize only then as the bulbous nose that one of the waiters had put on his face for an appearance in a frenetic clown number during the personnel party of the hotel employees,

27a. and my repulsive feeling of holding the prop of an indescribable ritual of such obscene secrecy between my fingers that I—embarrassed—dropped the object to the floor again because the

waiter, as an amateur clown, had stretched his enormous red nose into the air with the same possessed insistence as had the exhibitionist his erect genitals in front of the entrance to the club Cinecittà at the Schiffände in Zurich in the middle of September.

28. the fish

the longing for the fish that gleamed in Robert Rauschenberg's eyes, and the unexpected drop in tension in his voice when he said on April 15th, 1993 while looking at the Limmat, which flows passed Jamileh Weber's gallery, that he could not be a fisherman because he could not bear the disappointment that the fish would bite and, by biting, would end the blissful waiting for the bite.

29. the watchword

the watchword which Peter Rosei and I set for every day that we spent together in the spring of 1993, and its effect that is now unexpectedly noticeable in our everyday life, which was finally the dreamed-about confirmation that wishes are really useful, because on March 12—the day of the watchword "Looking ahead undauntedly!"—without any prior consultation, we brought each other's attention to the pleasing undauntedness with which we were looking ahead.

30. the elevator

the threatening rattling of the elevator on its way to the 15th floor of the hotel Dorobanti and this shaking when stopping and starting on each floor, which would have appeared less threatening to me if at least one passenger at the stops would have said "Hello" or another word of comfort upon entering the elevator.

31. the money changer

the tempting high rate of exchange that the money changer had offered to me at the edge of the "Place of the Revolution," and the realization gained some time later while recounting the changed money that my dollar bill had not been changed by a money changer but a trickster.

32. the Swiss

my astonishment about how little the word "Swiss" must have to do with Switzerland since the man at his sales desk in the Academiei Street extolled an obviously soft, wrapped-up product made in Romania on the large board with the inscription "Swiss," and a look into the dictionary I carried along showed that Switzerland is called "Elvetia" in Romanian and the Swiss simply "Elvetian," while the

Romanian word "Swiss" really means nothing else but "cheese with holes."

33. the effort

the fully glistening sunlight above the entrance to the Lisbon's "Cemetery of Joys," this burning light through which the old man walked forward with sticks so sluggishly and stoopingly as if he was dragging his black shadow on the ground behind him with great difficulty.

34. the dead man

the drunk who could no longer stand and who was hanging with his two arms, limp like someone crucified, over the shoulders of his two friends that I first considered him to be a dead man whom the two boys—as a sign of belonging together—had taken along into the dance and into the frenzy of this deeply stirred-up carnival.

35. the delicacies

the "Joy of Eating" restaurant, whose sign promised me indescribable delicacies, and the amusing disappointment upon entering the restaurant because the room was not a restaurant but a painter's shop whose employees had hung the freshly painted sign "Joy of Eating Restaurant" at the wall of the house to dry.

36. the weapons

the reversal of the conditions in the Pernambucan carnival, and particularly the change of weapons for the survival fight that I am witnessing now: where those without rights demand their right in the dance; the wretched street children, their home in the frenzy; the homeless who lives in the cardboard box of a Siemens refrigerator on the sidewalk of the Rua do Sol demanding his right to human warmth in the loss of consciousness; the victims, their revenge in high spirits; the outcasts, their respect in ecstasy.

37. Swiss

the puzzle what actually is "Swiss," which I attempt to solve in vain, now that I am reading in Cocteau's diaries of the Good Friday movie, which Charles Chaplin had wanted to make at one time because he concludes the description of the content, "The crucifixion in the bar. Nobody notices what is going on. A drop of blood drops from Jesus onto the shoulder of a dancer who snips it away. Only a dog is barking when he is dying," because he concludes the description of this content with the comment placed in parentheses: "Very Swiss"—and the reassurance it provides me when I imagine that

the Swiss in this event is only the barking of the dog.

38. the agony

the worrying fascination to develop new ideas from old ones, which Max Frisch admits to have fallen prey to, and the agony that can turn this fascination empty for him, namely that the businessmen are not capable of imagining anything else as the venue of ideas than the market.

39. the vanguard

the incomparable no-man's-time on Lisbon Sunday evenings, on which a deserted Lisbon lets poetry-turned-city emerge from its labyrinth of calçadas and becos, which protects it against and keeps it hidden from the rush of bustle on working days, and which it occasionally sends into the beginning week's everyday life as old, enchantedly rattling streetcars with their occasional passengers behind dimly lit windows like a timid vanguard.

40. the title

the poetic title, then the slightly poetic title, then the almost slightly poetic title, and then the astonishment that the almost slightly poetic title is the most poetic of all.

41. the smile

the thirteen members of the gang, who blocked the path of a sixteen-year-old boy in the underpass of the Oerlikon railroad station on 6 December 1997 shortly before 9 p.m., surrounded him, held him, then snatched the wallet from him, and finally extorted the code of his postal check card—and the acknowledging smile on the lips of the gang leader (if he had read the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of December 9), which I imagine as particularly scornful because they, who had hatched and performed and planned and committed the robbery, could read there that the robbery had taken place.

42. poetry

the horror that torments me on account of the drastically increasing number of things that I have already forgotten, and the comfort that I can at least not forget all of those things that have become poetry for me.

45. the handwriting

the handwriting that I am when I write, and the realization that I cannot exist if I am handwriting because I am handwriting.

44. the voyage

the secret of traveling in my strong need, in the passionate desire for everything foreign, which finally reveals itself to me on the flight to Fortaleza when I noticed that the arrival in the new country transfers me to the state in which I experience everything for the first time, that is, transferring me into childhood.

45. things

that what I want from the things that I see, and the experience that they never give to me if I see them only on television.

46. the snake

the opposite lane into which the drivers in front of us on the road to Itapuama—one after the other—pulling out at risk of their own lives to—in a collective act of revenge—run over again and again the injured giant snake that was ecstatically leaping up and jerking in painful contortions—until it lies dead on the asphalt—as if it is essential to take revenge on the hated creature that must be guilty of many things and of everything.

47. the circus

the clown faces worn out to shreds on the weathered posters of the Circo Americano on the way to Canindé, which make a difference clear to me, namely that the posters are removed from the walls in Switzerland as soon as the circus has moved on, but that they can be seen in Brazil until they are bleached out by the sun, washed out by the rain, and ruffled by the wind.

48. literature

the habit of the inhabitants of Paramontí never to pronounce the name of their small city without the attribute "the city in which nothing evil ever happened," our stay near the small city in the hinterland of Ceará, Paramontí, the city in which nothing evil ever happened, and Hugo Loetscher's reason for his refusal to follow the leaning signpost on the unpaved road to Paramontí, the city in which nothing evil ever happened: "No sense in going there. Because no literature can be created there!"

49. the skeleton

the feeling of lightness that guides my steps when I walk through the completely deserted downtown of Fortaleza on Sundays because the empty streets that are not overcome with people and even devoid of cars, which allow for a

cityscape similar to an x-ray view with their shops barricaded with metal shutters: It is as if I could see the skeleton of the city, the structure of the city body in transparent purity.

50. the battlefield

the contrast of soft glimmer, delicately shimmering angel hair, Christmas tree ornaments and twinkling gold tinsel, with which the stack of boxes with the label "Battlefield" is decorated in the children's department of the Standa department store in Rapallo, and the terminator-dull war machinery packaged inside of it, this contrast which by itself should have shocked me, if this other shock had not been much greater, namely the one that this stack—the closer Christmas was coming—was becoming smaller with every day.

51. film shooting time

the impatience for the beginning of the cutting time that gripped me on the flight home from Captiva because the pleasure is in store for me to become much better acquainted with Robert Rauschenberg in the three weeks of montage time—when I can hear him say the same sentence a hundred times and see him make the same gesture a hundred times—than it was possible during the ten years of shooting the film.

52. New Year's night

the feeling of departure, of new beginning, that we want to seize us on New Year's night because in this way we want to prevent that this dawn becomes the morning of the 32nd of December.

53. the fountain pen

the love for the city of Macao, which the poet Austin Coates showed by filling his fountain pen with the water of the Pearl river, using it to write his poem and then still wondering why nobody—but him—could recognize how good this poem about Macao was and how much he loved Macao.

54. the newspaper

the tourist who I appear to be and whom the locals here in Silves—which embarrasses me—always speak to in English,

54a. and the Portuguese newspaper that—as soon as I tuck it under my arm—appears to completely change my appearance that I am spoken to in my favorite language, Portuguese, from then on.

55. the human order

the sting ray that had strayed into the harbor basin of Horta and that the fishermen attempt to kill from their fishing trawlers using spears, fishing rods, clubs, knives, lances with such panic in their stabbing, hitting, tearing, cutting, pushing as if they had to show that everything natural breaking into the human order must be feared, and that only its death releases one from this fear.

56. the messenger

the rich Brazil, which is the world of the rich Brazilians who do not want to take note of the fact that there is a poor Brazil, which is the world of the poor Brazilians who are informed of the Brazil of the others on a daily basis from the soap operas on the television—and the messenger between the two Brazils whom the author becomes, because it is him who—in writing—carries the news from the bottom to the top.

57. the accomplice

the hopelessly empty streets on which I—since most people walk only from the car door to the apartment door—am frequently the only pedestrian, and this desire that arises—especially at night—when I see someone

coming toward me from far away, this strong desire—to indicate to him that I did not fail to notice that there is someone else walking through the street—to greet this second pedestrian like an accomplice.

58. the measure

the landscape of the Plateau de Tademait, this endless desert plain with its horizon as if cut off with a knife, in which the eyes of the traveler, my eyes, are the highest point and the distant horizon lies below at the level of my ankles, this enormous landscape, this simplest of all landscapes, which is the measure because every landscape form is a level of deviation from this basic landscape, just like the fundamental A is the measure of all music, because every tone is a level of deviation from it.

59. the reader

the reader who—like every reader—does not notice what he does because he experiences that which he reads while reading, and not the reading.

60. last

the transatlantic voyage from Genoa to Rio de Janeiro that I experienced with Theo as one of the last in the passenger ship before the

legendary "seafaring" of the liners was displaced by air traffic,

60a. and the fluttering curtains announcing threatening disaster on the stage set that I experienced as one of the last ones in the Théâtre du Grand Guignol before the legendary Paris horror theater was replaced by the emotional attacks of the horror and violence movie industry,

60b. and the question awakened by this memory what I may have experienced as one of the first—and even as the only one—this question which probably and reasonably certain can only be answered with: my life.

61. the dishes

washing the dishes in the Weinbergstrasse, while I suddenly have to think of Felix Mettler and of the possibility that he could also be washing the dishes right now in Windhoeck; but then the growing conviction that he, even if he is washing dishes right now, is doing something completely different from me because he is doing what he is doing in Namibia.

62. the laptop

the countermeasure against the panic-inducing acceleration of time that I can only give by

starting the laptop since writing is the only activity that cancels and neutralizes time, and turns the day into an hour, weeks into days, months into a week, and this back again into a whole long life.

63. the body parts

the hand, which is always depicted when a movie deals with writing—the hand with the quill, the hand with the ballpoint pen, the hand with the typewriter, the hand with the keyboard—which means a criminal neglect of all other body parts that come into action during writing and, only at the end, command the hand to move and to form letters.

64. the blackness

the blue sky, the gloriously bright one that delights us, the gray sky, the overcast one that depresses us, and the unexpectedly black, the black-India-ink-black one—that can only be experienced in Amazonia—that frightens us since it is so deeply radiating black that we would like to rescue ourselves from it if it were not captivating our senses so hypnotically, this spell is so deeply stirring that nobody dares to ask any longer due to its blackness whether it is day or night.

65. the street scene

the harmony of all signs—forms, colors, weights, sounds—in the Rua do Fogo in Paraty, which provoked, when German could suddenly be heard, Rara to make the statement: "Those who do not want to speak the language of the natives are ruining the street scene, those speaking German here are committing phonetic pollution of the environment!"

IX. Catalog of Everything III: The Californian Catalog

1. the ticket

"I bought myself a ticket from Irvine to Claremont at the train station," this, my casual statement that triggered astonished disbelief from the professors (who warned me that a non-motorized colleague had been left stranded in America), who had been discussing for days who had to bring me where in which car and with which driver, and who would have to transport me then from there to the next venue in Claremont,

1a. and the amazement at my outrageous statement that arguably bordered on confusion because in the US, like nowhere else, transportation equates to transportation by automobile and therefore no one wants to know that there are trains in this country.

2. the focus

the view from the bridge at Costa Mesa over the twelve-lane highway that becomes astonishingly changeable: if your focal point is on the cars hunting amongst one another, then it is clear who is moving, but adjust your focal point just a

bit, and it is the highway that rushes ahead, whirring.

3. the information desk

the uncertain feeling if I am he, who I am, that the woman squeezed into a full secretary uniform whom I asked the way to the John Wayne Airport awoke in me with her information: "Someone like you can't exist, since no one has ever tried to go to the John Wayne Airport on foot."

4. the paperwork

the industrious dental implant sales representative, whose car is his office, bursting with paperwork, and who seemed to me the friendly, uncomplicated authentic American because he answered my question about which way led to the John Wayne Airport not with "this way" or "that way," but with: "Get in, I'll drive you there!"

5. the hangar

the attempt to find out where this splendid, rejuvenating feeling came from, (I feel like a rascal who stole past the cash register into the Lyon Air Museum) that certainly was not a result of the greatly reduced senior entrance price that I paid, much more of the exhilaration I

felt at being in the enormous hangar, with its airplanes sparkling like magical paraphernalia, as the museum's only visitor.

6. the Mercedes

the Mercedes-Benz from 1939 in the Lyon Air Museum, this "G4 open touring vehicle," the sight of which raises goose bumps on my back because I once saw exactly this automobile in a historical photograph, this clunky "G4," with a garishly saluting Adolf Hitler inside, who, standing, stretches his right hand in the air.

6a. and the forgivable attempt of the museum guard Herb Guinness, to pull me out of my horrific fantasy to the solid ground of rational facts and figures, in which he drily says that the bulletproof windows of this Mercedes are seven centimeters thick.

7. the change

the forgivable attempt to change the world by declaring it a work of art, and then the wished-for change, that—and it has happened several times—only comes from transposing the world into a work of art.

8. the companion

the visibly worn clothing of the man who comes toward me on Pico Boulevard in Santa Monica, and his companion, on whom something else appears worn, namely: his face.

9. the orchestra

the musician in front of the Federal Reserve Bank, who calls forth such an abundance of noises, mighty-sounding voices and tones from his bassoon, as if he weren't playing the bassoon but instead an entire orchestra.

10. the tire

the over-and-over tattooed man, who encountered me as the only pedestrian on the sidewalk of Red Hill Avenue and, sweat-drenched, was pulling behind him a Caterpillar tire filled with iron machine parts—apparently—to train as a stuntman for the world record performance to pull a whole railway train one hundred meters with muscle, and thus to achieve the world record in the Guinness Book.

11a. and his resistance to this weight that forced him into such an acute angle to the ground that I would have to describe his movement as no longer walking and not yet creeping.

12. the brother

Uli's world, in which every man is the brother of the other, and the other world (the one from James) that is given away by all his brother words: that every man is a patron of the other.

13. the instrument

the flute player in Union Square at the festival for the national Dutch holiday, whose playing has nothing to do with "making music"; all I have to say about him: he ventilates his instrument.

14. the certainty

"That really took forever! ", this sighing from the Swiss female tourist in line for the ticket counter of Union Station in which nothing of a feel of transience resonated, which inexorably encounters us, everything and everyone around us, and would affirm us in certainty, that nothing, nothing at all will last forever, save that one and only: eternity.

15. the lunch break

the endless row of parked cars on the side of Airway Avenue, in which—it shocked me—each one, a person sits behind the wheel not going anywhere, and of which someone

explained to me: "It's their lunch break now, so they want to seek out a different residence with their lunchbox rather than the usual office space."

16. the art of writing

the brilliance of Thomas Pynchon's narrative, which is reflected in the suspense that becomes virulent when trying to figure out with what exciting means the impression of boredom is created.

17. the advertisement

the super sweet, super plump, super sticky marshmallows that the barista warmed in Starbucks on the corner of Campus Drive and MacArthur,

17a. and the scent of fresh toothpaste that began the spread of this specialty as the affable aide—as if he had rehearsed an advertisement—said: "Now you can sense the taste of America!"

18. the crime

the writer who must atone for a crime that his character had committed and who asks himself in prison if it is not completely impossible that his character go to jail for him representatively?

19. the homecoming

the return to "Fullerton" that the train station sign suggested to me, on the stretch from Irvine to Los Angeles, that I had already sometime arrived in the Wild West nest a long time ago, which I must naturally admit that I never had; that the station name "Fullerton" was familiar to me was only because I had read it before as a school boy in Zurich's Cinema Cosmos in an action-packed cowboy film.

20. the inversion

the inversion of the world, that James A. Winston to our—bravado!—astonishment must have been felicitous, as he explained to us that his short story *Whether or Not* takes place in the time in which the past overtook the future.

21. the error

the "Catalog of Errors and their Possible Consequences," which made me aware that that which I would have most enjoyed describing and cataloging can't exist at all: the intentional error.

22. the enjoyment

the inexpressibly bewitching enjoyment of Silpancho; this savoring, which—almost frighteningly—makes me conscious that such a

delicacy only allows itself to be enjoyed as long as it is not important to me, for as soon as I recognize its importance, it awakens my guilty conscience towards those who are not partaking.

23. the things

the story of coincidence, which again and again will not progress, until I finally notice that instead of the story I describe only the things that prevent me from writing the story.

24. the sentence

the critic Klippschmidt's sentence about the artist who is completing her work "squeezed between joy of life and passion for her work," which I considered nonsense because it is impossible to squeeze someone between two things that are both the same.

25. the affection

Ernest's love, which had to fail because it was not the desire for Janett, but the desire for her affection.

26. the time

Alex's rootedness in his own conviction, which was so full and strong that everything seemed to be collected around him and in him, and this, so concentrated, that even the divisions of hours

could no longer impose themselves on him and time could only exist as it faded;

26a. and my reworking of this sentence, until it stands in such a way that no one can think I believe that Alex can stop time with his will, which of course he cannot do because it only seems like he could.

27. the souvenir

the refusal to accompany me into the souvenir shop in the train station of San Juan Capistrano, which—and this is rare in refusals—impressed me because Mareen Pan justified it with: "Experiences are the most lasting souvenir."

28. the jewel

the hand-friendly object, this mysterious thing, which no person could tell me what was good for, and the jewel that it became when I talked myself into believing it was good for nothing other than emitting poetry.

29. the do-gooder

the do-gooder, this type of world-improver, which James from Capistrano had to remain unsuccessfully because he didn't care to know that such activity must be preceded by a career as a self-improver.

30. the relief

the relief, which inexplicably took hold and continued to spread on April 30th in Sausalito, as it became easier for me to understand all of my duties as my desires.

31. the question

the fantasy game that the comparative literature students at the University of California, Irvine devoted themselves to, with visible mischievousness, when they were asked to imagine what Blaise Cendrars would have answered if he were asked whether the novella *The Conquest of Sigriswil* was a true story,

31a. and the answer that was chosen from thirteen possible answers as the most credible: "If the story weren't true, it wouldn't have let itself be written!"

32. the pixel

my early assertion that "a good picture is always a picture of everything," which still holds true decades later in the digital age, now, as Johannes Binotto intimates in his lecture that—because *all* pixels are newly and differently organized for every digital picture—*all* possible pictures are contained in each unique picture.

33. the information

the poems that the poet writes because he wants to share his life with others, and because only poetry imparts what is experienced as experience to the reader—and not merely as information about it, as journalists do.

34. the pair of opposites

the pair of opposites "true and untrue" that we also discussed in Claremont after Irvine, and then the question of where in the whole spectrum delimited by these concepts the adjective "fictional" would be placed,

34a. and the result, that the question cannot be asked, because the word "fictional" brings together true and untrue and moreover that the untrue is constantly transforming into the true.

35. the mistrust

the mistrust with which I corrupt the world when I kindle it,

35a. and the hate with which I corrupt myself when I hate someone.

36. the notebook

the restaurant *Traxx* in the main hall of Union Station, Los Angeles' main train station built completely in Art Deco style, where I ate wild asparagus and delved into my notebook

36a. and the generous nonchalance of the waiter who—as I looked up from my notebook—did not let me perceive that the restaurant was closed from two o'clock to five o'clock, as it was every day, and let me sit writing, lost in my thoughts, for three hours until it opened again.

37. the bungalows

the unmistakable spacious array of bungalows that bears the name Los Angeles, although this city, whose trees cover the one-story houses, is not visible on that level: the city first forms gradually before our eyes when the peaks of the bundled skyscrapers shoot upwards from the ground; and it takes until when the needles that make up the city center spread out as if they were folded up, for us to take the conductor's call "Los Angeles" at face value.

38. the entrance

the "train's entrance into the City of Los Angeles," this unsuitable phrasing that prompts inexact, even false ideas, that must therefore be canceled and replaced by the more precise and realistic statement: the train nestles at the foot of the scattered bundle of skyscrapers.

39. the cathedral

the Art Nouveau cathedral that is the main train station of Los Angeles and—like all good

architecture—determines the behavior of travelers: without a trace of the rush that usually dominates train stations, the passengers walk, stride, stroll to the platforms with relaxed steps and do not reveal that a train schedule, tuned to punctuality, could even be relevant.

40. the hall

the train station hall that I must describe here in Los Angeles as a waiting room, in which waiting passengers sink into countless puffed leather seats like in the lounge of a stylish men's club and engender a relaxed atmosphere, as if this place weren't about waiting for departing trains, but rather about waiting for arriving friends.

41. the abode

the transit stations, as the train stations typically have to serve on the way from train to destination, and the abode that I (euphorically) make out of it because the Art Nouveau ornamentation and the spatial proportions of Union Station provoke an unexpected festiveness that holds onto me in this hall: as I travel back eight hours later in the Metro-Link train to Irvine, I had seen the station and all of its fascinating details, and with it experienced more of the city's character than if I had lingered on the streets of Los Angeles for 8 hours.

42. the application

If and to what extent the unusual is simply the unexpected, this dispute over definitions in the library of UC Irvine ran longer than expected topics of conversation would, and we didn't risk bringing it to a concrete conclusion as we feared any theory threatens to evaporate in practical application,

42a. and my agreement that, what is usual to students here is for me the unusual, notably that for them (in contrast to European libraries) everything stands open: unrestricted access to all shelves, which gave me the opportunity to prove the unexpected, (as satire to our dispute over definitions) that in this library Blaise Cendrars is represented with surprisingly numerous works.

43. the shadow

the solace that nature offers me because it shows me that my shadow, when I stand still, steadfastly moves onward.

44. the visual aids

the English subtitles that the Student Alex Lotz had made on his computer to the film about Max Frisch *If There Weren't Literature...*, but

for some unknown reason weren't shown in the film at the screening and to me served as visual aids while many viewers (where the subtitles were missing) saw entirely different images than the ones shown.

45. the German philology student

the German philology student who can speak very good German, the one who speaks it rather badly, and the third who can hardly understand German, all three demonstrated to me in the room of "Humanities, " that you cannot only understand words and sentences (thus text), half understand them, or not understand them, but that there are also misunderstood images, the most damaging of which are the half-understood ones.

46. the main entrance

the view out of the main entrance of the Los Angeles train station, in anticipation of metropolis streets and concrete facades up to the clouds and the almost agitating surprise that I had before my eyes: rather than an immense metropolis, an idyllic Mexican hamlet whose village life played out between Paseo de la Plaza and Paseo Luis Olivares.

47. the interlocutor

the woman who approached me shortly before midnight on Bristol street and just before we crossed paths, pulled a cell phone from her pocket and began to speak wildly into it without giving her interlocutor even one second to give his response—this breathlessness which betrayed me, that she thought I was a criminal and the aim was to deter his planned robbery by calling an imaginary "ear-"witness.

48. the travel expenses

the white robed bride who caught my attention because she ran from her groom through dense traffic across North Broadway and shortly after, the Amish who detained a young daughter with force, who tried to run away from the community of faith; these incidences are that which I hold as proof of an exciting, diverse city life, which I first recognized as a misinterpretation when I saw children on a street corner mug a street hustler on the corner, it became clear to me that the Hollywood neighborhood made the streets of Los Angeles into the ideal film location because the proximity cut down considerably on the cost of the film crew's travel expenses.

49. the possibility

the impossible, which becomes possible as soon as I trust the sayings and their words, and above all what they evoke; this impossible that now makes it possible for me to say: "when I could not yet hear the blooming of roses and see the scent of thunder, I smelled the moonshine and felt the sound of the dawn on my skin."

50. the foundation

the empty remaining foundation of an enormous monument (somewhat along the lines of that from Kim il Sun in Pyongyang) that will certainly soon be erected (whose monument, I thought, could it possibly be?)—this foundation I never would have recognized as the Los Angeles Courthouse were it not for a loquacious tour guide in front of a group who praised the architectural merits of the palace of the Attorney General.

51. closing time

the fake police, who crowds the streets of Los Angeles, the citizens dressed as bride and groom and the pretend metro conductor, whose variety awakens my fantasies, that the Key-Lime-Pie at *Manupuku* is made of styrofoam, the rain splatters from water hoses on the roofs, and the stagehand cleared away the houses after closing

time and stored away the presentation for the Matte-Projection of the skyscrapers in the scene dock.

52. "The Happy"

the picture of the smiling girls, to which the photographer gave the title "The Happy."

52a. and the pictured girl, who at the private viewing in the Saint Louis Gallery said: "I do not smile because I am happy, but rather because I am being photographed."

53. the buses

the conjectured punishment of the writer in Catalogue Number 18, who must atone for the offences of his fictional character in jail, this conjecture, which now became hair-raising certainty, as I read in the *Tagesanzeiger* (October 17th 2013) about the film director, who received a heavy fine from the police, because he—after all: according to the screenplay—had to allow his film character to drive through the red light of an intersection.

54. the experience

the liberating experience, that the more I write, the more I become myself, this observation, which allows me to now finally say "I write myself."

55. the client

the discussion at Scripps College, why is art, why is literature always subversive—and the upsetting answer, which fell, because it is what teaches that not every person is another's client.

56. time

eternity, which exists only thus, that one cannot quantify it and should one begin to quantify it, it becomes time.

57. the past

the coming centuries, which my table-mate at the *Zoetrope* Cafe hence identified as the only ones that should deserve our attention because he is certain that our wonderful present age is nothing but the grey past of the future.

58. the curiosity

the name "Switzerland," which I had expected to read in the American report about the expedition to *Schweizerland*,

58a. and then the realization, that only Switzerland is called "Switzerland" in English, while the Greenlandic *Schweizerland* is also called "Schweizerland" in English,

58b. and the peculiarity, which derives from the fact that only those who speak English do not confuse "Switzerland" and "Schweizerland."

59. the inner conflict

the epitome of tragic inner conflict, about which the Seminar of Pomona is concerned, and which I cannot more precisely epitomize than with that writer, who with his left hand wrenches the pen from his right, with which it wants to write the Unwritten.

60. the foreign

the mysterious foreign, against which the Holidaymaker Harry tries to protect himself through the booking of general bookings for Puerto Rico, and gives me thus the opportunity to say: "He goes—like on the edge of a forest—along the edge of the foreign."

61. the raw material

the unedited film, the raw material, which—as became clear to me through a conversation with Anton Kaes in Berkeley—is more suitable for academic research on documentaries than on edited films, because each cut of the document creates inevitable fiction.

62. the flood

the plump dark sandbags, which have been piled up on Pier 39 in the harbor for protection against overflow and flooding, and which suddenly rear up in a sigh-like snort (I'm terrified!), turning out to be gigantic sea lions, which let themselves splash into the harbor water.

63. flippancy

the lightly written book by Dan Simmons, *The Crook Factory*, which at the start of reading already makes clear to me, that printed literature must not settle for seeing its main task as stealing spoken language of its flippancy.

64. the wine

matter of taste, which is actually anything, just as Everett from Connecticut alluded to when he answered my question as to why Caladessa is his favorite wine with this statement: "A wine tastes all the better the closer it comes to the taste of Coca-Cola."

65. the swarm

the alarm that goes off, the buzz, whose suddenness startles as Jeroen and I come to the first step of the stairway that leads to Coit Tower—alarm, because we infringed upon private grounds with our steps?—and the shared

smile with which we nod, as we realize that the alarm is none other than the vigorous, droning flutter of a swarm of black parrots that we startled with our footsteps.

66. the conversation

the conversation about what in my *Catalog of Everything* is worthy of mention and what is not, which Jeroen and I hold during our walk through San Francisco, and which Jeroen tops with the remark: "...you need to mention that nothing happened at the intersection of Lombard and Hyde Street,"

66a. and my "Why?" to which Jeroen replies: "Without nothing there cannot be everything! A catalog in which Nothing is not listed cannot be a Catalog of Everything!"

66b. and my exasperated acclamation: "Yes, without nothing there cannot be everything, but not everything without nothing!" which I take back in embarrassment, as I realize that I said nothing wrong here, but the same thing twice.

67. the shame

the feeling of shame, which I try to hide upon leaving after dinner with Jeroen at *Pasta Primavera* in Walnut Creek, when the waiter packs the rest of the unruffled noodles on the plate in a plastic carton for me to take home, and this feeling of shame, which only rises with

me because I misunderstood the waiter's gesture as a silent reproach for not having finished my plate.

68. astonishment

my astonishment, to have not seen a single pedestrian and no farm workers in the unremitting sight outside my window during the 11.5 hour train ride from Los Angeles to San Francisco; rather, only unmanned slow-moving plows, remote-controlled and multi-laned sowing machines, and multi-laned fully-automated irrigation tractors in the fields. "Aha!" I say, "It's Sunday!" and my seatmate corrects, "Aha, it is America!"

69. the pastime

the man, who drums with both hands on his suitcase to a rhythm, which his iPod feeds into his ear, at the Pleasant Hill BART subway station, and my attempt—not that it's a commemorated pastime—to guess what music it is that his iPod is playing, using the rhythmic beat of his hands, and the failure of my attempt, which caused the man to stop drumming, noticing that I was watching him.

70. the name

Mount Diablo, which towers massive and wide over Walnut Creek, and whose name has prompted an evangelical church to appeal, as

this god-fearing community could not possibly live at the foot of a mountain named devil, and a skeptic's objection to the church's proposal to give the mountain the entirely humorless name Mount Ronald Reagan: "In that case, we might as well let the matter rest with the name Devil's Mountain!"

71. the memory

the memory of the common residence in Fortaleza that provoked Jeroen and I to compare the US and Brazil, about which I brought myself to say that the pleasantry here in California is that in one whole month I have not once heard what can spoil a stay in Brazil: "it's too dangerous to go here, and standing here asks the bad guys to mug you, here lurk the robbers and there the pickpockets lust after your wallet..."

71a. and my abrupt stop in the middle of the sentence because I wanted to let Jeroen finish his sentence that more precisely and nuanced, summed up the character of both people: "...if a Brazilian is silent, I have the impression that I know what he must be thinking; if an American is silent, it feels like he does not let me know what he is thinking."

72. the plastic cup

the casualness with which I downed the lavish Dôle wine brought from Switzerland at the consulate party instead of savoring it with tongue and palate as it deserved, and this solely because—this baffled me—instead of being served in a wine glass, this noble wine was served in opaque plastic cups.

73. the intercom

the clerk in his cubbyhole of the BART station in Berkeley, who behind his glass turned on the intercom to give me the requested information, which rattled in such a way, so terribly, and distorted every syllable while he unswervingly continued speaking,

73a. so that I began to doubt my English because I could neither with words nor gestures, make it clear to the man that I could not understand him.

74. the interlocutor

my question, where I could change my 50 dollar bill into smaller bills to get a ticket from the machine, to which the Montgomery Station BART inspector only reacted with a dismissive grunt so that my English instantly became bad and dried up—while only days before I had experienced that a good, friendly response

actually bettered my English!—which gratifyingly confirmed to me that the ability to speak languages is not solely dependent on the talent of the speaker, but also on the friendly reaction of the interlocutor.

75. the contrast

whether there is such a thing as everyone's favorite America, this little problem that was going to be discussed in the bar *Vesuvio* where arguments came up like Nebraska or Utah and acknowledgement to Little Italy and to Little Diomedes Island in the Bering Strait, as well as my judgment: my favorite America is the contrast between the Transamerica Pyramid and the Columbus Tower at that very moment in which the cast-iron looking, green-painted exterior of Coppola's unparalleled Columbus Tower pushes forward more and more towards the steep concrete pyramid with each step I take across Columbus Avenue.

76. the chicken

the signed copy of Patti Smith's *Seventh Heaven* in Embarcadero's *Book Passage*, that I was suddenly reminded of a night in Rüscheegg in 1979, in which Patti had provoked the question of whether the artist is really more important than his muse which today is often understood as discriminatory,

76a. and this feminist variation of the inexpressibly often discussed question about the chicken and the egg, which the great artist Patti Smith boldly brushed aside just as simply as precisely in Franz Gertsch's studio in Rüscheegg as she, given Gertsch's epochal Patti-cycle, confessed: "When I was a young girl it was not the artist that I wanted to be but I dreamed of being a muse that inspires others to do their great work. So it makes me happy to somehow have achieved my most earliest goal."

77. the eyelid

"...neither the body nor the head (not the face), not even the eye, but only the manner in which the eyelid opened after detailed hesitation..." this observation that reveals nothing about the lid and the eye (nor the face), the head, or the body, but about the entire person who, sitting across from me in the train to San Francisco, was preoccupied by opening his eye.

78. the end

the end of the Californian journey that I took upon myself to write down, and that—surprisingly—demanded with a special vehemence another mode of expression, so that it only remains for me to say:

- 78a. if I had to *paint* this journey, it would be a picture of the footstool, which the conductor of the "Coast Starlight" pushed under the feet of the travelers in order to ease their entrance into the train car,
- 78b. if I had to *sing* this journey, it would be a ballad of the full moon, which forgivably attempts to prevent the sunrise,
- 78c. if I had to *dance* this journey, it would be a jitterbug underneath the waterfall in Yerba Buena Park, in which Martin Luther King's quote about water and justice is written,
- 78d. if I had to *sculpt* this journey, it would be a twelve-color rainbow of plasticine, which with constant blinking illuminates the way from Walnut Creek to Pleasant Hill,
- 78e. if I had to set this journey to music, it would be the festively clanging organ of the eternal rotation of the carousel on the Santa Monica Pier,
- 78f. if I had to scream this journey, it would be the hymnal fanfare of a great orchestra in crescendo, when the constellation of the big dipper tilts in the night sky,
- 78g. if I had to write this journey, I would write that I must paint it, sing it, dance it, sculpt it, set it to music, scream it;

P.S: ...if I had to travel this journey, it would let me be here and there, both, in the same moment.

Contributors

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Robby and Alfred, Burlesque, The Conquest of Sigriswil, and Hearty Home Cooking have been translated by Peter Baltensperger but have not been previously published. These translations were edited by Anna Carlsson and Kevin Russell, respectively.

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