Vampires and a Reasonable Dictionary

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Scott Abbot and Zarko Radaković. 
Vampires and a Reasonable Dictionary. 

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When we got to the United States of America our field of vision immediately expanded. While the soil of Europe was constantly felt in the airplane (in the bitter tasting bread, the uncomfortable bend of the fork handle, the practiced, stiff walk of the cute stewardesses, and even in the hard landing of the plane), suddenly in the terminal building at San Francisco Airport, the carpet on the long, wide corridor seemed like a vast plain. Wide and soft under the walker’s feet, it extended far into the distance. Feet sank through suddenly softened leather soles into a soft clover-covered underpinning. And the walker’s face, respiratory organs and forehead were immediately struck by the warm air of a country in which the winds, sunrays and fans in spacious rooms acted in concert. (There remains, of course, the unpleasant memory of that showy movement of the customs officer when she refused the passenger’s passport and said gruffly, “Yugoslavs have to fill out the ‘white form’ before they cross the border! . . . Next!”) (There is the somewhat more pleasant memory of the young woman in an orange suit, pretty, really attractive and coquettish in her sternness when she replied, “Go left there, then right and then straight ahead!”). Of course, the obese people, primarily women, in front of the Delta Airlines window, erroneously chosen by the distraught traveler more out of excitement than lack of sleep, falsely altered the picture of a country just acquired by his first, childlike, uncertain steps. They were the only Indians in the check-in
line, on their way to Alaska. They were like outsized pictures of themselves from the time that Columbus reached America. Like they had grown stronger in the meantime, expanded physically, puffed up, so to say. Unlike the South American Indians, for example, who were shrinking more and more every year,\(^{13}\) allegedly because of increasing poverty and thereby lack of nutrition, these here seemed to epitomize all the power of the “industrially most developed country in the world.” Like they were not living beings, but plastic figures that moved. Like they were wearing signs that said: “We are the biggest people in the world, because the country where we live is the richest in the world.” (Scott said later that sixty percent of the American Indians suffered from diabetes because of the sudden “improvement” in their food, which did not suit the centuries-long adaptation of the organism to living in the sparest of conditions.) (This would never happen in the Balkans. Living conditions there are always the same, favorable. People never go hungry, not in time of war, not during economic sanctions, not during ecological catastrophes, not in years of drought, not during epidemics. The obesity of the Balkan man is always the result of suffering, which, of course, “has nothing to do with life.”) In spite of discomfort at the thought of the coldness of far-off Alaska, the corpulence of the Indians stoked my feeling of security in the line. This was immediately actualized at the “right” window of the same airlines. A man, far, far thinner than the Indians, acted “perfectly,” “in the here and now.” His eyes flashed. He grinned. He drummed his fingers on my passport. (Did he have a pencil tucked behind his ear?) He was “normal” above all. (Unlike the first, unkind customs woman!) He was not contrite either. (Unlike the second, kind customs woman who let me into “the country” after I had finally filled out the questionnaire on the “white form” but in her “contriteness” made an “intentional?” mistake that later ended in a fine. More about that later!) So, I truly “felt good” at the San Francisco Airport.

It was much colder in the plane to Salt Lake City than in the plane to San Francisco. Not because of the small number of passengers. On the contrary, while still at the airport before takeoff, they seemed quite buddy-buddy. They were all dressed the same. Suddenly I remembered the beginning of Scott’s and my previous joint book\(^{14}\) and

\(^{13}\) For more about this, see my book *Brazil*.

Scott’s description of a similar situation in the waiting room at the airport in New York. The Mormons from the Church of Latter Day Saints there were dressed in a similar fashion too. Even though they were not related, they appeared to belong to the same tribe. They almost looked like each other. This familiarity, perhaps because of remembering Scott’s text, was immediately transferred to the airplane cabin. Even though no one communicated with anyone else, between the passengers—either because of their similar clothes (all the women wore long skirts), or because of the positive voices of the stewardesses (they were all smiling or nodding their heads in the affirmative or looking quite clearly at the trays they were carrying)—there was a closed (or open) family atmosphere in which each individual felt safe. (The stewardesses were particularly warm. They were also untidy. Older women with slightly wrinkled clothes. Like they were in housecoats. But this increased the impression of motherly care for each individual.) (There is also the vivid memory of a mother with two little preschool girls. The woman had an unusually pretty face. The little girls were always smiling, concentrated on sheets of paper that they diligently covered with: circles, triangles, squares. Their mother spurred them to draw even more—underlining—in the game. And each time she smiled at me kindly over her children’s heads. At one point she even stood up and her blouse was pulled out from under her belt and opened up on her chest, clearly showing swollen, juicy breasts, which gladdened me and prompted me to stand up, give a friendly “Hi,” to the woman, “brush flanks” cozily with the stewardess and calmly take a blanket from the overhead bin, that I then cuddled into and, like the most normal Indian, sat there in the cold and stared out the window at what I could see outside.) (I looked at the little girls. They were like two tops, constantly spinning. And every time that the spinning would slow down, their mother would go up, now with the top button unbuttoned, smiling at me almost coquettishly, now more than normal, and start them spinning again.) (And that game lasted until the airplane landed.) And, of course, they looked out the window even before landing. The sun, of course, was setting. Its incandescent rays scorched the mountain tops that sizzled quietly down below. Bloodstained lakes, as though grilled on the spit, smelled up above like lamb, fried potatoes, baked apples, fresh cracklings and hot loaves of bread.

Silence.

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Now in a whisper, but audible, the local god makes himself heard. The plane had a soft landing. No one applauded the pilot. (Later it turned out that the pilot was a woman.)

The corridors in the airport terminal (in Salt Lake City) are illuminated by quite different light. It is stronger, more piercing and facilitating. (I went into the first restroom and washed my face with soft, fragrant water. A man brushing his teeth over the sink smiled discreetly over his toothbrush. I returned his greeting and, truly facilitated, touched the soil of the United States of America where I “immediately” spotted my friend Scott Abbott. Like a “local god” faithful to his believers—with me in the front row—he was standing to the side and quietly waiting for the one who suddenly looked at this story—now a travelogue?—as “set free.”)

Scott, my friend, was wearing the same thing he had worn several months ago in Višegrad: blue jeans with a “funny” belt and a purple t-shirt. And the clench of my friend’s hand was warm and wholehearted. (Did I feel in him the desire to change the contents of this story? Is that why the story turned into a travelogue?)

It was hot outside. The wind slowly descended over the town, advancing confidently down the wide avenue. The sidewalks were empty. The cars at the stoplight were like horses just before they are taken out of the stable. There was only one freight truck at the gas station. The food on the shelves in the supermarket was displayed in bright colors. Scott was quiet and slow, like the king of his territory, which would only be seen in its true light the next day after, of course, a weary, heavy and extremely complex sleep.

📅 16 September 1998

Of course, the first trip outside my host’s house was to the slopes of Mount Timpanogos. It rose like a neutral being (“neither male nor female”),16 uninterested, lazy, but preponderant (sheer). At the same time it gave the impression of suspended history as shown by the unfinished stories on the surrounding massif (“History always has to be like that!” I thought and jotted it down), episodes (“Yes, episodes!”), and everyone has a right to them.

The path led up an incline overgrown with yellow grass scorched

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16 See Peter Handke, *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (Lesson of St. Victoire)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), which I translated into Serbo-Croatian from the German in 1985, thus before the breakup of SFRY.
by the sun and wind, agitated and constantly whirling upwards toward the sky. And that field (“or skin”) stretched like a carpet (“or blanket”) across the bare flank of the sleeping animal (“or mountain”). It breathed heavily and perceptibly. The spasm of every breath set the population on a terrible, panicked flight. Swarms of grasshoppers exploded. Pollen burst from the plants. Birds took wing in flocks. Lizards, disoriented, crawled over broken (wounded) roots and dried (killed) plants. The animal (or mountain) where we were walking woke from a heavy sleep.

Of course, the streets in Orem (and later in Provo, and even later in “engaging” American Fork) were broad and empty. And only the foreigner noticed that the cars (“here”) were considerably larger, more spacious and with quieter motors than “over there” (which the foreigner had left to come “over here”). And indeed the cars moved slowly on “such” an avenue. Like there was no one on them (the avenues) and in them (the vehicles). They were sufficient unto themselves. For example, vehicles parked next to the curb seemed to be resting before going to work. At a stoplight, for example, two whispering vehicles were gossiping about a third, the one coming from the opposite direction and “now” was stopped at the light . . . Not for a moment did the foreigner think of the drivers. They, if they even existed, were the embodiment of the car’s internal organs: the carburetor, cylinders, universal joint, battery or spark plugs, for example.

Orem is just one of many towns on the plain between the mountain chains in the state of Utah and the lake of the same name. Owing to the diligence, enthusiasm and perseverance of the local (current) people, that brutal, dried, lifeless air of the desert was transformed into one of the “most fertile regions in the world.” (The previous people, the “Indians,” ate well, multiplied and exploded, consequently, they vanished, or, refusing welfare and underfed, thus scrawny, withdrew to reservations where they live as in the stone age, waiting for the return of their God and sleeping Nature to awake, thus “their five minutes.”)17 Along the fences around the spacious houses are rows of Fruit trees, branches bending under the weight of Produce. Between the posts are Bushes of multicolored and highly fragrant Roses. In the evening, a basket full of large, tasty Plums reaches the house. The spectacular Melons, Peaches, Apples and Pears on the counter in the kitchen simply vie with each. During din-

17 See my book Mount Timpanogos.
ner on the spacious terrace at the back of the house, when we looked at the slopes of the Mountain, “bare, rocky, and steep,” the contrast between the Desert (“high up there”) and Fecundity (“down here in the lowlands”) became so obvious that I saw myself doubled as well. I was like a foreigner and a local from time immemorial. I was both standing and sitting. I was an old man and a child. I ate cooked corn with kernels like marbles and kicked a lemon-melon-like ball on the curly, grassy, bristling garden carpet. And the water streaming from the sprinklers was truly a sign of my vitality—exclamation point! I wanted to change clothes. Wear thongs instead of shoes. Of course, I chewed kernels of corn indulgently. My eyeteeth ground the kernels, the popcorn, the grains or stones, as the dog (“called Honey”) played with an eaten but scruffy corncob. And my teeth became stronger with every bite. They filled their own cavities. Was I becoming younger with every breath? I ate, slept and saw everything. And acted. Yes. I was in the United States of America.

That is how it was for the next few days as well.

The first signs of fatigue in my eyes went unnoticed. Although my face looked exhausted in the mirror, no one, not even I, noticed the traces of paleness. I did, indeed, blink more and more. My vision, however, was better than ever.

So, “the other side of the Mount Timpanagos ridge” is “quite different” (I jot down). No longer in the desert (“transformed,” “by the diligence of the population” into “a fertile plain,”) I walked on “truly black humus, thus rich soil.” “The vegetation with its highly varied shades and the weight of its colors, the darker ones, of course, spread by the strong wind, occasionally hit the traveler in the head.” “There is an abundance of water here,” I say. “This is not a desert,” I continue. We were in dense, succulent, green “Bosnian” forests. As a “foreigner” I must say that I trembled from, not even I know what kind of excitement. And I really did strip naked to the waist on a forest glade, sit on a pine log, and surrender to a swarm of flies that buzzed and softly caressed the skin of my utterly, utterly, trembling body. We fell silent and listened to the “local” sounds like a primeval text of “this” landscape.

So, we took off (traveled) through the lands (territories) of the United (and yet individual and independent) States (republics) of

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18 Similar to Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire.
19 Scott was right. See Abbott and Radaković, Repetitions.
20 Is this similar to that in the book Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire?
America (just like the old Yugoslavia at one time). We traveled. And we experienced our surroundings first-hand.

PAGE, ARIZONA, 18 SEPTEMBER 1998

In the town of Kanab, not far from the Grand Canyon, in a restaurant at a gas station, all the ceiling fans are working. The wallboards are worm-eaten, creating the sumptuous relief of this “landscape.” Looking at the pot of coffee on the breakfast table suddenly stirs hatred for the troop of writers who at one time undermined, smothered and destroyed their desire to describe their favorite landscape. And then, moments of tranquility, poured from the cup, bottomless, of black coffee.

Only moments later, above the giant Lake Powell dam, came the memory of Peter Handke’s enormous forehead . . . The landscape in this area on the border between Arizona and Utah is like the surface of the moon (seen the last time in Herzegovina before the collapse of Yugoslavia). Nevertheless, it is unusually lively. Sage bushes. Beautiful white flowers with an intoxicating fragrance. A truly strong desire to be silent and breathe evenly and softly. In the meantime the drivers’ faces are clearly Indian. Just like the road, just then, is straight and rolling. And the traveling cars fly to the sky, bright and blue. Diaphanous and cloudless. And the rocks along the road are like scabs, pock-marks. They prickle the eyes of the passenger who suddenly feels chafing memories of certain parts of Lika. The thought of the ban on freely crossing borders is painful.

Right before the Grand Canyon is a green plateau. (Or just a flatland in front of a ravine.) Juniper trees and pinion.

GRAND CANYON

The Grand Canyon. Conversations stop. Thoughts stop. Forbidden, by conscious decision, to articulate words before the powerful sight. A picture of textures constructed by a multitude of details and countless tales in each particularity. And mist has brought the landscape to life, making it fateful, primordial and timeless, in which essential

21 I will read about this later in my notes from 1998. Then I will (copying from my notebook) write a story about it. It will certainly not be a story about hatred.
movements (of the eye) are suddenly possible—back and forth. What freedom, spellbinding at the same time: Freedom from enslavement! If I have ever tried to get close to the “concept” (understated!) of “perceiving” (understated!) the “concept” (more than understated!) of “Exalted” (understated in all respects!), then that might be “here” and “now” “on Mt. Moran.”

Gallup, New Mexico, 19 September 1998

Night in the little town of Gallup. It was founded during the construction of the first railroad from east to west. Our motel is on a busy access road, once part of well-known Route 66. During the Depression in the 1930s, it was the “highway of hope.” (Scott said that instead of taking many people to “sunny California” and “salvation,” Route 66 took them to “ruin.”) (Many people “took this road” and moved “to slavery.”) (“Many people disappeared forever.”) (My friend’s face is serious. Between sentences, spoken with his mouth barely moving, and between “this plain” “here,” were long silent pauses.)

(“Scott Abbott’s face is silence embodied in an expression without mimicry. Nevertheless, “it is not pale,” “it is not numb.” “There are no bite marks on his neck.”)

Today, “here in Gallup,” Route 66 is a broad, busy avenue with rows of cheap hotels and restaurants marked by the usual signs on tall poles that can be seen from a great distance.

We stop at one of these roadside motels. Its name is also on a signpost on the road, Lariat Lodge. (That was last night, after a long ride through the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico.) That hotel with the usual row of suites in a three-sided square, had an opening for cars from the highway (Route 66). There is a parking space in front of the entrance to every suite. Several cars were already there when we arrived, mostly old American cars, rattletraps. One van, two jeeps and a car with a trailer full of enormous, round, fat, truly convincingly large watermelons.

The rooms in the suite were cramped. In one, the bed literally ended in the walls. In the other somewhat larger one, there was a television, a little five-hook coat rack on the wall, a chair next to the bed, a mirror on the door (oh, yes, and a telephone on a small dresser).

They were two “cabins” like wooden boxes placed on a wooden base placed on a narrow belt between the highways (Route 66 and the
highway going north) with railroad tracks going along it. The noise of traffic, particularly the trains, invaded the silence of sleep.

What did I dream about that night on Route 66! About nothing and everything. About a herd of cows, for example, quietly running over a stream in a ravine. A naked Indian was standing in the water combing her thick black hair. She had a silver bracelet on her right wrist set with green and turquoise stones. She rolls in the soft bed when the train sounds its horn. The humming engine of a late-night guest at the *Lariat Lodge* is also heard. The Indian’s eyes are turquoise-green. And the flames pouring from her vulva are turquoise, too. She stood quietly in front of the dresser with the telephone. I started to sing.

Gallup showed its full splendor in the morning. Empty avenues colored by the bright sun. Stores selling beautiful Indian goods, still closed. Empty gas stations shining in the magical dawn of the day. Only one restaurant was open, its customers (crystal-clean faces, of course), all Indians, happily “normal,” concentrated on their breakfast.

We sat right down at a table by the window. Outside, in front of the place, cars were talking softly like horses tethered to a fence, in a small group—a Ford jeep, a Chevy pickup and a Nissan sedan—parked in front of our window as though waiting for their masters, the drivers. The owners, in cowboy hats, Wrangler jeans, and brown cowboy boots, sat calmly at the counter like horses in a stable and ate slowly, like hawks circling above the desert.

I immediately ordered two fried eggs “sunny-side up,” two pancakes, and two sausages. (In the menu this was denoted as *Two Plus Two Plus Two.*) I smiled at the waitress. She was loose, plump, a happy expression on her face, Indian. She comes right up to our table and pours coffee (limpid, brownish liquid, thus not “with milk”) into cups (white, ceramic). I immediately pour a large gulp into my wide-open mouth (like an eagle’s). “Thank you,” I say. Bob Dylan’s music comes from the radio softly, as though far away. The crossbeams on the ceiling of the place are bent out of shape. Even though it is morning, the sun is shining like it’s going down.

Later, in the restroom, a look in the mirror: in the picture is the one who is looking, and standing next to him is a man with an enormous hat. He combs his hair with a wetted comb. He smooths his sideburns with wet palms. Of course, a strong jet of water is pouring from the faucet.

So, we travel (move around) the United (and, again, individual)
States of America (just like those of the old Yugoslav republics). We travel. And experience our surroundings first-hand.

The road to Chaco Canyon goes through a vast barren area covered with clumps of grass as far as the eye can see. Not a single vehicle on the horizon. Just a few ravens in semicircular flight. Just a few snakes, rattlesnakes, winding in spirals. Just telegraph poles. A few rocks, washed by powerful downpours, cleaned by strong winds. Van Morrison is singing with a “regally” confident voice (from a cassette player, of course). And suddenly, the fear of losing my friend. And at the same time the desire to die slowly in the silence of the desert (“Ah.”)

Santa Fe, New Mexico, 20 September 1998


I spent some time searching the ground intently for the remains of broken ceramics. The soil is sprinkled with tiny stones. They sparkle in the strong sun and their sharp reflections prick the eyes. That is the most magnificent picture of Indian (or late) summer. The horizon is vaster than anywhere else! Of course, the pressed flowers in my notebook, where I persistently tried to describe my preposterous corporeality, are large, bright and vibrantly colored.

Evening in the city of Santa Fe is fresh. A cool wind is blowing. People, filling the streets, seem frightened.

“Finally in a city,” I think as I catch sight of a group of policemen next to the railing on a bridge under a knoll. They stand there almost nonchalantly. Laughing uproariously. Was one of them telling jokes?

Later, in a restaurant (of course, the oldest one in town, built way back when tracks were being laid for the railroad that never got there), I feel, probably because of the inexplicable bond between all the customers, like I’m in a German beer hall. For example, a woman of about thirty, “classy” looking, gracious gestures, pronounced Indian features, is sending brief smoldering signals, as though drinking beer, not coffee. At another table a man, also alone, with sunglasses raised above his eyebrows, seems to be drinking beer and not three different drinks in three different glasses. (Why? What happened to him? Afterward they took him out half-conscious.)

Almost never have I felt such aversion to the urban environment. I almost started crying for Bajina Bašta, a place that I keep in a tiny
part of my memory as a green oasis in my personal wilderness. Why the feeling of such alienation right there at that convivial moment, in a restaurant in Santa Fe?

Later: Walking through the city streets is just more wandering aimlessly. Even the police have left the little bridge under the knoll. (“No more help.”) (Did I physically feel Peter’s desire in all his travels through Serbia to “urgently,” “as soon as possible,” “flee,” “from the city,” “to nature”? (Was this the “beginning” of that “expected” “disease”?)

Then: a dream, of course, intense and interrupted.

The feeling of imprisonment continues in the morning, after the dream. Irritability right away. Coughing and spitting in the bathroom not only brings no relief but causes alarm with one look down the drain in the sink. The top of a tube of toothpaste appears there menacingly. (“Who threw it down the drain? And why?”)

Walking through town. (“Finally on the move!”)

There is no one on the bridge above the dry (“empty”) bed of the Santa Fe River. Not a single car in the parking lot. Not a single pedestrian in the street. (“Am I allowed to count myself as being present?”)

In the “Coyote” coffee shop. The usual coffee (“weak”; and no limit to how much you drink). First sitting in a gallery with unpleasant artificial coolness produced by an air conditioner. Later, in the lower area in the unpleasantly pleasant atmosphere of more pleasantly unpleasant air temperature but an intensified unpleasant feeling of imitating everything that does not exist. On the walls are pictures (“American imitations”) of a European painter (Van Gogh). (Reminiscent of the “European” imitations of the paintings of American painter Edward Hopper on the walls of a restaurant in the center of Cologne.) “Roman mosaics” on the floor. Chairs decorated in the French prerevolutionary style. Even the “purely American details” appear Italian, Danish, Finnish or German. Nothing of that authentic force of nature seen in previous days. Not a shred of challenging or aggrandizing oneself in that magnificent atmosphere. (Did I sleep poorly?) Just absurdly, or irrelevantly, and repulsively, catching myself imitating and unproductively repeating the desire to wake up something else (“European” in this case?). (Am I sick?) Not an ounce of “historicity” (brought to the point of absurdity in Europe), so needed here (it seemed to me). (Have I gone mad?) (Suddenly every “American,” even Scott, or above all Scott, seems like a Reject who persistently, or by any means, wants to be in the “center,” the long nonexistent center, mostly nonexistent, or primarily—it suddenly
seems to me—the destructive action resulting from the pure survival instinct, “cultivated” then in some sort of hard and cold pride. As though the psyche of each individual here, and of my friend too, appeared to me in some conscious reduction.)

(Did core consciousness self-destruct or had it consciously retreated into the shadows: “for now”?)

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum sharpened the line that separates the interior from the exterior.

First, I tried at length to get close to this famous artist’s paintings. (I went from painting to painting slowly, heavily, bated breath, no blood pressure.) But the canvases rebuffed me the whole time owing to (what I imagined to be?) the (artist’s) overemphasized desire for “introspection,” which (it seemed to me) repressed, almost destroyed the primary principle of communicating with this “environment” (“it destroyed observation”). If observation was defined, then they denoted it by “deviations” represented by the incomprehensible need, or unconscious desire, to physically inscribe themselves (and their insatiable hunger for the routine) in a landscape that was completely lost, gone forever. The question “Why?” arose at once. Behind it all seemed to be a bare, incorrectly used and thereby weakened force (coming from the desire to compete?) (“With whom, exactly?”).

Of course, the impression of the museum building was all the more striking. The floor was earth-gray. The visitors’ sandals and feet appear clear, plastic and “ambitious”: just like every detail of the mountain, prairie and desert, illuminated by the strong, late-summer or early-autumn sun. All at once, I physically loved the building I was in.

What I loved above all was the color of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum floor. In the cracks of the dirty-gray earth-colored cement I caught sight of the broken line marking the middle of the road (lane) as a generator from a previous life filled (“in spite of all the competitiveness”) with love and warmth? And the crack between the floor and the thick plastic wall (on which the paintings, only with my deep suffering, sobbed in their helplessness) was so beautiful that I wanted to keep looking, silently (and quietly whimpering) “forever.”

I must say that I particularly liked the dark room where films were shown. Georgia O’Keeffe appeared truly beautiful and productive on the film screen. I am thinking primarily of her name. It smelled with its beauty. It spread like paramecium.
After leaving Santa Fe, did the plot of this story (travelogue?) become reflectively deeper and broader, emotionally duller and longer and perceptively more scattered and shorter? It finally turned into a travelogue! (That was yesterday.) (That was yesterday in the late afternoon hours.)

During the ride to Dulce, Scott and I had a short conversation in which we “looked back” on the “tension” during the day spent in Santa Fe. It had been painful in the blind, aimless wandering through (the otherwise pretty) town. The awkwardness hindered me from remembering a single scene from my favorite movie, *Desperado* by Robert Rodriguez, most of it filmed in that city. The whole time I saw Scott as falling out of our common context. Like he was obstructing the memory of that movie by imposing his own (more important to him) role in a movie of the same name that he had thought up and produced on the spot. Like I had a secondary role in Scott’s movie. The whole time I felt a dullness that spread until it pressed against my senses. I experienced almost nothing, because there were no observations to induce feelings for the surroundings and an opinion about the surroundings. There was nothing but a dull queasiness that went on and on and only cleared up later during the visit to the pioneer museum and the city of Santa Fe. I finally felt something tangible there: real sorrow filled me. When I saw the museum displays of men’s and women’s shoes worn during the time of the pioneers and conquering the west and south of today’s United States of America, tears welled up in my eyes. It was not ordinary staging. I trembled over my very self and the fate of all emigrants, outcasts, loners. I was truly frightened of Scott’s new “movie” in which his main role (I imagined) would push all of us into the wings (a reservation), preparing for our final disappearance. (Yes, that was my “great imagination”! Of course, the whole time I observed, felt, and thought, and thus experienced only the scenes and sequences of all possible Hollywood movies from the past. Even today, I think I need therapy to purge my consciousness—decontamination of core consciousness—of all the Hollywood movies seen back then in the Yugoslav Film Archives in Belgrade. Not, for example, because I imagined that on a visit to Cologne, Dinko Tucaković, in the meantime the main editor of the Film Archives’ program, had a face that was too pale; not because I imagined that the small group of people who went to the Belgrade Film Archives museum, to which I belonged with my
whole being, lived only at night and that each one left their daytime lair only in the evening, wearing dark glasses; not because I imagined that many of those employed in the Film Archives had died in the meantime of paleness, blood loss, sunken eyes and the transformation of feeling to the nails and teeth. I wanted that therapy primarily in the desperate attempt to prevent the destruction of core consciousness, which I suddenly saw as “wretched” and in a “secondary role” in Hollywood movies: like the bus driver of a band of vampires in a night action, in the Coen Brothers’ film *Barton Fink*; or like the attendant at the entrance to the lavatory in a restaurant on the edge of town, a place where vampires hang out in the movie *From Dusk Till Dawn* by Robert Rodriguez.

In another museum with an exhibit of items from the apartment of Lucy R. Lippard, I found myself. Because that is where I clearly remembered the formation period of my personality and *core consciousness*, which is so important to me today. I stood for a long time before artwork from the 1970s, gifts from different artists of the apartment owner’s time, imagining my apartment as the central place where my personality was formed. The series of drawings by Hanne Darboven was seen in parallel with the rug in my room on Avgusta Cesarca Street in Zemun, and I suddenly saw a drawing by Dubuffet as the incarnation of Raša Livada whistling below the window to my room. There again, I saw Scott as a soft line on a drawing by Pablo Picasso, the one on the hip of a nude young woman. That is also where I realized that the *core* of my anti-vampire *consciousness* was formed under the auspices of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, but not in swimming down the river of sexual freedom those absurdly free years (as “accurately” noted by my former, third, wife), but in resisting all cupidity. While my peers were “screwing” in apartments, parks, on canals, in basements and garrets, wasn’t I looking for hours out the window at nothing, that is at my *consciousness*, seeking the elementary substance of my identity, consciously blunting my libido, conscious, and increasingly so, of the fact that my anti-vampire creativity could only emerge outside of the corporeal? That is why, at the time, I had the habit of going out at night into the open and confronting the werewolves. That is why I preferred listening to the Stones at the time. Because I perceived them right away as being “ethnically uncommitted.” Thus, not at all as a group. The frequent “intonation” and “bullshitting” today that the Stones and Mick Jagger

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22 And I saw Dinko Tucaković as a figure on Giotto’s fresco.
are some kind of ethnic enlighteners is a misconception. No! The Rolling Stones are *Everyone Together*, but not a People, rather *Both Them and Us*, so Nothing, so an instant of rhythm and music, and that, seemingly, irrelevance, irrelevance of being against. Unlike Bob Dylan, who appeared to me paler, thinner, more religiously indoctrinated and vampire-like as the years passed. Consequently, today I don’t like myself from the phase of liking Dylan. I don’t even want to remember myself from Tri Kaplara Street, when I sat on a dumpster and played the guitar and acted like Bob Dylan in a wailing voice, and down in the audience, seen from above on the dumpster, only a random passer-by applauded, a guy named Ratko Adamovič. (Of course, I’m exaggerating!)

I remember the colonnade on the main square in Santa Fe and the row of Indians selling souvenirs and homemade goods. “Who to?” I wondered. They were pale, bitten all over, dirty, with scratches and large scars.

Later (enjoyably?) sitting in a little park on the main square with mouthfuls of tasty Jamaican food that tumbled rhythmically in the stomach from one organ to another. They rolled toward the body’s exit, transformed into their antipode. It was a rare moment of world musicality in which I imagined everything—people, insects, domesticated animals, objects and even the surrounding mountains—as reggae beats.

Every kilometer away from Santa Fe and closer to Farmington brought relief. (Scott was less and less pale. His eyeteeth got smaller. His nails shorter. His ears redder and redder. He hiccupped, softly and amiably.)

Night fell somewhat heavily in Farmington, above all physically. (Someone kept turning a car motor on and off right below the bedroom window.)

The time spent in famous Monument Valley most certainly sharpened my feeling for the sublime. Back when I read Kant, I imagined the sublime as standing above a yawning chasm, staring dumb-founded at the gulf for a long, long time, while here I saw myself at the bottom of it. Looking at that “nowhere-else-in-the-world,” plastic, all-encompassing, wide-open Space, was always twofold: I was looking at myself at the bottom of the valley and at someone up
above. So I saw the whole space as my realm and myself in the space as insignificantly small. My first time here several winters ago, I concentrated on the snow, while this second visit clarified a number of details. Wandering among the magnificent natural monuments in the valley, I practiced my feeling for size in the enormous space. And two perspectives intertwined again. One was pulled to the very core of nature, truly powerful here. The other perspective was determined by the camera angles in films about Monument Valley. On famous John Wayne Peak, I was immediately reminded of the actor’s boots in the foreground of the panorama of Monument Valley in the movie of the same name. (Of course, I also remembered the joke about John Wayne in front of a urinal in a public restroom in Belgrade.) I immediately included John Ford in the experience, the director of that film, as a great mythmaker. Like Cezanne, he took a truly, in itself magnificent work of nature, a landscape, and made it into a mythical story of world and historical importance. Thanks to those striking scenes in several of his Westerns. Everyone who loves movies and visits Monument Valley feels the need to find the same angle to look into the distance, or the need to walk just like John Wayne in John Ford’s films (slowly, with a gait, dragging his boots on the ground).

Later, on the road to Teasdale, I read excerpts from Scott’s and my book Repetitions in the voice of the great Hollywood actor, although without a cigarette between my lips and without my coat collar turned up. The road was like part of the moving scenery in a film that had yet to be filmed. And the reader’s voice was like the first course of the dinner at Scott’s friends Nancy and Sam’s house in Teasdale.

Yesterday was spent hiking together (Nancy, Anne, Sam, Scott, and me) in Spring Canyon in Capitol Reef National Park. The hike lasted

23 Dejan told me the joke: “Why does John Wayne stay away from urinals in public restrooms in the center of Belgrade? Because the man in front of the urinal on his right side always tells the man in front of the urinal on his left side, ‘There’s John Wayne!’ The man on the left turns and John Wayne always leaves the restroom with wet pants.”

24 I was reading in preparation for the presentation at the Kennedy Center in Provo. I was supposed to read an excerpt about going to Gazimestan in Kosovo in 1989, described on pages 96 ff in Abbott and Radaković, Repetitions.
around six hours and was like an endless story about rocks, mountain massifs, cliffs, stones, sand, and highly diversified flowers (mostly desert and canyon roses).

OREM, UTAH, 24 SEPTEMBER 1998

The presentation, after the presentation and right before the presentation in the Kennedy Center: I remembered yesterday’s hike to Cassidy Arch in Capitol Reef National Park.

Sunny weather; rays pass through the scattered clouds; sultry.

I am wearing new black oxfords, new dark-blue pants and an orange-green t-shirt.

OREM, UTAH, 25 SEPTEMBER 1998

In the meantime, events are piling up with all their weight and at great speed. Experiences become fossilized spots that suddenly should be treated with the patience of an archeologist.

What all happened, for example, in Spring River Canyon? The answer hides in the picture of a rock covered with layers of sand already hardened under the pressure of the glance and memory.

In the meantime, I read an excerpt from my text Under the Stone Bridge from Scott’s and my book Repetitions. I read that text, taken from the whole, and called “Kosovo” (in the “excellent” translation into English by Ivana Đorđević), before an audience gathered in the Kennedy Center. Never once did I raise my eyes from the paper on which the letters appeared like a column of ants following the course of a maniac. Of course, the reading for me was primarily music, harmonic or disharmonic. The rhythm was determined by the meanings of individual words, clearly distinguishable in even intervals. As though spurred by the ticking of a metronome, the meanings emerged from the darkness of the text, turned on like the lamp of a lighthouse, illuminating the space around them, showing the outlines of rows of chairs in the auditorium, like waves on the ocean, in which the public, like shadows of Eastern theater, showed the lower part of their faces. The text was also a heavy mass of water in which we floated in an unknown direction. All that was heard was the speaker’s breathing. And at one point, I felt like I was on a swing (I said that later).

It was hotter in Salt Lake City than in nearby Provo. The avenues
are much broader and seem more powerful. Had they been blood arteries, for example, the liquid (“of life”) in them would have flowed quietly, calmly, and in moderation.

Elaine (Scott’s friend) appeared in one of the quietest streets that afternoon in town. She trod on the clean, smooth and compact space with the foot of an elastic, slender ballerina. That woman, who is a journalist by profession (which was only supposed to upset me) (in her free time the drummer in a female pop band), was “so charming,” “so attractive,” and “so nice,” I told Scott later.

The atmosphere in “The Pie” pizzeria had something conspiratorial about it. People sat in twos or fours at square or round tables that were black or had tablecloths. One, two, or three enormous portions of pizza were on each table. (Why had I previously imagined that in some restaurants in towns in the USA—in New York? In Santa Fe?—people mostly sit alone or in twos, and if they are alone they stare blankly and greedily toss pieces of food into their mouths like into a machine to process food into calories, recognizing already by the bites the future shape and density of the feces?)—(I imagined it like that because I was not normal.)—(Why at the time did I think that at large dinner parties in restaurants in some cities of northern Europe—in Sweden? In Denmark?—people are mostly silent? That words are side dishes in the plate, on the fork, or in the mouth? That they “eat” like one common mouth? That teeth, also in common, are perfectly filled, maintained, and polished, and sharp, like nails, hammering, loudly clacking at bites that are the same in all the mouths? That conversation, that added “salad,” is inarticulate, produced by moving the jaw, like a ruminating cow, left-right-up-down? And that these, actually, these maxillary balletic movements of the “eaters” are celebrated in many operas by European composers?)—(I saw it all like that because I was not normal.)—(Why did I imagine at the time that the restaurants in countries of former and present socialist countries are all the same? That food there was part of brotherhood, equality, unity? That words in conversations at lunch crumble through spaces between teeth? That the tongue, like a shovel, turns over food like hay in a barn? That a chewed bite is already the gulp of a heavy little ball sliding down the esophagus to the stomach like the common reservoir of the state where the members of the government count the mouthfuls? That during the meal, some ministers go around the restaurant tables and gently, but authoritatively, after all, and promising “even better” food, stroke the hair of their fellow citizens, the “eaters”? The “head of the health
department,” as the waiter, announced at one point that it is “pro-
vided by law” to drink liquids, most often beer, regardless of the type
of food.)—(I imagined it all like that because I was not normal.)— . . .
Here, now, over real plates at a real table in a real pizzeria in Salt Lake
City (thus, in the United States of America): real glasses and pitchers
of beer. Although the patrons are “talking” all the time, the basic
sound of voices comes from the television that seems in the darkened
room like a special guest has arrived and wants to have some fun and
wants to check out the manners and behavior of those who are there
(because the rules in this regard have also been established in advance).

Elaine had a restrained smile, somehow from her forehead, and
more from her lips than from her stomach or chest, unlike me.
Tongue-tied, I wanted to tell the joke about the peasant who wanted
to sell his cow. On the way to the market he dropped by a tavern
where potential buyers were sitting. As the seller and buyers got
drunk, the cow grazed outside and several hours later lay down to
ruminate. It moved its jaw up-down-right-left. After a while the pea-
sant came out of the tavern, firmly resolved to continue the trip to
the market, even though the buyers had stayed behind to have a few
more drinks, intending to go to the market the next day or the day
after. When the peasant pulled the bridle to get the cow moving, it
swore at him and spit in his face. A quarrel ensued ending in a fight
and all those in the tavern took part. Someone called the police. The
peasant, of course, was defeated . . . I simply could not stop myself
from preparing to tell the joke. I probably seemed intimidated. I
might even have fallen silent. But I laughed boominly several times,
from my stomach and chest. And I think that everyone at the table
looked at me worriedly . . . Elaine managed to bring her curiosity in
line with the investigative soul that emanated from her firm breasts.
Although she was slight, she seemed extremely ambitious. And
loving. It was only when she asked me at one point whether I had
ever “ruined someone’s life” in my “journalistic career” that I re-
membered scenes from horror movies. Of course, I fell silent then.
Later, I laughed again. This time, I wasn’t thinking of a joke. This
time, everyone accepted my laugh.

Alex Caldiero25 was having a show in the gallery across from the
pizzeria. The performance was held in conjunction with a wider pro-

25 See, for example, Richard Kostelanetz, Text-Sound Texts (New York: Will-
iam Morrow, 1980).
gram marking exhibits by two local artists. First an astrophysicist spoke, a university professor and associate at the High Energy Astrophysics Institute in Salt Lake City, “on energy and mass.” (“Why?”—I wondered the whole time.) He stood at a small rostrum in front of a microphone (just like me several hours earlier in the Kennedy Center at Brigham Young University in Provo), holding a little lamp that shined red rays on a screen that projected an outline (foil) of the lecture (“on what?”). The lecturer was in his middle (the best) years, wearing ironed pants, an ironed shirt, with a tie, but without a jacket. He looked like a preacher in a church. Later during the socializing in the gallery, he seemed like he had “wandered in.” (Like one of the “committed” gallery goers had brought him along by chance.) What did he actually talk about? The content could be read on the faces of the audience. They too were sitting in seats, in rows like lines on note paper. They too were looking at the speaker from the bottom of themselves. One was sitting with crossed legs and nodding his head “in a relaxed manner.” A second was staring at the rostrum like at an icon above an altar. A third was turning around looking for someone to talk to, primarily a likeminded-thinker. A fourth was a woman who crossed her legs every time the speaker stressed a word. Of course, they all clapped thunderously at the end of the lecture. Of course, after the lecture many went up to the speaker who, in his ironed pants and ironed shirt, had an ironed smile on his face.

Alex performed “from the rear.” Like an Egyptian sphinx, he stood for a while without moving. He looked straight ahead. His eyes pierced each spectator individually. He glided over the rows of seats and stopped at each one, raised his eyes, and then suddenly, like a pin, with a flourish nailed the eyes of the spectator sitting there immobile, but staring straight ahead, periodically emitting inaudible shrieks of horror that, then, fell right into a basin full of viscous liquid that was part of the installation of one of the artists who, of course, were sitting in the room and anxiously awaiting the “beginning.”

“The beginning of what?” I wrote discreetly in my notebook (from which I am now rewriting those same words). Elaine noted that at once. “As a journalist, did you ever ruin someone’s life?” she asked. I shrugged my shoulders, raised my eyebrow, winked and, with a smile, looked meaningfully at Alex.
What Alex Caldierio said during his show was something I had thought about twenty-five years ago, sitting in a half-empty restaurant in the center of Novi Sad. At the time, a man with a shaved head was sitting across from me at the next table, talking to himself. What he was saying could not be heard. The man only opened (and closed) his mouth. Nevertheless, I understood him quite well: “word for word.”

Alex Caldiero spoke with rigid eyes. His mouth supported his strong forehead. He kept balance with his breath. He floated in the air. He stood on his tongue. He drew the audience’s attention with his ears. He addressed the paintings on the wall with his stomach and in those “dramatic moments” it (the wall) did not obstruct the field of vision. Alex Caldiero moved through the exhibit area full of spectators like a centaur through bacchantes and bacchantes. Sitting with their legs crossed, they firmly squeezed their tightly bound genitals in which the flesh puffed up, swelled, expanded and fell apart. And the words that Alex Caldiero spoke that evening were the connective tissue of presence, at the same time fecundating cells of absence that would later, in repeated presence grow into a “great event” that would distinguish itself from history by its shape: it would not be fixed, it would be described with broken lines, often noted just with periods, all in open surfaces from which colors would spill into each other, and between them would certainly remain empty surfaces, not, however, like gaping holes, but like a very delicate painting, easy on the eye.

Morning. Sharp, cold air. Through the openings of the venetian blinds over the window onto the street: contours of the Cascades, a mountain range extending from Orem toward Provo. Round black clouds are on the mountain peaks: a sign of bad weather. Nevertheless, the music of silence, broken by the even background noise of passing cars.

At exactly nine o’clock, the bell rings at the front door of the house at 300 North Street. I get out of bed with heavy movements paralyzed by sleep. Fortunately, the floor underfoot is a reliable support. I go to the door with energetic steps. (I imagine the energetic movements of a pen writing a letter to my friend: Lieber Peter, eine fast unwirkliche Reise kommt leider bald zum Ende. Die Erlebnisse sind komplett. Es fehlt nur noch der Geruch des Fußballspiels heute mittag . . . . Liebe Grüße von Deinem Ž., der sich sehr freut auf
unsere nächste gemeinsame Reise nach Jugoslawien.) At the door in the Penelope pose stood Alex Caldiero.

The ridge of Mount Timpanogos, seen from the base, clearly separated the background of the picture from the part that we might call the face of the mountain. Either because of the clouds pouring from the top of the mountain or because of the strongly illuminated sky above the mountain’s head, the line of the mountain ridge did not disturb the view or restrict the two-dimensionality of the picture. Suddenly the picture gained additional expanse that was manifested by the plasticity of form. The line of the mountain ridge formed a face with a full, lively expression. The mountain slopes descended from the top in broken crags, not like lines drawn on a sketch, so not like steaks but like the plastic sides of a sculpture. The clumps of trees were not the shadows of the drawing but protrusions in space, forms of gentle bristling. The large boulders, rubble, rough sides, thighs of the mountain scratched the limbs of the eyes with such feeling that they either moved away painfully or else, from some indistinct physical passion, rushed to the heart of painful pleasure.

The conversation with Alex Caldiero was unusually friendly and filled with mutual respect. We each felt the other to be an important person, struck by the emanation of enormous mutual trust, but also like humble beings of a planet divided into chambers, spheres, zones and, above all, sectors. We were in an interstice: the foyer of the house of our common friend Scott Abbott, a particularly dark room today. A ray of sunlight pierced the blinds and with a gentle caress warmed my foot that had simply fallen off my body sprawled in a rocking chair. Alex was sitting in an armchair across from me. We looked each other in the eyes. We were talking.

“I’m an optimist,” said Alex. He was sitting without moving, in the position of a sphinx, denoting the desire to prolong everything: the mood, time, position in space, the species.

“Europe is in a bind,” I said, my eyes piercing the border of the corona around Alex’s head that now truly turned a dark brown color.

Did the keys on the piano behind my rocking chair move by themselves? Did my heart tremble (from love, happiness, satisfaction, the liberating fear of emptiness)?

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26 Dear Peter, an almost surreal trip will, alas, soon be over. The experiences are complete. All that is missing is the smell of the football game this afternoon. Greetings from your Ž, who is really looking forward to our next trip to Yugoslavia.
If there were restraints in America (and there were!), then I perceived them primarily in religious rites. At church services, I almost saw them in the thrall of the church. Perhaps it was the kitschy cloyingness of individual believers that alienated me the most. I was also astonished by the desire for public confession. This was something I only got to know after surviving terrible catastrophes, such as the death of a loved one. On the day of the funeral (or rather after the funeral) you catch yourself in some sort of pleasant self-pity, shown by the desire to recount your memories of the departed, a story in which you feel like the bad guy. That is how I saw the ascetics at the service in a church on the outskirts of Salt Lake City. One, for example, talked about himself as a former soldier in Vietnam who, by the grace of God, had escaped certain death in the hell of the battlefield. Another started crying “out of happiness because God had given him a pretty wife,” and he was, “well,” “the ugliest man in the world.” A third was “overjoyed” because he was still living “with Mama” and because, “well,” he could express the hope that his father, who left before he was born, was also “fine.”

On the way back to Cologne, everything seemed highly implausible. The passengers who got on in Paris gave the impression of a dispersed bunch of random arrivals from somewhere on the outskirts of cosmic events. I suddenly realized that I was not returning anywhere. I realized that where I was returning did not belong to me. I was simply being taken from one end of the planet to the other. I almost did not care where it would land, this plane that had taken us on the long, sad trip across the ocean.

Of course, this was not the only reason for my abnormality. It was certainly not the only reason for my completely abnormal views, my more than abnormal observations, feelings, thoughts, experiences. They were strung together like something inevitable, like a chain reaction, one producing another. They even surprised me.

The passenger in the seat next to me on the airplane from San Francisco to Paris, a man in his fifties in tight pants bursting with the flesh of an aging ex-gigolo! Of course, he answered the stewardess’s customary question, “What would you like to drink?” by ordering “a beer.” As though long ensconced in futility, he spilled it the very first time he brought the glass to his cracked and twisted lips. Of course, he ordered another beer.

That is how all the passengers in the plane looked to me. Decrepit, tired, old. A child in its mother’s lap did not sleep but breathed with a rattle in a nightmare between the dream of a (future)
monster and reality deformed by the trip. A young woman leaning back in a worn-out seat appeared like a superannuated “nag,” physically used in all kinds of ways. The triangular crease on her pants around her vagina was like ruins after a powerful earthquake accompanied by a heavy downpour. The woman’s skin was bruised, with open wounds and half-dried scabs, over which the tongues of prematurely aging men had hung. Their voices echoed the over-ripe secretion of puss and bloody spit that poured slimily down the body shuddering with pre-death fever that shook an observer from the side, like a maniac behind a bush watching a couple on a park bench, with the fever of most lustful excitement. When one of these men, not the perverse, but the truly, naturally, unnaturally-naturally bent old man vomited over the woman’s stomach, I screamed with a voice cracked by horror. The echo was so loud that its blow opened the overhead bin, spilling out suitcases, coats, handbags and sacks of goods bought in duty-free shops. Of course, a bottle of Wild Turkey whiskey hit me on the head, the one I had bought for a relative in my homeland, which I would only reach after a long “odyssey,” consequently in several months. Of course, I was knocked out at once and the bang of closing the overhead bin (done with the attentive hand of a stewardess) immediately (or somewhat later) turned this into a long dream. I cannot say it was unpleasant. It was periodically too bright, causing strong pain in the depths of the negative view. I dreamed of the stewardess sitting in my lap, dissolute, bare breasts and legs wide apart. Her skin was smooth, taut, cold, and covered in oil. She had a ripe, red, smooth, and cold apple in her teeth. The woman’s hair was straw, of course. She smelled of hay. Naturally she had lively almond eyes. They twinkled like pieces of glass in the rain. I felt good. I breathed evenly. I did not cough. Periodically I sneezed, expelling the remains of pepper after the meal on the plane. With motherly care, the woman wiped my nose with the bottom of her t-shirt. It went on like that until we landed. (Those were moments in which I found my abnormality pleasant.)

It was cold in Paris. But it did not start raining until Cologne.

Nothing spectacular at the airport. Disciplined travelers, like cattle guided by trained dogs, took their luggage to the exit. There, in the shadow of sad thoughts, was a friend. I thought at once that he was sick. Of course, as we embraced in greeting (three times on the cheek), I saw fresh signs of bites on his neck. (Another unpleasant experience of abnormality!)

On the way, in the nervous ride through the city, the threatening
sign of a flickering lamp warning that the radiator was not working. My friend’s apartment. Silence. The sleepy eyes of my friend’s wife. Pale face and sad eyes that, when I announced that I would soon go “to Yugoslavia,” shone with a wet, metal gleam, accompanied by the barely audible snapping of eyeteeth. Finally, soft rain fell outside.

Two days “after that”—in the desperate battle to stop the process of forgetting, in the feverish battle to preserve my memory, and almost superhuman efforts to keep my increasingly sluggish and cold memories awake—I left the room “for some fresh air” “out into the street.” (“Stinking”) rain was falling. The thought of the “pleasant” return to the room was immediately “rejected” by the “simultaneous cold” that, I could see quite well, had “snuck in” through the slightly open window onto the street.

I went deeper into the molasses of the day: at first glance, the picture did appear “kitschy,” but thanks to the shadows of the forms in it, “smelled” like letters in the famous essay on old age.

It also appeared physically at the entrance to the supermarket, in episodes from great genre paintings: a man without a single front tooth; leaning on a woman without any hair; bloody mucous pours out of his snout; the man is missing three fingers on one hand; the woman talks in a whisper nonstop; she has no vocal chords.

Three days later: again at my (tired) friend’s with his pale wife (sleepy-eyed). Sitting in front of the television for a long time. Silence. Exchanging silent looks in which large tears evoke memories of melancholic music from the radio in the corner of an empty restaurant.

Later, in the street, several pairs of worn-out shoes. Vagrants. The dirty skin of a woman’s décolleté on a bus without a windshield. Curtains, carried by the strong wind, fly through the opening in front of the driver and bats get tangled in them at once.

Silence. Only footsteps echoing on the sidewalk. Only dry leaves on the empty street, then on the wet sidewalk, then on the shoes of the slow walker.

In front of a crooked lamppost: No one.

There actually were no official changes “at work.” The furniture was the same in the rooms. People at the desks were like flowerpots on windows. No one raises their eyes from their desktops. No one changes place. Place is only formally defined. You do not exist men-

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tally. Physical existence is the only reason for being employed. Employment is weightless, consequently incorporeal, sitting on what only the cleaning ladies still call “chairs.”

Indeed: one female colleague was sitting there, hanging in the air so to speak, sucking into herself, like a vacuum cleaner does dust, the letters of a processed text that puff up the weightless body to the envisaged weight. One man was even sitting like a grasshopper, waiting for the “gong to sound.” Another man had identified with the cactus plants on the window ledge and his body was completely covered with barbs. I was sitting standing up, wrapped in a blanket under which my penis swung slowly, loudly, and accurately. I watched a female coworker as she leaned her bare back against a space in which I suddenly saw all the inhabitants of the earth without an economic system. A third coworker was sleeping. The man next to him yawned.