



Donnerstag, 25. August - ERÖFFNUNG

20:00: Adam Scrivener (Künstler London / Toulouse): „Stadt als Wille und Vorstellung“

Texte zu Adam Scrivener und Inventory*

1) Flesh and Stone (Text von Inventory)

When feelings of torment, of extreme emotional distress, sear your consciousness one feels inevitably driven by a wanderlust, a directionless, unemployed agitation that seeks to smother and soothe such suffering.

Though, at moments like this, London seems inadequate to the task for, try as you might, you cannot lose yourself. You cannot dissolve in a delirium of bricks and mortar, sound and colour. This is because London suddenly rejects you, refusing to offer any assistance in anonymity. To the contrary, it chooses to excavate your memories and expose them to you. It lays out the paths taken, the sites, the incidents, the relationships cherished, loved and lost.

Therefore Leytonstone is Natascha. Cricklewood, Kilburn and Morden are forever Patricia. Oval, Norwood and Surrey Quays are Katherynne's alone. Pentonville road and the walk to Russell square can only belong to Felicitas.

Moreover, the city centre, the west end, also transforms itself into a complex chronicle of meetings, liaisons, fights, conflicts and laughter; countless actions and gestures with which we mark, deface, territorialise and re-territorialise the city.

Ordinarily, we habitually depend upon the city's comforting capacity for erasure, its apparently easy ability to reformat and present itself anew; just as within our own psychological space, we need the capacity to forget.

Yet this sudden awakening induced by the coalescence of an individual's emotional existence with the virulence of a city such as London displaces any attempt at thoughtless flanerie into the compunction of an accursed cartographer.

This is because, this perception cannot be described as alienation or as an impetus for aimless drifting, it is the exact opposite; everything is amplified and rendered in precise hallucinatory detail.

As the city unexpectedly reveals its sedimentary nature, you begin to recognise your supposed footprints within its fossil record as nothing more than fragments, dashed upon broken curbstones by incessant waves of everyday life. You gaze as the city unfolds your impassioned maps, ridiculing you with the knowledge that you are just one more witness in its relentless development; Another ant whose satellite existence, across so many districts and suburbs, is of no consequence to this monstrous termitarium.

* Londoner Künstlergruppe, deren Mitglied Adam Scrivener ist

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And yet you feel you have to keep going. You've got to get ahead. There's no time like the present; No past like the future. No thought without a memory, a sound, a half-hearted internalised pep talk that made you feel lost within a labyrinth that was never your design. A worthless derelict facing up to the overwhelming confrontation with a city whose architecture can never liberate and therefore can only oppress.

Nevertheless, somehow, you persist. Someday, you hope to comprehend, to give to and to depend upon another human being, to arrest some sense of home from a lover's embrace. However, trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of survival and recrimination, London eroded our intimate union. Claustrophobic streets and confined rooms provided the combustible material for the heat of the moment. Igniting the careless words and fuelling split second judgements that resulted in abiding regret.

And so it was that I attempted an escape. I took the first available train and headed for the coast, with no other desire than to reach the waters edge, to reach the limit of this island, to have no more land left to walk upon.

2) WE REFUSE TO CONFIRM YOUR BELIEFS (Text von Inventory)

*Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures,
by pouring only out of one vessel into another?*

*Are we for ever to be twisting, and untwisting the same rope?
for ever in the same track – for ever at the same pace?*

*Shall we be destined to the days of eternity, on holy-days, as well as working days,
to be shewing the relicks of learning, as monks do the relicks of their saints – without working
one – one single miracle with them? 1*

What can we say after ten years of Inventory? That we have tried our best to make ourselves understood? That we are happy or sad? Resplendent in self-satisfaction? Unrepentant or willing to ingratiate ourselves? Conceivably, it may be a cause for celebration only in the fact that it is a fucking miracle that we have survived this long. For we concede that it has not been easy for us to even inconsistently produce this journal, along with other self-imposed undertakings, projects etc. and concurrently find a way to eat. These difficulties aside, it has been the search and establishment of a singular and multiple voice(s), that is the concern of any collective undertaking, which has been the most difficult to achieve and nurture. Moreover, whether these years can be described as 'successful', and we are not entirely convinced they can be, there has been the undeniable rewards of friendship, debate and the exchange of ideas that was the impetus for, and developed from, working in a group. However, during this time, there has also been intermittent attempts box us in, to control and silence through a criticism usually delivered by those who have never even opened the cover of this journal.

For example, over the last year, there have been the odd references to Inventory's work in the pages of Art Monthly. References which glibly refer to our stance as being 'post-situationist', 'closed, funny' or 'their usual provocative selves'. If anything were more closed, uncritical, unthinkingly lazy and, perhaps scared, then it is this procession of stock phraseology, this

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ridiculous willingness to reach for any easy word under which ideas can be neatly dismissed; neatly bracketed and compartmentalised so that, 'you know, you get the idea'. From its inception, Inventory's task has always been to resist the easy formulas of categorisation, not so as to suspend judgement, but to act as a drug that wishes to erode the sclerosis of thought, idea and action. A sclerosis spread by an economy that disciplines and neutralises through such processes, through a powerful and careful management of cultural change that knows the symbolic and economic value(s) of such an induration.

As a counteroffensive, Inventory has attempted to act as a supple catalyst – an effort to contribute to a change in ideas, thoughts, feelings, ways of acting, speaking and, to a limited extent, towards an eventual change in the conditions of being here. A tall order you might say, but what would you suggest instead? Keep your head down? Say the right things? Make friends with the right people? Aim for a comfortable career? Aspire for affluence sufficient to eat regularly at St. Johns? Is that all you want?

Over the years we would acknowledge that we have walked an uneasy and perilous path between our desire to achieve and maintain our autonomy and our wish to realise and communicate our ideas. Which has sometimes resulted in various wars of attrition with institutions, curators and 'project spaces' (i.e. cultural entrepreneurs and fashion slaves). The outcomes of which have been mixed and have achieved varying degrees of success and failure. However, this was, in some ways, expected. For, apart from never intentionally seeking a finished 'product' (in every sense of the word), Inventory have never particularly considered themselves to be 'artists' in the way that this term is commonly understood by the public or cherished and vaingloriously celebrated by the art economy today. If we are anything, then Inventory are essayists.

Naturally, this journal and its contributors have actively pursued the possibilities inherent in the essay as a literary form, a rant or as an analytical or interpretative tool. The essay as technique of contaminated analysis, a way of examining phenomena in close-up – with subjective and objective elements deliberately coagulated. Yet what we mean here is something further. The word *essay* is derived, by way of Middle English, from the Middle French *essai*. With the latter's origin in the Latin *exagium* (the act of weighing - *assay* refers to a scientific test made to determine the presence, absence, or relative quantity of one or more elements in a substance). Similarly, *essay* can also be used to mean a trial or to test, to make an attempt, or to set forth on some act or adventure. From these etymological roots the spirit of the essay is, as Adorno deduces, 'the critical form *par excellence*,' whose 'innermost formal law is heresy'².

Thus, we see ourselves as heretics and not as 'political artists'. Paradoxically, we have been viewed by turns as troublesome, didactic and ineffectual by the contemporary art establishment and as a 'sell-out' by those groups and individuals that consider themselves on the fringes or perhaps even outside of it. We have been attacked and condemned (verbally and in print) by all sides and this has been, for us, both exasperating and pleasurable.

Exasperating because the quality of the criticism levelled against us has been so insipid and poorly thought out and yet nevertheless pleasurable because such platitudes inevitably arise from our accuser's own irritated bluster. However, the fact of the matter is that we have never considered ourselves as being explicitly motivated by political subject matter, because we conceive every arena and activity of life to be worthy a creative critical analysis – and all these areas are already political anyway. We have never been orthodox in anything, because we are defiant, contrary, autodidactic, amateur, rigorous, stupid, slipshod, conniving, ETGOW,

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obsequious and ignoble and we refuse to confirm your beliefs!

We are heretics who, like millions of others, do not believe in the mute inscrutability of contemporary art, its economics and its power brokers. Within the opportunities that have offered themselves to us, through the situations we have created and placed ourselves in, our adventure has been the pursuit of 'moments' – situations whereby art and life meet each other in a head-on confrontation.

Although you probably think we are being disingenuous, we can nevertheless absolutely affirm that at no point in our decade of activity has this unproductive pursuit acquired an aspect whereby it could be described as 'a career in the art world'. Why? Because our reasons for becoming interested in art, literature, criticism et. al., wasn't due to fact that it appeared to offer an attractive job opportunity. To the contrary, work, career and all the other vocabulary of our way of life under capitalism must be questioned and transformed rather than perpetuated ad infinitum. Therefore, we have tried, with great difficulty, to cut a different path. We have always mistrusted publicity except where it furnishes an attempt to disseminate our ideas. A studio or an office has always proved to be unaffordable and therefore we have never really had one. We all have, at various times, been unemployed, worked part-time/full-time jobs in different sectors. None of us have ever occupied a part/full-time lecturing job in an art school (we are even *personae non gratae* at our former college) and we certainly will never be in a position to employ 'assistants' to churn out the product like a sausage machine. We freely admit that, in recent years, our visual work has been 'represented' by a gallery (The Approach), and that this relationship is assigned a great importance by some people, but what does this transaction actually signify in real terms? As far as Inventory is concerned, a private gallery has supported us by providing the opportunity to present exhibitions of our work - nothing more. Besides this, to us, The Approach seems the ideal space because it is above a public house and this situation illustrates an interesting, but commonplace, dynamic that can be observed in any large city like London. Like oil on water, various social strata inhabit these sociologically differing environments. They remain suspended in close proximity to each other – yet rarely do they mix – even if the potential exists to do so. This seems extraordinary and banal in equal measure. Banal in that this state of affairs exists in many areas of life, in public and private spaces (even in autonomous initiatives) all over the world and extraordinary in that we continue to fail to transform the conditions whereby the reality of our shared existence is actually understood and recognised as precisely that - shared. Nevertheless, the potential for a shared existence still exists and one must remain committed to that.

Furthermore, Inventory has never earned large amounts of money nor do we expect to be able to financially support ourselves from our activities in the future. We have been easily reconciled to this fact from the very beginning. Because we value something other than what is admirably perceived to be the goals of contemporary art and contemporary life. Our heretical attitude towards our practice and to the context of the art world in general has always been one that takes the view that we have no other recourse than to make an essay; an on-going series of tests and attempts upon life that are, simultaneously, our way of life. Therefore, during these ten long years, we have never had a masterplan, or a long-term view, further than a few months of adventure in front of us. We have no commitments other than to our families, to our evolving ideas, and to life and whatever chance presents.

All creative acts must ask questions of life, questions that an artwork or an essay cannot possibly answer alone. This task vitally necessitates the interpretative vigour of the

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viewer/reader who, rather than be passively advised that a work is (to employ stock reviewer phraseology) 'ambiguous' or 'open to multiple readings', must take a dynamic and actively creative role. Therefore, we do not, necessarily, wish that you would esteem or appreciate what we have to say. We do not demand that you understand what we are trying to communicate in exactly the same terms as we do. However, what we do expect, and we expect this from all creative acts, is that, positively or negatively, you ACT UPON IT. Action not reaction.

Ultimately, what matters is that all creative endeavour should act as a catalyst, in any way possible, with any means available, providing small contributions to a wider urge and movement for social change. A movement that will eventually bring about a re-evaluation of values whereby creativity and life are one – where labour, class divisions and all the other classificatory machinery of contemporary capitalism that makes slaves of us all are overturned in permanent revolution.

Therefore, Inventory has resolutely engaged with the idea that an independently produced publication could be a crucible for a dynamic and relentless process of critical interpretation of our material and ontological condition. A publication produced by a group of enthused individuals who wished to act upon a world that is seemingly presented to us all as a seemingly incontrovertible given. However, two inter-related forces (amongst many others 3) have arisen in the years of Inventory's existence. Firstly, the rise of the Internet that, in turn, provoked the decline of autonomous small-press and fanzine culture. Secondly, the decline of zine culture which has stimulated an almost necrophiliac, pseudo-nostalgic, revival and reassessment in the form of the 'artists publication' as a zine.

Perhaps it is possible to consider that independently produced printed matter has become a redundant technology in the age of the Internet. With certain forms of essay writing there undeniably exists useful, powerful and informative forums on the Internet where thoughts and ideas can be shared and transmitted quickly and with immediate effects. The potential for a wider distribution than anything available to small publishers appears to be a real possibility; yet whether this is merely a reformulation of the same community that once existed in the world of print and is now nevertheless on-line, is another matter. Regardless, we feel that this phenomenon does not render printed matter obsolete. There remain certain qualities and methods of exegesis in the essay that current computer technology cannot cope with. This is partly due to the simple fact that, unless one is under the duress of ones employer, it is simply injurious and tiring to spend hours in front of a screen. Furthermore, even if screen technology is continually improved, there seems to be a psychological inclination that has cultivated itself concomitantly with the development of the Internet itself, an analysis of which would require an essay on its own; That is the desire for speed and the coexistent (and symptomatic) lack of patience in the user. In other words, no one really spends any time on focused and sustained reading on a text of any length on the Internet. From bulletin board to blog, the ill-considered aphorism has reigned supreme. A glut of chatter that does not so much as provoke or inspire participation as censoriously and fatalistically engender silent resignation. Nevertheless, we neither reject the Internet or the possibilities that it may offer. To the contrary, we hope, time and resources permitting, to become more active within this domain, but as and when we cannot say. Though the important question lingers as to what forms of writing can exist in this domain without the obligation to download and print out.

On the other hand, if one turns to the conclave that is the world of 'artist publishing' one is

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confronted with two kinds printed matter. Firstly there is the book as an 'art object' which attempts, through the sheer novelty of it opening in an odd way or having something un-book-like about it, to communicate in terms that rarely step outside of the purely formalistic. If those individuals who participated in endless paper assembly that was Fluxus knew that that their legacy to the world would provoke a constant stream of concertina-shaped nik-naks with Wiener-esque bon mots then they might have thought twice about inspiring what amounts to an alternative greetings card industry. Secondly, there is the artist's monograph masquerading as 'a project' or fanzine. Mercifully, these publications rarely unfold like Christmas decorations, yet their contents invariably contain little that goes further than the conventions of the curriculum vitae or a business brochure of goods and services. Even the examples that fully adopt the language of the fanzine come across with the kind of distanced and voyeuristic exoticism that is only to be found within the confines of contemporary art. Attempting to make a cult out of a 'three chord wonder' approach, implying that such forms are naturally and intrinsically free and democratic. Even to the point of making a fetish out what is merely a matter of expediency – photocopying.

Droll thing life is – that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. 4

Ten years! Why would you contemplate it, reflect upon it? But we must and we have, every excruciatingly painful, laughable and pleasurable moment of it. For this publication has been a sustained series of attempts at critical reflection upon our existence, our ways of perceiving, upon humankind's ideas and their material manifestations (from the commonplace to the overlooked). An endless inventory that could never be completed and therefore never rest – never settle (literally and conceptually) for the easy way out. This is why the 'the essay' is the ideal procedure. It is not a new idea - it's as old as writing itself. Yet, within it, one finds a modest yet difficult and restless entreaty for our anti-project, our fierce sociology. Although we must confess that, now that we have reached our tenth birthday, we are beginning to wonder whether we possess the strength and the will to persevere with another five, ten, god knows how many years! This is due to the inescapable reality that maintaining this journal's existence has always fluctuated as an uncertain and precarious enterprise from the moment we initiated it. Although there has been one major improvement and that is distribution. For many years we had to distribute the journal ourselves, which was not only laborious but it also meant that the publication rarely left London. Therefore we are eternally indebted to Cornerhouse who, without their commitment to our cause, Inventory would not have travelled to many bookshops worldwide. Aside from this inestimable assistance, we have begun to speculate whether there might be others who are perhaps more accomplished and better equipped than we are for the battles ahead. We have considered that perhaps we should distil and concentrate our essayist endeavours in other directions, other formats and methods of presenting ideas. For we must face the fact that marginal publications, such as this one, are becoming evermore marginalised as time goes on. In Britain, at least since the dissolution of the net book agreement, publishing, like other areas of life, has been sacrificed to the forces of free market economics. Moreover, throughout the years, this publication has survived without any aid, grants or sources of finance from any state or private institution. Some people have suggested to us that maybe we should have fostered the support of an academic institution or some funding body or umbrella organisation. However, while that may appear a good idea in principle, we feel that we have compromised quite enough in other areas

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of our activity without having to subject our journal to the machinations that unavoidably arise from such conflicts of interests.

So how did we manage it, you may ask? Well, the reality is similar to what Michel De Certeau describes in his book 'The Practice of Everyday Life' which poeticises those known, but unacknowledged, methods of poaching, borrowing, stealing – 'making do and getting by'. Though our experience of it is somewhat more prosaic; A boring, tiring and laborious process (although not without humour and absurdity) that, since the wide circulation of De Certeau's book, is pretentiously appealed to by sections of the contemporary art world who, in reality, understand nothing of these realities.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, we would be ungracious if we did not accede to the truth that we would be nothing without the generosity of our fellow contributors. Contributors who have come from many different backgrounds, professions and experiences of life, we thank them all, along with all those friends who have supported us over the years and in innumerable ways. Furthermore, and most importantly, we thank you – the reader – without your patronage and engagement we would have ceased to exist long ago. We thank you all. Now, if we had ten divisions of such human beings, our troubles here would be over very quickly...

Notes

1 Lawrence Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman* London: J. M. Dent, 1912. p. 251.

2 Theodor W. Adorno 'The Essay as Form' [in] *Note to Literature Vol.1* (Edited by Rolf Tiedermann) New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

3 For example, the world of mainstream magazine publishing who, in their persistently doltish enslavement to fashion, have appropriated (and contributed to) the widespread de-politicisation of the discipline of Cultural Studies. Consequently this 'industry' continues to exacerbate these symptoms by pursuing a cynical eclecticism that palms off feeble essays on various aspects of material culture and contemporary ideas. Thus, *Inventory* has had to survive in the 'periodical' section of a bookshop environment smothered by inane gloss, pimped by perpetrators such as *Another Magazine* and *Frieze*, whose only meaningful content is their bloated pages of advertising.

4 Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995. pp.112.

3) Peripatetical Meditation

The film, and its accompanying narration, *Flesh and Stone* attempted, amongst other motives, to complicate and confront the notion of the *derive* as it has been formulated by the Situationists. This is mainly due to the fact that the prior experience that was the basis for the subsequent writing and filming departed from orthodoxies of psychogeography in a number of ways. Firstly, the undertaking of a solitary *derive* of London was not 'consciously' initiated. Rather than the pursuit of an 'emotional disorientation', it was precisely the reverse – an emotional disorientation provoked the desire for a concomitant dislocation and randomised deflection among the myriad of streets and alleyways of the city. This desire was as insistent as it was imperative, governed by a delirium that almost took for granted that the possibilities for such a spontaneous dissipation must be achievable in an urban environment with the

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anonymous magnitude of London. Yet, to my surprise, this contumacious adventure was to be undone. Perhaps this was due to the fact that London confronted my adversity and, not only exacerbated my feelings, but its contentious aspect also forced me, literally and conceptually, in another direction - forcing me to make a decision.

Secondly, although I cannot claim to be familiar with London in its entirety, even after Seventeen years of living within its grasp, it nevertheless became something of a betrayal, as my 'drift' slowly imposed upon me how much terrain I had actually covered. Instead of proffering new and heretofore unperceived penetrations into psychological articulations or unties of ambience, I was hopelessly lost inside while simultaneously perceiving that this heightened state of distress could not attain the desired outward means by which I could formulate an actively surmountable response. My footfalls answered me, however the urban environment did not.

All the stories that we live – the drive(s) of our life – are characterised by the search for, or the lack of, an over-arching construction. The transformation of the environment calls forth new emotional states that are first experienced passively and then, with heightened consciousness, lead to constructive reactions. London was the first urban result of the industrial revolution, and the English literature of the nineteenth century bears witness to an increasing awareness of the problems of the atmosphere and of the qualitatively different possibilities of a large urban area.

The love between Thomas de Quincey and Poor Ann, separated by chance and searching for one another, yet never finding themselves, 'through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other,' marks a turning point in the slow historical evolution of the passions. 1

However, if it is indeed 'a turning point', it may possibly be in the direction of a dead end, unless one can muster the necessary forces for an intensely lived and passionate existence. Because, even in a city such as London, there are complex and elaborate sets of social and political relations; which continue to build, adapt and renovate themselves to such a degree that they can be experienced as, to complete the same quotation from de Quincey, 'a barrier no wider than a London street often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!' Any mark we make upon the city's surface is despite ourselves, regardless of our settled intentions. Our biographies build up like the polluted dust from exhaust fumes upon a window ledge. It is a sedimentary process that cloaks the exterior of everything but does not probe nor disturb the interior logic that dominates any city. One does not need to take a wander through a shopping mall or a park to realise that no common space exists and that such a practice will not win over this territory to the multitude. Skateboarding outside the South Bank centre will not alter the economic and political logic of this institution.

The spatial politics of capitalism is dominant everywhere. It is especially significant in Britain with its history of the enclosures beginning in the Sixteenth Century along with Locke's notion that if one makes 'profitable' a piece of land, then that land becomes that person's property. Space that is made to function for the exclusive purposes of profitability is one of the principle origins of modern capitalism. Its effects are such that, today, there is not a square metre of London that cannot be put to what is perceived to be some good and noble use.

It is against this background that architecture appears merely as an instrument of oppression.

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All talk of utopias, revolutionary models and bogus benevolent schemes dreamt up by celebrity architects or disingenuous artists and curators are all so much bullshit and lies; because none of them have ever experienced or comprehended the need for shelter and a desire in common. For the average citizen, resistance does not mean rejection; it means acceptance under duress. Life in a city has to be tolerated or merely forgotten once we are safely inside and have closed the door. We accept the capitalist spatial regime because we need shelter, somewhere to live. A vast majority suffers because they are made to believe that they have no choice but to take on an enormous debt. They are index-linked into their home and therefore their survival. Debt creates and stimulates obedience towards the politics and economics of contemporary capitalism – their debt to society that may not even be paid off by the time they reach old age. Moreover, we even turn upon each other, landlords rip-off their tenants, local councils are defrauded by 'hotels' charging exorbitant rates to cram in as many asylum seekers as they can. Others 'speculate' and redevelop second or third homes in order to profit from another's need for a space to live.

Once upon a time, on the local London radio station, I had the misfortune to hear that self-appointed spokesperson for London, Robert Elms, proclaim his homespun cockney Darwinism. Stating that, what was beautiful about London was that, the city accepted and harmoniously integrated rich and poor alike, and that no one seemed to mind that much – everyone is happily contented in their appropriate quarters of life. It is precisely this kind of rose-tinted Dickensian image (propagated by a 'geezer' who grew up in Burnt Oak and now lives, in some comfort, near Regents Park) that has to be confronted.

One cannot approach the city from the indifferent, bohemian, perspective of the flaneur. Nor can a person who executes a derive be described as 'homeless' nor can it be compared to anthropological fieldworkers, 'professional-strangers' – who vainly attempt to position themselves within a self-reflexive state as marginal, yet 'objective' observers. What is contemptible in all these approaches is the romantic willingness for 'exile' without the strength to abandon oneself to it without recourse or reserve. The city's cartography cannot be transformed by a small number of passionate souls alone. Many more must continue challenge it with a scrupulous and deliberate series of collective and individual assaults. And even if these programs are set in motion, one must hope that this gradual and modest erosive process will eventually bear witness to a fracture that will be increasingly difficult for all to ignore.

1 (Unattributed text) 'Unitary Urbanism at the end of the 1950s' Internationale Situationiste no.3 December, 1959.

2 Thomas de Quincey Confessions of an English Opium-Eater

The sentence in full: 'If she lived, doubtless we must have been some time in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other - a barrier no wider than a London street often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!'

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4) Ohne Titel

Wenn Gefühle der Qual, Empfindungen extremen emotionalen Elends dein Bewusstsein versengen, wirst du unweigerlich durch eine Wanderlust, eine ziellose Rastlosigkeit getrieben, die dieses Leiden zu ersticken und zu lindern sucht.

Für solche Momente ist London jedoch nicht geschaffen. Egal, wie du es auch anstellst, hier kannst du dich nicht verlieren. Du kannst dich nicht auflösen in diesem Rausch von Backsteinen und Mörtel, Klang und Farbe.

Dies liegt daran, dass London Dich plötzlich zurückweist, alle Wege in die Anonymität versperrt. Im Gegenteil, die Stadt entscheidet sich, deine Erinnerungen auszugraben und zu entblößen. Sie breitet vor dir bereits beschrittene Wege aus, Orte, Vorfälle, geschätzte, geliebte und verlorene Beziehungen.

Daher ist Leytonstone Natacha. Cricklewood, Kilburn und Morden sind für immer Patricia. Oval, Norwood und Surrey Quays sind einzig Katherynnes. Pentonville Road und der Weg zum Russel Square können nur Felicitas gehören.

Außerdem verwandelt sich das Stadtzentrum, das West End, in eine komplexe Chronik von Begegnungen, Liebschaften, Kämpfen, Konflikten und Gelächter; zahllosen Handlungen und Gesten, mit denen wir die Stadt markieren, beschmieren, für uns einnehmen und wieder aufgeben.

Normalerweise sind wir es gewohnt, uns auf die Stadt mit ihrer beruhigenden Kapazität für das Vergessen zu verlassen, auf ihre scheinbar so einfache Fähigkeit, sich stets neu zu programmieren und zu präsentieren; ebenso wie auch wir, innerhalb unseres eigenen psychologischen Raums, die Fähigkeit benötigen, zu vergessen.

Doch dieses plötzliche Erwachen, welches durch die Vereinigung einer individuellen emotionalen Existenz mit der Bösartigkeit einer Stadt wie London ausgelöst wird, verwandelt jeden Versuch gedankenlosen Flanierens in Reue eines verfluchten Kartografen.

Diese Erkenntnis kann man schließlich nicht beschreiben als Entfremdung oder als Anstoß für zielloses Dahintreiben; vielmehr ist es das genaue Gegenteil; alles wird verstärkt und wiedergegeben in präzisen, sinnestäuschenden Details.

Während die Stadt unerwartet ihre sedimentäre Natur offenbart, beginnst du deine vermeintlichen Fußabdrücke in ihrer fossilen Aufzeichnung nur mehr als Fragmente zu erkennen, aufgeschwemmt auf kaputten Randsteinen wie die unaufhörlichen Wellen des täglichen Lebens. Du beobachtest, wie die Stadt dir deine leidenschaftlichen Karten ausbreitet und dich mit dem Wissen verhöhnt, dass du nur ein weiterer Zeuge ihrer unbarmherzigen Entwicklung bist: eine von vielen Ameisen, dessen Satelliten-Existenz über so viele Bezirke und Vororte hinweg keinerlei Auswirkungen auf den monströsen Termitenhaufen hat.

Und dennoch spürst du, dass du weitermachen musst. Du musst voran kommen. ‚Keine Zeit wie die Gegenwart,‘ keine Vergangenheit wie die Zukunft. Kein Gedanke ohne eine Erinnerung, einen Klang, eine halbherzige, innere Aufmunterung, die dir vorkommt, als wärst du verloren in einem Labyrinth, an dessen Entwurf du nicht beteiligt warst.

Ein wertloses Wrack, das plötzlich der überwältigenden Konfrontation mit der Stadt gewahr wird, deren Architektur niemals befreien, sondern nur unterdrücken kann.

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Nichtsdestotrotz, irgendwie bleibst du hartnäckig. Eines Tages hoffst du, zu verstehen, einem anderen Menschen etwas zu geben und Dich auf dieses Wesen zu verlassen, in der Umarmung eines Geliebten ein Gefühl von Heimat einzufangen.

Gleichwohl, gefangen in einem scheinbar endlosen Kreislauf von Überleben und Beschuldigungen hat London unseren intimen Bund untergraben. Klaustrophobische Straßen und beengende Zimmer lieferten das leicht brennbare Material für die Hitze des Gefechts. Ein Entzünden unachtsamer Worte und ein Anheizen von Zehntelsekunden-Entscheidungen, die in ein beständiges Bedauern mündeten.

Und so kam es, dass ich versuchte zu entkommen. Ich nahm den erst besten Zug und fuhr in Richtung Küste, mit keinem anderen Verlangen, als den Rand des Wassers zu erreichen, die Grenze dieser Insel, nur um kein Land mehr zu haben, auf dem man laufen kann.

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