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Making archangels out of dirt

Günter Brus

The first time I met William Blake - there was an exhilarating autumnal hubbub all around us - he was just five years old and counted up all his teeth forme. He had just bitten them all out, on his rage with this world and the scoundrels who live in it. I said, «Dear Willi, it's the same for you as it is for me. We invent the keys, the Shreeps play piano!»

He tried to pat me on the back, but as he was still too small he jumped astride an angel and landed on my shoulder. He's still there, as a shimmer of gold, and itches from time to time. I often go out with him. I walk into the Blue Flower and order a fiery beer. He drinks half of it, so I have to pay double for a single.

A master of conservation comes in through the door and says: «Herr Brus, I believe in you!»

Then all of a sudden Blake grows very old and drops from my shoulders like powdery snow.

Then Georg Christoph Lichtenberg came in. The two nags were in the bedchamber and the servant Lichtenberg took his little pipe from its case and sat down contentedly on the canapé to smoke it.

Goethe had answered Kleist's letter and got Eckermann to sign the reply.

Then Friedrich von Schiller came in. He told Goethe that he had met some featherbrain on the Jena-Gotha road who had talked a lot of eccentric nonsense about lilies that could breathe without human aid.

Goethe smiled and mimed his own youth, leaning against the curtain with elegantly jutting hip, whereupon the curtain gave way. The Privy Councillor ended up leaning on the wall-paper after all. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg stood up, drew a ruler from his armpit and measured the distance from Goethe's forehead to Schiller's forehead. «Not enough space between them to say Kiss My Arse», shouted the servant.

Much, much later, this sentence was duplicated many times over.

We met in the cell door. Karl May was going, I was coming. When the grille closed behind me I realized that the room fell away at the ultimate end, and unwaite water flowed that way and fell, together with the room, deep into a netherworld which I could not bear to think about - even after the 39th year of my stay in that room. On my right was a parure of feathers, on my left an oasis. Whenever I tried to get to sleep, these two repoussoirs had illicit intercourse and formed a palm tree which was the creation of wakefulness instead of a dream. When I had not slept for 39 years, a boat put me out of my misery. This boat came sailing up the waterfall broad-side, pushing the last waves before it, and washed my face with them.

On the boat was a nose, and on it were two ears and a little book, a user's manual. However, because I found no eyes, I noticed nothing.

Shifting sand flew out of their eyes. One look at what had been done, and the desert took over.

The unsigned Herr Keats greeted the signed Herr Rimbaud. Between the multiplication tables the silver stars reposed, one and all.

«Chef, if you don't immediately tip stewed fruit on to what has been achieved so far, I shall lie down there myself!»

This said, nothing was ventured.

Then Rethel came round the birch tree and showed me how to hide in the shade of the quaking grass. I wanted to get the better of him, so I hid in the shade of transparency.

Back in everyday life, I am forced to recognize that my blood has made a superb contribution to the reopening of Gothic stained glass.

But this window stays black.

The sun does not shine, it only sounds familiar.

1977.

Mira's third transcript

Günter Brus

A fine evening. The air is warm; the scent of chestnut blossom is in the air. Outside the doors of the little theatre stands a queue, the component parts of which, namely the individual persons, evince barely concealed impatience. If a number of the links in the chain move forward and one stays put, so that a gap appears, the person behind him plants his foot so close that he is reminded of his responsibility to keep the line intact and immediately conforms. Many a human link seeks to improve his position by a sidestep which enables him to outflank the man in front, who may be engrossed in talking to an acquaintance, by taking an apparently casual step forward. When the victim becomes aware of this blatant cheat, he is moved to tap the offender on the shoulder, to vindicate established order. But he suppresses his protest, because the exposed part of the body on which he was about to tap belongs to a young lady. Another member of the queue has the same experience with an older person. This time, however, there is a dispute, because the injured party is unable to halt his angrily raised arm in mid-air and the end joint of an index finger lands on the shoulder of the man wrongfully standing in front of him. The man turns round and says: «What do you want?»

«Nothing, nothing. I just wanted to get into the theatre on time», wittily replies the disadvantaged party.

«My dear sir, the play starts when no one, no one at all, is in the audience. Do you think the actors will start acting before we are all in our seats? I can assure you, I know this theatre. There are more supervisors dealing with the queues outside, and more attendants to make sure people get to the right seats, than there are actors. And ever since it first opened, not one single performance has been sold out. You'll get your seat, because the supervisors and the attendants are never all there at the same performance. If they were, there would be no room for any of us. I used to be an attendant here myself, and I know from experience that for some inexplicable reason one could be absolutely sure that two-thirds of my colleagues would fail in their duty of attending every performance. The next night the theatre manager

threatened us with dismissal from our posts, but no one ever was dismissed. The manager knew, as well as we did, that if we had all come to work at the same time hardly any audience would have got in at all».

The disadvantaged party nods, although his eyes reveal only incomprehension.

«But, - says he, - why must the supervisors and attendants, as you say, watch the same play over and over again? Why must they always sit in the seats that other theatres keep for the audience?»

«A fair question, sir, a very fair question. I am too old to understand what our theatre manager has got into his head. He is obsessed by the idea that we here, standing in the queue, are the play. As I said, I was not a supervisor, only an attendant! But one thing I can tell you, and that's very important: we attendants and supervisors were always the only people in the audience, and there are no actors. We were condemned to stare constantly at an empty stage, always clinging to the promise that one day we would become members of the audience, with the right to go outside during a performance. But I was too old by the time I got the job here. The supervisors had the privilege, whenever they did report for work, of leaving again straight away. We attendants, when we were here, had to stay put in the auditorium for the announced duration of the drama, the comedy or whatever else was on the programme. And we were always the only people in the audience - and I can assure you that I still know all the plays by heart to this day».