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Europe: North-South

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We have decided that all places can be divided into North, South, East, West. In Europe East-West has, in the main, disappeared. Also North-South has always been the most important to us "up here" and them "down there". It's the Pope and Luther. And, difficult to resist, Paolini and Lüpertz. There is however no need to go on with the Thirty Years' War. After all, you can't beat out the truth.

I met Johannes in Stuttgart. It was completely accidental. But as if sent from Heaven or at least Castello di Rivoli. I had gone into the Staatsgalerie not because I love Stirling's building but because I sought relief for my nagging frustrations by sitting in the vicinity of the Munch pictures. Not that they are the best Munch pictures that I know, but for me they radiate, as do all of his pictures, a paradoxical meaning by doing something meaningless - spreading oil paint on a canvas. If I can only get by the dreadful reconstructions of Schlemmer's dolls then I am in harbour for a while. Then I can pull myself together and although everything may have gone wrong, all that should be advancing me in the world, exhibitions, decorations, aulads and public sculptures - even if all that was going awry, then it perhaps didn't matter anyway because, at the last analysis, the only thing that counts is the picture you have painted, beyond good or bad, in your absolute schizophrenic isolation from all your clothes and all the negotiations. And this was precisely what I needed. I had just come from a morning discussion about - I believed - the technical circumstances of a large work which suddenly turned out to be economic-attitudinal diktats. At any rate, I suddenly understood why I had never become an architect. And the horror of discovering that it was up to me, amiable person that I am, to be the one that said no and appeared intransigent. And it was even worse as I knew very well that my opponent was not present but was some sort of invisible, incomprehensible mechanism that was able to write objective letters till the end of time whilst my letter-writing was full of passion and ate me up, was untactical and full of hopes and openings that acted like midge grubs on aquarium fish.

Thus I needed my Munch pictures. It was a sort of practice for the giving up of certain proud "public" dreams. It was also an insight into what really counted. To sit in the vicinity of this pair of pictures was not without similarities to one of the popular exercises against stress; first you breathed in deeply, counting to four, counting again the exhalations, repeating it so that with the last exhalation you felt a light buzz at your toes and fingertips and your jaw and lips hung down. I was sitting with just such a hangdog face when I saw Johannes out of the corner of my eye. Eagerly and chivalrously occupied in introducing a couple of charming Italian ladies to Nordic qualities.

It was also Johannes who sent me the Pinot Gallizio book. We had talked about Gallizio a couple of years ago on Laes in the Northern Sea and I had always believed that he was half or completely forgotten and that he was not commemorated by anything at all. In Denmark he had left behind a lot of pictures and was a figure close to Jorn. Gallizio was also an image of Jorn's meeting with the South. And an image that consorted with the perception of those times that one met there in the

South, as it looked with Fontana and Manzoni as examples. How could one go on making pictures? By acknowledging that one made them, just made them, understood as output, the answer came from the North-South Company. Rotolo di Pittura Industriale an Laboratorio Sperimentale di Alba produced pictures by the metre. A picture of the desired size could be cut out. Through this process of production experiences about the necessary "freezing" of the picture, about its ultimate self-sufficiency, were obtained. This southern pharmacist arrived at the Byzantine landscape. Look at the pictures from 1960-61, a picture like *Gli Oracoli II*. It is as if it creates the mountain landscape of a Byzantine icon from frozen waves and transparent formalism. And thus Manzoni's pictures are in reality too, even though snow has fallen.

Back to Stuttgart. Lunch, and Johannes told me that there was a vernissage that evening for a big Paolini exhibition here in the Staatsgalerie. So I went back to the hotel and slept and then found myself back at the museum after normal closing time.

It was a true retrospective exhibition which took me right back to the beginning. It was Manzoni and Copenhagen at the start of the Sixties. The frothing enthusiasm of Addi Köpcke, spit in the corners of the mouth as one was made aware how stupid one was. There was nothing ethereal and distant about Manzoni's white and padded pictures. In their own time, they were aggressive. I discovered that Paolini's pictures began about that time.

I am now using "Manzoni" as a state, a spiritual phantom, that one was able to use in the South at a particular historical moment. Geographically speaking, a long way from an artist called Jorn in Denmark and, in relation to age, a long way from the young Paolini. What did this encounter with the giant mean? For Jorn, it meant a radicalization of the painting process itself which set his spectres free. For Paolini, it started great theatre which allowed the curtain to reveal in glimpses an underlying antique-Byzantine landscape. The cotton-wool of Manzoni's pictures has been woven into a light curtain that can be opened and closed and even thrown over this and that and draped in relation to the transparent and formalized landscape.

Markus Lüpertz is a Central European. This is more northerly but it is not the North. With Jorn no Byzantine landscape appeared but a much more untidy landscape of the hunt. Markus began with a Teutonic-Byzantine landscape. I can remember very distinctly how aghast I was when I saw these landscapes at Michael Werner in the beginning of the Seventies. With steel helmets and such paraphernalia. There was no transparency but there was historical mass, there was Byzantine formalism decided by historical fate and unavoidable knowledge about the dash of the waves. No curtain. I didn't have an eye for all that then. I was frightened away before I had a chance to look about me.

With Markus I have gone the opposite way: the later things opened the door for the earlier ones. The later pictures with their attachment to the landscape of the "wild hunt" were a more familiar terrain to me. But it is nevertheless significant that when "the prince goes hunting" then he is entangled in a Byzantine ceremonial. And behind and in the archaic warriors from the more recent time lies a landscape of paraphernalia, fortifications, cowering hills and emblematic cornfields. A Byzantine landscape different from that South of the Alps, one that resists. There is something Russian about Markus's Byzantinism, a form of presence that does not need revealing. This landscape is the basic mood that follows Markus's pictures through all the Celtic variations.

Thus we find ourselves in a landscape without North or South, East or West. A landscape without end or victories. My countryman Søren Kierkegaard noted in his diary in 1848:

«Whoever said that truth must triumph in *this World*? Christ at least did not. No, truth shall suffer or must suffer in this world, yes it shall suffer and thus the whole of this existence shall be an examination.

Thus it is the meaning of eternity. The rest is rubbish. It is also only a betrayal of the senses to say

that the presumed truth will triumph after the death of Man. No, when Man is dead, then there develops a fancy that one presumes to be true: now that there is no danger and no endeavour, it is this fancy that triumphs - not truth.

Yes whoever has something finite he wants to do, then he can triumph; but that however is not truth either. A reformation of the concept of the lamp, yes that can be said to triumph. He who fights a king can perhaps triumph and get a republic instead - but is such a frivolity truth.

Therein lies the satire on Luther. The good in Luther has certainly not triumphed but on the other hand to a certain extent he triumphed over the Pope. Oh, Lord God, with that he comes in under analogies of reformations in the Fire Service and the like».