

Chaddanta

The Entrusted

For Doris

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This novel is a dystopia and therefore a work of fiction.
The protagonists and the plot are fictitious.
Any similarities to persons, living or dead, are coincidental.

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Journal entry

Over a year has gone by since I took the plunge into self-employment and opened up my own practice. I still remember going into the furniture store to pick out the two comfortable leather armchairs that quite visibly dominate the room. They face one another and are carefully spaced apart, thus keeping my patient and I firmly locked in and unable to dodge a question, a problem or any kind of confrontation. The walls are still bare save for the two *Heidelberger Örtlichkeiten* (Heidelberg locations) drawings – the Old Bridge and the Castle Ruins. A bronze statue of *Der Lenker der Rosse* (the charioteer) adorns the small wooden table to the left-hand side of the armchair that usually seats my patients. I didn't place it in the room for purely esthetic purposes. Whenever my patients bemoan their temper fluctuations or lose control of their turbulent emotions, I refer this antique chariot driver who never releases the reins. Behind the analysand looms an imposing bookcase that houses the complete works of C.G. Jung, numerous reference works, and all manner of literature I accumulated throughout my studies and professional career. Working independently has finally liberated me from the systemic and even hypnotic therapeutic approaches so commonly used in my former clinic. I can now apply the personal methodology I developed over the years without fearing any criticism. And I can select my patients. This is the most important aspect of my profession. Any dentist can extract a tooth. One may be more skilled than the next, or cause more pain, but that is of minor significance. My profession is fundamentally different. It calls for an affinity between a patient's disposition and my own. In some cases, it isn't there to begin with. In others, the insurmountable obstacles only manifest after some time, which compels me to discontinue therapy under some pretext. In the long term, my work has rarely proven wholly unsuccessful, but my true masterpieces – resolving a patient's mental health problems – are few and far between. Nevertheless, today I have been reminded just how fulfilling it is for me to help other people.

Journal entry

Today is Sunday and I have made some time for a visit to my hometown. What brings me here is the installation of a new heating oil tank in the apartment building I lived in until I was eleven and that now belongs to me. Over sixty years have gone by since my grandfather built it and nearly twenty years since my mother transferred the ownership to me by way of donation. She still holds usufruct over it. However, given that she lives abroad and the property manager is on holiday, I'm inspecting the new tank myself. The garden belongs to the ground floor apartment, so I leave a short message on the tenant's answering machine. He is a dentist and our dealings with him, as with the other tenants, are straightforward. I walk over the cellar rooms and through the covered patio area with clotheslines to make it into the garden. I've been meaning to fill up the small, fenced-in swimming pool for a while now. When we were kids, we would fill it up with water on hot summer days. It was always heaps of fun but the next day we'd fish out all kinds of disgusting creatures with our butterfly net. I decide to talk it over with the dentist. We could also put in a pond if he is interested in having fish or water lilies. Upon my last visit, the bottom of the steel door leading to the heating tank room was rusted. In the meantime, they have put in a new door but the manager hasn't left me a key. So I have come all this way for nothing. Anger towards the manager builds up within me like bubbles of poisonous vapors bubbling on the surface of a geyser. But this inner disharmony settles down rapidly and I have a look around the garden. Not much has changed since I was a kid: there's that same Japanese cherry tree and the hazel bush on the edge of the neighboring property. Even though she was a little older, Andrea would occasionally play with me when she used to live here. I can only vaguely remember her and surely wouldn't recognize her if I passed her on the street. I wonder what's become of her. There is a tangible bond between this partially overgrown garden, its people, and me. It's a completely different relationship than the one between me and my patients. It was never deliberately created or subjected to a subservient purpose. That is exactly why these

things suddenly strike me as so fateful and valuable. They appeared on my path when I was too young to even appreciate their significance. Who riddles our path with these early influences, joys, surprises, and disappointments? As an atheist, I see it as a case of pure coincidence. A religious person, on the other hand, would classify it as an act of divine providence. Ultimately, there is no use in questioning this feeling. Or perhaps there is? Maybe rootedness can only begin to make sense when associated to its genesis. I decide to pay a visit to my former elementary school. On the way, I pass the former public library. Like so many other public institutions, it has been closed down. Financial resources are lacking nowadays. To be more exact, they aren't truly "lacking" but just reoriented towards other priorities. Even so, many German-speaking people still live in this part of the city. I cast a quick glance through the glass door and remember how patient the librarian had been as she repeatedly warned us schoolchildren to stay away from the adult section. Forbidden books hold a magical appeal for many people. This could be linked to biographical experiences such as this one. My former schoolyard is just a few meters ahead. Naturally, it too has been abandoned. Three decades have elapsed since we played our forbidden soccer games with the old tennis ball between the four benches that always served as goal posts. Once, the janitor grabbed our ball, stabbed it with a knife and tossed it in a trash can near the gym. We resented him at the time. He had been almost unfailingly patient when cleaning up those cone-shaped milk cartons that we would empty, stack up like little pyramids, and then trample under our feet. Beyond the sports field I can see the barbed wire reinforced walls surrounding the barracks that housed US soldiers back then. When my paternal grandmother was sick with cancer, my mother, brother, and I rode our bikes over for a visit every day. The road took us by the side of the barracks that was marked off from the public with tall wire mesh fencing instead of a wall. On the inside, young men in military uniforms would often pause in their baseball game as the three of us rolled by like ducklings in a line. Some of them would press up against the fence laughing and jeering, making insinuations in English or spouting all kinds of ambiguities that my

mother unblinkingly ignored and that my brother and I couldn't make any sense of at the time. I recently came across the quote "home is where you don't have to explain yourself." I mulled over this sentence for a long time, yet could not dispel my doubts. Due to these foreign soldiers, we didn't have unrestricted domiciliary rights at the time. Maybe home is more of a hidden notion that only applies to the self. It lacks communicability and remains deeply buried within the layers of childhood. At best, it can be surmised as a feeling.

Dream log

First dream: *A traffic sign indicates radioactive radiation.*

Second dream: *I meet a black-clad woman who prays the rosary.*

Third dream: *I am dressed up in a grotesque costume. The knee-high purple socks stand out to me in particular.*

The first dream indicates an invisible danger. As for the rosary, I had to look up its symbolic meaning in my dream lexicon. It portends grief and sorrow. This is also indicated by the Mediterranean-looking widow. The third dream does not fit in with the rest. A dream sequence like this one generally indicates a hasty judgment made about another person.

Journal entry

This evening my doorbell rang and I opened up to see Frau Oppermann standing before me. She tried to smile through her sadness.

"We have to leave," she said bluntly. "And I wanted to return the key."

She had been a big help around the house after the divorce. She received payment, of course, but at times she went above and beyond her duty. She and her husband were honest, reliable, and trustworthy in every respect.

“You’re moving? So suddenly?”

“Yes, the notice from the city came in April. We were told to vacate the house within three months.”

“And who’s moving in?”

“Nobody. The house is being demolished, the adjacent building too. You know the Krothes. They also have to move.”

“I don’t understand. Why are they demolishing the housing?”

“Because the refugees. The building is city property. They are building homes for the newcomers. They’re moving us and our children into an old flat.”

Hundreds of migrants stream into our city every month. The authorities have no choice but to create the allocated space, and they begin by moving out the most defenseless members of society. Old Oppermann lost his job as signaler for the railway years ago and lives off of welfare and odd jobs with his family of six.

“Didn’t you appeal to the municipality? You’ve been living there for over ten years after all.”

“It wasn’t any use. Oh, how I loved that little garden.” She shrugs despondently and hands me a piece of paper. “This is our new address. We’d be happy to work for you again.” The lower class can stand to be pushed around. They are completely and utterly at the mercy of the state. A few days ago, the mayor was lauded by the local press for his commitment to immigrant integration. There was no mention of the Oppermanns or the Krothes in that press coverage.

Reflections on the session with Monika Z.

The focus of today’s session was Z.’s account of a visit to the outdoor pool with her two young sons. It was striking how she remembered this unspectacular leisure activity down to the last detail. She rattled off the entrance fee to the nearest penny, the company name of the guards on duty, and knew the pool’s weekday opening hours as well as their Sunday and public holiday program. With her children freely engaged in summer activities, Z. focused on the sociological

situation at hand and contrasted it to her own childhood memories. We discussed why guards had not been required at swimming pools in the past as opposed to now. The patient explained that the large number of male Muslims present at the scene made this protection necessary. Upon entering the grounds, she claims to have noticed bathers from this faction occupying the “strategically important positions” by the swimming ladders. Additionally, Z. expressed concerns regarding the so-called “burkinis,” which are whole body bathing suits worn by religious Muslim women. She repeatedly deplored the absence of a lifeguard. Z. confessed that as a young girl, she would often join her friends at a quarry that was not officially open to public swimming. Therefore, in her experience, lifeguards were not necessarily associated with a bathing environment. We delved deeper into the psychological importance of the lifeguard in the patient’s eyes. For Z., this individual embodied an intercultural institution whose presence was binding in terms of guaranteeing compliance with social rules among the visitors. The hard-to-reconcile cultural norms of the immigrants and the native bathers troubled the patient. Her worry deepened into a yearning for an impartial authority who would grant security. During the session, I became aware of the fairly negative connotations lifeguards have held for me ever since I was a boy. I saw them as rather under-qualified enforcers whose regulatory function was more about guaranteeing compliance with the rules than mediating conflicts. Z.’s visit to the outdoor pool with her two sons also brought back an unpleasant childhood memory. Given that the municipal swimming pool was at a considerable distance from my elementary school and that no suitable bus connections existed between the two, our parents took turns driving us. After the swimming lesson, one of the mothers walked into the boys’ changing room and lingered there for no apparent reason until one of us finally told her to leave. This corresponds with the patient’s excessive worry for her children. Naturally, the actual reason she desires a lifeguard stems from her yearning for a father figure. In upcoming sessions I will suggest she adopt a more easygoing approach to childcare. She should also try dealing with the unavoidable social changes in a more constructive manner.

Journal entry

A collective intoxication is seeping into the country due to the ever-rising number of incoming refugees. We welcome the stranger unaware of his intentions, motives, and instincts. It is a patronizing intoxication that manifests with blatant openhandedness because what is being given away is almost exclusively collective property. The drunkards therefore lack the necessary restraint when dealing with the beneficiaries. The latter do not hesitate to impose themselves. Disorder reigns at this party with more or less drunken hosts and uninvited guests who are reluctant to mingle. They stay sober and know what they're after. Their plans extend far beyond a simple hello. They are here to stay for quite some time to come. Maybe they are even repelled by the strange embraces and exuberant welcome. A creditor whose books are filled with a slew of demands isn't interested in meager coins thrown his way by the masses. Besides, no invitations were actually sent out beforehand. There had only been a sort of announcement stating that there was "still so much room left." But the guests had to get a foot in the door by themselves, and they hadn't forgotten that. A unique public spectacle plays out before my very eyes. It has neither a pre-determined beginning nor a foreseeable end. Anyone who sharpens their senses shall quickly realize that the tireless hosts are no longer as inebriated as they claim to be. The Dionysian stupor has faded into a pleasant tipsiness. Still, no one dares cut the music and make everybody realize that none of the guests had ever swayed to its beat.

Dream log

First dream sequence: *I am standing in a descending elevator. I notice that the floors buttons are labeled with letters instead of digits.*

Second dream sequence: *I am in a Catholic kindergarten that used to be combined with a nun orphanage. A blond girl comes over and informs me and that she'll be picked up by her mother today. Her tone sounds very*

naive and she smiles hopefully. I somehow know that it's not going to happen, but it's impossible for me to tell her that.

The first part of the dream symbolizes my descent into the deeper layers of the unconscious. The second dream relates to a remnant from my waking life. Yesterday, a patient opened up to me about her school days in a nunnery. Her experience with the nuns is one of the reasons why she wants nothing more to do with the Church, she explained. However, the emotion-laden incident with the girl in the dream suggests that there is more to it. It seems to indicate a disappointed hope that I am yet unwilling to acknowledge.

Journal entry

This afternoon I went jogging with Bernhard. We drove to the sports track in his car. As a lawyer he can hardly get by without a car. Financially speaking, he is severely broke. He has recently taken to rejecting clients who do not have legal expense insurance. We run five laps around the cinder track. Bernhard takes our time, jots the numbers down in a notebook and compares the stats. He's always been the faster one.

"You ran your second worst time today," he says gravely. "The last time you ran slower than this was last May."

We have both reached an age where carefully measuring our physical performance has become superfluous. But seeing as this is important to Bernhard, I keep my thoughts to myself.

"Let's go to the bar!" I suggest.

I make the most of my outings with Bernhard. He gives me free legal advice and entertains me with odd stories from the social milieu of his penniless clients.

"Have I already told you about that man I'm representing in a rental law matter?"

"You mean the one whose lease was terminated after his stay in the psychiatric ward?"

"Yes, that one. He invited me to his place to discuss our case strategy and opened the door wearing an immaculate white suit. After

inviting me to take a seat, he sat down at the grand piano. ‘Only for the academics,’ he emphasized before launching into a self-composed piano piece.”

I have to smile. Bernhard has a gift for recounting such anecdotes and he can go on for hours. He is actually bound by professional secrecy in these matters, but that doesn’t stop him. We’ve known each other for many years and he was the one who handled my divorce. “My latest case has to do with the refugee crisis. I’m representing an interpreter who was attacked and lightly injured by an asylum applicant while on the job.”

He pauses.

“They’re all liars. The refugees, the citizen welcoming committee, the counterfeit industry, the lawyers specializing in residence right enforcement: they all cheat – without exception.” Bernhard gives me a piercing look. He may have never thought it impossible that he would ever utter such words.

“From what I hear, it’s like a stench spreading all over the country. It isn’t only the asylum system that reeks, but every crack in the fabric of this state is emanating it. The law is degenerating into trickery and criminals are enriching themselves with overt shamelessness. There are daily reports of Christians reporting persecution for their beliefs. A few minutes in, it becomes apparent that they don’t even know what Christmas Eve represents. Mysterious childhood scars or medical interventions are used as evidence of torture and matching political circumstances are brazenly invented.”

I have never heard Bernhard speak so directly and bluntly on any given topic. I remember the unsavory case of an exhibitionist who was protected by his wife through perjury. Bernhard remained objective even when it was difficult for him to continue listening.

“I wonder how anyone can work in a field where they are lied to morning, noon, and night. What does it feel like working in a profession devoid of ethics?”

“Everyone involved knows they are being deceived. But that’s how they – and I – serve our personal ideology of doing something good. Marrying a local woman is one way of obtaining a short-term permit. No one cares if the submitted death certificate of the wife

back home is a fake. They're all well aware of it. They just pretend that the document is real. The same applies to the reported death threats made by Islamic terrorist organizations. The letterhead and signature may well be authentic, but the text content can be purchased for a price."

We seat ourselves at one of the tables in front of the restaurant and order beers. It's a warm summer day.

"There are people who see the very manifestation of life in the dim subculture of the migrants," says Bernhard. "Most of them have completely different living circumstances but keep seeking proximity to this cesspit of vulgarity. The women are almost worse than the men. They flutter around volunteering as if they were birds looking after their nests.

"Sometimes I wonder if these women are driven by a guilty conscience. Perhaps they are trying to make up for some actions from their past?"

Bernhard doesn't answer my question.

"You haven't seen anyone more aggressive and unscrupulous than my colleagues. It's mostly my female colleagues who represent the interests of the immigrants. Judging by the way the interpreter has described the procedure to me, he is already being pressured to gloss or skip over the applicant's objections. Every now and then he is asked to make up a story that somehow ties it all in coherently. In this case, the lawyer straight off demanded that he work in favor of her plea or risk the negative consequences."

"Is he claiming compensation?"

"Yes, but I fear it will be treated as a political case, in which case the cards will be stacked against him. They want to stop him from going public with his depiction of events."

An old friend joins our table and the conversation takes a different turn.

Journal entry

Yesterday evening I went to *Parkcafé*. I've been visiting this brothel once or twice a week ever since I got divorced. Before that, back

when Sandra and I barely exchanged a word, I would only rarely go. On the outside it looks like an inconspicuous hotel. Visitors are recruited through word-of-mouth recommendation. Once the electric door opens and you make your way to the bar, it becomes clear what this is all about. In places like these, the women strike an unusual chord. One time, an engineer who had spent many years working in Arab oil states spoke to me about court etiquette in his host country. He told me about the prince's wedding and the tradition that, from birth on, prohibited the heir to the throne from seeing the women of the palace unveiled. He knew them by name and could distinguish their voices. Still, he could not see any of their faces. This matter changed on his wedding day when all the women he had grown up with had their faces uncovered for the duration of this celebration. By the next morning everything went back to the way it had been, and he was forced to rely on his memory to call up the beauty and grace of the women. It's the same with the women of the world's oldest profession. Here, masculine drive is inconsequential since it no longer encounters any resistance. Everything is more uninhibited and that is what it makes it all the more personal: the looks, the garments, the words, that seemingly random touch... Every living human today probably has female ancestors who, in the distant past, have engaged in sexual activity for a pecuniary benefit. This secret female legacy is what reveals itself to me in this enchanted place. It is patient and inviting, examining my desires and titillating my senses, offering and surrendering itself to me. I had called earlier to ask for Gysèle. This evening, she is wearing a beige, classic cut suit. We sit at one of the small tables in the back. She's happy to see me. We've known each other for a long time. As always, I'm at a loss for words at first.

"We attended the folk festival this weekend," Gisèle says like she's opening a game of chess.

"I've never been," I reply. "Is it really as international as it's said to be?"

"Yes, you might say that. And with all that beer, they all get so plastered that they can hardly stand. For the most part, the exact opposite is true with the men from the Dark Continent." I

can't help but laugh. Gysèle has once again set the right tone for the evening.

“Let's go upstairs!” she suggests, and we take our drinks up to the first floor.

Reflections on the session with Matthias H.

After seven months of treatment, the patient's compulsions have somewhat diminished. A characteristic of H.'s overall personality is a compulsion for stained clothes. Every morning, he conscientiously verifies all clothing worn on the previous day to see if there are any stains. If he finds a spot on one article of clothing, he adds it to the laundry pile. If he can't detect any staining, he feels obligated to continue wearing the shirt or the pants. For olfactory reasons, this is difficult to keep up in the long term. Therefore, H. increases the probability of staining by wearing an already worn shirt as an apron when cooking, for instance. Problems also arise with paired garments, such as socks, when only one of the two is dirty. In addition to working as a teacher, the patient is very politically active. He is one of the leaders of the “Lest we Forget” initiative and is currently working closely with the city's refugee initiative. His psychological disposition seems typical for a greater part of today's social elite in politics and in the media. Central to his political action is the fixation on – according to his understanding – a self-inflicted, irreversible devaluation of his own nation. He expressly welcomes the low birth rate in concurrence with the progressively increasing immigration rate. His remarks concerning this correlation sound so enthusiastic that I'm compelled to give them special consideration. As member of a worthless nation afflicted with an ineradicable stain, he sees the hope its salvation as bound up with its downfall. I could not help but compare his biography with my own experiences on this matter. I was confronted with historical guilt for the very first time back when I was about eight years old. I can still remember Geiger, the religion teacher who addressed this topic in his class. He had been in the war and would include sudden flashbacks in

his explanations. As a child, I was unaware of it, but in retrospect I can ascertain that this man's traumas latently influenced him in the pursuit of his profession. I cannot say that the rendition of this singular crime emotionally charged me back then. At the time, it was impossible for me to understand the causes of the underlying conflict. What lingered in my mind was the vague feeling that a heavily charged topic had been addressed for the first time. Half a decade later, a communist led my class through a detention camp where he had once been imprisoned. Wearing his loden coat, he looked completely different than how I had pictured a politically radical individual such as him. I had imagined someone wearing a leather jacket and a flat cap. His descriptions of the living conditions in the barracks were convincing. We had to put up with a few digs at "capitalist exploitation" as well as the "imperialist war," but I didn't identify any subliminal hatred of the people as a whole. Of course, at this time, the guilt hadn't really evolved into a cult and the suffering of the victims hadn't become a political religion yet. That only came later, and the more intrusive the indoctrination and the more relentless the related material and political demands became, the more critical I was of this ideological narrative. In my patients, I observe a wide range of attitudes on the subject: they range from rejection and indifference right up to the enthusiastic self-destruction of the collective identity that is typical of H. Lately, there seems to be a general tendency towards irritable boredom. Many patients complain about the "endless loop" of information on this topic and the media's tendency to sound like a "broken record." H. often complains that despite his tireless commitment to victim interest, he receives little recognition from the females in this group. He deliberately ignores my cautious presumption that he might see different results if he focused on his personal grooming.

Journal entry

I actually do well on the outskirts of civilization; I'm a philistine. Why should custom dictate that we dress up for the opera? Today, it's the

theater I'm going to. I'm sitting in the stalls and waiting for the performance to begin. Finally, two men and one woman appear on stage. "Everybody sit down on the floor," the woman calls into the microphone.

"We are all going to imagine that we are sitting on a refugee boat. We are going to feel the narrowness and the fear! Those who refuse to sit down on the ground are..."

The end of her sentence is swallowed up by the noise of sliding chairs and obediently mumbling members of the middle-class audience. I find an uncomfortable seat in the aisle. Directly in front of me, a forty-year-old has her legs drawn up and head tilted back, handbag firmly clutched to her chest. Her left-hand side companion has taken his shoes off and adopted a meditative pose. From time to time he feels compelled to comment on what is happening, which his partner acknowledges with a silent nod.

"Flee!" the three actors on stage shout into the microphone. From the rows and the balcony, the spectators chant in unison:

"Flee! Flee! Flee!"

This is when I realize that the majority of the guests are actually refugees. They're holding up banners and cardboard signs with their countries' names. Even the man sitting in front of me cross-legged is chanting as the woman lowers her head with due solemnity. Several immigrants now take the stage and form a circle together with the trio.

"We are human! You must realize that!" one of them announces.

"And as humans, we have rights that you must respect!" adds another one.

A refugee reads a short statement in his native language and one of the actors translates it.

"Many of us have made it over, but not all. Many of us who tried have failed. They drowned because you looked the other way. You did not want to see us coming, because you did not want to welcome us."

At the back of the stage, the lights shine on a group of bent-backed people wading through water and dragging something behind them with a rope. It is the choir:

"We are here to stay, though you didn't expect us, imploring protection, we are entrusted to you, but you don't recognize your blame."

More and more refugees read out their accounts of the dangers, the hardships, and the misery of their journey across the open sea. Suddenly, one of the actresses unexpectedly leaps up and gestures wildly to the side of the stage, shouting: “There it is! There it is!” Actually, there is nothing and no one to be seen. Everyone is running around the stage excitedly looking for something.

“Human dignity!” one of the actors finally exclaims, a look of terror on his face.

“Quick, throw the blame on it while it’s still around!” a hooded refugee accuses the audience.

“We beg you for help, but you look the other way!”

Applause fills the room.

“Consider the way you think of us,” a refugee woman appeals to the auditorium “and never forget that we are just like you. Our children will be one of your own someday.”

I’m slowly beginning to realize how the roles have been distributed and what narrative is being acted out. I rise slowly and humbly apologize to every spectator I pass on my way out.

Dream log

First dream: *I’m handing out mandates to other people. It is unclear to me what these free passes authorize.*

Second dream: *I visit a pawnbroker to pawn off a piece of jewelry. The employee wants to estimate the value in another room. I vainly wait for his return.*

I am delegating my tasks. I cannot work out which duties I am avoiding. The second dream indicates that I will not succeed if I keep this up.

Journal entry

Gernot, a childhood kindergarten friend, got back in touch with me some time ago. He was looking up former classmates using

internet browsing engines and asked me how I was getting on. “Yes, it’s me!” I replied and promised to get back to him with a more detailed description of my life. He had been a pretty good student. As far as I could remember, he had been somewhat stocky and pale, which helped me recognize him in a recent photograph. He had been a very calm and serious playmate. Some people are naturally loyal like that; you can just count on them. At the same times, they don’t get close to just anyone. They often appear a bit isolated or even lonely. This is the kind of friend I found in Gernot; he was not so much a pal but more of an unobtrusive companion whose presence was felt during a particular phase of my life. Through sheer memory, he had managed to reconstruct the names of most of our classmates as well as the teacher body. He had only misspelled one of their names. I can remember some of my classmates very well: that arrogant son of a notary who got the best grades; the girl who was average in most subjects but a whiz at math; the orphan who had been adopted by an unmarried relative and who was often picked on at recess; the girl I envied because she had an aunt living in the US and had once gone there on vacation; the gym teacher who tried to make me exercise in my underwear when I forgot my gym clothes, a suggestion I promptly refused – “Bravo, that was the right thing to do!” cheers Gernot as we exchange stories forty five years later; the East Prussian teacher, my very first teacher in fact, who could hardly suppress a smile when she saw the breasts I added to my rudimentary drawing of the word “Yuta;” the subsequent teacher who was appointed principal at another school and used this change in location as an opportunity to start wearing a toupee. Some names on the list did not jog my memory. I had shared a room with them almost every day for four years, but they hadn’t left any traces, not even the kind that I’d like to forget. Actually, yes, upon longer reflection, I come up with something: that Petra girl who stealthily unbuckled my knapsack from behind on the second day of school. Otherwise, it had been a largely peaceful and pleasant time.