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2023: again in Krakow, Poland

(25-30 October 2023)

Moment and Memory

26 October, Klezmer Hois

Kraków. The city is in transition with me. I look out of the window of the tram and recognise a street I have already passed. But it is still an uncertain feeling, a fleeting fabric, any small gust of wind could carry it away.

It's not the first time I've been here and I notice small changes in the everyday life. A new law regulates what shops can sell at night. Nine months ago it was different, I remember. Reluctantly, people in Krakow are getting used to it.

For me, the city is no longer a monolith, a uniform and alien entity devoid of history. I am already somewhat absorbed, like sun cream. I don't feel part of it yet. I don't recognise anybody. I don't get greeted by anyone. I don't understand the language. And yet a sense of belonging creeps into my consciousness.

Like a rhythm to which I have already danced. It is not possible to remember this state. It is life that cannot be grasped in retrospect. I can only write it while it is. This is the feeling that accompanies me in my travel writing. I have to capture it now, I can't write it down and process it later. It was during my second trip to Krakow that I became most aware of this. When Europe's history suddenly started to shift. On 23 February 2020, Russia had still widely denied that it wanted to attack Ukraine again. But on 24 February they did. I was on my way to Krakow at the time. I had the feeling that the change that had gripped the world had also thrown me off balance. That it was taking my future and my own path out of my hands. I knew I would get used to it in some way. After a short time, the whirling leaves would sink back to the ground. As if they were just a new humus layer.

But in the first moment, one world collapsed and a new one began to emerge. I felt I had to write about it now, because if I wrote about it later, it would only be a reflection from the newly created reality. I would be aware of many things that in the past moment had been incalculably overwhelming.

In this way, the travel texts are like islands, like logbook entries of a ship that always docks anew at the moment. The entries in the log book carry on from one another, but they are not from one state of mind. Each of these journeys changes me. And I record these changes. The transformation, the difference between how I arrive and how I depart is the thread I am looking for. I want to grasp this red thread on my journeys. I want to feel the changing dissonance between myself and the world I encounter. No, not the dissonance, but the sound.

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From:
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