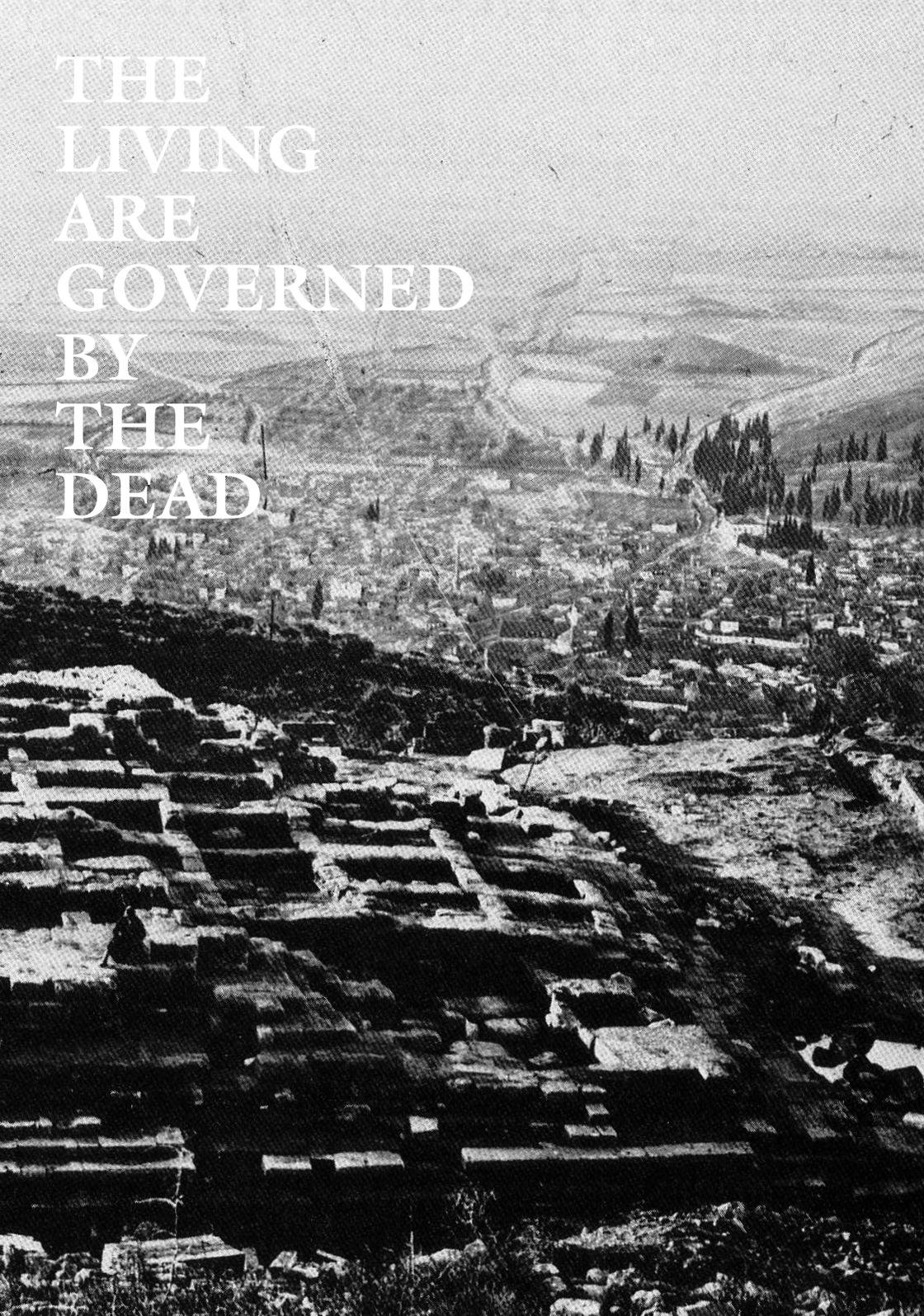


THE
LIVING
ARE
GOVERNED
BY
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DEAD





Marius Engb

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“We must not demand of antiquity that it should answer the question at pistol point whether it is classically serene or demonically frenzied, as if there were only these alternatives. It really depends on the subjective make-up of the late-born rather than on the objective character of the classical heritage whether we feel that it arouses us to passionate action or induces the calm of serene wisdom. Every age has the renaissance of antiquity that it deserves.”

—Aby Warburg

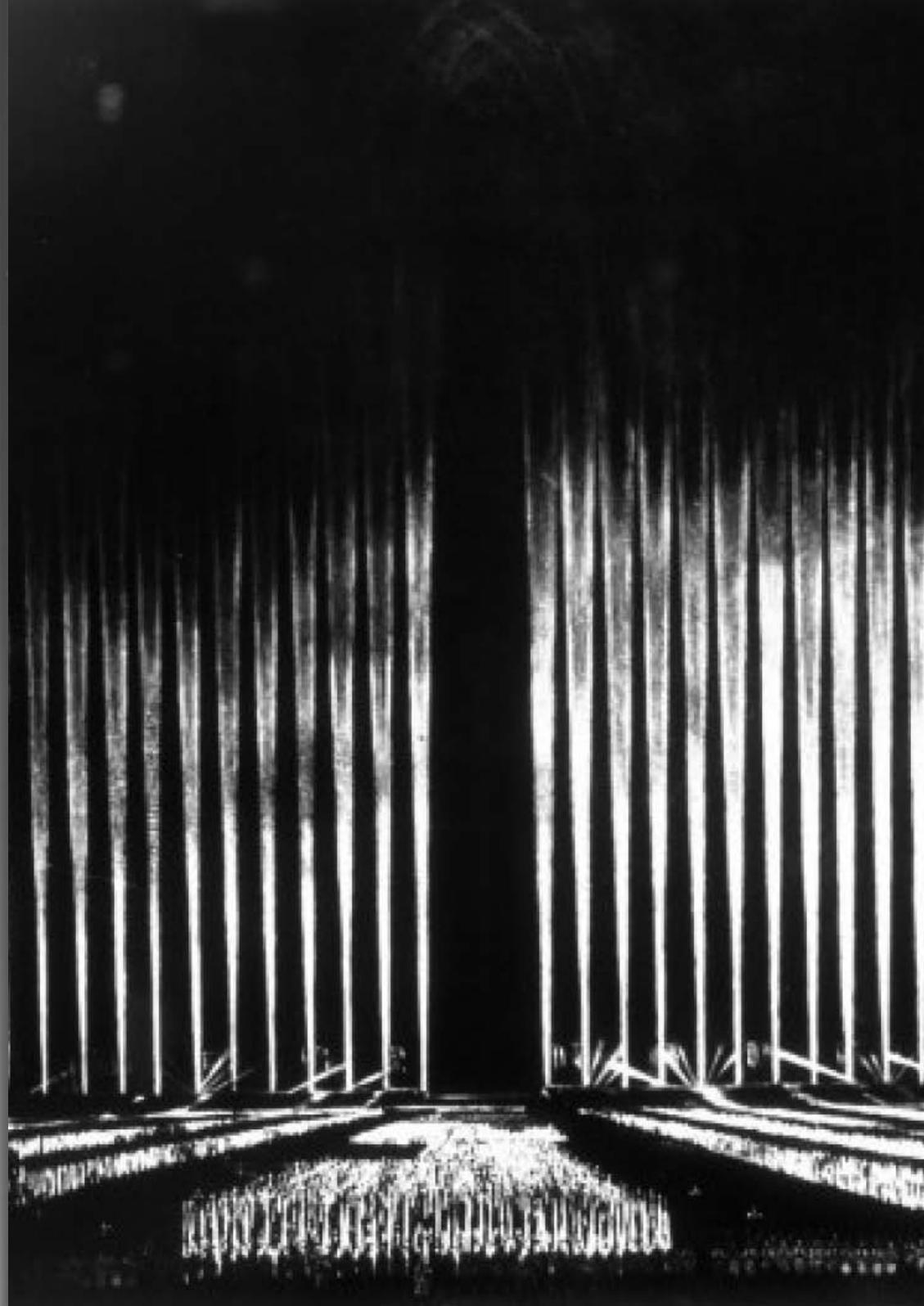


ALL around us the bodies rose out of the stone, crowded into groups, intertwined, or shattered into fragments, hinting at their shapes with a torso, a propped-up arm, a burst hip, a scabbed shard, always in warlike gestures, dodging, rebounding, attacking, shielding themselves, stretched high or crooked, some of them snuffed out, but with a freestanding, forward-pushing foot, a twisted back, the contour of a calf harnessed into a single common motion. A gigantic wrestling, emerging from the gray wall, recalling a perfection, sinking back into formlessness. A hand, stretching from the rough ground, ready to clutch, attached to the shoulder across empty surface, a barked face, with yawning cracks, a wide-open mouth, blankly gaping eyes, the face surrounded by the flowing locks of the beard, the tempestuous folds of a garment, everything close to its weathered end and close to its origin. Every detail preserving its expression, brittle fragments from which the whole could be gleaned, rough stumps next to polished smoothness, enlivened by the play of muscles and sinews, tautly harnessed chargers, rounded shields, erect spears, a head split into a raw oval, outspread wings, a triumphantly raised arm, a leaping heel circled by a fluttering tunic, a clenched fist on a now absent sword, shaggy hounds, their jaws clamped into loins and necks, a falling man, his finger stub aiming at the eye of the beast hanging over him, a charging lion protecting a female warrior, his paw swinging back to strike, hands endowed with bird claws, horns looming from weighty brows, scaly legs coiling, a brood of serpents everywhere, with strangleholds around bellies and throats, darting their tongues, baring sharp teeth, bashing into naked chests. These only just created, already dying faces, these tremendous and dismembered hands, these wide-sweeping pinions drowning in the blunt rock,

4 this stony gaze, these lips torn open for a shriek, this striding, stamping, these blows of heavy weapons, this rolling of armored wheels, these clusters of hurled lightning bolts, this grinding underfoot, this rearing and collapsing, this endless straining to twist upward out of grainy boulders. And how gracefully curly the hair, how elaborately gathered and girded the lightweight mantle, how delicate the ornamentation on the straps of the shield, on the bulge of the helmet, how gentle the shimmer of the skin, ready for caresses yet exposed to the relentless rivalry, to slaughter and annihilation. With mask-like countenances, clutching one another and shoving one another away, strangling one another, clambering over one another, sliding from horses, entangled in the reins, utterly vulnerable in nakedness, and yet enrapt in Olympic aloofness, appearing indomitable as an ocean monster, a griffin, a centaur, yet grimacing in pain and despair, thus they clashed with one another, acting at higher behest, dreaming, motionless in insane vehemence, mute in inaudible roaring, all of them woven into a metamorphosis of torture, shuddering, persisting, waiting for an awakening, in perpetual endurance and perpetual rebellion, in outrageous impact, and in an extreme exertion to subdue the threat, to provoke the decision. A soft ringing and murmuring resounded now and again, the echoes of footfalls and voices surrounded us for moments at a time; and then once more, only this battle was near, our gazes glided over the toes in the sandals, bouncing off the skull of a fallen man, over the dying man whose stiffening hand lay tenderly on the arm of the goddess who held him by the hair. The cornice was the ground for the warriors: from its narrow, even strip they threw themselves up into the turmoil, the hooves of the horses banged upon the cornice, the hems of the garments grazed it, and the serpentine legs twisted across it; the ground was perforated at only one place: here, the demoness of the earth rose up, her face hacked away under her eye sockets, her breasts massive in a thin covering, the torn-off clump of one hand lifted in a search, the other hand, asking for a standstill, loomed from the stone edge, and knotty, long-jointed fingers stretched up to the profiled corbel as if they were still underground and were trying to reach the wrist of the open thumbless female hand, they moved along under the cornice, seeking the blurred traces of incised script, and Coppi's face, his myopic eyes behind glasses with a thin steel frame, approached the letters, which Heilmann deciphered with the help of a book he had brought along. Coppi turned toward him, attentive, with a broad, sharply drawn mouth, a large, protruding nose, and we gave the opponents in this melee their names and, in the torrent of noises, discussed the causes of the fight. Heilmann, the fifteen-

year-old, who rejected any uncertainty, who tolerated no undocumented interpretation, but occasionally also adhered to the poetic demand for a conscious deregulation of the senses, who wanted to be a scientist and a seer, he, whom we nicknamed our Rimbaud, explained to us, who were already about twenty years old and who had been out of school for four years by now and were familiar with the world of labor and also with unemployment, while Coppi had spent a year in prison for circulating subversive literature—Heilmann explained to us the meaning of this dance round, in which the entire host of deities, led by Zeus, were striding toward victory over a race of giants and fabulous creatures. The Giants, the sons of the lamenting Gaea, in front of whose torso we were now standing, had blasphemously mutinied against the gods; but other struggles that had passed across the kingdom of Pergamum were concealed under this depiction. The regents in the dynasty of the Attalids had ordered their master sculptors to translate the swift transience, paid for with thousands of lives, to a level of timeless permanence, thereby putting up a monument to their own grandeur and immortality. The subjugation of the Gallic tribes invading from the north had turned into a triumph of aristocratic purity over wild and base forces, and the chisels and mallets of the stone carvers and their assistants had displayed a picture of incontestable order to make the subjects bow in awe. Historic events appeared in mythical disguise, enormously palpable, arousing terror, admiration, yet not understandable as man-made, but endurable only as a more-than-personal power that wanted enthralled, enslaved people galore, though few at the top, who dictated destinies with a mere stirring of the finger. The populace, when trudging by on solemn days, scarcely dared to glance up at the effigy of its own history, while—along with the priests—the philosophers and poets, the artists from elsewhere, all full of factual knowledge, had long since walked around the temple; and that which, for the ignorant, lay in magical darkness was, for the informed, a handicraft to be soberly assessed. The initiates, the specialists talked about art, praising the harmony of movement, the coordination of gestures; the others, however, who were not even familiar with the concept of “cultured,” stared fur- tively into the gaping maws, felt the swoop of the paw in their own flesh. The work gave pleasure to the privileged; the others sensed a segregation under a draconian law of hierarchy. However, a few sculptures, said Heilmann, did not have to be extracted from their symbolism; the falling man, the man of Gaul taking his own life, showed the immediate tragedy of a concrete situation; but these sculptures, replied Coppi, had not been outside, they had remained among the trophies in the throne rooms, purely

in order to indicate from whom the shields and helmets, the bundles of swords and spears had been taken. The sole aim of the wars was to safeguard the territories of the kings. The gods, confronted with the spirits of the earth, kept the notion of certain power relationships alive. A frieze filled with anonymous soldiers, who, as tools of the higher-ups, fought for years, attacking other anonymous soldiers, would have altered the attitude toward those who served, boosting their position; the kings, not the warriors, won the victories, and the victors could be like the gods, while the losers were despised by the gods. The privileged knew that the gods did not exist, for they, the privileged, who donned the masks of the gods, knew themselves. So they were even more insistent on being surrounded with splendor and dignity. Art served to give their rank, their authority the appearance of the supernatural. They could permit no skepticism about their perfection. Heilmann's bright face, with its regular features, bushy eyebrows, and high forehead, had turned to the demoness of the earth. She had brought forth Uranus, the sky, Pontus, the sea, and all mountains. She had given birth to the Giants, the Titans, the Cyclopes, and the Furies. This was our race. We evaluated the history of the earthly beings. We looked up at her again, the demoness stretching out of the ground. The waves of loosened hair flowed about her. On her shoulder, she carried a bowl of pomegranates. Foliage and grape vines twirled at the back of her neck. The start of the lips, begging for mercy, was discernible in the raw facial plane, which veered sideways and upward. A gash gaped from her chin to her larynx. Alcyoneus, her favorite son, slanted away from her while dropping to his knees. The stump of his left hand groped toward her. She was still touching his left foot, which dangled from his stretched and shattered leg. His thighs, abdomen, belly, and chest were all tensing in convulsions. The pain of death radiated from the small wound inflicted between his ribs by the venomous reptile. The wide, unfurled wings of the kingfisher, growing from his shoulder, slowed down his plunge. The silhouette of the burst-off face above him, with the hard line of the neck, of the hair, which was tied up and tucked under the helmet, spoke of the pitilessness of Athena. As she swung forward, her wide, belted cloak flew back. The downward glide of the garment revealed, on her left breast, the scale armor with the small, bloated face of Medusa. The weight of the round shield, her arm thrust into its thong, pulled her along to new deeds. Nike, leaping up, with mighty wings, in loose, airy tunics, held the wreath, invisible but implied by the gesture, over her head. Heilmann pointed: at the dissolving goddess of the night, Nyx, who, with a loving smile, was hurling her vessel full of serpents toward a downcast





creature; at Zeus, who, in his open, billowing cloak, was using his woolen aegis, the goatskin of doom, to whip down three adversaries; and at Eos, the goddess of dawn, who was riding like a cloud in front of the rising team of the naked sun god, Helios. Thus, he said gently, a new day dawns after the dreadful butchery, and now the glass-covered room became noisy with the scraping of feet on the smooth floor, with the ticking echoes of shoe soles on the steep steps leading up the reconstructed western façade of the temple to the colonnades of the interior court. We turned back toward the relief, which throughout its bands demonstrated the instant when the tremendous change was about to take place, the moment when the concentrated strength portends the ineluctable consequence. By seeing the lance immediately before its throw, the club before its whizzing plunge, the run before the jump, the hauling-back before the clash, our eyes were driven from figure to figure, from one situation to the next, and the stone began to quiver all around us. However, we missed Heracles, who, according to the myth, was the only mortal to ally himself with the gods in the battle against the Giants; and, combing the immured bodies, the remnants of limbs, we looked for the son of Zeus and Alcmene, the earthly helper whose courage and unremitting labor would bring an end to the period of menace. All we could discern was a sign bearing his name, and the paw of a lion's skin that had cloaked him; nothing else testified to his station between Hera's four-horse team and Zeus's athletic body; and Coppi called it an omen that Heracles, who was our equal, was missing, and that we now had to create our own image of this advocate of action. As we headed toward the low, narrow exit on the side of the room, the red armbands of the men in black and brown uniforms shone toward us from the whirling shifts in the throng of visitors; and whenever I spotted the emblem, rotating and chopping in the white, round field, it became a venomous spider, ruggedly hairy, hatched in with pencil, ink, or India ink, under Coppi's hand, as I knew it from the class at the Scharfenberg Institute, where Coppi had sat at the next desk, doodling on small pictures, cards from cigarette packs, on illustrations clipped from newspapers, disfiguring the symbol of the new rulers, adding warts, tusks, nasty creases, and rivulets of blood to the plump faces looming from the uniform collars. Heilmann, our friend, also wore the brown shirt, with rolled-up sleeves, the shoulder straps, the string for the whistle, the dagger on the short pants; but he wore this garb as a disguise, camouflaging his own knowledge and camouflaging Coppi, who was coming from illegal work, and camouflaging me, who was about to leave for Spain. And thus, on the twenty-second of September, nineteen thirty-seven, a few days be-

fore my departure, we stood in front of the altar frieze, which had been brought here from the castle mountain of Pergamum to be reconstructed, and which, painted colorfully and lined with forged metals, had once reflected the light of the Aegean sky. Heilmann indicated the dimensions and location of the temple, as the temple, still undamaged by sandstorms or earthquakes, pillage or plunder, had shown itself on a protruding platform, on the terraced hill of the residence, above the city known today as Bergama, sixty-five miles north of Smyrna, between the narrow, usually dried-out rivers Keteios and Selinos, gazing westward, across the plain of Caicus, toward the ocean and the isle of Lesbos, a structure with an almost square ground plan, one hundred twenty by one hundred thirteen feet, and with a perron sixty-five feet wide, the whole thing dedicated by Eumenes II, to thank the gods for helping him in his war—the construction having begun one hundred eighty years before our era and lasting for twenty years, the buildings visible from far away, included among the wonders of the world by Lucius Ampelius in his *Book of Memorabilia*, second century A.D., before the temple sank into the rubble of a millennium. And has this mass of stone, Coppi asked, which served the cult of princely and religious masters of ceremony, who glorified the victory of the aristocrats over an earthbound mix of nations—has this mass of stone now become a value in its own right, belonging to anyone who steps in front of it. It was no doubt highbred figures who trod barbaric mongrels underfoot here, and the sculptors did not immortalize the people who were down in the streets, running the mills, smithies, and manufactories, or who were employed in the markets, the workshops, the harbor shipyards; besides, the sanctuary on the thousand-foot-high mountain, in the walled district of the storehouses, barracks, baths, theaters, administration buildings, and palaces of the ruling clan, was accessible to the populace only on holidays; no doubt, only the names of some of the master artists were handed down, Menecrates, Dionysades, Orestes, and not the names of those who had transferred the drawings to the ashlar, had defined the intersections with compasses and drills, and had practiced expertly on some veins and shocks of hair, and nothing recalled the peons who fetched the marble and dragged the huge blocks to the ox carts, and yet, said Heilmann, the frieze brought fame not only for those who were close to the gods but also for those whose strength was still concealed, for they too were not ignorant, they did not want to be enslaved forever, led by Aristonicus they rebelled at the end of the construction, rising up against the lords of the city. Nevertheless the work still incorporated the same dichotomy as at the time of its creation. Destined to emanate





royal power, it could simultaneously be questioned about its peculiarities of style, its sculptural persuasiveness. In its heyday, before falling to the Byzantine Empire, Pergamum was renowned for its scholars, its schools and libraries, and the special writing pages of cured, fleshed, and buffed calfskin made the fruits of poetic invention, of scholarly and scientific investigation permanent. The silence, the paralysis of those fated to be trampled into the ground continued to be palpable. They, the real bearers of the Ionian state, unable to read or write, excluded from artistic activity, were only good enough to create the wealth for a small privileged stratum and the necessary leisure for the elite of the mind. The existence of the celestials was unattainable for them, but they could recognize themselves in the kneeling imbruted creatures. The latter, in crudeness, degradation, and maltreatment, bore their features. The portrayal of the gods in flight and of the annihilation of urgent danger expressed not the struggle of good against evil, but the struggle between the classes, and this was recognized not only in our present-day viewing but perhaps also back then in secret glimpses by serfs. However, the afterdays of the altar were likewise determined by the enterprising spirit of the well-to-do. When the sculptural fragments that had lain buried under the deposits of Near Eastern power changes came to light, it was once again the superior, the enlightened who knew how to use the valuable items, while the herdsmen and nomads, the descendants of the builders of the temple, possessed no more of Pergamum's grandeur than dust. But it was a waste of breath complaining, said Heilmann, for the preservation of the showpiece of Hellenic civilization in a mausoleum of the modern world was preferable to its traceless entombment in Mysian detritus. Since our goal was to eliminate injustice, to wipe out poverty, he said, and since this country too was only going through a transition, we could imagine that this site would some day demonstrate the expanded and mutual ownership intrinsic in the monumentality of the formed work. And so, in the dim light, we gazed at the beaten and dying. The mouth of one of the vanquished, with the rapacious hound hanging over his shoulder, was half open, breathing its last. His left hand lay feeble on the forward-charging leather-shod foot of Artemis, his right arm was still raised in self-defense, but his hips were already growing cold, and his legs had turned into a spongy mass. We heard the thuds of the clubs, the shrilling whistles, the moans, the splashing of blood. We looked back at a prehistoric past, and for an instant the prospect of the future likewise filled up with a massacre impenetrable to the thought of liberation. Heracles would have to help them, the subjugated, and not those who had enough armor and weapons. Prior to the genesis

of the figurations, there had been the bondage, the enclosure in stone. In the marble quarries on the mountain slopes north of the castle, the master sculptors had pointed their long sticks at the best blocks while eyeing the Gallic captives toiling in the sultry heat. Shielded and fanned by palm branches, squinting in the blinding sun, the sculptors took in the rippling of the muscles, the bending and stretching of the sweating bodies. The defeated warriors, driven here in chains, hanging from ropes on the rock faces, smashing crowbars and wedges into the strata of glittering, bluish white, crystalline-like limestone, and transporting the gigantic ashlar on long wooden sleds down the twisting paths, were notorious for their savagery, their brutal customs, and in the evenings the lords with their retinues passed them timidly when the stinking prisoners, drunk on cheap rotgut, were camping in a pit. Up in the gardens of the castle, however, in the gentle breeze wafting up from the sea, the huge bearded faces became the stuff of the sculptors' dreams, and they remembered ordering one man or another to stand still, opening his eye wide, pulling his lips apart to view his teeth, they recalled the arteries swelling on his temples, the glistening nose, zygomas, and forehead emerging from the cast shadows. They could still hear the lugging and shoving, the stemming of shoulders and backs against the weight of the stone, the rhythmic shouts, the curses, the whip cracks, the grinding of sled runners in the sand, and they could see the figures of the frieze slumbering in the marble coffins. Slowly they scraped forth the limbs, felt them, saw forms emerge whose essence was perfection. With the plundered people transferring their energies into relaxed and receptive thoughts, degradation and lust for power produced art. Through the noisy maelstrom of a school class we pushed our way into the next room, where the market gates of Miletus loomed in the penumbra. At the columns flanking the gates, which had led from the town hall of the port to the open emporium, Heilmann asked whether we had noticed that inside, in the altar room, a spatial function had been inverted, so that exterior surfaces had become interior walls. In facing the western perron, he said, we had our backs to the eastern side, the rear of the temple, that is, in its merely rudimentary reconstruction, and the unfolded southern frieze stretched out to the right while the relief on the northern cornice ran to the left. Something the viewer was to grasp by slowly circling it was now surrounding him instead. This dizzying procedure would ultimately make us understand the Theory of Relativity, he added when, moving a few centuries deeper, we walked along the clay-brick walls that had once stood in the cluster of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian towers, and we then suddenly stepped into an area where yellow-

ing leaves, whirring sunspots, pale-yellow double-decker buses, cars with flashing reflections, streams of pedestrians, and the rhythmic smashing of hobnailed boots demanded a readjustment in our bearings, a new indication of our whereabouts.

We are now, said Coppi, after we crossed the square between the museum, the cathedral, and the Armory Canal, in front of the motionless field-gray steel-helmeted sentries at the monument, whose dungeon still has room enough for the mangled marchers who, having bled to death, are en route here, willing or not, in order to lie down under the wreaths with silk ribbons. Heilmann, beneath the foliage of the Lindens, pointed between the Brothers Humboldt, who, enthroned loftily in armchairs with griffin feet, were brooding over open books, and he motioned across the wide forecourt, toward the university, where, reckoning with an accelerated high school diploma, he intended to study foreign affairs. He already knew English and French, and at the night school where we had met him, he had been seeking contacts for teaching him the taboo Russian language. The municipal night school, a gathering place for proletarians and renegade burghers, had been our chief educational institution after Coppi had left the Scharfenberg School Island at sixteen, and I, one year later, had likewise taken my last ferry to the mainland near Tegel Forest. Here, basic courses on Dostoyevsky's and Turgenev's novels served for debates on the prerevolutionary situation in Russia, just as lectures on economics guided us in our perusal of Soviet economic planning. The Association of Socialist Physicians plus scholarships from the Communist Party, where Coppi belonged to the Youth Organization, had enabled us to attend the Scharfenberg School, a progressive institution at that time. Our chief advocate had been Hodann, a municipal physician, head of the Health Office of the Reinickendorf district and director of the Institute of Sexology. We had met him at the question-and-answer evenings in the Ernst Haeckel Auditorium, and until his imprisonment and escape in nineteen thirty-three we often participated in the regular discussions on psychology, literature, and politics taking place every second week at his home in a settlement on Wiesener Strasse, Tempelhof. After the summoning of the National Socialist government, known as the *Machtübernahme*, the takeover of power, when it was no longer possible for us to go to school, Coppi had begun training at Siemens, and I had gotten a job as a shipping clerk at Alfa Laval, where my father had been foreman in the separator assembly department. Here, in one of the low elongated brick buildings on Heidestrasse, between the Lehrter freight sta-

tion, with its workshops, warehouses, roundhouses, and shunting trains on the one side and on the other the thronging barges on the canal, which linked Humboldt Harbor to North Harbor, I was busy receiving equipment parts from Hamburg, from the Bergedorf Ironworks, and from company headquarters in Stockholm, as well as packing the finished separators for dairies. In late nineteen thirty-four, my parents had decided to return to Czechoslovakia, the country to which our passports assigned us after the conclusion of the peace treaty of Versailles and Trianon; I myself had kept my job in order to continue the evening classes for my high school diploma. When my parents left, I rented out the room in our apartment on Pflugstrasse, near Wedding, to a family, while I, as I had done earlier, slept in the kitchen, where the incessant nightly rattling, clattering, and hissing from Stettin Station alternated with the roaring at my job in Moabit. In the spring of thirty-seven, after becoming an assistant fitter, I had been laid off because of staff reductions, and I had been looking for odd jobs ever since, constantly at risk of being deported or, given the demand that I apply for German citizenship, in danger of having to report to the army, an obligation that, following a draft notice from the Czechoslovakian embassy, was hanging over me this fall, in my unfamiliar homeland. However, my high school equivalency classes and my studies of medicine and economics, which I had pursued on the side, were done with anyway for the moment, while my military duty had to be delayed since I was looking ahead to activity in Spain. For me, as was true for Coppi and so many others, the lack of solid career plans was part of a natural development, we saw political action as our chief task, and my road led out of the country in which I had grown up. Coppi had to get his bearings here; after his prison term he, a trained latheman, had been forced to go on unemployment, he had sold shoelaces and also newspapers and ice cream at a stand by the Red Mill Movie Theater at Halensee Station, and now, still a member of the illegal Communist Party, he was being conscripted for labor service to build an expressway outside Spandau. For Heilmann the schooling was still regulated. Once his father, after teaching at Dresden's Technical Institute, had taken over a leading position at Berlin's Municipal Construction Agency, Heilmann had started at the Herder School and was living with his parents on Hölderlinstrasse, right off the square that we called Reich Chancellor Square, where we spit whenever we passed any of its present street signs. The gray men planted there, with straightened hams, each rifle placed on a flat hand on the shoulder, should, said Heilmann, stand in front of the temple not to commemorate the conquests but to make sure no further







marching orders were given, and the only people honored in the tomb should be those who resisted the tyrant. Taking detours, roundabouts, from the turmoil of Friedrichstrasse into the vaults and embranchments of the passageway, past the waxworks and the shop windows of the court painter, who, in accordance with the Chancellor's taste, daubed the oppressive mendacity of the Greater German intoxication into the nakedness of ecstatic maidens and youths, then into Georgenstrasse, past the elevated lines, amid the thunder of the municipal trains, back to the Copper Ditch, on the bridge to Monbijou Castle, in the riverbanks areas, past Chamisso with shoulder-length hair on the red marble pedestal, leaving the stock exchange behind us, turning into Hackescher Markt, all the way to Rosenthaler Strasse, corner of Linienstrasse, where the Coppi Family lived three flights up in the second back court, Heilmann, occasionally referring to Heracles' project, elucidated something he had been recording in notebooks for years now, his concept of a future society that, after the experiences of coercion, deception, degradation, and all manner of torture, would eliminate the familiar systems, laws, and taboos. Any fear of authority, any submissiveness, any blind performance of work would, he said, give way to a sigh of relief, confusion was over, the collective best was identical with one's own best, everything would be voluntary and completely balanced, there would be no more ranks, no secret decisions made behind closed doors, everything would take place in public, allowing access and monitoring at any point. This society, where every measure, every assignment would be determined by the participants themselves and where the products would belong to them, where everyone could continue his education according to his own needs, was certain to be characterized by self-confidence, by pride and pleasure. Such a structure, borrowing, said Coppi, from the ideas of Saint-Just, Babeuf, Proudhon, can only lead to anarchism, to chaos. Your state, which makes itself superfluous by having no ruling class to support and no one left to keep down, recalls the generation that Lenin said was capable of discarding all the old garbage, ask about that preparatory phase, which you leave in mythical murkiness, and in which the most authoritarian thing that exists, the revolution, is reality. The victors would have to use weapons to force their will upon the vanquished and weapons that inspire terror to assert their power, and before talking about the demise of the state, they would have to set up a new state, with the rules of a new life together, and this would launch the everyday efforts, in which any theory has to demonstrate its usefulness. Perhaps it was the hustle and bustle of the surrounding traffic that made Heilmann's words unclear, but he insisted

that the very thing that Coppi labeled an illusion, the figment of an imagination run riot, was, to Heilmann's mind, built on solid ground, for we were, after all, sufficiently familiar with programs, with the strictures of rules and regulations, we knew that obedience, trust in superior leadership were meant to weaken our own faculty of judgment, invalidate our discernment, and promote inferiority and powerlessness. What we must do, he said, is overcome the patterns that have been taken over since time immemorial. His statements, however, which got lost in the din, bouncing against unknown faces, had long since been refocusing on the step that Heracles had taken, away from the privilege of an alliance with Mount Olympus and toward the earthly, and it was only gradually that we could follow the thoughts about what sort of changes Heracles had thereby wrought, what mistakes he had made, and, perhaps, what knowledge he had gained on his travels. The direction he thereby took was traced out from the very start, for as a baby he had already rebelled against the intrigues of the powerful. In her jealousy, Hera, sister and wife of Zeus, had acted to delay the birth of Heracles by clamping up the womb of Alcmena, who, impregnated by the father of the gods, was now in labor. This, said Heilmann, showed the breach leading to irreconcilable conflict, for the revolt against the status quo had been prefigured in the embryo, and intrigue and cunning had been used in the attempt to preserve tradition. On that day, as Zeus solemnly announced to the gathering of the great, a new ruler was to come into the world, a highly promising man. Zeus's drift was, as usual, unfathomable to mortals, but the queen of heaven smelled disaster, for she was sufficiently acquainted with her spouse's machinations, and something inspired by a sudden whim, by a divine pleasure, seemed to be in the making, something that could shake the entire venerable structure. The events had shifted from the upper sphere to the earthly level. The man of promise was to be born to Amphitryon, a nobleman in Thebes, a descendant of Perseus. Hera, striding through the air, hurried into the chambers of another lofty personage, likewise a kinsman of Perseus, Sthenelus, whose wife was pregnant, in her seventh month, and the goddess, using acrid potions, made her give birth prematurely, so that, instead of Heracles, Eurystheus was pushed into life at the designated hour. Outfoxed and belated, the person whom Zeus had chosen for grand deeds appeared next to the one preferred by Hera, and Heracles was well formed, he promptly opened his eyes and reached about while the other lay motionless, grimacing, with a bluish cast. We will see, said Heilmann, the fruits of this rivalry, in the course of which the misshapen boy came to power and the strong and well-proportioned boy had to endure all burdens







and afflictions. Enviously Hera followed the growth of the healthy baby, for whom the normal basket was soon inadequate, and in golden sandals that did not graze the ground she stole over to him, bathed in ambrosia, heavy pendants on her ears, and, in her voluptuous arms, two serpents to snuff the rival's life. She bent deep between the mosquito veils, which were pushed aside, and the child reached out his hands as if to stroke her tenderly, but then spit in her face and strangled the adders. While Eurystheus was still woefully bawling in his pillows and being coddled to health by the nurses, Heracles was already tending the flocks of sheep on his parents' large estate and gaining his first renown in the rustic population since he tore the throats not only of the attacking wolves but also of the supposedly invincible lion that had been devouring the livestock in the environs for years. Eurystheus, his cousin, tearfully recited poems, accompanying them, off-key, on the lyre, but when Linus, the tutor, tried to inveigle Heracles into believing that the only existing freedom was the freedom of art, his pupil yanked the man's hat down so hard over his eyes that he broke his nose, and when the schoolmaster then claimed that art was at all times to be enjoyed independently of the contemporary chaos, Heracles thrust him headfirst into the cesspool, drowning him to prove that unarmed aestheticism cannot withstand the simplest violence. He had already once beaten the daughter of Mnemosyne, she too a relative, for daring to presume that she alone could settle all issues of dance, music, song, and poetry, Heracles preferred the ditties sung in the streets and the shrill reed flutes, the caterwauling bagpipes, the whacking of drums in the taverns. Wandering around the urban outskirts despised by the muses, he got to know the poverty that was at home in shacks and basements, and it was always the maids and farmhands, the cringing domestics, the day laborers, the small shopkeepers, who starved and were sucked dry by the inflicted tributes, while the castles had overabundant meat, fruit, and vegetables, just as the wine vats there, and the treasure chests, were always filled. Heracles could not believe that the terror gripping his native city Thebes could be blamed on Erginus, the mystical prince, whom no one had ever seen, for why did Creon, the king, and the entire royal household belch and puke in surfeit, why did the aristocratic ladies don new frocks every day, if they were ruled by a despot who levied incessant taxes. To show that it was solely the blue bloods who held the ignorant mass of workers down by deluding them and forced them into drudgery by bribing and buying their leaders and masters and threatening the workers with unheard-of punishments, Heracles sailed to the island of marble quarries and came back with a retinue that com-

manded respect. He did not need to explain very much to the slaves who sat coughing in the basin, their lungs full of stone dust. With marble chips in their beards, with pebbles between their toes, armed with their big saws and crowbars, they accompanied him, and they made short shrift of any sentries, the only surprise was when people asked why this had not happened earlier. Heracles arrived in Thebes with the freed slaves and spread the news that he had drawn and quartered Erginus and tossed him to the ravens. Before he even entered the royal castle, songs were being sung in the city, hastily composed for everyday use, with striking rhymes and catchy tunes, describing how the mortal enemy had been dismembered, his limbs scattered in all directions, and how Thebes had finally been delivered. Since neither Creon nor his cagiest priests and philosophers could produce the monster that had ruled over them for so long, Heracles had to be celebrated in the highest echelons, and Creon gave him his daughter Megara as his bride, distributed food and drink to the populace, ordered three days of feasting, and opened the gates of a few labor camps. The king and all the dignitaries now informed Heracles that he was the best, the strongest, that he deserved the rank stolen from him by the weakly inferior Eurystheus, but they simultaneously maneuvered the earlier born upon the throne of Mycenae, from where he ordered the capture of the runaway slaves and sent heavily armed troops across the land to massacre the rebellious peasants. That was the time of Heracles' derangement, said Heilmann, while, from the central market hall, trucks piled high with empty crates and cartons drove toward us. Heracles, beguiled by Megara's charms, did not even notice that his bodyguards had been murdered and buried, no warning cry came up to him over the castle walls, and when, in a silk garment, he first went out again through the gates, into the city, where he thought the epoch of prosperity had begun, he found only beggars and children running wild and throwing rocks at him, and a few passing craftsmen turned away when he called to them. A single moment of inattention had managed to destroy all his achievements, and now months had passed, perhaps years, ones that he had spent idly and that the enemy had used. The state was armed better than ever to forestall any recurrence of surprise attacks. The court authors had likewise learned a bit more and, in the patois of the streets, composed satirical poems about Heracles' swindling of the poor, his bragadocio, his bumptiousness, while Eurystheus, the sage, installed by the grace of the supreme god, was praised in many verses for his fatherly love of the populace. The populace, who it was said, always needed something it could believe in, could venerate, was offered parades on the pub-





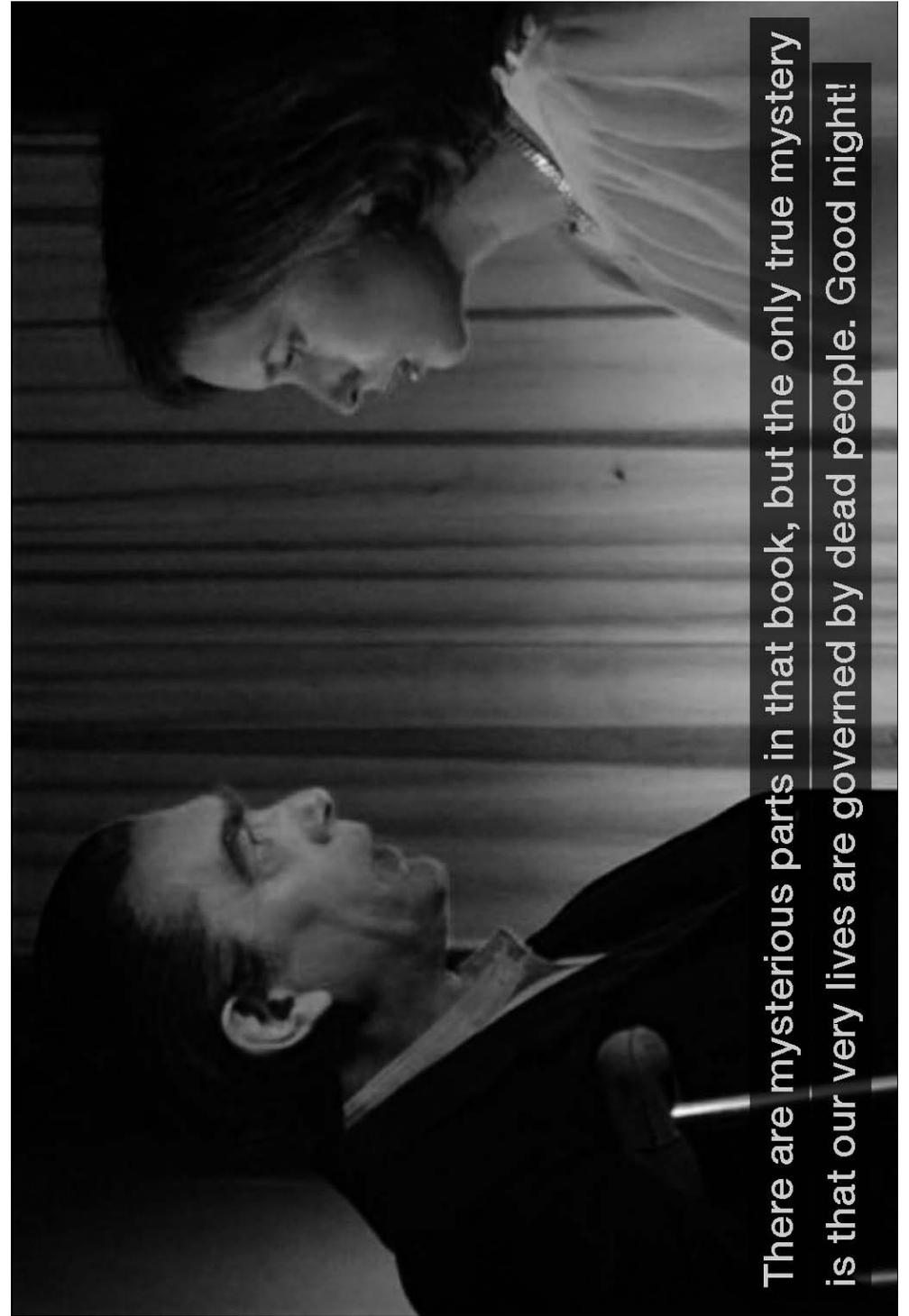
lic squares, with a visual delight of chariots, plumed helmets, standards, while exalted speeches voiced the hope that the final conspirators, who stood in the way of renewal, would soon be eliminated, and the regent told the weary and famished that he was worried about them and shared their suffering, and the listeners learned in hushed amazement that what had been imposed on them was a state of emergency. How, we wondered, on the canal, leaning against the sooty iron railing, its knobs splotched white by bird droppings, how could Heracles have assumed that others had already been there to continue what he had begun, how could he have believed that an isolated deed sufficed as an example of how to achieve the upheaval. He howled with anger, said Heilmann, he raged in his bedroom, less because this had happened to him, a man who did, after all, know how to defend himself, than because he had run out on the countless others who were weaker and without influence. Before fighting his way out of the spears encircling him, he killed his wife and also the children she had born him, everything that bound him to the higher ranks, any kinship had to be snuffed out, no reconciliation was possible here, and we were endorsing his frenzy when a squad of black gravediggers, with skulls on their caps, moved past us, bawling. But we did not understand why, wrapped in a sack and strewn with ashes, he then went to Mycenae to submit to Eurystheus. He humbled himself, begged forgiveness, said Heilmann, he took every degradation upon himself because it was necessary for him to survive. Instead of winding up in the torture chambers that were prepared for him, he offered to serve the monarch and carried out a series of dangerous missions for the ruler, who could pique himself on his ally. Understanding the negligence and the changed situation in the land, Heracles now had to focus on a lengthy plan, with which he hoped to overcome the system of malevolence, assassination, and lust for power maintained by Eurystheus with Hera's help. Initially, the purpose of Heracles' actions was not obvious, and this uncertainty has been preserved up to the present day in the legends that were spread about him. The scholars tersely announced that Heracles was risking his life for the beloved Eurystheus in order to wipe out the hotbeds of rebellion and hostility throughout the country and later in distant areas as well. The storytellers in the markets embellished the envoy's deeds with details. Way up in the northeast, close to Nemea, he had slain yet another lion by getting him into a headlock with his left arm, boring his thumb and forefinger into the brute's nostrils, and plunging his right fist through the gaping jaws, deep into the gullet. Cloaked in the beast's skin with the paws joined on his chest, the open maw thrust over his head, Heracles

had moved on, this time southward, to the marshes of Lerna, where the nine-headed Hydra dwelled. Since it was known that whenever one of the reptile's heads was chopped off two grew in its place, people in the bazaars were already saying derogatory things about Heracles, what good is his big black sickle, they said, if all he does is leave a bigger tangle of serpents than before. He would not be Heracles, came the retort, if he ended an adventure without victory. What happened was that he took a glowing tree trunk and burned out the neck stump of every decapitated head, thereby preventing any new growth. The listeners shook their heads, clicking their tongues in disbelief. But then when Heracles came from the mountains of Erymanthus with a captured boar, holding the tremendous drooling beast by its rear legs as he paraded it into the palace and into the throne room, where the God-sent king, quaking with fear, crept into a clay jug, there was loud mirth despite all the misery, and some people got an inkling of what Heracles was planning. Ever since, his fame resurged among those who had already given him up for lost, and when they heard that he was at the lake of Stympalus, about to eliminate the giant birds that plagued the countryside, nesting on the farmland, the children acted out these stories, shooting their arrows aloft with lightning motions and, surrounded by feathers, pointing triumphantly at the heaps of prey. Granted, many people still felt that all the game he had hunted, all the herds of cattle he had brought in benefited not them, but only the gentlemen of the court; but others set out to emulate Heracles and explore the regions beyond the Archipelago. A time of ocean voyages, of epoch-making discoveries commenced. While the aristocrats drove their thinkers to ever-greater exertions in depicting the distant feats of Heracles to their advantage, the have-nots talked about him as one of their own. What's the news about Heracles, was constantly asked, and just as they were proud of him for wresting the fire-breathing bull to its knees, taming the man-eating horses, felling the three-headed giant, and winning the friendship of Atlas, so too their anger mounted against Eurystheus, who, with Hera's whispered promptings in his ears, attempted once more to pursue the hero with disaster and bring him down. It was time, said the workers gathering secretly at night, for him to return, since no one now had any doubts that he was superior to Eurystheus with all his landowners and generals, and the workers wondered what he had done among the Amazons, what the pillars meant that he had erected on the shores of Okeanos, and why he was staying on so long in the gardens of the Hesperides. He had, came the answer, to measure the entire world with his steps in order to determine where a superior enemy force or a poten-

tial for free development could be found. Meanwhile the workers geared up for the day when he would rejoin them. During the inroads of the mercenaries, the workers remained calm and collected. They gathered pitch in secret cellars in order to set the arsenals ablaze at the appropriate moment. When they had to erect new walls around the royal castle, they made sure these ramparts contained passageways to be opened quickly. They knew that Eurystheus wandered sleeplessly through his sumptuous halls, hearing all the walls whispering that Heracles would soon be returning. By now it was too late for the rulers to bewail Heracles' release, for the whippers to order the soldiers to remain extremely watchful, for the governors to distribute alms in the cities. The disquiet that had been spreading could no longer be denied, the security of the nobles was undermined, no prayers or parades could wring devotion from the populace. The torturers were still raging, and the dungeons still filling up with any people arbitrarily suspected of dissatisfaction. But the whereabouts of the real prisoners were shown one morning, before sunrise, when Heracles arrived in Thebes, accompanied by a gigantic hound, at whose howling all those who had a solid house crept under their beds, while those in shacks and those who slept outdoors pricked up their ears and dashed toward Heracles as if called by a cheery trumpet. The guardian of infernal order, who had been depicted as unassailable since time immemorial, had been pulled out of the earthly depths by Heracles, easily, with a song, it was said, during his last raid into the interior of the world structure, and in the marketplace, which had been abandoned by the warriors of the upper ranks, he showed the maids and farmhands, the craftsmen and the day laborers, and the loitering rank and file: Cerberus, the shabby cur, who, upon viewing the vast assembly pulled in his tail and started whimpering. Heracles had also brought a caged eagle, a further celebrity in the system of coercion and menace; the eagle had served to torment the defiant, the valiant, the self-confident, to devour the livers of the rebellious, over and over, and now all this, as the inhabitants of Thebes could see, was about to end. They saw what scabby scraggy legs had propped up the reign of fraud and lies and how wretchedly the feathers dangled on the bird that had only just been throning proudly over Prometheus, how dull the membranes were that had drawn over the bird's eyes, which had otherwise glittered so dangerously. An end thus to fettering anyone to anguish for thinking new thoughts, everything was open in Thebes, in Mycenae, for the age of justice. But, we wanted to know, did the inhabitants manage to spread so much conviction that the aristocrats in the palaces, in the patrician buildings, came crawling on their knees, begging for mercy, were they not,

after a little doubting and waffling and not even necessarily a betrayal, but rather that routine tolerance, given a chance to defend themselves, to strike back. For it was not peace that now followed, we would, after all, have heard about it; instead new campaigns were launched, wars, vaster than ever. From now on, however, Heracles could not be imagined anywhere but on the side of the enslaved, said Heilmann amid the screeching of the wheels of a packed trolley, which, coming from Alexanderplatz, turned into Rosenthaler Strasse; Heracles, Heilmann went on, had made it clear that all magic spells had been broken, all legendary creatures subdued, and it was a mortal who could perform such feats. His apprenticeship was over, everything he now did would be marked by tremendous changes, he already had powerful allies, including the carrier of the firmament. And yet, said Heilmann after a while, as we entered the worn building entrance, which was shored up by buckling giants, and yet Heracles perished in dreadful agony, no one managed to grab the shirt soaked in Nessus's poisoned blood, tear it from his skin, stop his pain-induced madness, and prevent him from throwing himself into the ever-burning pyre on Mount Oite.

Leaving behind the rows of telescoped carts in the courtyard, the creaking boards of the stairs, we opened the door with the ribbed glass pane, with scratches and peelings in the greasy, blackish brown paint, with the letter box of bossed black metal, with the cracked white enamel of the oval nameplate, with the nailed spotted cardboard bearing the ornately printed text, Reader of Der Völkische Beobachter, and we entered the kitchen. In the smoky light falling through the window, we could recognize stove and sink, and, at the table, under the green porcelain shade of the ceiling lamp, Coppi's mother, upright on the chair with the slanting arm. After returning from her half-day shift at the Telefunken Works on Hallesches Ufer, she had taken off her shoes and stockings and sunk her feet into a bowl of steaming water. At first only dimly perceptible, their contours dissolving in front of the six rectangles of the window, the details of her shape emerged as we joined her at the spic-and-span table. From the edge of her gray hair, which was tied back in a knot, thin creases fanned down her forehead to the root of the nose, between thick eyebrows. Her nose arched out, deep notches ran from its wings, past the corners of the mouth, to the chin, her lips were narrow, moistened by the tip of her tongue, she wiped the back of her hand across her closed, yellowish discolored eyelids. Her thin neck rose rigidly between the stooped shoulders, she wore a light blue dress, with dark blue vertical



There are mysterious parts in that book, but the only true mystery is that our very lives are governed by dead people. Good night!



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abuse, afterglow, afterimage, annihilate, antique, antiquity, archaism, artifact, assault, atrophy, attack, baffle, balance, balk, ban, bankrupt, bankruptcy, barbarize, batter, beat, beat all hollow, beat hollow, beating, beggar, beldam, bereavement, best, betray, blast, blight, bloodbath, blue ruin, bollix up, botch, brave, break, break up, breakdown, breakup, bring to ruin, brutalize, burn, bust, butcher, butt, butt end, candle ends, carcass, carnage, carry on, cave painting, chaff, challenge, checkmate, circumvent, clean out, collapse, condemn, confound, confront, confusion, conquering, conquest, consume, consumption, contravene, corrupt, corrupting, corruption, cost, counter, counteract, countermand, counterwork, crash, crone, cross, crumbling, crush, curse, damage, damn, damnation, dash, dead loss, deal destruction, deathblow, debacle, debase, debasement, debasing, debauch, debit, debris, decadence, decay, deceive, decimate, decimation, declension, decline, deface, defeat, defile, defilement, defiling, defloration, deflower, deflowering, defy, degeneracy, degenerate, degeneration, degradation, degrading, demolish, denial, denudation, deplete, depredate, depredation, deprivation, desecrate, desolate, desolation, despoil, despoilment, despoliation, destroy, destroyer, destruction, detriment, detritus, devastate, devastation, devolution, devour, dilapidate, discomfit, disconcert, discountenance, disfigure, dish, dishonor, dishonoring, disintegration, disorganization, dispossession, disrepair, disrupt, disruption, dissolution, dissolve, divestment, do in, dodo, dotard, downfall, downgrade, drain, draw, drub, drubbing, elude, end, engorge, eolith, expense, fag end, failure, fall, filings, fix, flatten, flummox, foil, fold up, force, forfeit, forfeiture, fossil, fragments, frustrate, fuddy-duddy, gin, go on, gobble, gobble up, gut, gut with fire, hag, hammer, harm, havoc, hecatomb, hide, hiding, holdover, holocaust, hors de combat, hulk, hurt, husks, impair, impoverish, incinerate, injury, knock the chocks, lambaste, lambasting, lather, lathering, lay in ruins, lay waste, lead astray, leavings, leftovers, lick, licking, liquidation, loot, loser, losing, losing streak, loss, louse up, maim, mangle, mar, mastery, maul, mere wreck, mess up, mezzolith, microlith,

mischief, mislead, mug, mutilate, nemesis, neolith, nervous wreck, nonplus, nullify, odds and ends, offscourings, old fogey, old geezer, orts, outclass, outdo, outfight, outgeneral, outmaneuver, outpost, outrage, outrun, outsail, outshine, overcoming, overthrow, overturn, paleolith, parings, pauper, pauperize, perdition, perplex, petrification, petrified forest, petrified wood, petroglyph, pillage, plateaulith, play havoc with, play hob with, poison, privation, pulverize, put, quietus, rage, rags, ramp, rampage, rant, rape, rattletrap, ravage, rave, ravish, raze, refuse, relic, relics, reliquiae, remainder, remains, remnant, residue, residuum, rest, riot, roach, roar, robbery, rubbish, rubble, ruinate, ruination, ruins, rump, sabotage, sack, sacrifice, savage, sawdust, scotch, scourings, scraps, screw up, scuttle, seduce, seducing, seduction, settle, shadow, shambles, shatter, shavings, shipwreck, sink, skeleton, skin, skin alive, slaughter, smash, soil, sow chaos, spike, spoil, spoliage, spoliation, stonewall, storm, straw, stripping, stubble, stump, subdual, subduing, subjugation, sully, survival, swallow up, sweepings, taking away, tear, tear around, terrorize, thrash, thrashing, throw into disorder, thwart, total loss, trace, trim, trimming, triumph over, trounce, trouncing, uglify, unbuild, undo, undoing, unleash destruction, unleash the hurricane, unmake, upheave, upset, vandalism, vandalize, vanquishment, vaporize, vestige, violate, vitiate, vitiating, vitiating, waste, whip, whipping, wipe out, wiping out, witch, worst, wrack, wrack and ruin, wreak havoc, wreck, wreckage

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Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume I*, Translated by Joachim Neugroschel, Duke University Press, 2005. Originally published as *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, Volume I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 20 pages excerpt

IMAGE CREDIT:

Cover: *Fundament des Pergamonaltars nach der Freilegung, um 1879*, Max Kunze: *Der Pergamonaltar. Seine Geschichte, Entdeckung und Rekonstruktion von Zabern, Mainz 1995* (Photographer unknown)

1. *Teilnehmer des Pergamenischen Festzugs der Berliner Künstlerschaft anlässlich der Jubiläumskunstaussstellung 1886*. Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin
2. Marius Engh, *Goddess Hera*, from Pergamon. A copy made of marble dating from about 250 BC of an original dated about 550 BC, 2011
3. Albert Speer, *A Cathedral of Light*, Zeppelintribüne, Zeppelinfeld, Nürnberg Rally in 1936. Speer placed 130 flak searchlights at intervals of forty feet to shoot beams into the sky to a height of 25,000 ft.
4. Willy Saeger, *Siegessäule in May 1945* (*Siegessäule* in the background), Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin
5. Marius Engh, *Hanging Man*, Abgussammlung antiker Plastik der Freien Universität Berlin, 2010
6. Martin von der Bogae, *Zeppelintribüne*, 2007
7. Marius Engh, *Part of the destroyed Wiener Brücke in Berlin, destroyed in 1945, showing the dying Giant Alcyoneus with Athena, sculpted by Wilhelm Wandschneider in 1895*. (= A copy from Pergamon Altar). *Today as a memorial To The Victims Of 1939-1945 at the cemetery in Berlin-Heiligensee*, 2011
8. Hermann Rückwardt, *Wiener Brücke im Zuge der Wiener Straße über den Landwehrkanal, vom Görlitzer Ufer zur Lohmühlenstraße*, Berlin. (Landesarchiv Berlin)
9. Marius Engh, *Part of the destroyed Wiener Brücke in Berlin, destroyed in 1945, showing the Goddess Nyx in fight with a Giant, sculpted by Wilhelm Wandschneider in 1895. Today as a memorial To The Victims Of 1939-1945 at the cemetery in Berlin-Heiligensee*, 2011

10. Marius Engh, *Casting forms stored in shelves*, at Gipsformerei-Kunstmanufaktur der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2011
11. Marius Engh, *The Living Are Governed By The Dead*, 2011
12. Marius Engh, *The Living Are Governed By The Dead*, 2011
13. Marius Engh, *The Living Are Governed By The Dead*, 2011
14. Liselotte Orgel-Köhne, *Trümmerfrau vor dem Pergamonaltar auf der Museumsinsel*, 1948/49
15. Heinz Albers, *Carl Humann died on 12. April 1896 and was buried in the catholic cemetery in Izmir. His remains were reinterred at Pergamon in 1967, just south of the altar*, 2011
16. Dario Argento, *Inferno* (1980), filmstill
17. Stanley Kubrick, *Spartacus* (1960), *Overture* filmstill (detail)
18. *Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers – 8 Lovely Ladies as Living Sculptures Illustrating Famous Art*, Poster, Encore Editions
19. Freakingnews.com, *Toga party with George W. Bush and Gerhard Schroeder*.

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“The only way in which we can reflect upon the essence of nihilism is initially to take the path that leads to the location of the residence of Being. It is only on this path that the question of nothingness can be located. But the question of the residence of Being withers if it does not abandon the language of metaphysics, because metaphysical representation prohibits thinking the question of the residence of Being.”

— Martin Heidegger

