

Ulrike Meinhof on the Dead Wing

From the period between June 16, 1972 and February 9, 1973:

The feeling, one's head explodes (the feeling, the top of the skull will simply split, burst open)—

the feeling, one's spinal column presses into one's brain

the feeling, one's brain gradually shrivels up like, like dried fruit, for example—

the feeling, one is constantly, imperceptibly, flooded, one is remote-controlled—

the feeling, one's associations are hacked away—

the feeling, one pisses the soul out of one's body, like when one cannot hold water—

the feeling, the cell moves. One wakes up, opens one's eyes: the cell moves; afternoon, if the sun shines in, it is suddenly still. One cannot get rid of the feeling of motion. One cannot tell whether one shivers from fever or from cold—

one cannot tell why one shivers—one freezes.

To speak at a normal volume requires an effort like that necessary to speak loudly, almost like that necessary to shout—

the feeling, one falls silent—

one can no longer identify the meaning of words, one can only guess—

the use of sibilants—s, ß, tz, z, sch is absolutely unbearable

guards, visits, the yard seems to be made of celluloid—

headaches—

flashes—

sentence construction, grammar, syntax—can no longer be controlled.

When writing: two lines—by the end of the second line, one cannot remember the beginning of the first—

The feeling, internal burnout—

the feeling, if one must say what's wrong, if one wants to let it out, it's like a rush of boiling water in the face, like, for example, boiling water that scalds forever, that disfigures—

Raging aggressiveness, for which no outlet exists. That's the worst.

Keen awareness that one cannot survive; a complete breakdown of the capacity to deal with this;

Visits leave no trace. A half an hour later one can only mechanically reconstruct whether the visit was today or last week.

Compared to this, bathing once a week means: a momentary thaw, a moment of rest—to stop for a couple of hours—
The feeling, time and space reconnect—
the feeling of finding oneself in a house of mirrors, like in an amusement park—to stagger—
Afterwards: incredible euphoria, that one heard something—
beyond the acoustic day and night differentiation—
The feeling, time now flows, the brain expands again, the spinal column sinks down after some weeks.
The feeling, as if one's skin is thickening.

The second time (December 12, 1973 until January 3, 1974):

Ears buzzing. Waking up, one feels as if one has been beaten.
The feeling, one moves in slow motion.
The feeling, finding yourself in a vacuum, as if you're encased in lead.

Afterwards: Shock. As if an iron plate had fallen on your head.

Comparisons, concepts that invade one's mind:
(Psycho) shredding—
The feeling of traveling through space packed into a barrel so that the acceleration causes your skin to flatten—
Kafka's penal colony—The version with a bed of nails—
A non-stop rollercoaster ride.

The radio: it offers minimal stress reduction, like when one, for example, reduces one's speed from 240 to 190.

That everything exists in a cell that makes it in no obvious way different from any other cell—radio, furniture, plus newspapers, books—is actually by its implication rather aggravating: making any understanding between the prisoners and people who do not know what silent isolation is impossible.

Also disorienting to the prisoner. (That it is white like a hospital cell, for example, only increases the terror, but mainly it is the silence. If one lived there, one would paint the walls.) Clearly, one who is in there would rather be dead.

Peter Milberg, who was in one of these things in Frankfurt-Preungesheim (“an empty medical wing”) subsequently accused his judge of “attempting” to kill him. This indicates that what is going on in these places is simply a type of “execution.”

That is to say: A process of inner disintegration occurs—like something being dissolved in acid, which one attempts to slow down by concentrating on resistance, but nothing can stop it

The complete destruction of the personality is insidious. Nobody exists outside of oneself in these completely extraordinary circumstances.

As means/method, it can quite clearly be compared, for instance, to that which they use against the Tupamaros: to create in them a state of nervous agitation and agony, shortly before administering pentothal—which suddenly creates a feeling of relaxation and euphoria. One expects the prisoner to lose self-control.

To babble.