

VOM SUCHEN
OHNE NEUGIER
von Marina Resende

I saw pink reflections on the foreheads of houses on S---gäßchen.
I walked down the alley towards the whirring sound of the canal,
looking above the rooftops without finding the pink sun. A
ribbon made of four thinner strips, green, blue, yellow and pink,
tied at the end, was crumpled on the cobblestones, and a pink
flower was pressed facing the ground.

On another walk, I saw the pink reflections again, and the
mystery of their origin extended infinitely backwards in time. It
seemed to me that I had seen the same light, and asked the same
questions, not only days before, but in fact a year ago, when I
must first have walked down that alley.

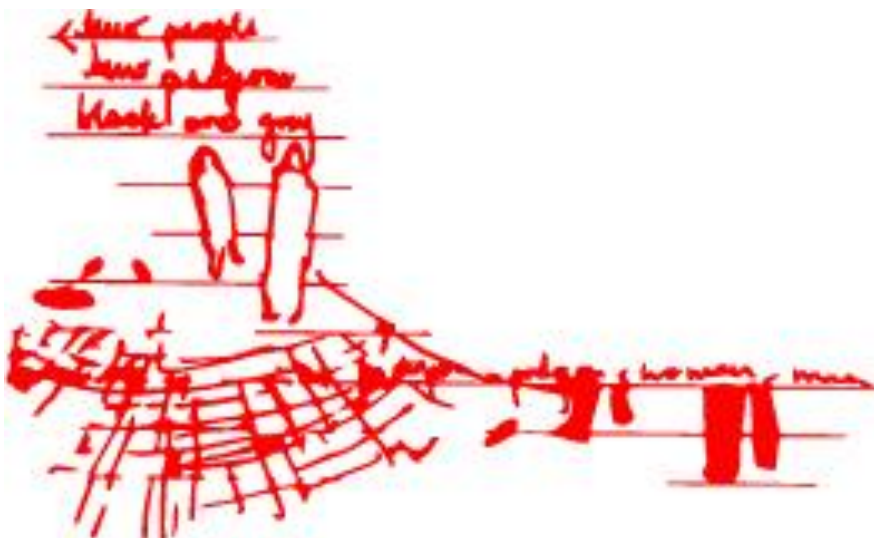


On every street, an orange car in front of an orange house.

The air was washed fresh after the rain.

There is nothing to be done after a night has cried.

The feeling of early morning extended well into the day. Sunday
rising tide, or pearly flood water in the river of time. I was watching
two pigeons drink water from a manhole cover in the purple-grey
cobblestones, when a grey-haired couple, a man and a woman,
walked in wearing black suits.



A-- has always felt like a trap, from the first tragic day I visited it. There is something immense and hidden about that day—and about this feeling—that I am compelled to interpret mystically, but I am not sure I understand fully how to.



I walked around S-- with T. Just being with her on the streets, listening to her stories of when she lived in the old town with her dog, gave me the exact feeling that she went on to describe: “it was like this quarter was our village”. Something transfigured in the dimension of the stately buildings as they revealed the secret of their habitability, a treasure kept for centuries by lives lived unheeded. Yet, at the same time, I felt that I, too, had ownership over those footpaths. That even after two days away in A--, I already saw the cobblestones of S-- as a former dwelling, that more parts of my body than just my head knew where they were and could be trusted.



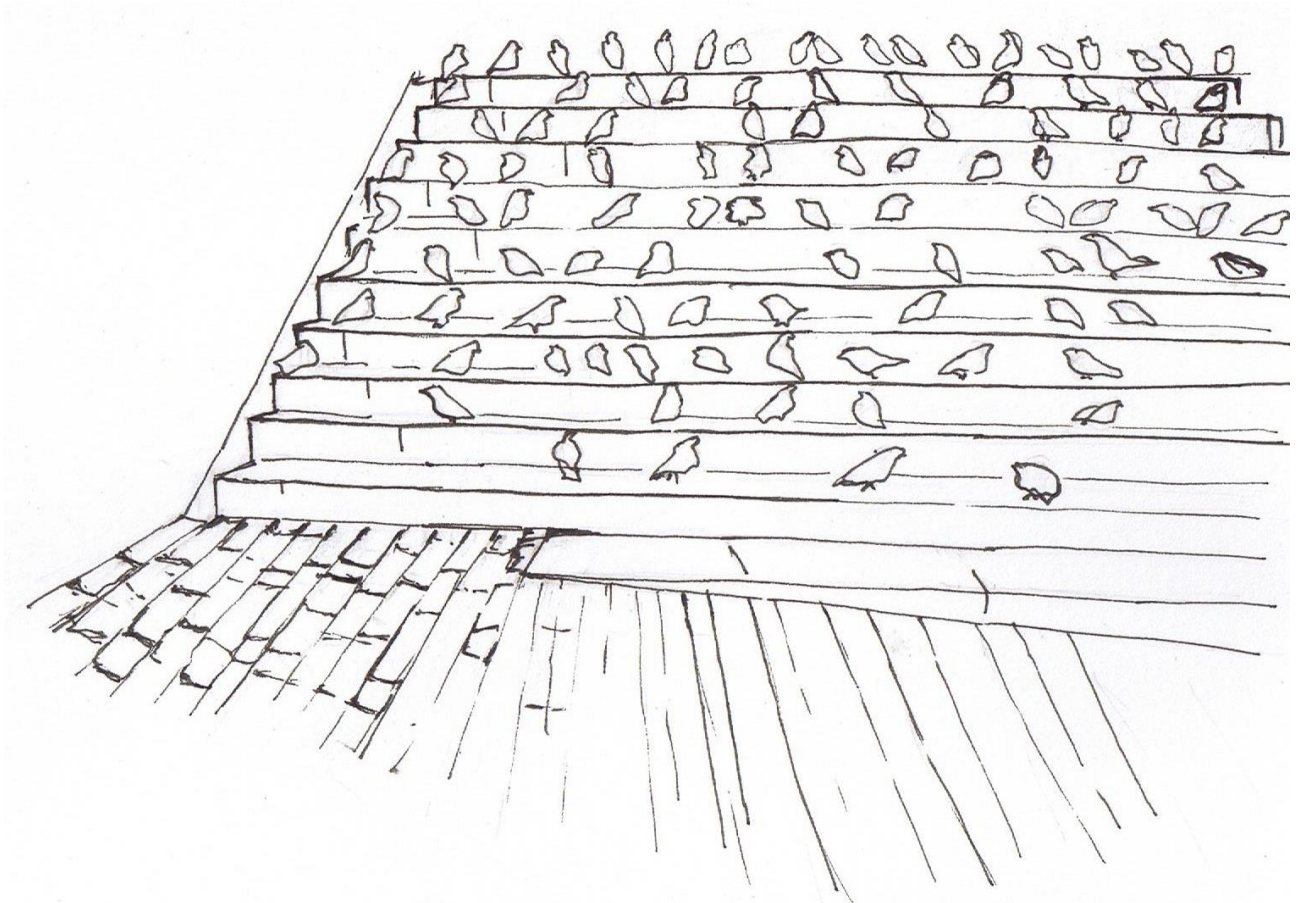
As I realised years ago, the word “rever” (to see again, in Portuguese) is a palindrome. It contains in itself an act of continuous repetition. A cycle that always finds the same word, that always gets to the same alley, even though I went out the other way when I started my drifting walk this morning.



The impending rain grasped the city’s beating heart. A lighter that won’t fire, one two three flicks of the thumb, bikes rushing by, heads looking up, reading a sign, hesitating with blinks of the eyes, the leaves turning on the opposite direction of a passing car, behind which a woman crosses the street to get inside. Every pace a little bit faster. The curtains that I saw hanging outside of a window were drawn back in. Just as the rain has a smell and the light over the entire city dims down, so do fingers fidget and hearts beat faster, even inside the people who sit indoors and watch.

The dozens of pigeons taking up the concrete stairs in an alley between the old town hall of M- and the O—platz are the only reason I remember that place.

A pink boat docked in the canal in Y-, the old man booming electronic noises on an indecisively cold and sunny afternoon in E—garten- could they still be there? But nothing else is as true about knowing a place.



I walked the ways my feet still knew. Strangely, I had no nervous energy. In my mind, I played a game. First, I remembered places. What I felt about them, why and with whom I went there for the first and further times. Then I conjured the surroundings—the shape of the street, the colours, the sense of direction that is attached to every part of a well-known town. Then my challenge was to retrace the way in my mind: to remember the paths I used to take to get there. And thus a road appeared, connecting everything, stitching together ribbons and loops, just like when I first lived here and slowly learned the city.

There was something quiet, even subdued about those walks. Perhaps by virtue of how unprepared I was for a return, having decided to come very spontaneously, and by virtue of my only remote affection for the city itself, I let space be filled in by serene recollection. Memory did not try to give me signs of fate, but lent itself to the feelings of conversations, emotions, lights that were left in the past.

So that everywhere I went, my feet knew just a moment before what to expect.

I took my shoes off when I got to –platz. The grass was not soft but stung sometimes, just like all of my memories from A--.



I was teaching T some Portuguese.
Saudade, she insisted, is the same as *Sehnsucht*.