

# Notes from a Cold Mountain in Austria

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I'm in Arzler Alm. I have hiked up the mountain. I was told not to go up due to avalanches. She said I could get the bus up to the alpine zoo and walk down from there. But walking past the zoo I found a hiking trail. Listening to Mount Eerie's 'Dawn', I walk through the trees and fog. I extend the hike, beyond the trail and to the avalanche zones where you are not permitted to walk. I wanted to get higher. As I get higher my red blood feels warmer. I haven't seen anyone since the beginning of the hike. I am about to turn back when I find a large clearing. The sun is coming through the trees. I walk into the centre of the clearing as my knees sink into the snow and the snow touches my skin. Almost losing my 1461 Doc Martens in the process. The white is bright and I can't see with my eyes open. Only white. After ten minutes of white. I hear the first sound of a Man speaking German. The white clears and I tell him I only speak English. He takes me to his cabin in the woods. He makes me black coffee and a vegetable soup. I looked at my map and I was in the white area. No more blue sky. I ask for directions back to town and he writes on the map. He told me not to go any higher as we are already in the avalanche zone. He told me to look up constantly in case an avalanche is coming. He said be safe as you are solo. I leave

the cabin and get caught in a snow cloud. Seeing only white again. I imagine getting lost. But eventually I force myself to snap out of this death fantasy as I realise that is not how it would go. I find my way through the trees back to the town before the blue night.

*She talks romantically about her own death. Sometimes Jerome tries to cheer her up by turning her despair into a routine... He "interviews" his wife about her suicidal thoughts. <sup>1</sup>*

After leaving the mountain I tried to write down a poem:

I walk up the unmoving cold mountains. Quiet echoes.

As I move I become concealed in snow clouds

Wide eyed, seeing nothing, no shape and then no sound. Buried echoes

Imaging scenes of being covered in the cold snow.

Imaging sinking into the blue lake and have the warm sunlight pierce my skin.

Trying to remove the romance of the isolation. *I even wrote scenes where I re-emerged boldly, bearded, alive with [blue] eskimo eyes. <sup>2</sup>*

I write down Hannah Black's statement '*I cried at the sink like a trademark of a real woman*'<sup>3</sup> was this action just a trademark of a real man? Wanting people to adore a combination of strength and weakness? knowing that soon enough they will realise and see that I'm only a man.

Carlos calls me from London. People talked about my Australian accent as I walked past. He says he has the winter blues. I thought about how fragile people get when they withdraw from anything and this brought me some comfort.

For my Objects:

The body is resistant to the atmosphere. The protective layer develops and regenerates continuously, when subjected to the influence of the weather. Rain removes the rust until the body loses its memory to return to its nude state (gun metal grey with blue heat burns).

Unmoving, the fog sits comfortably.

For my Objects No.2:

After 10 Hours the blue will fade temporarily. After 135 Hours the blue will fade permanently.

In London, a blue city. I fantasise about meeting people. After waking up in a double bed for the first time in eight months I consider past lovers. *How can I distract myself from the luxury of my tears?*<sup>3</sup> I went out for dinner at a Ramen place in East London, people watching, considering whom I could fall in love with.

In Germany I stand in front of Dan Flavin's Blue fluorescents. *Both past and future are placed into one objective present. Time breaks down into many times, a million years is contained in a second.*<sup>4</sup> I think about this blue leaking on to my skin and how the veil of youth is lifting off me. Simone calls me and we discuss Amsterdam, an evil city. We talk about the red lights and what sort of person Amsterdam would be. *Perhaps getting to know a person is like getting to know a city.*<sup>3</sup>

At dinner with Dom a woman from the hostel walks in to ask us out for drinks, we decline. As I look at Dom I am reminded of reading Helena a passage from *Aliens & Anorexia*:

*As I'm wring this, I'm crying – the image of Sylvère, then 56 years old alone in the rented house in Easton, cradling the dying dachshund 'she looked at me', he said 'she understood...' the image catapults me still into a grieve that's bottomless because its absolute, unspoken.*<sup>4</sup>

I think about my writing and note taking as I read and re-read through my journal.

*Writing does do something to ones memory – that at times it can have the effect of an album of childhood photographs, in which each image replaces the memory it aimed to preserve. Perhaps that is why I am avoiding writing about too many specific blue things.*

*In a 1994 interview, about twenty years after he wrote ‘famous blue raincoat,’ Cohen admitted that he could no longer remember the specifics of the love triangle that the song describe. ‘ I’ve always felt there was an invisible male seducing the woman I was with, now whether this one was incarnate or merely imaginary I don’t remember’ I find this forgetting quite heartening and quite tragic, in turns.*

*For to wish to forget how much you loved someone – and then, to actually forget. <sup>5</sup>*

I leave the Tuscan hills with my Italian-speaking driver. The hills fall as the roads cut through them. The blue sky stays still. *Does every departure repeat an original departure?*<sup>3</sup>

I read Joan Didion on the way home:

*Memory fades, memory adjusts, and memory conforms to what we think we remember... Fade as the blue nights fade, go as the brightness goes. Go back into the blue. <sup>6</sup>*

I wonder if this will be my Joseph Beuys plane crash moment?

## References.

<sup>1</sup> Chris Kraus - Torpor

<sup>2</sup> Phil Elverum – Great Ghosts

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Black - Dark Pool Party

<sup>4</sup> Chris Kraus - Aliens & Anorexia

<sup>5</sup> Maggie Nelson - Bluets

<sup>6</sup> Joan Didion – Blue Nights

