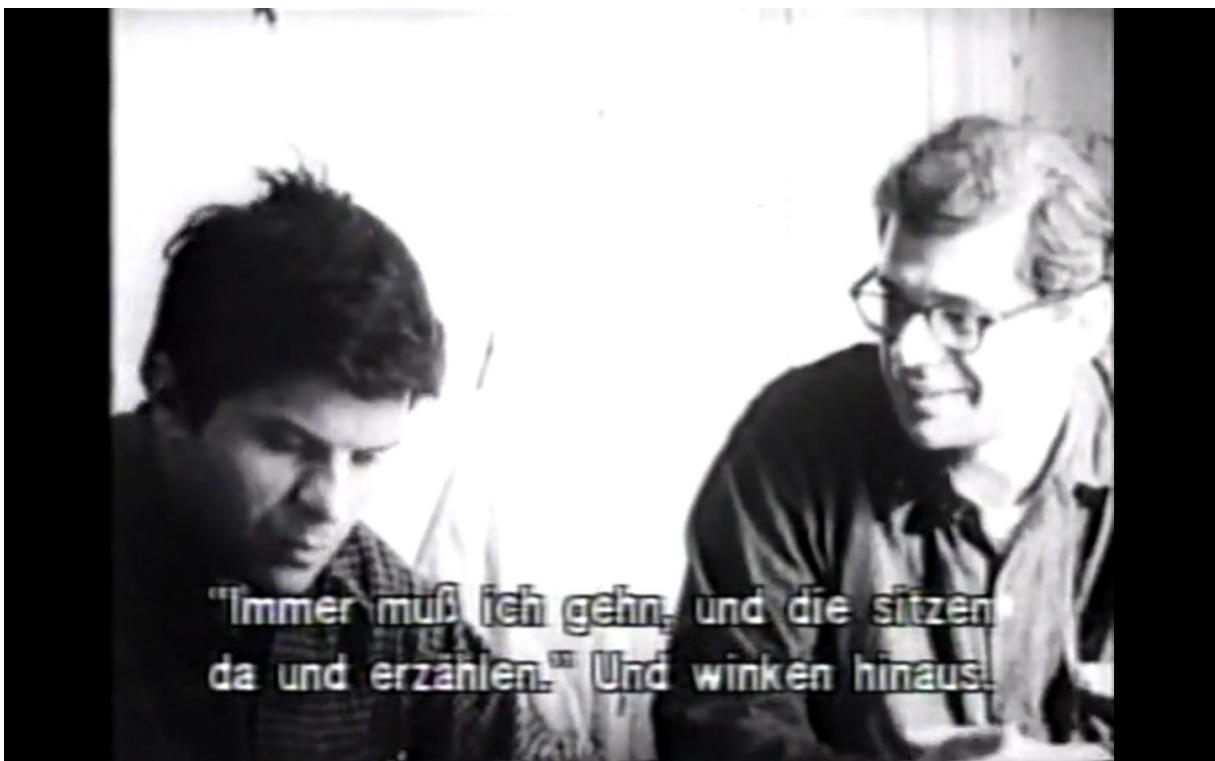


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oH46Cr33-h4&ebc=ANyPxKpLt0a4bsCZkw_8lfqQVpJh_Y48fV-ICnsCYhodL5uN-Vh7SNJ30I2dK8xPTipODcWZqt8-aWFhdr1rFOW0JDtypaisvA

What is said above applies not only to persons, but also to separate parts of a person, and objects. Let us suppose a man is to be taken apparently listening calmly to the conversation of someone else, but actually restraining his ... with difficulty. The man crushes the cigarette he holds in his hand, a gesture unnoticed by the other. This hand will always be shown on the screen separately, in close up, otherwise the spectator will not notice it and a characteristic detail will be missed.



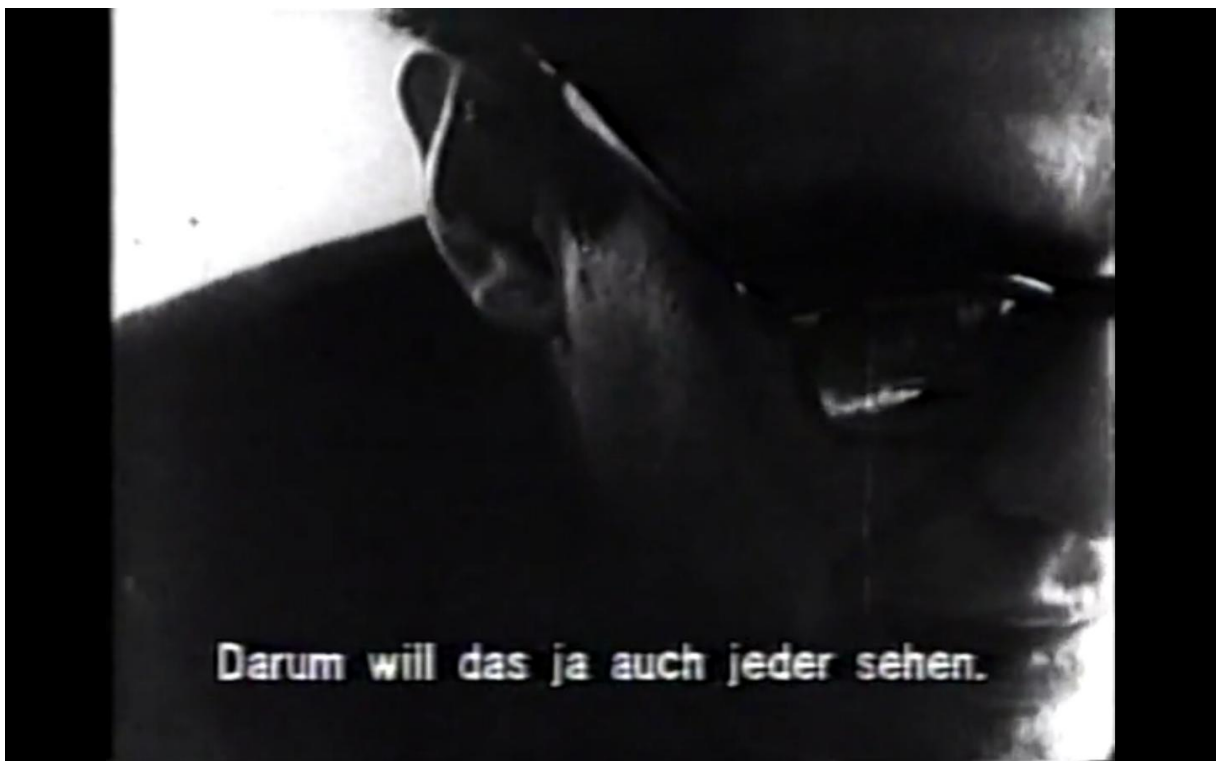
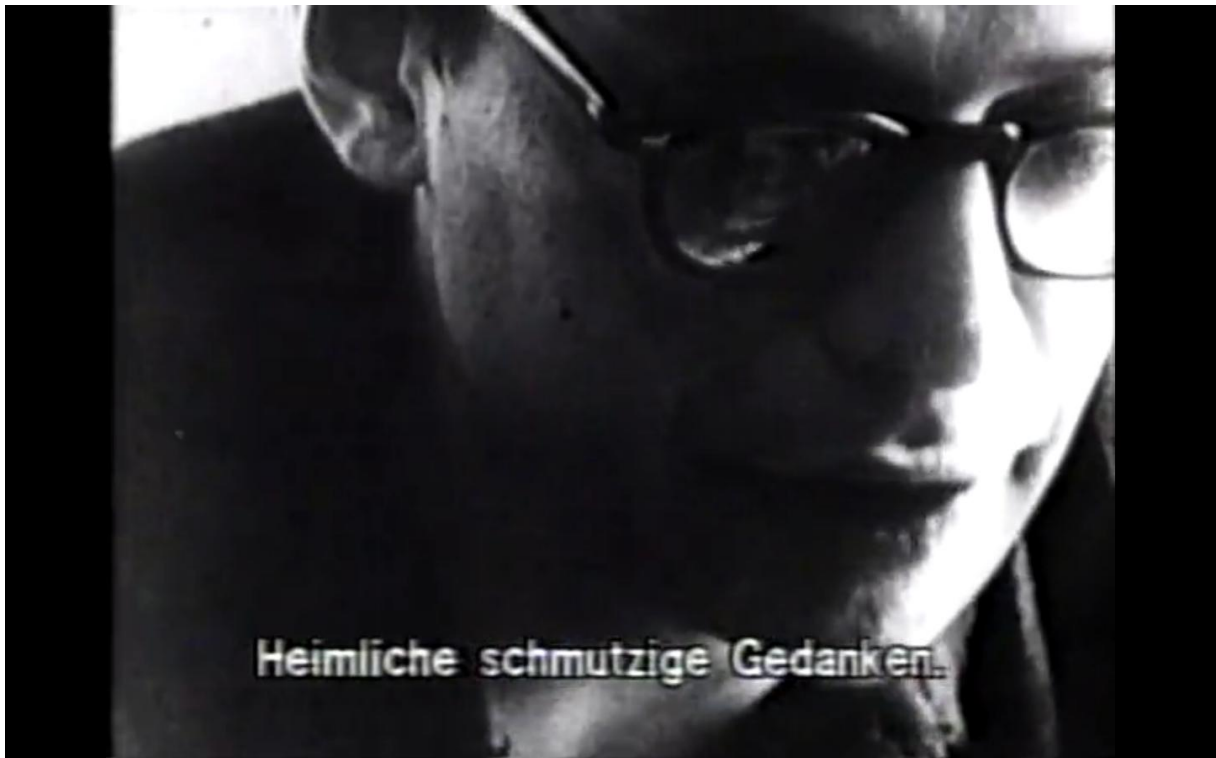
The view formerly obtained (and is still held by some) that the close-up is an “interruption” of the long-shot. This idea is entirely false. It is no sort of interruption. It represents a proper form of construction.



I have since learned not to take the things I am told too seriously. It's not that people make a point of lying to you, it's just that where the past is concerned, the truth tends to get obscured rather quickly.



Legends crop up within a matter of hours, tall tales circulate, and the facts are soon buried under a mountain of outlandish theories. ... the best approach is to believe only what your own eyes tell you. But not even that is infallible. For few things are ever what they seem to be, especially here, with so much to absorb at every step, with so many things that defy understanding. Whatever you see has



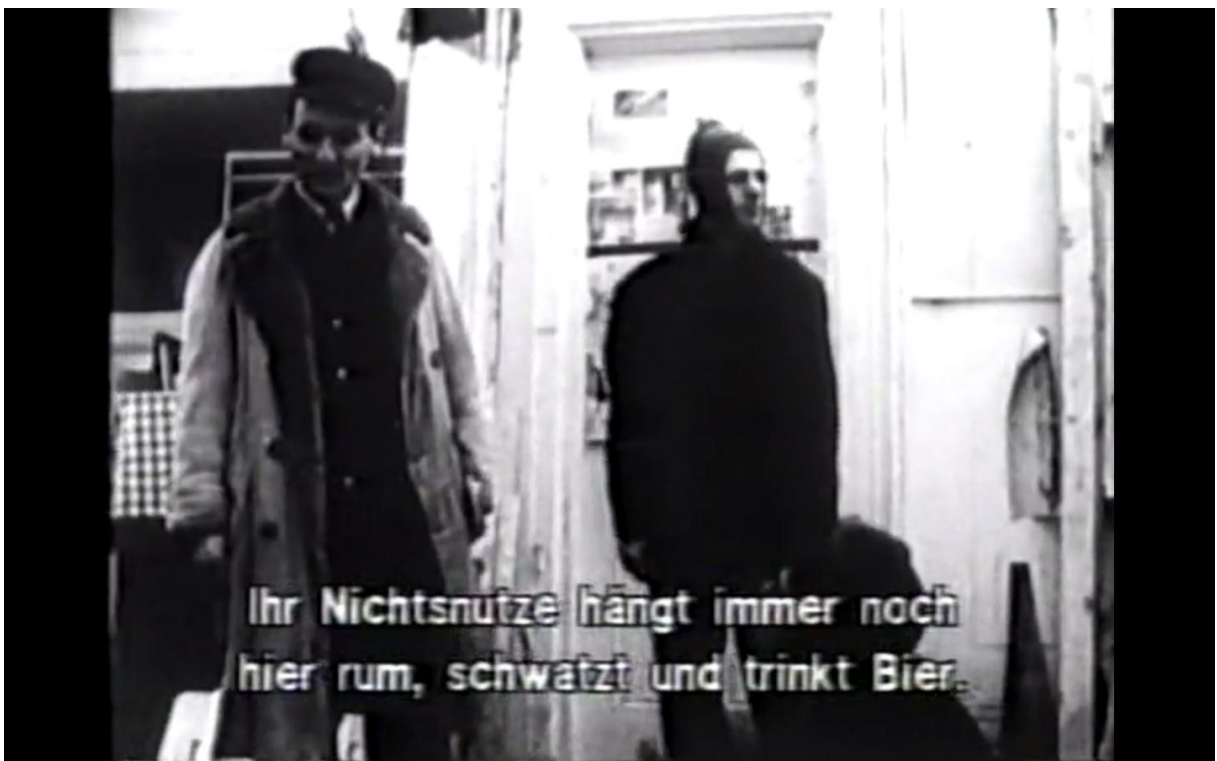
the potential to wound you, to make you less than you are, as if merely by seeing a thing some part of yourself were taken away from you. Often, you feel it will be dangerous to look, and there is a tendency to avert your eyes, or even to shut them. Because of that, it is easy to get confused, to be unsure that you are really seeing the thing you think you are looking at. It could be you are imagining



it, or mixing it up with something else, or remembering something you have seen before - or perhaps even imagined before. You see how complicated it is. It is not enough simply to look and say to yourself, "I'm looking at this thing." For it is one thing to do this when the object before your eyes is a pencil, say, or a crust of bread. But what happens when you find yourself looking at a dead child, at a little girl lying in the street without any clothes on, her head crushed and covered with blood? What do you say to yourself then? It is not a simple matter, you see, to state flatly and without equivocation



"I am looking at a dead child." Your mind seems to balk at forming the words, you somehow cannot bring yourself to do it. For the thing before your eyes is not something you can very easily separate from yourself. That is what I mean by being wounded: you cannot merely see, for each thing somehow belongs to you, is part of the story unfolding inside you. It would be good, I suppose, to make yourself so hard that nothing could affect you anymore. But then you would be alone, so totally cut off from everyone else that life would become impossible. There are those who manage to do



this here, who find the strength to turn themselves into monsters, but you would be surprised to know how few they are. Or, to put it another way: we have all become monsters, but there is almost no one without some remnant inside him of life as it once was. That is perhaps the greatest problem of all. Life as we know it has ended. Those of us who were brought up somewhere else, or who are



Old enough to remember a world different from this one, find it an enormous struggle just to keep up from one day to the next. I am not talking only of hardships. Faced with the most ordinary occurrence no longer know how to act, and because you cannot act, you find yourself unable to think. The brain is in a muddle. All around you one follows the other, each day produces new upheaval, old assumptions



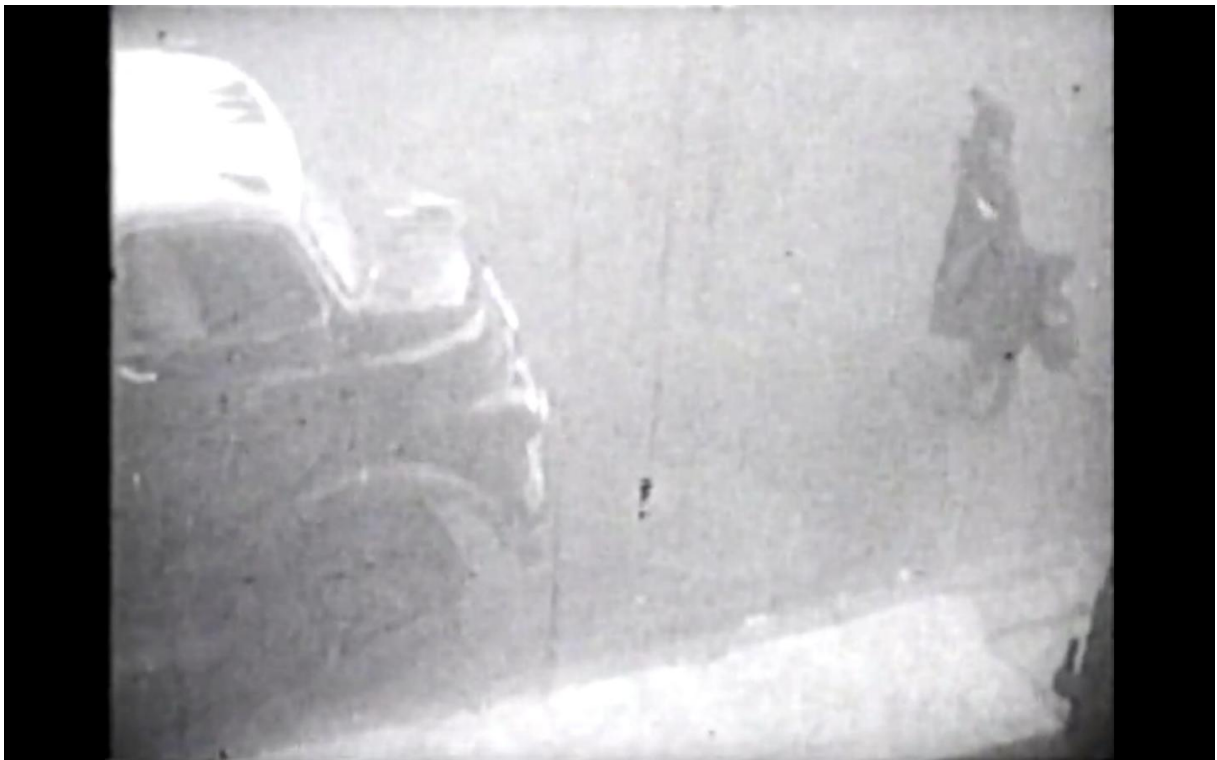
are so much air and emptiness. That is the dilemma. On the one hand, you want to survive, to adapt, to make the best of things as they are. But, on the other hand, to accomplish this seems to entail killing off all those things that once made you think of yourself as a human. Do you see what I am trying to say? In order to live, you must make yourself die. That is why so many people have given up.



It tends to blur in my mind now: what happened and did not, the streets for the first time, the days, the nights, the sky above me, the stones stretching beyond. I seem to remember looking up a lot, as



If the sky could explain the things I saw around me. I could be mistaken, however. Possibly I am transferring the observations of a later period onto those of the first days. But I doubt it matters.



There is so much I want to tell you. Then I begin to say something, and I suddenly realize how little I understand. Facts and figures, I mean, precise information about how we live here in the city. That was going to be William's job. The newspaper sent him here to get the story, and every week there was going to be another report. Historical background, human interest articles, the whole business.



That is perhaps the greatest problem of all. Life as we know it has ended, and yet no one is able to grasp what has taken its place. Those of us who were brought up somewhere else, or who are old enough to remember a world different from this one, find it an enormous struggle just to keep up from one day to the next. I am not talking only of hardships. Faced with the most ordinary occurrence

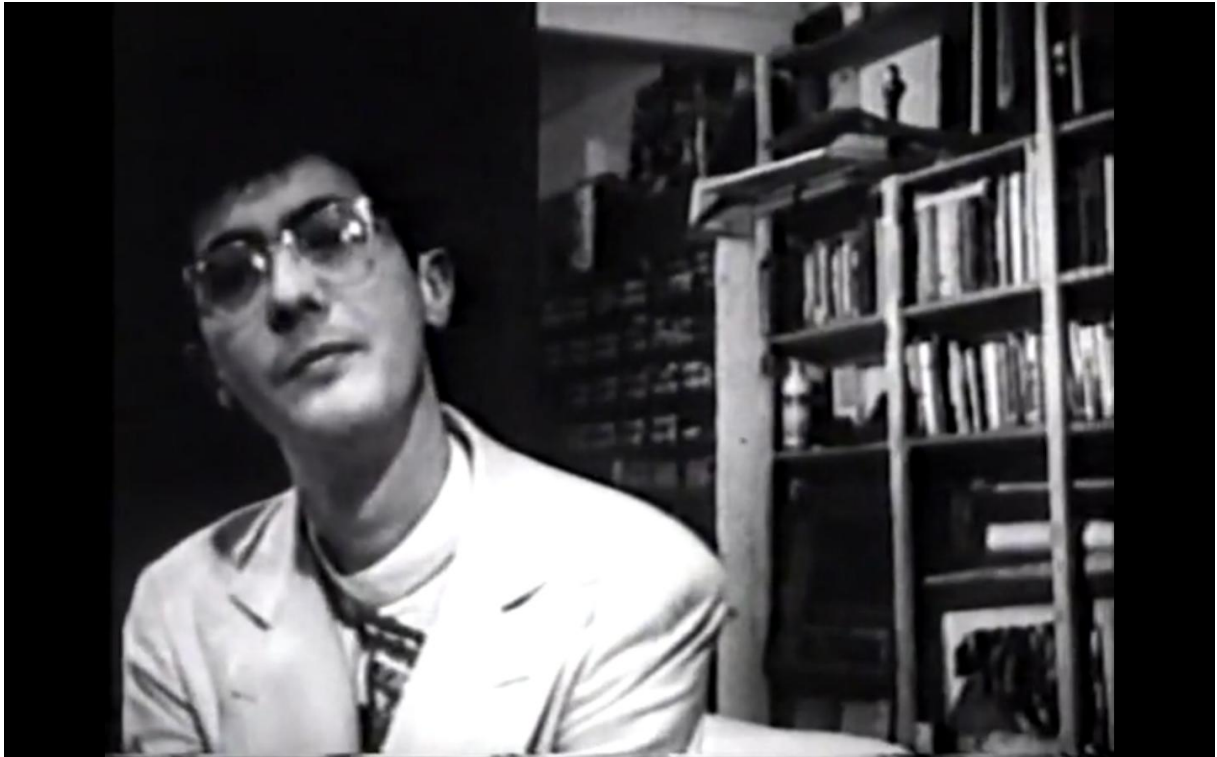


you no longer know how to act, and because you cannot act, you find yourself unable to think. It's not just that things vanish – the memory of them vanishes as well. Memory is not an act of will, after

all.



Everyone is prone to forgetfulness, even under the most favorable conditions, and in a place like this, with so much actually disappearing from the physical world, you can imagine how many things are forgotten all the time. In the end, the problem is not so much that people forget, but that they do not always forget the same thing. What still exists as a memory for one person can irretrievably lost



for another and this creates difficulties insuperable barriers against understanding. Boris Stepanovich was a plump, middle-aged man who seemed almost fat by the standards of the city. He had taste for flamboyant clothes (fur hats, walking sticks, boutonnières), and in his round, leathery face there was something that reminded me of an Indian chief or Oriental potentate. Everything he did had a certain



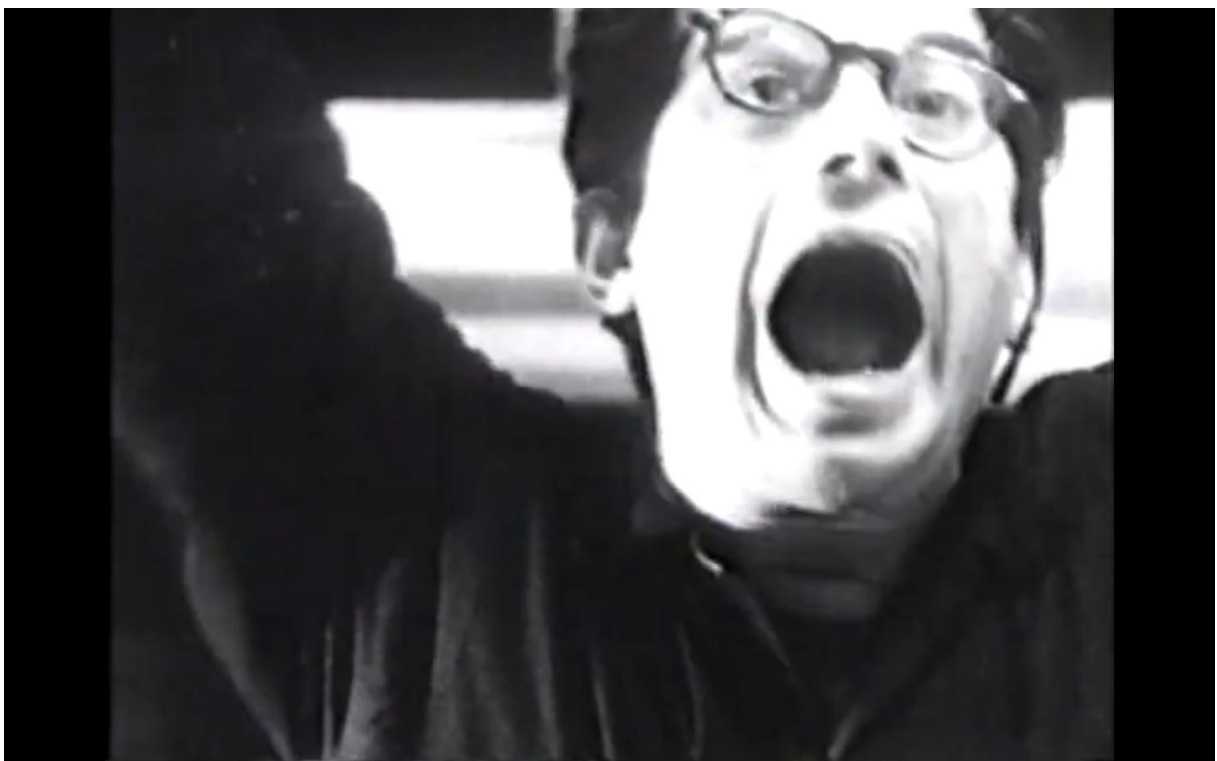
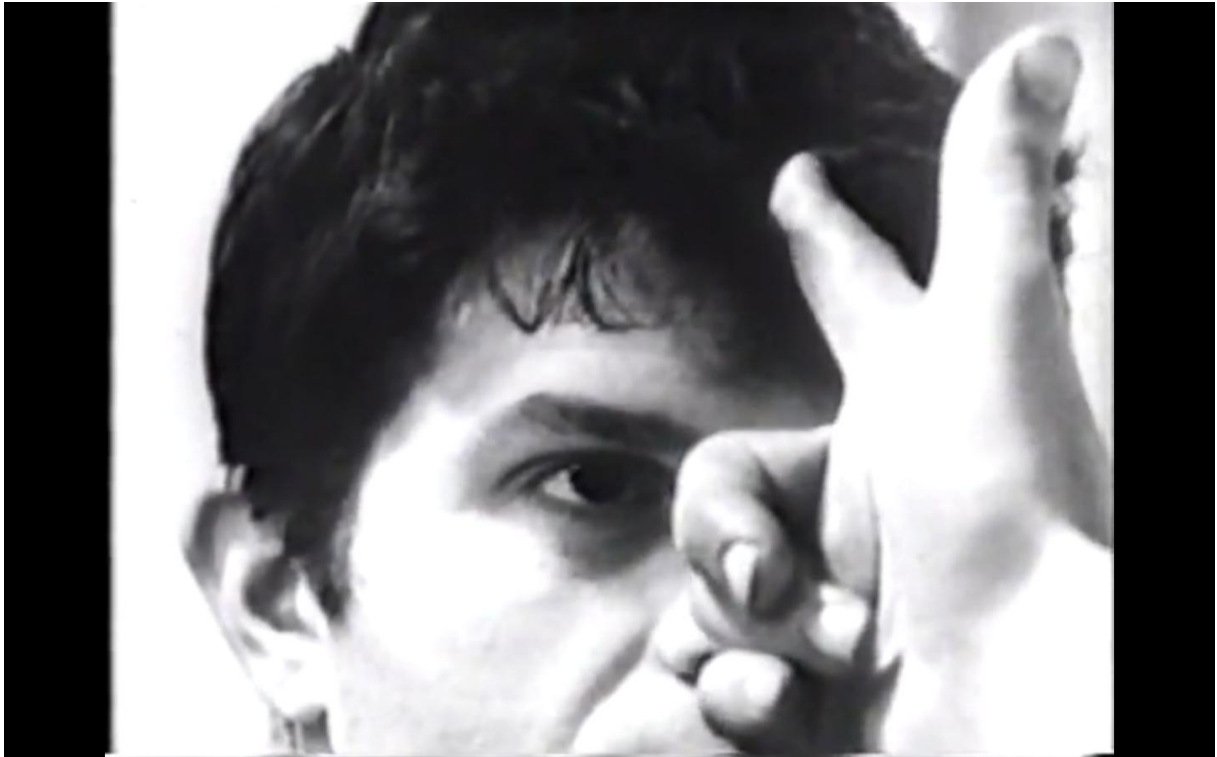
flair to it, even the way he smoked cigarettes – holding them tightly between his thumb and index finger, inhaling the smoke with an elegant, upside-down nonchalance, and then releasing it through his bulky nostrils like steam from a boiling kettle. It was often difficult to follow him in conversation, however, and as I got to know him better, I learned to expect a good deal of confusion whenever Boris Stepanovich opened his mouth. He was fond of obscure pronouncements en elliptical allusions, and he embellished simple remarks with such ornate imagery that you soon got lost trying to under-



stand him. Boris Stepanovich never really expected you to believe what he said, but at the same time he did not treat his inventions as lies. They were part of an almost conscious plan to concoct a more pleasant world for himself – a world that could shift according to his whims, that was no subject to the same laws and bleak necessities that dragged down all the rest of us. It was as though he had imagined every possibility in advance, and therefore he was never surprised by what happened. Each personality had its vulnerable spot, and Boris always worked his pitch to the heart of it. If an agent



had a weakness for flattery, Boris would flatter him; if an agent was fond of the color blue, Boris would give him something blue. Some had a preference for decorous behavior, others liked to play as being chums, still others were all business. Boris indulged them all, lying through his teeth without the slightest twinge of conscience. But that was part of the game, and not for a moment did Boris ever think it was not a game. His stories were preposterous, but he invented them so quickly, came up with such elaborate details, kept talking with an air of such conviction, that it was hard not to find



yourself sucked in. "My dear good man," he would say, for example. "Take a careful look at this teacup. Hold it in your hand, if you wish. Close your eyes, put it to your lips, and imagine yourself drinking tea from it – just as I did thirty-one years ago, in the drawing rooms of Countess Oblomov. I was young back in those days, a student of literature at the university, and thin, if you can believe it, thin and handsome, with a beautiful head of curly hair. The Countess was the most ravishing woman in Minsk, a young widow of supernatural charms. The Count, scion of the great Oblomov fortune, had

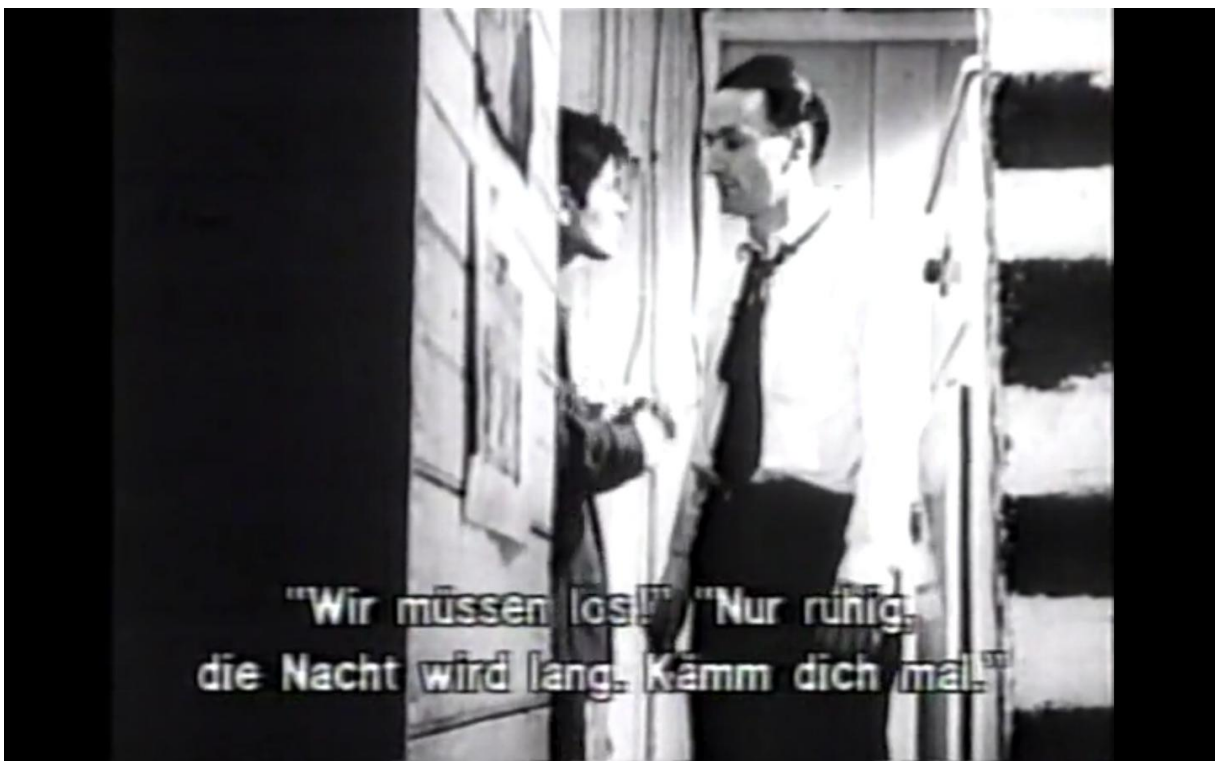


been killed in a duel – an affair of honor, which I need not discuss here – and you can imagine the effect this had on the men of her circle. Her suitors became legion; her salons where the envy of all Minsk. Such a woman, my friend, the image of her beauty has never left me: the brilliant blond hair, the white, heaving bosom; the eyes flashing with wit – and yes an ever-so-elusive hint of wickedness.

It was enough to drive one mad.



Treat it gently, my friend. You are holding my memories in your hand.” The trick, I think, was his ability to make inert things come to life. It didn’t matter whether these stories were true or not. Once Boris’s voice began working, it was enough to muddle the issue entirely. That voice was probably his greatest weapon. He possessed a superb range of modulations and timbres, and in his speeches he was always looping back and forth between hard sounds and soft, allowing the words to rise and fall as they poured out in a dense, intricately fashioned barrage of syllables. Boris had a weak



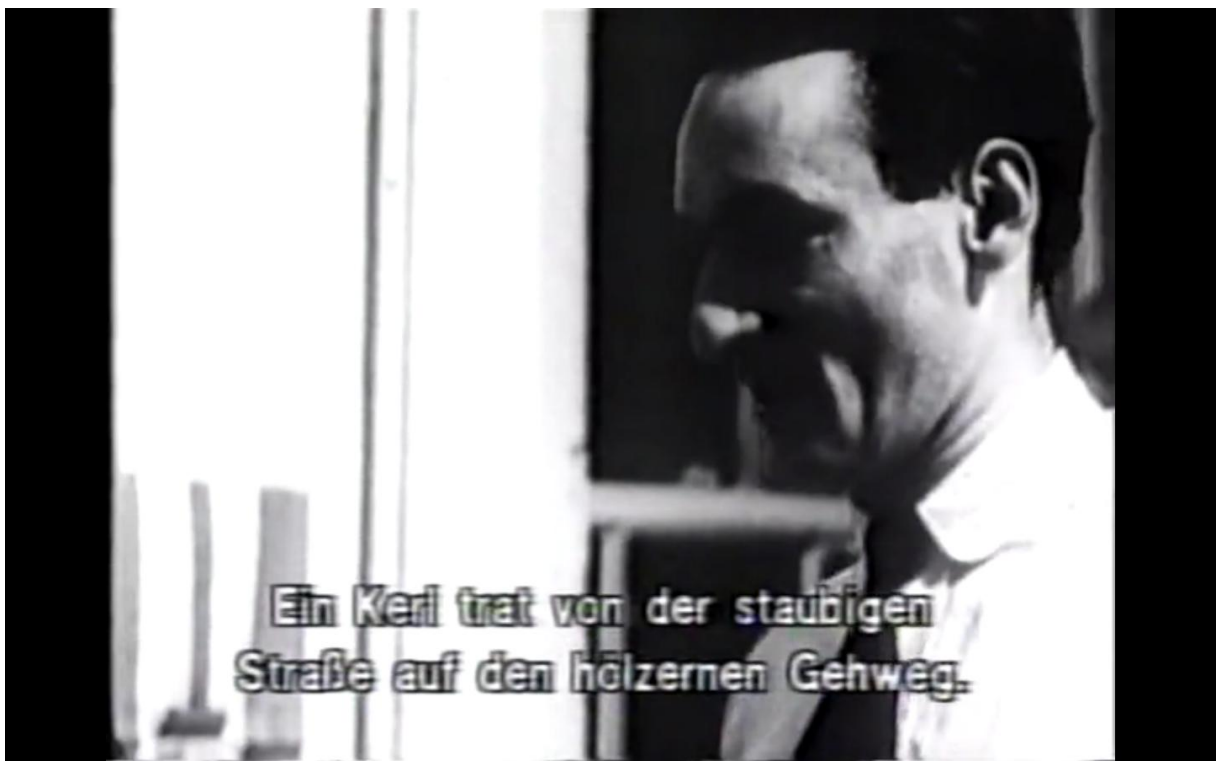
ness for hackneyed phrases and literary sentiments, but for all the deadness of the language, the stories were remarkable vivid. Delivery meant everything, and Boris did not hesitate to use even the lowest tricks. If necessary, he would cry real tears. If the situation called for it, he would smash an object on the floor. Value is determined by supply and demand, after all. The apartment was a shabby, three-room affair, cluttered with years of accommodation throughout – crockery, clothes, suitcases, blankets, rugs, every manner of bric-a-brac. Immediately upon returning home, Boris



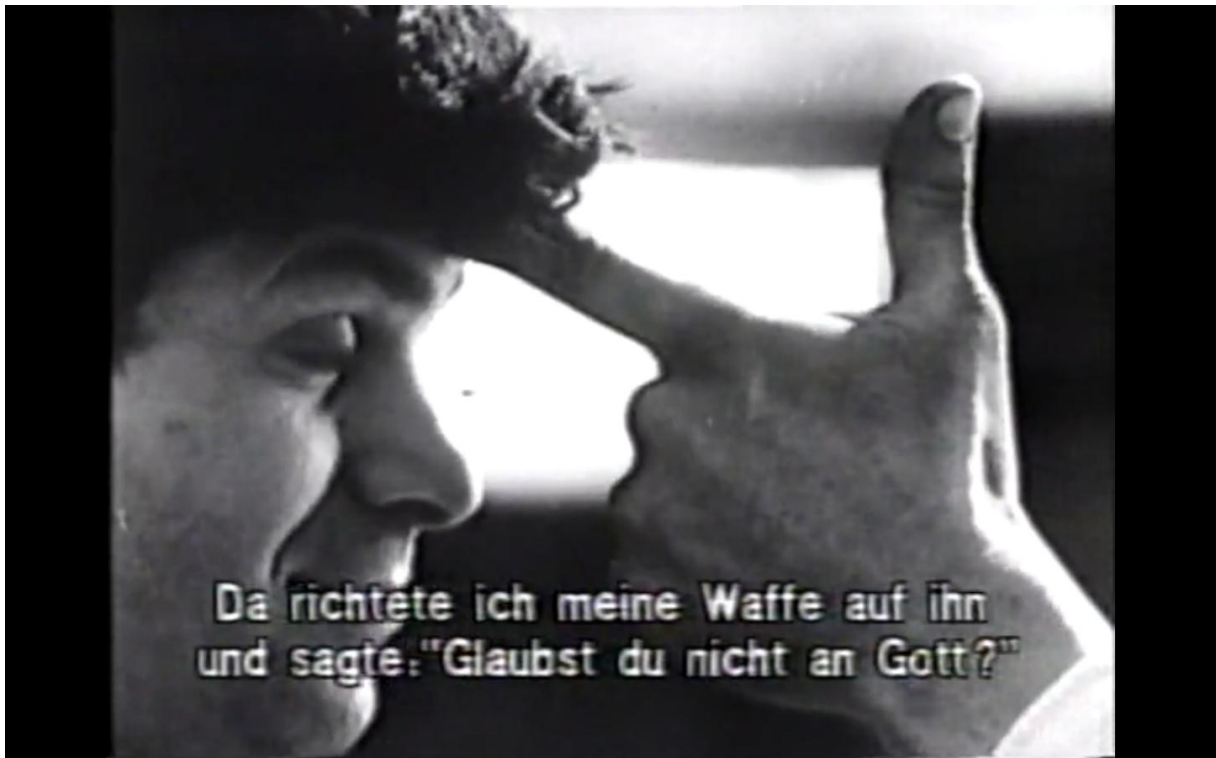
would withdraw to his bedroom and change out of his suit, carefully hanging it in the closet and then putting on a pair of old pants, slippers, and his bathrobe. This last item was a rather fantastical souvenir from the bygone days – a full-length concoction made of red velvet, with an ermine collar and cuffs, completely ragged by now, with mothholes in the sleeves and frayed material all along the back – but Boris wore it with his customary panache. After slicking back the strands of his thinning hair and dousing his neck with cologne, he would come striding out into the living room to prepare t.



Boris was right. Eventually, I did understand. Eventually, all the things that were on the brink of happening did happen. It took me a long time to catch on, however. In fact, I did not really see them until they hit me in the face – but this is perhaps excusable, given that I am the most ignorant person who ever lived. Lesbianism is only a clinical term, and it does not do justice to the facts. Victoria and I did not become a couple in the usual sense of the word. Rather, we became a refuge for the other, the place where each of us could go to find comfort in her solitude. In the long run, the sex was the

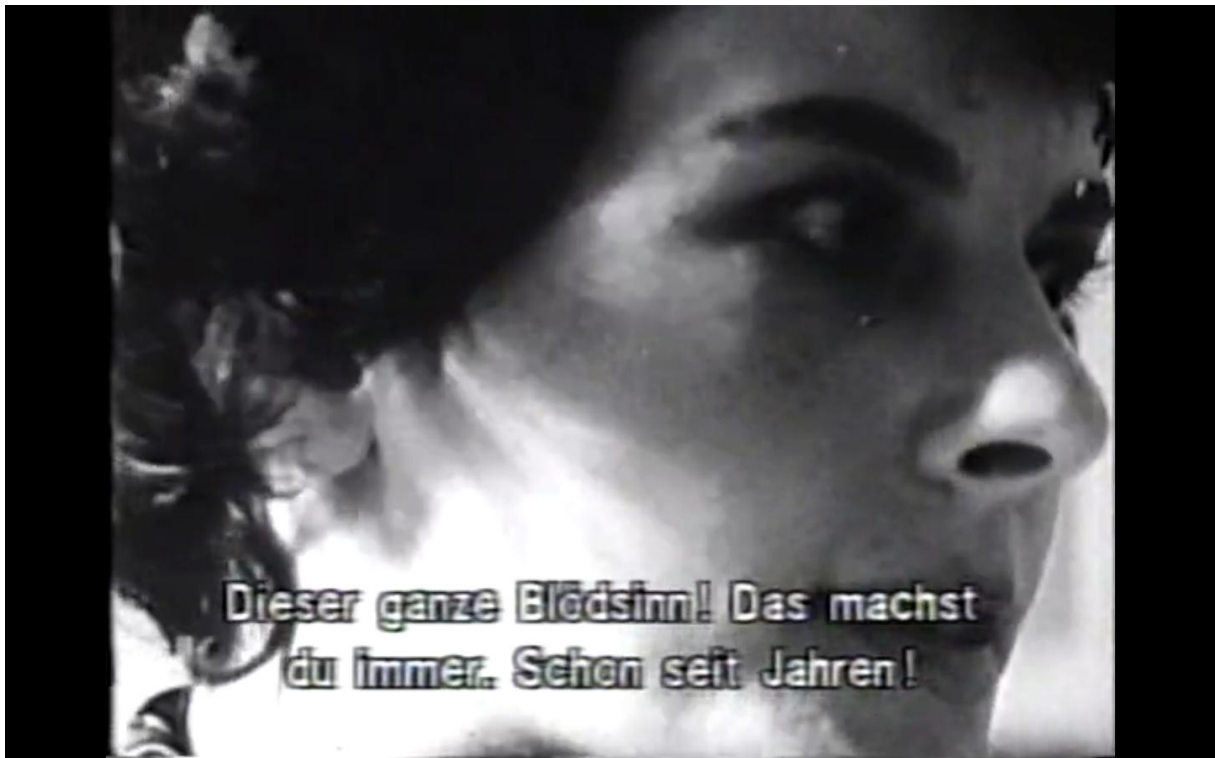


least important part of it. A body is just a body, after all, and it hardly seems to matter whether the hand that is touching you belongs to a man or a woman. Being with Victoria gave me pleasure, but it also gave me the courage to live in the present again. That was the thing that counted most. I no longer looked back all the time, and little by little this seemed to repair some of the innumerable hurts I carried around inside me. I was not made whole again, but at least I did not hate my life any more. A woman had fallen in love with me, and then I discovered that I was able to love her. I am not



Asking to understand this, merely to accept it as a fact. There are many things in my life that I regret.

But this is not one of them.

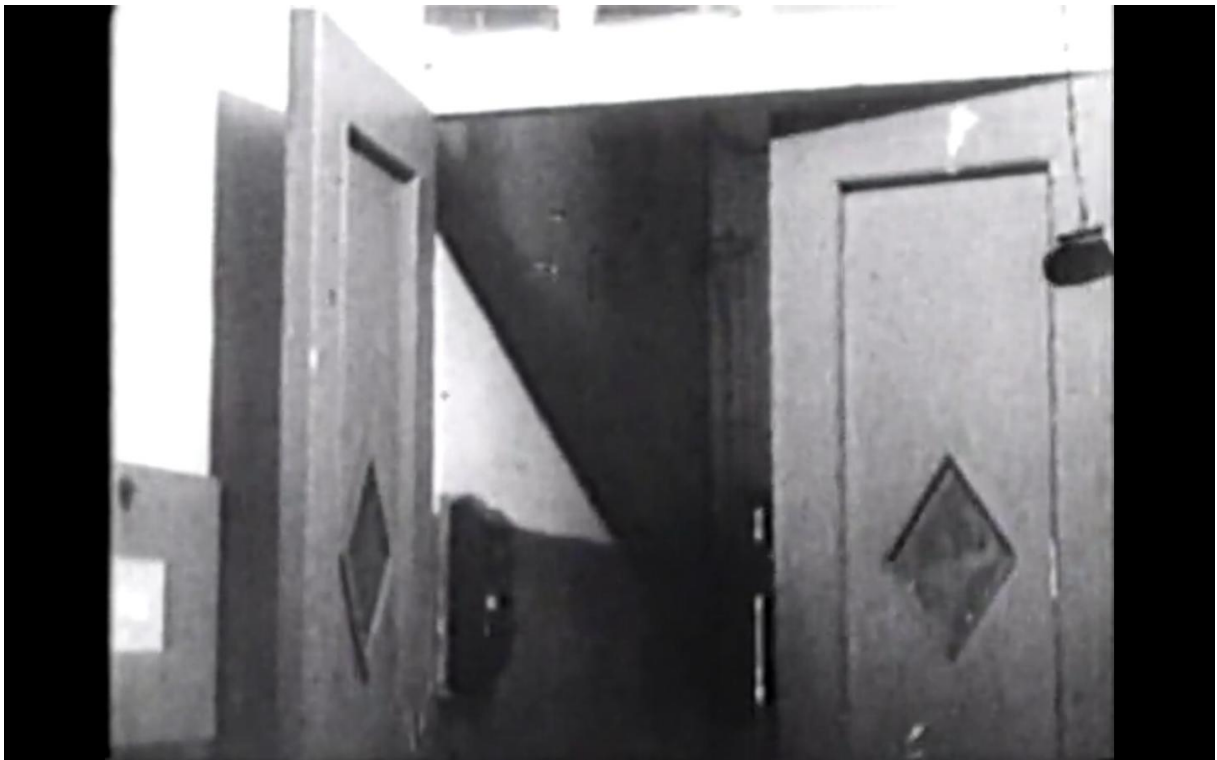


Dieser ganze Blödsinn! Das machst
du immer. Schon seit Jahren!



Kommt, los, wir hauen ab!

Realizing that I already had fallen in love with her while anxiously trying not to notice the sense of it, of and on furious of losing control but unable to resist, I began to feel like a dumbskull in a nuthouse. She wouldn't care of my needs as my needs cared of her almost getting scared to dare to let it to her. Insanity would be my part like in that role of the desperate doter performing Lear with the milkmaid?



I had no clear idea what I was going to do. When I left my apartment on the first morning, I simply started walking, going wherever my steps decided to take me. If I had any thought at all, it was to let chance determine what happened, to follow the path of impulse and arbitrary events. My first steps went south and so I continued to go south, realizing after one or two blocks that it would probably be

best to leave my neighborhood anyway.