

TREBLINKA CAFÉ

by WERNER KOFLER
translated from the German by LAUREN K. WOLFE

WERNER KOFLER
(1947–2011) was an Austrian
novelist and playwright.
His other works include the
trilogy *Triptychon: Am
Schreibtisch, Hotel Mord-
schein, Der Hirt auf dem
Felsen*, the first volume of
which, *At the Writing Desk*,
is available in English from
Dalkey Archive Press.

Closed performance. Spoken word, with music.

A—an older, B—a younger actor

These are not psychological portraits (this is no “old Nazi”—though it sometimes seems, cannot but seem so) but fictional characters, holding forth on memory and history, repudiating it too, in a deliberate and absurd reversal of the exhibition of evidence, the burden of proof.

They are not in dialogic (communicative, dramaturgical) relation with one another but deferred, “time-lagged”; there are two theatrical worlds—in terms of melodics, cadence, pitch—that do not so much collide as follow one after another, each performance passing the other by.

A—Leave unresolved for as long as possible whether this is a monodrama, internal monologue (imagined dialogue), delirium, etc.—Some words to be spoken with relish, as if “rolling off the tongue,” as if listening in on himself.—Must be able to hit MY notes, somewhere between Bernhard (coarse) and Beckett (subtle).

B—Faster tempo, destruction, tighter choreography, somewhere between Handke (earlier works for the stage) and—no idea, really—Sarah Kane.

(Stage directions for B even before the start of the second part.)

Stage: An assortment of (writing) desks cluttered with papers and written documents, books, and so forth; a variety of places to sit; a free-standing table around which one must be able to walk, with a slide projector on top of it, and behind that, in the background, a projection screen

On the right, an open window, but only slightly open.

*Near the window, half in darkness—the darker the better—a stereo system (a “tower”—radio, turntable, CD player) from which can be heard excerpts of *The Magic Flute* (from Act II onward)—louder at times, then softer, at times as if wafting in through the window.*

Shadow, half-light, indirect lighting—desk lamps, spotlights; the light should basically be such that there is doubt as to whether B, who is being addressed—“B”—is actually on stage or not. (In the second part, when B speaks, vice versa for A—“A.”)

A: *(On the projection screen, black and white photographs of the Municipal Theater [Borderland Theater])*¹

(Reads from a sheet of paper, like a prologue)

1. During the Third Reich, after the annexation of Austria to Germany, the Austrian municipal theaters came to be known as Borderland theaters, to reflect their status in relation to the Fatherland; in this case, the so-called Borderland Theater is the Municipal Theater of Klagenfurt, Carinthia, then under the direction of Gustav Bartelmus.

The gates to our home have given way
 To hard times forced by solemn hand.
 When the Führer speaks, we obey
 And stand in wait for his command.

As the soldier, with German arms,
 Brings brash defiance to kneel,
 So shall we, with German arts,
 Thus discharge our duty with zeal.

Enter, then, the stage is set,
 Today it mirrors a difficult moment.
 We hope our play shall beget
 Sober grandeur, joyful foment.

So the stage proves in essence alike
 With the drama of these times,
 So shall you to our work consign
 Yourselves in this our unified Reich!

—*Gustav Bartelmus*

A: (*cont'd*) —Gustav Bartelmus, Artistic Director . . .

(*Slide change: photo of Bartelmus, then the Municipal Theater again*)

(to “B”)—Astonishing, isn’t it . . . that must have been at least sixty years ago—wait (*recalculates, counts*)—nineteen eighty nine, nineteen ninety nine, nineteen—nineteen (*falters*)—Sixty years, give or take, anyway . . . Back then, by the way, it wasn’t the Municipal Theater, back then it was the Borderland Theater, the *Borderland Theater’s Magic Flute* . . . Back then there were no stage managers either, back then they were *wardens* of the play. Wardens and prompters, not *souffleur* back then, but prompters . . . *Prompters, Wardens* . . . Astonishing indeed; the theater *must* astonish . . .

(*Slide change: SA/SS march: A goes to the window, listens. The Magic Flute gets louder. Half to himself*)

—Must have been marvelous evenings back then . . . —Unfortunately, back then I wasn’t there, I was somewhere else, back then I was *always* somewhere else, only *where* exactly escapes me . . . Brilliant premiers in early December, joyful evenings of reprieve in the midst of

A: (*cont'd*) needful times . . . —or needful evenings of re-
prieve in want of joyful times? Evenings in Ad-
vent . . . the Klagenfurters' longing for a leader
sated, wartime winter settled over the land . . .
After the performance, they'd likely gather at
Café Lerch . . . —Pardon? That's right, *Café Le-
rch*, a highly respectable and prosperous estab-
lishment, in good times and bad . . .

2. Nazis referred to the era known as the Weimar Republic as the *Systemzeit*, or the time of the System. In Germany, this time spanned from 1918 to 1933; in Austria, though, *Systemzeit* also included the years after the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, during which the NSDAP was still banned in Austria, and ended only after Austria's annexation by Germany in 1938.

3. *Heimkehr*, or *Homecoming*, is the title of a 1941 Nazi anti-Polish propaganda film, directed by the Austrian Gustav Ucicky, who is rumored to have been the illegitimate son of painter Gustav Klimt. The film tells the story of an ethnic German minority population living in Poland, where they are disenfranchised by the Polish authorities and abused by the citizenry.

(*Standing again before the slide projector, pointing suddenly to an SA-man on the screen*)

—That's me, by the way; or rather, *not me*, but could have been me, back then . . . The Gau Party Congress, a demonstration . . . Me, as an SA-man . . . Just look at my cadet's cap, see? I'm sure you'd have liked to have had a cap like that . . . And the cobblestones, look how they sparkle under those boots . . . Do you see?—Yes, those bitter years spent suffering under the System² over at last . . . Our longing for a leader sated . . . *Homecoming*³ . . . (*goes to the window*) War-time winter settled over the land, to the café following the performance, to commune at Café Lerch . . .

(*Listens out the window, as if *The Magic Flute* were wafting in from outside.*)

A: (*cont'd*) (to "B")—Do you hear that? No? You don't hear anything?—What about now? Still nothing? Now? Nothing at all?—That's unheard of, that you don't hear anything—as though you weren't there . . . as though—something weren't right . . . !

(*Back to the projector*)

—Where were we? Oh yes, the SA march; me, an SA-man . . . So, *what do you say*, what's the abbreviation mean? (*Aghast*) SA, Sturmabteilung, Storm Battalion, this means nothing to you? That I can hardly believe . . .

(*As if trying to "jog his memory"*)

—SA. The Field Marshals' Hall. Munich. The Beer Hall Putsch. March on the Field Marshals' Hall, a skirmish, bang bang . . . never heard of it? Unbelievable . . . ! What about the name *Franz Pfeffer von Salomon*, top SA commander, no idea?—A fine name, by the way, Pfeffer von Salomon . . . But you will have seen the film *SA-Man Brand*, or at least heard of it . . . —No? Not that either? Astounding!—Ah, you're just messing with me . . . —We'll try something else . . . What about Maier-Kaibitsch, a man, a *local*, even, Arthur Maier-Kaibitsch, SA Standartenführer, a full colonel, still no idea? No?

A: (*cont'd*) But everyone around here knows who Mair-Kaibitsch is! You've never heard of Mair-Kaibitsch? Really?—But you wouldn't dare go so far as to say the name RÖHM means nothing to you, ERNST RÖHM, the fat-ass, yes, you know—you wouldn't go that far . . . Röhm, SA Chief of Staff, one of the Führer's closest comrades and confidantes . . .

(*Half to himself*)

Also a homosexual, by the way . . . but back then, who wasn't . . . ?—Pardon? No, not . . . (*in a low voice*) The Night of the Long Knives . . . You'll have seen the Visconti film—only, what was it called?—I can't remember . . . starring Helmut Berger . . . Helmut Berger, right, exactly, look, now you remember, now—

No? It doesn't seem to be sinking in . . . It's really not sinking in. You've never seen or heard of it?—But listen up (*forcefully*)—Röhm, Ernst—SA, *Sturmabteilung*, *Chief of Staff*, *Comrade Sepp*, *what are you doing?!—*This man Röhm, whose last words, cried out at Stadelheim Prison in Munich to SS General Dietrich, SEPP DIETRICH, upon seeing the pistol that Dietrich had brought to Röhm in his cell, with which he, Röhm, was meant to shoot himself . . .

A: (*cont'd*) Comrade Sepp, what are you doing?! Fine last words, huh—No, still nothing? You don't *want* to know, do you? Stubborn, aren't you? Stubborn indeed . . . And here in Carinthia, no less . . .!

(*Goes to the window as if to get some air, listens—
Magic Flute*)

(*Murmurs*) Wartime winter . . . Winter Relief of the German People . . . Wartime winter's Magic Flute . . .

(*Goes back, again to "B"*)—But we'll get you back onto history's track . . . just have to bring you around by other means: The Horst Wessel Song, do you know it? No, of course you don't, and this circumstance puts me in the awkward position of having to sing it for you, the beginning at least, pay attention:

(*Sings*) Raise high the work, stand rank on rank,
Storm troopers march—(*breaks off*)

—I always make the same mistake: *not* raise high the work, raise high the *flag*, stand rank on rank . . . (*sings*) Storm troopers march / with steady quiet tread . . .

A: (*cont'd*) (*continues singing, fumbling a bit, hesitant; an incidental, unobtrusive sound of shattering glass from somewhere – a water glass perhaps, breaking indoors; breaks off singing, as if struck suddenly by an idea*)

—Wait— . . . That's it—that's the cue, the *magic word*, now you can't but get with the program: KRISTALLNACHT . . . THE SA REICHSKRISTALLNACHT, THE NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS . . . Kristallnacht—but hear how it clinks and tinkles now!—The Night of Broken Glass, it happened here too, not far from here, at the Friedländer Department Store, for example, on Neuer Platz . . . A year or so before the Wartime Winter Magic Flute was *Kristallnacht* . . . Or, a year or so after *Kristallnacht* was the Wartime Winter Magic Flute . . .

4. Fritz Fischer was artistic director of the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, from 1937 to 1938 and again from 1941 to 1944. Hitler was an admirer of Fischer's productions, particularly his staging of Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe*. In 1941, the theater's ensemble visited the Dachau concentration camp, where they are rumored to have performed for SS troops.

(*At the window*)—The many galas . . . Cock-sure Fritz Fischer⁴ in the role of Monostatos, are you listening? And Papageno, he was a bit husky for the part, did you know that? Still—I imagine—joyful evenings of reprieve in the midst of needful times; afterward—I imagine—afterward perhaps—in any event: *Kristallnacht*, SA, Reichskristallnacht, clink, clink, Friedländer, Neuer Platz, now you can't just keep on . . .

A: (*cont'd*) Well?—What do you say?—Wrong? But why wrong? *How* wrong? Friedländer not a Jew? Or was it not Neuer, but Alter Platz?—*Kristallnacht wrong, SA wrong* how? *Kristallnacht*: never heard of it, the SA, never heard of it—is that what you mean by *wrong*? But tell me—(*pauses, considers*)—no, don't—

5. Harry Piel was a prolific film director, actor and screenwriter. The preponderance of his work prior to and during WWII consisted of action/adventure and comedy films. He was among the first directors to film live explosions. Piel was a member of the NSDAP and of the SS. Though he attempted to continue his filmmaking career after his "denazification," he did not have much success.

(*Clicking through some images in the slide projector—marches, cordons, SA, SS, among them a photo of Harry Piel.*⁵)

—Tell me, how did I even get started on the SA? Me, an SA-man? That's got to be a mistake, I must have mistaken myself among the men in uniform . . . Me, in the SA? No, never, I certainly will not have been in the SA, nor in the SA Cavalry, and not in the NSKK, the Nazi Motor Corps either, or—the Motorcycle Corps, I have not, I have never been, as at ease as that . . . These gaps, these gaps . . . But never in my life would I have been in the SA; German Stewpot Sundays, collecting donations for Stewpot Sunday—that I would not have been able to stomach . . . All that aside, even, the SA!

A: (*cont'd*) (*Scornfully pointing to a few details in one image*)
 Here—impossible, they look like they've got nothing but beer and bratwurst between their ears! As if they were waiting for a field mess suddenly to appear! Or here, this guy, tugging at his belt, as if making room . . . ! That anyone could mistake *me* . . .

(*Goes to the window, comes back; in a low voice*)
 But who, then, *as who*, then, back then? . . . —No, I will have been destined for other, for higher duties; I will have been—must have been—in *the SS* . . . Yes, why not, the SS, of course—here, *that's* who I will have been, *me* as . . . —The sober solemnity, do you see that? And the flag there, too, no doubt about it, the *Blood Flag*, waving from police headquarters as it must have waved above me, standing at attention, the fine black, the white runes . . . the ORDER OF THE BLOOD . . . (*ruminating*) . . . Our honor is fidelity . . . fidelity . . . unto death . . .

(*Pauses; goes to the window—The Magic Flute gets louder; then all of a sudden*)

—You don't know the Order, do you? Or what the abbreviation stands for, skeet shooting or— . . . Skeet shooting? You're making fun of me. While there was an element of sport to it,

A: (*cont'd*) SS stands for *Shutzstaffel*, Security Squadron, a little misleading, I know . . . But you will have heard of the *Ordensburgen*, the officer training strongholds, the SS Ordensburg at Sonthofen in Bavaria, the term LEBENSBORN will mean something to you —Font of Life, no?—The SS division DAS REICH, or the DEATH'S HEAD SQUADRONS—not that either? Not even the Death's Head Squadrans . . .

(*His tone changes—faster, somewhat gruffly*)

We cannot go on like this. How am I supposed to help you wrap your head around history while you persist in your ignorance?! You're going to have to make a decision: if not the DEATH'S HEAD SQUADRONS, then at least the FONT OF LIFE, and if not the FONT OF LIFE, then the DEATH'S HEAD SQUADRONS—You absolutely cannot have *heard nothing about anything!* *Heard nothing, knew nothing*, as if none of it were familiar! Then what about the REICH MAIN SECURITY OFFICE SD—

(*Pauses, his hand to his ear, then a detonation, loses his temper*)

—Excuse me? No, it does not mean *self-dramatization!* SICHERHEITSDIENST, SD, the SS security service . . . ! Doctor Kaltenbrunner, if

A: (*cont'd*) that's correct, ERNST KALTENBRUNNER, a lawyer from Ried im Innkreis, high-ranking SS and police commander and chief of the Reich Main Security Office . . . (*in a low voice*) Didn't live to a ripe old age, by the way . . . (*venomously*) DEPORTATIONS, of course you never heard of those either, deportations . . . In the Netherlands, for example, HANNS ALBIN RAUTER: he too a high-ranking SS and police commander; he, *Hanns Albin Rauter*, (*calmer now*) that name *must* mean something to you, a native son of *this very town*, by the way . . . —No, not him either? Wait— (*Clicks through the slides until an image of a "barracks cover" appears*)

—Here, a *Hanns Albin Rauter-style barracks cover*, nice, don't you think?—Yes, Hanns Albin Rauter, a commendable man, a lovely name . . . Surely by now the city must have dedicated a Hanns Albin Rauter Park, maybe even Hanns Albin Rauter Homes—No?—Why not?!—If there are Per Albin Hansson Homes in Vienna, why shouldn't there be Hanns Albin Rauter Homes here in Klagenfurt? Have the visiting Dutch not been urging the Ministry of Tourism to build one? No?—No, of course it needn't be an entire housing complex, but a park at least, or a mall, a *Hanns Albin Rauter Promenade*

A: (*cont'd*) running along the seaside, beside an open air theater—no? Not yet?—It'll happen, just wait, you'll see. (*Pause*)—It ought to happen, at some point.—*Clear summer nights*, I imagine, clear summer nights, sauntering along the Hanns Albin Rauter Promenade, a melody wafting on the air, a song from Lehár's *Land of Smiles* or an aria from *The Magic Flute*—or, no, not from *The Magic Flute*, but something perhaps from *The Magic Violin*, by Werner Egk, the scene with Guldensack, the Jew, that's more appropriate . . . *Magic Violin, Land of Smiles . . . And strolling*—I imagine—strolling with incredible lightness, as if barely aware one was moving at all, with an incredible lightness of being, along the Hanns Albin Rauter Promenade . . .

6. *Nothung* is the name that Wagner, in his *Ring Cycle*, gives to the sword with which Siegfried is destined to slay the dragon. Some English translations of the Niebelung myth render this as *Balmung*, approximating both the need and the salve that resonate in the old German word.

(*At the window: Priests' Chorus or No. 19, trio—absently, more to himself than to "B"*)

Sarastro . . . SA—SS—Sarrastro . . . It's the *unveiling*, the unveiling . . . the unveiling of history . . . Nothung, Nothung⁶ . . . input output . . . bone mill powder mill . . . chimney, industry . . . the German Industry Standard . . . industry, final solution . . .

A: (*cont'd*) (directly to "B")—FINAL SOLUTION—never heard of that, have you? WANNSEE CONFERENCE, not that either?—*Universal history*, nothing?—HEYDRICH, Reinhard Heydrich, the predecessor of our Dr. Kaltenbrunner at the Reich Main Security Office—No?—Pardon? Why predecessor? Well, Heydrich suffered a little mishap in Prague, from which certain repercussions . . .

7. Each of these towns were razed to the ground and their inhabitants murdered en masse—in Czechoslovakia, France and Italy. Of these three examples, only the razing of Lidice was done in revenge for the plot to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, which the Nazis linked to the Czech government in exile.

(*Hollers*) LIDICE, perhaps you've heard of it—?!—Lidice, Oradour-sur-Glane, Marzabotto,⁷ but in this connection, only *Lidice*, Reinhard Heydrich and Lidice—no, nothing?

(*Pause, then a sudden thought, "diabolically"*)

What about INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS? Do you recall *infectious mononucleosis*? Infectious mononucleosis—that, at least; infectious mononucleosis *must* mean something to you . . . —No, not even that? Remarkable . . . Why shouldn't you be familiar with infectious mononucleosis? It's harmless, perfectly harmless; true, the Germans discovered it, but that was in the nineteenth century . . . infectious mononucleosis has next to nothing to do with the SS, no connection at all . . . It may be you're only feigning ignorance, you're playing *dumb*,

A: (*cont'd*) perhaps you're dissembling, perhaps you want to make a fool of me—*You, testing me!! You, making a fool of me!! . . .*

8. *Sonderbehandlung* and *Sonderkommando* are euphemistic terms Nazi functionaries used in official documents related to the likewise euphemistic Final Solution: *Sonderbehandlung*, literally “special treatment,” refers to mass extermination; while *Sonderkommando*, literally “special unit,” refers to the Jewish camp inmates who were forced to assist in the murder and clean-up of fellow camp inmates.

—Pay attention, I'm going to give you a series of prompts, just bear with me, pay attention: SONDERBEHANDLUNG, I say to you: SONDERKOMMANDO⁸ . . . Listen: fulfilling of duty, cold, outside, night, listen: fidelity to principles, listen: Syberberg . . . selection, I say to you, ramps . . . —Yes, ramps—No, not stage ramps, not ramp lighting, no orchestra pits . . . Light, yes, lighting of a sort, at least, the glare of floodlights . . . A kind of ramp lighting, only there's no performance . . . they've no idea . . . The Municipal Theater is dark today . . . (*to himself*) – No idea of this sort of ramp lighting, of this sort of ramp; no idea of the pit below the trap, some will fall, others ascend . . .

(*Pause: at the window*)

Falling . . . ascension—Marvelous evenings, glasses and spirits raised in these sobering times . . . Brilliant premiers in early December . . . Monostatos: Cock-sure Fritz Fischer . . . Queen of the Night: guest-starring Fritzi Margaritella . . . And after the premier,

A: (*cont'd*) again to Café Lerch . . . —Wasn't there, back then . . . —was somewhere else . . . But where, where? (*with an exaggerated gesture*)—Where, oh! *if only I knew to say . . .*

(*Directly to "B"*) Gas vans—never heard of those either? Not gas vans, no? No, gas vans: Gas vans, no? Or *racial hygiene*—nothing? “*Disinfection via sanitations technology*?”—no? *Showers and disinfection chambers*—nothing? *Dentists*—no, nothing?—No, nothing, of course not, how could you—You seem to think you're quite clever, but I can disabuse you of that . . . (*with cunning*) And you will never have heard, then, of Doctor Eberl. Dr. IRMFRIED EBERL, a fine name, don't you think . . . ? It sounds so . . . cordial, doesn't it? A native of Bregenz, by the way, studied medicine at Innsbruck . . . No, not a dentist, a medical practitioner, last residing in Blaubeuren, at least through 1948, then *Blaubeuren* became *Blausäuren* for him, too—fine word-play, no?⁹ . . .

9. *Zyklon B* was the trade name of the chemical product used in Nazi gas chambers. The B stands for *Blausäure*, or hydrogen cyanide, which in German rhymes with the name of the town, *Blaubeuren*, where Eberl was arrested in 1948 and shortly thereafter killed himself in order to avoid facing trial.

—And before that? Before what, when? A little more tact, please. Our Dr. Eberl died young, just thirty-eight years old—a victim of duty, of a pledge, an oath—and before that he had

A: (*cont'd*)

been camp commandant at So—no, incorrect, at Tre—ah, one really needn't be so forthcoming . . . —He'd been active in the Eastern Operations, at any rate . . . Ten thousand a day in his waiting room, waiting in line, in the courtyard, the train yard—That's enough to overwhelm any physician, no matter whether he studied medicine at Innsbruck or not . . . ! Before that, he'd been in charge of several SPECIAL OPERATIONS institutes,¹⁰ in Bernburg-Saale, for example, there he was afforded more time with the eighteen thousand patients he handled in just over a year and a half . . . Before that he was active in the Department of Health in Berlin—under Reich Health Director Conti, yes Conti, never heard of him?—And also in the Office of Public Health in Magdeburg-Dessau, and then, before that, he worked as a licensed physician in Vienna and Grimmenstein. That's all . . . Bregenz—Innsbruck—Vienna and Grimmenstein—Magdeburg—Berlin—Bernburg-Saale—Poland, General Government—Blaubeuren—the end. Eberl, Irmfried, doctor—an enthusiast, a go-getter, sometimes perhaps a little overwhelmed . . . —No, still nothing, you're not familiar . . . ?

10. These *Sondereinsatz* institutes were the staging grounds for the so-called Final Solution, where euthanasia was practiced on the mentally ill and disabled.

A: (*cont'd*) (*Pauses: goes to the window, listens; The Magic Flute, Sarastro singing; to himself*)

SA SS SARASTRO . . . Wartime winter settled over the land . . . And after the performance—after the performance—hitting the dance floor . . . at the Café— . . . Café—

(*To "B"—a new idea; jovial, to the point of cunning—*) Does the phrase OPERATION REINHARD mean anything to you?—Reinhard, as in Reinhard Heydrich, *Operation Reinhard*, the final solution to the Jewish question in the General Government, Poland, overall balance more than two million; the operation was headquartered in Lublin, by the way . . . Operation Reinhard—a code name, of course—doesn't ring a bell? That I can hardly believe . . .

Then it goes without saying that you've never heard of the *director* of this operation and his staff, assembled primarily of Carinthians, one *Globočnik*, and his adjutant, one *Lerch* . . . Odi-lo Globočnik, a civil engineer from Klagenfurt, high-ranking SS and police commander in the Lublin District, Himmler's personal secretary to earth¹¹—nonsense . . . what am I saying? . . . to the East, to Poland . . . Globočnik, SS *Obergruppenführer*, a Carinthian, a Klagen-

11. *Himmel* in German refers to heaven; Kofler often deploys the figure of Himmler, Hitler's secretary, to travesty the image of a Nazi heaven on earth.

A: (*cont'd*)

further to be exact, though not by birth, a native of Trieste, who made himself abundantly known throughout Carinthia . . . (*half to himself*) Strange, isn't it, *Upper Carinthians* often aren't even from Carinthia; they're foreigners, habitués, immigrants . . . Some come from the south, others from the opposite direction—from Upper Austria, for instance, as did this scion of the former Upper Danube District youth group . . .

(*To "B"*) Globočnik's ancestors are originally from Neumarktl, now Tržič, a region just beyond the Karavanks . . . Neumarktl, a strange name, and yet so familiar . . . Neumarktl—Trieste—Klagenfurt—Vienna—Lublin—Trieste—Klagenfurt—Krumpendorf—Paternion—an interesting biography, no? Globočnik, Odilo, born April 21st, 1904, Trieste—died May 31st, 1945, Paternion, buried on the banks of the Drava . . . —But you've never heard anything about this, you've heard nothing, know nothing, of course not! Right? Really, *nothing?* (*Enraged*) Do you actually have the audacity to claim no knowledge of my *favorite mass murderer*, the *first and foremost National Socialist exaggeration artist*, yes, the *first SS exaggeration artist*, the most gifted *mass exterminator* that Carin-

A: (*cont'd*) thia and the Adriatic coast have ever produced, our *Globus!*—and you dare to claim you've never heard of him?!

(*Calmer now*) A real go-getter, you ought to know. You couldn't keep that man behind a desk for long, paperwork was for lesser men, he had a *whole nature*, complete with a light and a dark side . . . (*picks up a piece of paper, reads aloud*)—Here, as described in a memorandum from SS Gruppenführer von Herff, on the occasion of his official tour of the General Government: His enthusiasm often leads him to overstep the prescribed limits and to forget those drawn for him within the Order itself, not, however, out of personal ambition but out of obsession, *for the sake of the cause . . . His success absolutely speaks for him . . .*

Success, understand: *input, output, efficiency, effectiveness!* Operation *Search for German Blood*, understand?—Not, so that you don't misunderstand, a go-getter vis-à-vis women, vis-à-vis the mother. You know, of course, no, of course you don't know—no, a go-getter in terms of *extermination engineering* feels a need

A: (*cont'd*) to do too much on his own, he wants to do everything at once, he brooks no dissent, he's obsessed, even . . .

—Oh, by the way, do you know—no, how could you?—nevertheless, do you know the joke that begins, *Congratulations on passing your engineering certification exam . . .*? No? Well, I made it up myself and I've never told it before, so how could you know it, dummy? Anyway, it goes like this:

So. The congratulations on passing your engineering certification exam joke. (The mother's voice, possibly in a grating falsetto) Odilo, congratulations on passing your engineering certification exam . . . !—Mother, thank you for your congratulations on passing my engineering certification exam . . . !—But where have you been, Odilo? I've been waiting so long to congratulate you on passing your engineering certification exam . . . But you might have guessed, Mother, I was at Café Lerch, where else . . .

—It's a good one, don't you think? Yes, a fine joke and completely incomprehensible . . . What has been built under the direction of this civil engineer? *Much*, but not *all* . . . Not

A: (*cont'd*) everything was finished . . . The East Wall, for instance, the Panther-Wotan Line . . . —The EAST WALL, of course you've never heard of it . . .

—(*Overexcitedly*) In the west—West Wall—in the east—East Wall; North Pole—cold, South Pole—hot, is that so hard?

(*Calmer now*) Or a district in Lublin, the SS AND POLICE QUARTER, never finished either . . . What else did he have built? Warehouses, great big warehouses . . . And CAMPS, some camps—gas chambers . . . and pits, *lime pits*, each one bigger than the last, but never big enough . . . Later, grills, giant grills . . . pits and grills, you didn't know, you never asked, why would you?

—Here (*picks up a piece of paper*)—from the diaries of Joseph Goebbels—Goebbels, never heard of him either, have you? No.—(*Reading aloud through a megaphone, like a propaganda speech; or better: whispering through the megaphone*)

The Jews in the General Government, beginning with *Lublin*, are now being deported (*coughs?*) further east. A rather barbaric proce-

A: (*cont'd*) dure is in place, hard to describe exactly, and not much remains of the Jews themselves . . . The former Gauleiter from Vienna who is in charge of carrying out the operation, Gruppenführer G., does so with discretion and via a procedure that does not appear too conspicuous . . .

Well?—Never heard of that either, heard nothing, of course not, though it's hard to miss . . . What is all this about? Which camp, and what went on there—What does Café Lerch have to do with it? That—

(*Pause; listening to The Magic Flute*)

—That's what I'm about to tell you . . . *Have a seat* . . . —No, not you, not yet—*Have a seat* is what Globočnik is alleged to have said to Stangl on his first official visit to Lublin, on a bench in the park at headquarters, on a beautiful spring—What?—Yes, Stangl, the *best camp commandant in Poland*, Globočnik told Hitler. Stangl, never heard of him either, have you? No, of course not.—*Have a seat*, Globočnik is alleged to have kindly said, patting the bench beside him: *Have a seat and tell me* . . . Later, an adjutant—possibly Lerch, possibly von Mohrenschildt, probably Lerch—will have

A: (*cont'd*) brought the plans for *Sobibor* . . . The general will have laid out the plans on the bench and in the grass, in order to explain to Stangl that this would be a kind of SUPPLY CAMP . . . A SUPPLY CAMP, do you understand? Not a prison camp, a supply camp, *a kind of supply camp* . . . not bad, right?

(*Pauses; The Magic Flute: The two armored men*)

Do you hear that? The two armored men . . . (*“translates”*) He who wanders troubled through these streets shall be cleansed, by fire, water, air and earth . . . (*increasingly to himself*) Fire, water, air and earth . . . Wrong order . . . —Air—more precisely *not* air—earth—fire . . . or, air later—or no air—fire—earth . . . but not water, never water; until, one time . . . one time—

(*Struggles increasingly, as he speaks the following sentences, to keep from bursting into laughter*)

—One time, it must have been toward the beginning, one time in Belzec—a *pit overflowed* . . . A pit overflowed! . . . The pit was . . . *overcrowded*, and the decay already so advanced that in the bottom of the pit everything—everything *had liquified*—And the *pit* itself was on—on—on

A: (*cont'd*) *a hill . . .* And one day, the bodies—*overflowed*, flowed out of the pit and—*rolled down the hill . . .* (*Pause*) Hundreds, if not more, just like that, as if on their own, welled up from the pit and rolled down the hillside . . . *A pit overflowed!* Isn't that bizarre? How could a pit overflow?! "One of our pits has overflowed," said one witness, quoting another witness, to Commandant Stangl . . . And the camp inspector, Lieutenant Wirth, must have been thoroughly bewildered. *A pit overflowed?!* Globočnik in Lublin must have been furious . . .

(*Pause; composes himself, again to "B"*)—Where were we? What was it you wanted to know? Or wanted not to have known?—Ah, yes, what Café Lerch had to do with Operation Reinhard . . . Wait—here (*takes a piece of paper, reads aloud*)—Again, from a memorandum by Gruppenführer von Herff on his official tour of the General Government: "Sturmbannführer Lerch belongs to the coterie of Austrians that Gruppenführer Globočnik has gathered around himself—an old brother-in-arms and his man through thick and thin" . . . Globočnik, you know—Pardon? No, of course not, you

A: (*cont'd*) never knew anything, didn't hear anything—Globočnik, Lublin, the first and foremost National Socialist exaggeration artist . . .

—Here (*picks up another piece of paper*) Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, talking about Globočnik, after his visit; Hoess seems, as the host, to have been very annoyed . . . —“He was here to inspect the crematoria and the exterminations . . . But he was not in the least impressed.—His facilities were operating much faster than ours and he began throwing out numbers, of daily output and exterminations and goods delivered, into the billions . . . He exaggerated shamelessly and at every opportunity . . . *He and only he* could do it all on his own and do it the best . . . He wanted only to be in the lead, with *his* exterminations” . . . Weird, isn't it, shop talk among mass murderers, mass murderers comparing themselves . . . (*with a exaggerated gesture*) *He and only he* . . . *He alone!* . . .

(*Looks again at the piece of paper*)

—Aha, another interesting passage: Hoess, after visiting Lublin in return, remarking on *Globočnik's staff*, his “hardworking and ambitious colleagues,” including therefore Adju-

A: (*cont'd*)

tant Lerch—(*hesitates*)—No, I can't read that aloud, not here, not in this city, no, impossible. Hoess apparently had gotten the impression that all of them, invariably—Pardon? No, I can't, I can't read it aloud—That all of them without exception were—were—okay, very quietly, you didn't hear anything, right?—that all of them without exception were—(*whispering*) were *abortive existences* . . . (*still whispering*) *Abortive existences* . . . Commandant of Auschwitz or not, that is outrageous . . . (*in a normal voice*) Outrageous! A café where, a little while later, both Udo Jürgens and Otto Retzer¹² would get their start . . . ! True, Lerch outlived Hoess by almost forty years, but if they were both still alive, Hoess most certainly would have had a lawsuit on his hands. Outrageous, no one should have to put up with a thing like that . . . —Pardon? You've heard of Udo Jürgens, but the others—no, nothing? You've heard of none of these names, none of these places, none of these numbers, none of these details, you will have heard nothing, you want to have heard nothing?

12. Entertainers in postwar America.

(*Different cadence, different tempo*)

A: (*cont'd*) *Belzec*, on the Lublin-Lviv rail line, approximately six hundred thousand, fifteen thousand per day, max—never heard of it, have you?
Sobibor, on the Chełm-Włodawa line—approximately two hundred fifty thousand, twenty thousand per day—not that either? Or that in *Sobibor* a SIDE TRACK was in operation, a side track from the ramp into—into *the other zone*, in order to comfortably convey the non-gassable and those who had died during transport to the corpse pits—not that either, no?

(*Cunningly*) Then you likely will not have heard of the LAZARETTE in Treblinka . . . In Treblinka, the old, weak and sick, who were presumed unable to make the last leg of their journey down the PIPELINE, were immediately delivered to the LAZARETTE, the *Treblinka Lazarette*—a *building façade* with a Red Cross emblem on it, behind which was nothing but a grave for those to be executed by firing squad . . . Pardon? *Treblinka*, yes, near the main Warsaw-Białystok line, approximately eight hundred seventy thousand, peak output up to twenty five thousand a day—never heard of that either? *Majdanek*, on the outskirts of Lublin—up to a hundred thousand. No? Nothing?

A: (*cont'd*) Never knew anything about it? Didn't smell anything either?—*Showers and disinfection chambers, women and children first*—nothing?

(*Quotations, spoken at different pitches*)—*Deep breaths*, Lieutenant Wirth is said to have ordered at an internal demonstration. *Deep breaths!*—*Quick breaths!* You must breath quickly, these inhalations strengthen the lungs, they protect you against contagious diseases and are a good means of disinfection—*Nothing in the least is going to happen to you . . . ! Deep breaths!*—LIEUTENANT WIRTH, camp inspector, he too obsessed with the—task . . . (*yelling, quoting*)—*I don't give a damn what they have done with the shit in Sobibor!* Wirth is said to have yelled, at Stangl's suggestion that they place BUCKETS in the PIPELINE, which was to have proven *helpful*—*I don't give a damn, let them shit themselves, everything has to be cleaned up afterward anyway!* Nothing? You smelled nothing? Never smelled anything?

—Pardon? What do the numbers mean, what's the operation in question? That's difficult to answer—it has to do with *production*, in a certain sense, the numbers are production numbers, it has to do with production and with—

A: (*cont'd*) abstraction . . . with *metamorphoses* . . . with *accumulation* . . . (*half to himself, half-joking*)—
 But no longer by *sword*, instead by *fire*, only by *fire* . . . and *air* . . . and *earth* . . . Accumulation and private gain . . . Untenable conditions, like those in Treblinka, under Doctor Eberl . . . but Globočnik can't be everywhere at once . . . *Leaning against a barracks door in Treblinka*, Globočnik ordered Commandant Eberl's immediate dismissal, he'd take care of the rest from his office in Lublin.

(To "B"; *reads aloud from—another—piece of paper*)
 —Here, from the final reckoning of *Operation Reinhard*: total sum in Reichsmarks, one hundred seventy-eight million, seven hundred forty-five thousand, nine hundred sixty and forty-six pfennig, of which: textiles at a value of forty-six million, diamonds in the amount of sixteen thousand carats . . . Or, alternatively calculated, just for example, one hundred fourteen kilograms of pearls . . . one hundred and three thousand six hundred fourteen watches . . . twenty-nine thousand three hundred ninety-two pairs of glasses . . . three hundred fifty razors . . . Not bad, right? *Three hundred fifty razors—that's unbelievable!*

A: (*cont'd*) —And? Still no idea?! No idea where the rest of the razors might possibly have wound up? None? Three hundred fifty razors, in the context of these balance sheets, it's completely laughable! Almost one hundred seventy nine million Reichsmarks total revenue, and of this, there are only three hundred fifty razors . . . Almost two million people, but only three hundred fifty of them brought along a razor? That I cannot believe, something here is amiss . . .

—Wasn't there, unfortunately, not there either, always somewhere else, neither here nor there, missed out on everything . . .

(*At the window*) Joyful evenings of reprieve in the midst of needful times . . . Wartime winter settled over the land, for the fourth time now, to Café Lerch after the performance; the café owner, staff director Lerch, was perhaps home on leave, told us perhaps about his boss, about the scope of his duties in distant Lublin—told us – *told?!—No*, by no means *told*, *not* told, he will have told us *nothing* about his duties in Lublin, about his—um—administrative work, about his revered Globus . . . Told, ha! Told, *for Himmler's sake!*—No, he will have *kept silent*; secret matters, secret matters of state, and far

A: (*cont'd*) more secret still, *the most secret of all*, he will have kept silent *as the grave, silent as a grave in the air . . .* he will (*changes his tone*) have been at great pains *to see nothing, to hear nothing*, to see nothing and to hear nothing . . .

Pardon? *About what* will he have kept silent, *about what* will he have wanted to know nothing? You still don't understand?

—Here, I will show you, with my *slide projector . . .* one moment . . .

(*Fiddles with the slide projector, a deportation photo appears*)

Here: Before—

(*Slide change: empty gas chamber—Majdanek*)

After—

(*Slide change: another deportation photo*)

Before—

(*Slide change: gas chamber*)

After—

(*Slide change: deportation train*)

A: (*cont'd*) Before—

(*Slide change: grass*)

After—Do you understand?

(*Slide change: gas chamber*)

Or here: Before—

(*Slide change: empty, snow-covered winter landscape (detail)*)

After—

(*Slide change: gas chamber or crematorium, chimney*)

Before—

(*Slide change: snow*)

And after . . . Do you understand now?

What are you saying?!—Snow, you say, yesterday's snow, *snow from the last millennium?*—What, *past its expiration*, dead knowledge?! (*Increasingly horrified*) Dead knowledge, snow from the last millennium? *Harry Piel*, am I hearing you right? Treblinka *Harry Piel*, Sobibor *Harry Piel*, the lot of it *Harry Piel!*! The Lublin Operation *Harry Piel*, do you want to annihilate me?

A: (*cont'd*)

13. Since the late 1990s, Klagenfurt's Wörthersee has been host to the International Federation of Volleyball world championships.

Oh, now you take it back? Not Harry Piel, *beach volleyball* instead? The lot of it, *beach volleyball*?—Beach volleyball¹³ . . . (*getting lost in his thoughts, darker now*) Sports . . . races . . . boxing matches . . . In Treblinka, too—Sporting events, organized by acting camp commandant *Kurt Franz* . . . Competitions decided only by the death of the loser . . . You say *Harry Piel*, I say *Kurt Franz* . . . This commandant, by the way, had a dog trained to tear people to shreds, starting at the genitals . . . *Kurt Franz*, a trained chef . . . He saw to it that not much more was left of Treblinka than a photo album of his bearing the inscription GOOD TIMES, which was discovered in his kitchen following his incidental arrest in the late 1950s . . . But beware, this Kurt Franz, pardoned long ago, may still linger among the living . . . Perhaps somewhere in Germany right now he's warming up his blood sausage, cooking himself some soup, and musing: Buchenwald, Treblinka, Trieste, but above all Treblinka—GOOD TIMES . . .

But you're betting on the FUTURE, the millennium, you say? The third millennium? (*collected now, calm*) The millennium, *bullshit*; as long as *The Land of Smiles* continues to be per-

A: (*cont'd*) formed, the turn of the century has yet to take place . . . The future, pshh, there's nothing stupider than the future, the future is stupidity itself . . . Only idiots like you bet on the *future*, I bet on the *future perfect*: You will not have known anything, you will have wanted to hear nothing . . .

14. *SA-Mann Brand* was a film made in support of Hitler's election in 1933; it tells the story of Fritz Brand joining the SA to fight the communist threat. *Hitlerjunge Quex* is another anti-communist propaganda film from 1933, in which the protagonist rejects and denounces his father.

But have a seat . . . Why Harry Piel? Why not *SA-Man Brand* or *Hitler Youth Quex*?¹⁴—Wait (*looks through the slide projector for a still from the film*)—Here, me as an SA-man, you as Hitler Youth Quex, we'd probably get along quite well . . . who, if not us . . . (*advances toward "B" in a suggestive manner*) You surely know—no, of course you don't know, nevertheless—the one film is called *SA-Man Brand* because the *Hitler Youth Quex* from the other film had to blow SA-Man Brand so hard that his dick was branded with blisters. . . Nice, right? SA, *Sturmabteilung*, you know, by now you know Franz Pfeffer von Salomon . . . What? What do you mean, never heard of him?—Listen, Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, SA, you *must* have heard of him, right? Ernst Röhm, the fat-ass, Chief of Staff, the Night of the Long Knives, the Visconti film, Helmut Berger, never heard of them? Comrade Sepp, what are you doing, last words, Mu-

A: (*cont'd*) nich, Stadelheim Prison, no?—But KRISTALLNACHT (*imploring, beseeching*) Kristallnacht you'll have remembered, Kristallnacht, Reichskristallnacht, SA—nothing? Really, nothing at all? Never hea—

B:

(*After the cue "Reichskristallnacht" and the first word from B—an eruptive NO!!!—light on B, who—deus ex machina—leaps from his chair, as A disappears into the half-light, from which he does not emerge again, though he can still be assumed to be onstage—"A"; a change in style and tempo, FURIOUSO, rebuttal, DESTRUCTION; little by little, of the stage layout, equipment, the subject matter, the language, the structure of the play, the scene, the "illusion" and so on.*)

(*B moves back and forth "like a madman," knocking into chairs and table legs, throwing papers into the air, sweeping them off the table, throwing small props at the projection screen; each collision is accompanied by the sound of SHATTERING GLASS [simulated! not realistic!].*)

(*The reverberations are occasionally powerful enough to cause The Magic Flute CD or record to skip as if out of fear and to stick in the same groove—on Monostatos's aria "Everything feels the joys of*

B: (*cont'd*) *love*—at high tempo—or, alternately, on the Queen of the Night's "Hell's vengeance" (the orchestral bars preceding the line "Disowned may you be forever"—above all when B "attacks," or when, after a pause (a change in rhythm), he starts in again with the same ["—even if—even if—"]).

(The simulated acoustics should, in short, sound as if B were breaking everything to pieces.)

(Leaping suddenly from his seat in the half-light and beginning to pace back and forth, in changing rhythm, though faster than "A")

NO!!!!

No, never heard of it!

Heard nothing, no!

No, and again, no!

REICHSKRISTALLNACHT—no!

SA—no!

Never heard of it—Kristallnacht!

(Runs into a table or chair—the sound of breaking glass, simulated as if B has run into a department store window)

Kristallnacht—never heard of it!

SA—never heard of it!

Never heard of the SA!

SA—SS—Sarrastro—no!

B: (*cont'd*) Nothing, no!
 Nothing, never heard of it!
 Not familiar!
 Not familiar, knew nothing!
 SA, not familiar!
 Storm Battalion, Field Marshal's Hall—no,
 never heard of it!
 Pfeffer von Salomon—nothing!
 Comrade Sepp, what are you doing—nothing,
 no!
 Ernst Röhm—no! Sepp Dietrich—nothing!
 Nothing, never heard of it!
 The Night of the Long Knives—so?
 Visconti, Helmut Berger—so? And?

Raise high the flag—never heard of it!

Raise high the flag, stand rank on rank—not
 familiar, none of it!
 The Friedländer Department Store—never
 heard of it, ever!
 Friedländer—no!
 Kristallnacht—no!
 No, and again, no!
 Nothing.

(*Crashes into something else—shattering glass*)

Heard nothing!

B: (*cont'd*) Heard nothing, knew nothing.
 Heard nothing—knew nothing; it's that simple.

(A different intonation, rhythm, somewhat softer)

Friedländer Department Store
 Wartime winter
 Longing for a leader
 Winter Relief
 Wartime Winter Magic Flute
 Kristallnacht
 Winter Relief
 Wartime Winter Magic Flute

(Imitating "A" at the window)

—Marvelous evenings . . . wartime winter
 settled over the land . . . brilliant premiers in
 early December . . . Cock-sure Fritz Fischer as
 Monostatos—

(Again ferocious)

—Theater!
 It's all theater!
 The Wartime Winter Magic Flute—theater!
 The marvelous evenings—nothing but theater!
 Winter Relief, longing for a leader—theater!
 Kristallnacht—theater!
 Friedländer Department Store—theater!
 Nothing but theater!

B: (*cont'd*) And what a theater!
 Friedländer—why all the theater?
 Kristallnacht—why all the theater?
 Wartime Winter Magic Flute—what a theater,
 but why?
 Why make such a theater?
 Theater about The Magic Flute, about Kristall-
 nacht, why?
 Wartime winter, Winter Relief, The Magic
 Flute—not familiar!

 Longing for a leader, never heard of it!
 Kristallnacht—nothing, never heard of it!
 Heard nothing.
 No, knew nothing, heard nothing, not familiar,
 none of it familiar, never heard, never knew,
 but
 but—even if
 even if
 if so
 if so
 never knew—but—even if
 never heard—but—even if
 not familiar—but—even if
 heard nothing—even if
 knew nothing—even if
 even if
 even if

B: (*cont'd*) even if I'd known
 even if I'd heard
 even if this were familiar
 even if
 even if, then
 no more!
 Even if, then
 never again!
 In the future
 no more!
 In the future
 never again!
 In the future, therefore now,
 no more!
 In the future, therefore now,
 never again!

(Throws or crashes into something—shattering glass)

Heard nothing, heard everything—so?
 Knew nothing, knew everything—so what?
 Yes, heard it all, but
 can't hear it anymore!
 Yes, knew it all, but
 don't want to have known any longer!
 Knew it all, but
 don't want to know it anymore!
 Heard it all, but

B: (*cont'd*) can't hear it anymore!
 Hear nothing, see nothing!
 Can't hear any more
 about those who
 wanted to have heard nothing!
 Don't want to know any more
 about those who
 will have seen nothing!
 Expired!
 Date's expired!
 Expiration date is past!
 The café is closed!
 Café closed!
 Closed.

(Change in tone, rhythm)

—Font of Life,
 Death's Head Squadrons—
 expired!
 Reich Main Security Office—
 closed!
 SS Security Police, Café Lerch—
 closed!
 Doctor Ernst Kaltenbrunner—
 sorry, who?
 Hanns Albin Rauter—
 who, again?
 Doctor Irmfried Eberl—

B: (*cont'd*) who, again?
 Reinhard Heydrich—
 sorry, who?
 —No, not familiar.
 No, there is no known
 Reinhard Heydrich here.
 No, there is no known
 Doctor Eberl, Irmfried here.
 No, there is no known
 Hanns Albin Rauter here.
 No, there is no known
 Herr Doctor Kaltenbrunner here.
 Yes indeed, one Doctor Kaltenbrunner
 is unknown to us.
 Yes indeed, one Hanns Albin Rauter
 is unknown to us.
 Yes indeed, one Doctor Irmfried Eberl
 is unknown to us.
 Yes indeed, one Reinhard Heydrich
 is unknown to us.

(*Noises? A pause?*)

Wannsee Conference—
 Heard nothing of it.
 Final solution—
 Heard nothing of it.
 Sonderkommando—
 Heard nothing of it.

B: (*cont'd*) Sonderbehandlung—
 Heard nothing of it.
 Operation Reinhard—
 Heard nothing of it.
 Extinguished,
 all of it, extinguished.

(*Pause*)—Extinguished.

(*Pause*)—All of it, extinguished.

(*Pause*)—Extinguished.

(*Pause*)—Extinguished.

(*Pause*)—All of it, extinguished.

Wannsee Conference—
 Beach volleyball!
 Final solution—
 Beach volleyball!
 Sonderkommando—
 Beach volleyball!
 Sonderbehandlung—
 Beach volleyball!
 Operation Reinhard—
 Beach volleyball!
 —Can't hear anything anymore.
 NOTHING! (*Noises—clinking*)
 —Don't want to know anything anymore.
 NOTHING! (*Noises—clinking*)

B: (*cont'd*) Nothing more about gas vans—
 Gas vans—even if—
 what then?
 Nothing more of racial hygiene—
 Racial hygiene—even if—
 what then?
 No more about disinfection via sanitations
 technology—
 Disinfection via sanitations technology—even
 if—
 what then?
 No more about showers and disinfection
 chambers—
 Showers and disinfection chambers—even if—
 what then?
 No more about dentists—
 Dentists—even if—
 what then?
 Even if—what next?

(Change in rhythm)

Belzec—expired
 Sobibor—expired
 Treblinka—past the expiration
 Lublin—expired
 Majdanek—expired

Snow!

B: (*cont'd*)

Belzec, six hundred thousand, up to fifteen thousand a day—

Snow, snow from the last millennium!

Sobibor, two hundred fifty thousand, up to twenty thousand a day—

Snow from the last millennium. *Snow!*

Treblinka, eight hundred seventy thousand, up to twenty-five thousand a day—

Snow, snow from the last millennium!

Lublin—Majdanek, one hundred thousand—snow!

Snow, dead knowledge!

Operation Reinhard, final reckoning, one hundred seventy-eight million Reichsmarks—

Dead knowledge!

Textiles, forty-six million; jewels and precious stones, forty-three million Reichsmarks—dead knowledge!

One hundred and three thousand six hundred fourteen watches—dead knowledge!

Twenty-nine thousand three hundred ninety-two pairs of glasses—dead knowledge!

One hundred fourteen kilograms of pearls—dead knowledge, snow!

Snow from the last millennium!

History, not future!

Harry Piel!

B: (*cont'd*) (*Rage, motion, noise, Monostatos?*)

(*Venomously, imitating, at the window*) Joyful evenings, needful times . . . wartime winter settled over the land . . . to Café Lerch after the performance . . . staff director Lerch, home on leave . . . his duties in Lublin, a grave in the air . . . the most secret of all . . .

(*Rage*) Theater, nothing but theater!—Harry Piel!

It's all theater, but it's not a whole evening's worth.

It's not a whole evening's worth!

Please, have a seat—

Theater, nothing but theater!

Please, have a seat,

said Globočnik,

patting the empty place

on the bench beside him;

Please, have a seat

and tell me

—So? So what?

Then what,

even if,

even if I'd heard, even if I'd known that

not even Stangl, the,

as Globočnik told Hitler,

best camp commandant in Poland,

B: (*cont'd*) that not even Stangl,
 according to his own testimony,
 wanted to have known what kind of camp
 he was supposed to be building
 and operating—
 even if I knew that Stangl
 himself wanted only
 to recall that in Sobibor,
 according to Globočnik,
 they would be dealing with a kind of
 SUPPLY CAMP;
 if, then,
 supposing I'd known
 that not even Stangl
 would have known
 anything—then?
 Then
 I don't want to know,
 about that
 I want to have known nothing!

Possibly Lerch, possibly von Mohrenschildt—
 no!
 Probably Lerch, though—
 It's not even a whole evening's worth!
 Supply camp—
 So?
 A supply camp—

B: (*cont'd*)

So what?

Please have a seat—

No! Theater!

Nothing but theater!

—Or, even if I'd heard that
there is purported to have been
in Sobibor
a side track
from the ramp into
the extermination area
in order to transport
to the corpse pits
the non-gassable
and those who died during transport;

—Even if I'd known that
in Treblinka, in the arrival zone,
there had been a so-called lazarette
which was no more than a façade
with a Red Cross emblem on it,
behind which there was nothing
but a deep grave, and that
after the arrival of the transport,
the old, weak and sick,
who were presumed unable to make
their way through the so-called pipeline
without
without disrupting the *operation—*

B: (*cont'd*) that these were delivered directly
 to the lazarette in order that
 they be shot;

—Or, if I'd known that
 Stangl, as the new commandant,
 had suggested to
 LIEUTENANT WIRTH,
 the new camp inspector,
 that they put BUCKETS in the pipeline,
 which would have proven *helpful*,
 and that Wirth had yelled
 that he did not give a damn
 what he, Stangl, did with the shit
 in Sobibor,
 that they may as well shit themselves,
 since afterward
 it would all have to be cleaned up anyway;
 even if,
 if so,
 if I'd heard anything at all,
 then that,
 certainly not!

Lazarette, pipeline, side track, bucket,
 proven helpful,
 Lieutenant Wirth—
 no!

B: (*cont'd*)

Not that!
 Nothing!
 Not *lazarette*
 not *pipeline*
 not *side track*
 not *Lieutenant Wirth*
 not *buckets!*
 No!

Lazarette—façade!
Pipeline—evergreen tunnel!
Side track—heritage railway!
Lieutenant Wirth—police officer!
Buckets—helpful!

Helpful, yes? so?
 Police officer, and? so what?
 Heritage railway, yes? so?
 Evergreens—and?
 Façade—and?
 And? So what?
 (*Pacing again*)
 SS Brigadeführer
 SS Gruppenführer
 SS Gruppenführer and General of the
 Waffen-SS
 SS Obergruppenführer Globočnik—
It's not even a whole evening's worth!

B: (*cont'd*) SS and police commander in the Lublin
 District,
 Head of Operation Reinhard.
 High-ranking SS and police commander in the
 Adriatic Theater—
It's not an entire evening's worth!
 Dear Globus—Yours, Himmler
 Dear Globus—Yours, Lerch
 —*not even an evening's worth!*
 SS Hauptsturmführer
 SS Sturmbannführer
 SS Obersturmbannführer Ernst Lerch,
 Adviser on Jewish affairs and staff director—
not even an evening's worth!
 Shop talk among mass murderers,
 Mass murderers comparing themselves—
not even an evening's worth!

The first and foremost
 National Socialist
 exaggeration artist
 Globočnik—
 it's not an evening's worth!
 Deep breaths,
 quick breaths,
 these inhalations strengthen the lungs—
 theater, but it's not an evening's worth!
 Into the showers, women and children first—

B: (*cont'd*) theater, it's all theater!
 TWO MILLION, Krumpendorf, testimony,
 flight—
 Theater, that's it!
 Harry Piel!
 Dead knowledge!
 History!
 Snow!
 The future. Now-time!

GOOD TIMES.

(*Change of rhythm, diction*)

Had I heard that
 the acting commandant
 at Treblinka, Kurt Franz,
 is supposed to have held
 so-called sporting events
 that ended with the death of the loser,
 and that this commandant, a trained chef, had
 trained his dog to tear people to shreds, begin-
 ning with their genitals, and that when Franz
 was arrested, they found a photo album from
 Treblinka with an inscription reading GOOD
 TIMES; even if I'd known it were possible that
 this Kurt Franz, who's since been pardoned,
 may still linger among the living, cooking him-
 self soup somewhere in Germany, or warming
 up his blood sausage,

B: (*cont'd*) even had I known of this,
I'd not have wanted to know,
certainly not about this!

Kurt Franz—
No!
GOOD TIMES—
yes, and
enough!
Good times. Enough.

*(Quickly back and forth, sentences insistent, stereo-
typed, "resistant")*

Showers and disinfection chambers—
The sand is white!

Disinfection via sanitations technology—
The sand is white!

Racial hygiene—
The sand is white!

Gas vans—
The sand is white!

Gas chamber—
The sand is white!

Wannsee Conference—
The sea is blue!

Final solution—
The sea is blue!

B: (*cont'd*) Sonderkommando—
The sea is blue!
 Sonderbehandlung—
The sea is blue!
 Operation Reinhard—
The sea is blue!

*(Change in rhythm, in a rage, throwing props
 against the projection screen—snow)*

No!
 Café—closed!
 Closed!
 Expired!
 Not even an evening's worth!
 Borderland Theater!
 Theater!
 The sea is blue, the stage is set—
 Theater!
 Municipal Theater!

(Resumes pacing)

Lublin—
 The sand is white, white is the sand.
 Belzec—
 The sea is blue, blue is the sea.
 Sobibor—
 White is the sand, the sand is white.
 Treblinka—

B: (*cont'd*) Blue is the sea, the sea is blue.

(Interrupts his pacing center stage; addressing himself either to "A" or to the audience)

The sea is blue, blue is the sea,
and now the café is closed.

(Moves back and forth in the same rhythm as before, INAUDIBLY declaiming; the stage goes dark as slowly as possible.)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: When *Tanzcafé Treblinka* was first performed in Klagenfurt, Austria, in 2001, it went largely unremarked by the critical press. His failure to produce the scandals that make literary careers was a longtime lament of Werner Kofler's, a lament he often strategically overplayed in order to get at something else. As a writer who, in his own words, proceeded from the conviction that "crime has a name and an address" to calling by name and to task "criminals" of all stripes, Kofler never generalized but localized the facts and outcomes of history. When these hit too close to home, the critical community looks away, and therein lies the scandal.

The café proprietor in this drama, Ernst Lerch, was indeed instrumental in the mass murders that were carried out in Poland during World War II. And, indeed, Lerch returned to Klagenfurt after the fact to resume running the café that earlier had served as the illicit meeting grounds for to-be Nazi war

criminals and later would launch the careers of many middling entertainers in the postwar schlock entertainment industry. Throughout the war years, Harry Piel kept the masses in good humor with spectacular motion picture hijinks. Since the late 1990s, Wörthersee in Klagenfurt has been host to the International Federation of Volleyball world championships. Twice now since the start of the third millennium, the city's municipal theater has premiered productions of Lehár's sentimental orientalist operetta *The Land of Smiles*, once in 2000 and again last December. Kofler's writings have little recourse to authorial invention, so far as detail of plot is concerned.

It is not difficult to detect, therefore, a disingenuity in both the persistent question—do you recall?—and the recalcitrant answer—no. The drama hinges less on the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, less on the agon of generations, than it does on ques-

tions of consequence and value: even if one remembers, then what? The past becomes a projection screen for self-dramatizing fantasy? Or, perhaps more palatably, one chooses instead to experience contemporary life as a sequence of thin, perfectly commensurable and self-flattering entertainments. There has always been a certain operative indistinguishability between politics and popular entertainment—a circumstance that has recently hit home hard for many Americans. Kofler's text angles even deeper into this morass to ask: is the only option left to a politically committed theater the staging of its own co-option and self-dismantling?

A brief remark on the translation: The language of the Nazi regime represents a special case, because it is a language of euphemism. The phrase special treatment conceals dark happenings. For some, this euphemistic deranging of signifiers and what they signify perma-

nently contaminated the German language, made poetry impossible. For this reason, some of this language must not be translated, in order to preserve this derangement, its ghastly specificity. Euphemism like this operates by exploiting the openness of language, ravaging the promise of relation contained in that open. For this reason, some of this language must be translated, in order to make relatable the ghastly process of derangement.

Kofler was an avid reader of world news. It would not have been lost upon him that the euphemistic language of the Reagan administration—Lee Atwater's so-called Southern Strategy in particular—was not without certain historical precedent.

—Lauren K. Wolfe

LAUREN K. WOLFE is the translator of Werner Kofler's 1988 novel *At the Writing Desk* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2016) and Ernst Kapp's 1877 study *Elements of a Philosophy of*

Technology (University of Minnesota, forthcoming 2018). She has contributed translations of poetry and scholarly essays to several anthologies. She is a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature at New York University.