Endsieg: The Second Coming

Elfriede Jelinek

Translated and with an introduction by Gitta Honegger



How It All Began

By way of introduction: As Elfriede Jelinek's longtime translator, I refer to her simply as Elfriede, because this is how she is, almost constantly, on my mind. Not unlike a traditional actor (as I was originally trained), the author becomes a character named Elfriede whom I research and perform in (American) English as translator. This choice is further justified, since in her post–Nobel Prize performance texts Elfriede inserts herself (unnamed) as a speaker. Note that she coyly casts herself as Miss Piggy, the blind seer of *Endsieg: The Second Coming*.

So then, in my longtime prep work as her translator-in-performance, so to speak, which has included countless conversations throughout the years, in her homes in Vienna and Munich, and in the context of the symposium's theme of political resistance that framed the presentation of her text, I begin with my perception of Elfriede's political engagement.[1] The seeds of it were

1. Honegger refers to the 2 September 2025 symposium hosted by the Segal Center at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York, where Milo Rau gave a talk and Jelinek's play was read, as part of Rau's RESISTANCE NOW project and the Segal Center's Down to Earth Festival. —Ed.

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planted by her father, whose own father was Jewish and who took her as a child to the unspeakably graphic first documentaries and movies about the Nazi concentration camps, which started to come out in the early 1950s—she must have been around 11 years old then. The Holocaust haunts and overshadows almost all her work. It culminates in the bizarrely graphic scenarios of her magnum opus *The Children of the Dead* (1995) that feature the Undead of the Holocaust, both victims and perpetrators, emerging in droves from the Austrian landscape and inhabiting the contemporary population. I mention it here, because of its topicality in the era of the Israel/Palestine tragedy. The novel chillingly allowed me to somehow understand Netanyahu's deadly obsession and the unsolvable complexity of the relationship between Israel and Palestine within a much wider and deeper historical context.

Elfriede's courage from the beginning of her career to confront the Austrians' involvement in the Holocaust was the foundation of my connection to and later friendship with her. It started 12 years before she was awarded the Nobel Prize when I saw the premiere production of *Totenauberg* (in my translation *Death/Valley/Mountain*) at the Vienna Akademietheater in 1992. As it was about a fictional meeting in the postwar years in Todtnauberg, where Martin Heidegger lived, between the philosopher and Hannah Arendt, his former student and lover, it was immediately clear to me that this play should be available in translation. I had already translated plays of Thomas Bernhard, Elias Canetti, and Peter Handke, all critical of Austria's past and the continuation of its legacy. As a dramaturg, director, translator, and teacher (I was the first to develop a seminar on the translation of plays at the Yale School of Drama), it was very important to me to introduce students and American audiences to the critical voices of my generation of Austrian writers and theatre artists.

Born in Vienna in 1942, four years before Elfriede, and like her, raised in Vienna, I, unlike her, was not exposed to early films about the concentration camps. Instead, my mother told me stories about the traumatic bombings by the allies, which she tried to avoid, with me as a baby, by living with a farmer's family in the country and hiding with me in the woods when the Russians invaded, while my father worked in a military hospital. I came to the United States at the age of 20...

...And here I am now, born into the repercussions of fascism and witnessing its rebirth in the final phase of my life. This is why the translation of *Endseig: The Second Coming* and its presentation has a very deep personal significance for me.

Therefore, with Elfriede's generous permission, I will share the suspense, desperation, surprises, and (gallows?) humor in excerpts of our e-correspondence, while she wrote *Endsieg* and I later

Figure 1. (facing page) Endsieg*, directed by Falk Richter. Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, 2024. (Photo by Thomas Aurin © Deutsches Schauspielhaus)*

Elfriede Jelinek, born 1946, lives in Vienna, where she grew up. She has received numerous awards for her literary work, which include novels, plays, poetry, essays, translations, radio plays, and opera librettos. She received the 2004 Nobel Prize in Literature for her "musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that, with extraordinary linguistic zeal, reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power." Most recently, her magnum opus, the epic horror novel **The Children of the Dead***, translated by Gitta Honegger, about the undead victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust, was published in 2024 by Yale University Press. elfriedejelinek.com*

Gitta Honegger translated three Nobel Prize laureates: Elfriede Jelinek, Elias Canetti, and Peter Handke. She also translated plays by Thomas Bernhard into English and her cultural biography **Thomas Bernhard: The Making of an Austrian** ***from English into German. She was a Professor of dramaturgy and dramatic criticism at the Yale School of Drama and resident dramaturg and director at the Yale Repertory Theatre. She is a Guggenheim and Fulbright fellow and lives in Santa Fe and Berlin. gitta.honegger@asu.edu***

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translated it.[2] We had been in regular email contact throughout all my translation work on her plays. As most of them addressed local and international political and social issues, those were also the topics of our exchanges. Of course, she has been and continues to be keenly interested in the United States. Growing up in the general silence about the Holocaust (and unlike most members of our generation in Germany and Austria, sensitized to the past by her father), she especially admired the freedom of the American press and was much influenced, like myself, by the Mickey Mouse magazines in the brilliant German translations of Erika Fuchs, known as the "grand dame of German comics." It advanced our friendship when I confessed to her that as a 13-year-old I won a contest run by the magazine and was elected "Junior Ambassador" to Disneyland, where I was welcomed by the master himself in his recently opened empire (something I became quite embarrassed about later in hip, super-cool New York City; rumors about Disney's early Nazi sympathies came up even later). Needless to say, the then and current president's first name triggered a lot of fun punning. To this day, Elfriede is an enthusiast of American films and TV series (*The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Breaking Bad* stand out among others), from which she picked up her idiomatic English.

Since Elfriede had already written a play about Trump's first election (*On the Royal Road: The Burgher King*, 2017), she contemplated revisiting the subject when he announced his second candidacy. She followed his second presidential campaign with special interest. At the time of the assassination attempt on Trump on 13 July 2024, a coda to the *Burgher King* was in the making. The same day, at 11:30 p.m. in Santa Fe, where I live, 7:30 a.m. the next day in Vienna where she lives, Elfriede wrote to me: "Dear Gitta, what do you say about the attack? I say the devil protects his own. The common people's lingo is always right."

When Biden withdrew from the campaign one week later, she sent me the first version of the coda to the *Royal Road*. At that time I was working on the translation of her play *Winterreise* (2011) for an opera produced in 2024 by Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg and also preparing to translate her older play *Burgtheater* (1985) for an upcoming production at the Vienna Festwochen (2025), also directed by Milo Rau and presented by and in the Burgtheater. I did not have the time to look at the draft and, like Elfriede, was primarily focused on the actual campaign until the shock of 5 November.

It was the starting gun for our race to catch up with Trump. The same day I opened my bleeding heart to her from Berlin, where I was at that time:

"Oh, dear Elfriede, I am so deeply depressed about the situation in America. Everything is so numbing. Sometimes it all seems for nothing anyway. It drives you to despair."

This triggered her instant repartee from Vienna: "Everyone is deeply depressed, even before all votes are counted, while all of us are given the count," followed by a dry PS: "We all knew it in the back of our head," to which I countered: "Yes. And in fact, you have already written the play. It must be produced right away [...] Should I start translating it right now? In any case, I'll start working on it."

The next day, 6 November, at 9:00 a.m., Elfriede writes: "I am already working on adapting it to the new reality. It doesn't take much anyway." For a discrete nudge I was able to inform her five minutes later:

"I just wrote to Frank Hentschker that you already wrote the play and I am ready to translate. The only therapy in these dark times. It simply must be done, before all of us get locked up."

Her (not totally unexpected) reply 15 minutes later: "The whole world is turning fascist. A landslide victory. Nothing to be done about it. One would have to deal with it in writing much more concrete, but that's not what I can do. Journalism does it anyway."

Now time was of the essence. Note the speed of our exchange on 6 November 2024:

GH 9:24 a.m.: No, no, you MUST do it, please, please, please, if not you, then who???????
You do it your way, that's in any case more lasting and universally applicable. ONLY YOU

2. Translations of all letters are my own.

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Figure 2. On the Royal Road: The Burgher King, *directed by Falk Richter with Bennie Claessens as the baby king. Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, 2017. (Photo by Arno Declair)*

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can do this!!!!! It is URGENT. What does "concrete" mean these days anyway? And journalists have to bear much of the blame for these election results. Trump had daily free-of-charge publicity worldwide. Good or bad, it is propaganda. And Trump is a demonic genius and has the shamelessness that goes with exploiting the media in his favor. Think of Imre Kertész and the necessity, the only validity to create an atonal language after the Holocaust. [In his 2002 Nobel Prize acceptance speech.] Only your voice speaks the truth!!!!

EJ 9:27 a.m.: I'm doing it, I'm doing it!

GH 9:37 a.m.: If we didn't have you, dear Elfriede [...] thank you!!!!!!!

EJ 10:30 a.m.: So, now I got through it once, for now. So you can better assess it, if it is worth it. Of course, it still needs to be cleaned up, but I want you to tell me, whether it makes any sense. I haven't worked so hard in many years. I am hurting all over.

GH 12:13 p.m.: Yes, of course, it's worth it, dear Elfriede. I haven't made it through the entire text, but I almost cried during the first 10 pages, that's how painful it all was. I just have to finish the surtitles to the new opera of (your) *Winterreise* at Les Théatres de la Ville de Luxembourg, which are needed in two days... I hope, you'll have a little rest now.

EJ 12:24 p.m.: And then I'll continue to work, dear Gitta [...] well, after all, I did break my daily writing record today and I will rest. You are working like crazy. Yet, my life is so joyless [Elfriede's husband of over 40 years, Gottfried Hüngsberg, died in September 2022 and she was still struggling to adjust to both the sale of their shared Munich apartment and her move to the Vienna house she inherited from her parents] and now the state of the world is so terrible, unfathomable! All that's missing now, is a nuclear war.

GH 12:59 p.m., to Frank Hentschker: Ironically—or, not surprisingly—Elfriede has already written the new play about Trump. She started the original version as a coda to the *Burgher King* between the assassination attempt on Trump in Pennsylvania on 13 July 2024 and before it was clear that Biden would get out of the race. Very prophetic. She is now looking at it again and I am ready to translate—it's therapy at the moment.

And on 7 November 2024:

EJ 10:30 a.m.: So here, dear Gitta, it's done, more or less, it will have to be reworked once more, for sure, but I can't go on, right now.

GH 12:30 p.m.: Here now one page [of the translation], first try. The subject wears you down [...]

One week and 10 minutes later, 15 November 2024, 12:10 a.m., was my first contact with Milo Rau, with Elfriede copied on the conversation:

GH 12:10 a.m.: We are in shock, the world is in shock and as you surely know, Elfriede, right after the election results, wrote a new text *Endsieg*, as a coda to her response to Trump's first win and I am at work translating it (English title: *Endsieg*: *The Second Coming*). Shouldn't this text, under your direction, have the world premiere reading? Would a collaboration with Frank Hentschker and Vienna Festwochen be an (also financial) option? I am fully aware that you are extremely busy. But I am following your current collaboration with Elfriede [Rau was scheduled to direct Elfriede's play *Burgtheater* at the 2025 Vienna Festival, of which he is the artistic director] and I am dreaming—very necessary in view of what is looming ahead of us.

Milo Rau responds the same day to both Elfriede and me:

MR 3:50 p.m.: Dear Gitta, dear Elfriede, that sounds great! Coincidentally, I just talked to my New York producer about other issues and this would be a super thing [...] It would have to happen soon, wouldn't it? I am going now for two weeks to Mosul [...] Until the end of the year it will be a little hectic [...,] could I possibly have a version of the text?

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The Second Coming: Recently, after the election victory of the FPÖ, the Austrian Freedom Party [the radical right of Austria], I gave a speech whose central part is titled: "Abandon hope, all ye, who enter here" [...,] a beautiful and frightful coincidence—"things fall apart—the center cannot hold" [...] [a quote from William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming"; full disclosure: the title was suggested by my fellow Austrian and scientist/historian husband Manfred Laubichler].

Elfriede's response, plain and simple, 15 November:

EJ 5:14 p.m.: "I am stunned!!!!"

In the meantime, I responded to Milo Rau on 15 November 2024:

GH 1:42 p.m.: Dear Milo, in my experience, there are no coincidences in the Jelinek sphere. It happens by itself. I think it is the eerie attraction of her language and her vision of the world.

If you can't do it before the end of the year, how about Inauguration Day on 20 January 2025?

Attached is the still rough draft of the text.

EJ 9:50 p.m.: Yes, beautiful, you and Milo are so enthusiastic, that is truly wonderful. Unfortunately, I can't be. It is not given to me. Sometimes I can muster it when I write, that's something already. Otherwise I sadly am an ingrained sceptic. But by no means do I want to tone it all down. I can't imagine Americans would be interested at this time. What's going on with the new Secretary of Defense is unfathomable. I couldn't write something like that, because it is indescribable. The only one who could do it was Jarry with his Ubu. Originally a schoolboy's joke.

And a few weeks later, 2 December 2024:

GH 9:30 p.m.: I just finished the first draft of my translation and am starting with the second one. I still have questions about a few spots.

Continuing, a couple of days later, 4 December:

GH 8:38 a.m.: I am sorry that I suddenly have "brainrot" (*Oxford* word of the year). I don't understand my own translation anymore.

And the next day, 5 December:

EJ 12:03 a.m.: Oh well, I don't understand my own text anymore even though I wrote it.

Moving forward to the presentation in New York, I heard from Elfriede on 14 December 2024:

EJ 2:04 a.m. (15 December, 10:04 a.m., MST): Dear Gitta, Milo writes that he is already in conversation with the Segal Center about the Trump play.

With Milo busy as usual, with several mega-projects all over the world, myself in Santa Fe, busy as usual with several complex-as-usual Elfriede-texts, Frank Hentschker, always the daring presenter of progressive, provocative theatre artists, we could not finish the work as close to the day that did change America and the world, as we originally intended it.

Because of scheduling difficulties, the first reading was globally streamed on 20 January, parallel with Trump's inauguration ceremony, presented by Frank Hentschker in New York, directed by Milo Rau from Mosul, and performed in an English and German version by two outstanding actresses, Nicole Ansari-Cox from New York and Ursina Lardi from the Vienna Burgtheater, respectively.[3]

I end with two specific self-explanatory examples of the spirit of our collaborative e-translation process, which is both a painstaking search for the proverbial needles in a haystack of homonyms and a silly playing with nonsense that ultimately develops its own surprising logic.

3. Lardi was the 2025 winner of the La Biennale di Venezia Silver Lion.

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Consider the following paragraph of 165 words with 10 twists on the root word *folgen*. I start with the quote from the German version. In the text, I bracketed my English translation of the respective word for the non-English speakers to "get the picture" of the untranslatability of the word games originating from the German homonym. This meant that I had to substitute it with very free translations of the puns whenever possible—or learn to confront failure. Sounds confusing? Welcome to the Elfriede Jelinek experience.

> Unser **Verfolger** dicht hinter uns, noch Gefolgschaft, doch bald gewiß **unfolgsam**, im **folgenden** "das Gespenst" genannt, das einer an die Wand gemalt hat, aber größer ist er als der Chef, der derzeitige Sieger, der immer noch Bälle **verfolgt**, anstatt sich einmal umzudrehn, ein Vorgesetzter, der dem gesprochenen Wort nicht traut, der Tat auch nicht, der gleich persönlich vorbeikommen wird, um zu schauen, ob der treue **Verfolger** nicht vielleicht Erfolg hat, nicht womöglich schon vor ihm, dem König, marschiert, dann muß er nämlich wieder zurück, mindestens einen Schritt zurück ins Glied. Unser **Gefolgsmann** also folgt vielleicht gar nicht uns, er **folgt** ganz andren, die sich nach ihm nicht einmal umdrehn müssen, auch nicht zweimal, sie wissen ja, er ist da. Die wissen immer, wo er ist. Wir drehen uns ebenfalls um und sehen nichts, wir sehen niemand und nichts, unser **Verfolger** also, der **folgt** einfach nicht, der will einfach nicht folgen. Ich habe keine Ahnung, wo der jetzt ist, aber ich weiß, daß er da ist.

My translation of the same passage shows the arid homonymity of the verb "to follow." Elfriede's explanation followed the morning after my initial inquiry (continuation of the play on "follow" NOT intended, though her strategies tend to echo in my brain unconsciously).

> Okay, dear Gitta, the pursuer [**der Verfolger**] is Vance, the real demon of the whole [story], while Trump is only a strawman, behind whom the rulership of capital and fascism lays in ambush. That pursuer is close behind us, now he still is obedient [**folgsam**], but soon he will rise up and become disobedient; currently he still is a specter that someone painted on the wall (for example myself, people, who also see it). But even now he is already bigger than the boss, because he sees through things and can apply this better than the current winner, Trump, who still prefers playing golf than look who will overtake him from behind, because Trump is too stupid to trust spoken words or deeds (he is extremely mistrustful) and he doesn't trust Vance either, he comes to check if this apparently obedient adherent does not follow [**folgt**] him, but totally different shady characters or possibly has long been marching in front of the king, who will shoo him back into line alright, but it will happen again. This adherent [**Gefolgsmann**] might not even follow us (plural majestatis), The King, namely the shady men of power, the big capital, Vance, after all, worked in Peter Thiel's financial industry and they control everything (like in Pynchon, by the way), they don't have to turn around for him either, they can rely on his being there. While we, the dumb people are still being deceived—we see nothing and nobody—but this pursuer [**Verfolger**], Vance, simply won't obey [**folgt nicht**] (the king), he doesn't have to either, he has a totally different agenda, which is also decided by totally different (masterminds). He does not want to but also does not have to follow/obey [**folgen**]. No idea, where he is now, but he knows, he is *there* (irony).
>
> Should introduce a mysterious (eerie) quality.
>
> I should write the whole thing again, so that it will be better understood, don't hesitate to weave in an allusion to Vance, which should not be too obvious. Maybe something with "Vice." (Yet another homonym, this time unintentional.)

As Jelinek initiates know, any space limitations for her texts—and for the translator's challenge to explain her mind-boggling linguistic interweavings—will be substantially exceeded (as in this document). A perfect example for the potential, nearly algorithmic, expansions of her initially harmless root verb "to follow" (*folgen*) is her (enthusiastic) immediate response to me on the day of this writing (23 October 2024), after I sent her the completed text to fact-check:

> As an actress you surely know the spotlight, that **follows** the figure on the stage and is called **Verfolger.**

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This theatrical *Verfolger* translates into the English "spotlight," which would, of course, invite yet more associations with the deadly media genius of the current US administration, albeit only in English. In deference to the author, her translator resists the temptation.

For comic relief, permit me a final brief sketch of our electronic wordplay on Elfriede's hilarious, untranslatable puns on Elon Musk. She refers to him as *Weltenräumer*, my all-time favorite neologism, based on *Weltraum*, literally, "world space," for universe. Her term changes "world" into the plural "worlds" and *Raum*, "space" into *Räumer*, based on *räumen*, "cleaning up" a room or "clearing" as in "slum clearing"—"space-clearing." It inspired my general name for Musk, which we discussed in the following email exchange.

A Porn of Power

22 November 2024

GH 6:47 p.m.: I think, I found something funny for Musk: "Sperminator"

EJ 6:55 p.m.: Hahaha! There also is a whale species, *Pottwal*, sperm whale in English. And, cross my heart, all the books, where the term occurs, even in *Moby Dick*, the National Novel, it had to be removed from the schoolbooks and who knows from where else. Dirty word!

GH 6:58 p.m.: Sperm whale is much better! Closer to home!

EJ 7:05 p.m.: That, then would, really be the national whale from Moby Dick. DICK!

GH 9:14 p.m.: Hahaha!!!!

GH 9:34 p.m.: Spermwhale with his mobile dick

EJ 9:52 p.m.: Crazy, unbelievable! Bad girl! Tsk! Tsk! Tsk!

GH 9:54 p.m.: Now think, what Taylor Mac (!!!) would make out of this!

EJ 9:56 p.m.: JA! That would be something!!

GH 11:33 p.m.: In contrast to the mobile dick, the current winner, the Don Duck, who "still follows balls" in German, becomes in his country "The winner, who still follows his little balls."

EJ 11:25 p.m.: That'll become a porn, an inner truth of the whole thing, a porn of power.

GH 11:35 p.m.: Ha, the porn comes out on its own. The truth lies in the language itself, as you always say.

—Gitta Honegger

Endsieg: The Second Coming[4]

(Miss Piggy as Polyhymnia, Kermit also as somebody, behind them an alpine wayside shrine. A poem is recited, which is the following:)[5]

Don't turn around! You are followed by a column of black ships, done up with flags, done up the women, moving up the beautiful rolling waves, the Lord makes them big, bigger than ever, the women also do it, and this is how it shall be for all of us together, perfect, das Volk, the

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5. Jelinek's punctuation is an essential part of her linguistic strategy. She thinks in musical scores and her punctuation helps define the acting style for the performers. —Translator

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People, always perfect, always welcome. It says what it wants. It already said it to us, no worries. And look: they stay up there, they stay on top, their heads are above the water again, in the foam they secrete, that's their element, otherwise they would drown; so now we know, they did not go down. It also may stay, as it was, the People, the Volk, it will be great again, all of it, foam on top of the waves, which are coming and not going, yet, nonetheless, so transitory, human beings who get abused, passed off as garbage or just offed, but they also off themselves. On the shores it is piling up already, the sea of the suppressed, who finally are allowed to press on themselves, from below to above and then, all the more, from above to below. Wherever it is pressing, there is the Volk. We are here. Now we'll soon become freer, safer, healthier! The Lord will soon arrive! Oh, I see, He's already here! I was not mistaken, I did hear the door open, this Lord who will embrace and kiss them, the People. What demon destroyed it so cruelly, this Volk? They did not need a demon at all, but they got him, in the West, there they approach, out from below the snow-covered rock. Those being led, those being had. The pressure gets passed on, from both sides, it also pushes from below, all might wake up with cries of woe. They are already awake. It's rolling, the wave rolls. Already it can no longer be stopped. The pressure is passed on, from all sides, all will awake with sounds of woe. The wave's enormous column rolls in, roaring. It can no longer be restrained. Who would have thought so? Well, I did. And it came true.

Now there are already several Peoples, several Völker, all peaceful now and pleasant, we won't need trenches anymore, not in front of the court either and not a thousand ships of believers, which are cutting through the water, plowing it up, sowing themselves into it, stirring it to stir up the masses as well. Yes, the masses also came. They brought with them their tribally bonded blood, so that it won't get polluted by foreigners, for the newest detergent for sensitive skin that does not leave behind irritating residue. The ships lie deep, the pilots fly deep. A bullet whistled and everybody followed it, all of those, who, once again, aren't even worth a whistle, they just don't know it yet. An umpire fired the starting gun and then quickly blew the whistle. The winner was preordained. Everyone knew it.

The palace resounds with steps, back and forth. The way it has been forever, it will go on forever more, according to the hymn. Eternity starts now, dated as of today. Eyes turn forward, color rises in the cheek. Done! The down stay down. A tough hand made a grab for them, out of the water, from the sand, they are on the sand and think they are still at sea and caressed by the water, they make swimming movements, become movement themselves, overflowing everything, a glistening as if from snail slime, you wretched creatures, you devour my beautiful leaves!, but they already turned towards me, also the hostile ones, you can do nothing to me now, but you eat me out of house and hair, yes, hair! What there is, will be distributed to friends, the only human breed that still exists. Freer, safer, healthier! Richer. I stand against it. Not with me! I say, nothing exists anymore. The Other does not exist anymore, there is nothing to look at, there is only the One, this time the Other is once again the same and it will also stay that way. It is business as usual. It is nobody's business. This golden crown on this head that remained the same as we were before all time, it fits firmly, the crown, a devastating firestorm that calls itself peace, peace everywhere is already in the making, the sewing machines are whirring already, the flesh melts down like pine resin. Ouch! This fabric cuts deeply into our skin.

And the bullet, too, it took the liberty, it whizzed by and took a piece with it and that's all it got, now that it has gone and done it. Everyone wanted a part of it or be a part of Him, no, it only scratched, the bullet, it was happy to cut into that bark, now it is recorded, the spot is marked eternally and now everybody who does not live, who only marks life by lifting their leg anywhere someone has been, but also in the Nothing: the people and their heads and with them their heads in chief, I can mention them here only in passing, no, better not, no piece of the holy ear torn off by the sweep of the passing bullet rushing by, without having to get anywhere. Nevertheless, it simply doesn't have time. It has no time anywhere. But otherwise, it has nothing planned. It is in a hurry and can't accomplish much more. Someone's shaking

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His dusty hair, the *snow*-blond hair, blonds always win. They must win. Advantage blonds. The champs, not only in Germany, champs everywhere, your golden hair, your ashen hair, Shulamit: You lost. You are fired. Your flesh is not welcome here and nowhere else either. The Man now lives in the House. The Man takes possession of His House. The bullet knew it already before its target. Without the bandage, it can no longer be seen. With or without the bandage, no one sees anything, not the shore underneath, not the face above the band-aid, painted with chalk, fearing the rain, the disappearance. We drink milk. The Man now lives in the House. We drink milk every day, black milk, because that's all there is. We drink milk every day, because we can. And the flesh finally gives in, it always must give in, it only has itself as protection, that which gives, now without a giver, the givers give to others, they much prefer taking, but to Him, to this man they give more, they make Him big like His land, no, bigger, the land runneth over with Him, and He runneth over the shores, He, who has been placed above humans, a chosen one, a god incarnate, they give prayers for the land to get even bigger, so that folks don't lie so confined in their graves, so that they have room, but there is only water where it ends. Who's got the biggest? No, that grave we don't want. We dig our own.

The land is almost entirely surrounded by water and where it remains hard, unyielding, unproductive, a wall will soon go up, where it is too hard to dig, we'll soon blow up, just you wait, soon, no one can stop it anymore, a fence, which supports and lovingly encloses it, the land, and makes it feel safe. More can be done! That dear land, it had to suffer so much, now it is done with suffering, now the grail goes up to the Hill, where it always belonged, to the One, the mean one everyone means, but carried by many who should have been retired long ago, like old tires, there, the crowd is uncountable, no, unaccountable, looks are thrown around, it doesn't matter whom they hit, looks are not returned, they must first be exchanged, so that everybody can be paid back in their own coin, small change, which won't make Him bigger either, not everyone can be big, not every wanna-be biggie is. The others might as well get lost and hand themselves over to Lost and Found. No stares there, stares are held on to, the crowd is among themselves. Now the crowd screams like an animal that wants to get out of the cage. And what the crowd wants, it gets. The cage is open. The enemies, the hostile princes are forced back behind a retaining wall, the warriors are questioned, one gets hit with a leaden bullet or whatever it is made of, it hits inaccurately, but well enough.

They demolish each other, they devour each other, they are trying it, how dear this image is to me! I used it already many times: Two serpents, both erect and entwined in each other, simply devouring each other, just like that! One last time: Come right up to me, all of you! But we are here already!, many are saying, they don't have much more say anymore. No longer familiar to any people, any nation, this form, which it created itself, a People's beautiful features, something's oozing out of it, I can't see it, from all the shit in its head?, from blood?, from being drunk on itself?. No. My mommy forbade me to wage a battle, only when I—upon my return—will look her in the eyes, may I fight again, with still better weapons, which she will get for me. Unfortunately, she didn't get them for me. She didn't get it. My father got it. Get off your ass, build your own little house, so that all of us can live under one roof hopefully high enough not to hit it. We drink and drink. We wipe our mouth. We wash our hands.

Still more water coming down, the looks of the delegates, heavy-footed they arrived, lighter footed they departed. Their goal is behind them. Luckily. Like the bullet. Baseball caps no longer protect the base, they stroll atop the heads of those people and seek, harmfully now and then, to get hold of as many mortals as possible. And if, for this purpose, they must get back on the Hill again, they will take it upon themselves, as people put their faith in themselves, those folks always put their faith and the money most of them don't have in themselves and their deputy on earth, The God. Below that they don't do it. There is such raging, as if the goal were someone else, some other dickshit, in solitary torment, the looks now are ejected forcefully, they want to get something for being here today, for putting out right here, for terrifying the others with words and battle roar. Those are just words, but what kind! Select words others spat out before them. They pick them up, thinking that it was they who lost them. Calls as if of vultures resound, eagles join in,

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whose young ones had been robbed, they eat you alive. Immediately they draw their circles high above the nest, the Adlerhorst, the eagle's nest, where their fate has been decided and is decided now. It hit the mark right on, it hit us, we were the goal, the target. But we also aimed at the others. It doesn't matter now. Unholy hands throw away the sword, eternal peace threatens, because then everything stays as is, just—one more time, still more times—freer, safer, healthier.

We poor screaming nestlings, not even the scream will they permit us. The scream swept the bullet away, but this God does not die away, He doesn't even have to resurrect, He is still erect, He is still hard, says He gets slandered, libeled, but still stands straight with his bible, just to show you, He is coming up for air. He takes a breath of totally new air, which, however, is the old one, so that finally a different wind is blowing. More air, please! Here it is! Cheers! With our wings we flail around, living below us is that hillbilly, we sometimes see him in the hallway, on the stairs, always upward. We never see him walking down, like time, always forward, backward never. The sun has already been apprised. It is so appreciative, won't raise an objection, when it is about its shining light, nothing is faster! You have to ring the bell twice, but not at the wrong door, be suspicious, be sustainable, even if no one notices, stay at your post, stand by your Man! It is the second time around that the fun starts for real, you'll see. Underneath us this hole, when did you last look into what was going on under you, oh God, you, supernatural one above us, our whole, dear homeland has sunk into a hole!, what can one say! Should we take the hole somewhere else? You just have to say it. So then do something! A hole of which we don't have an overview, looking into the depth we avoid, rising in front of it the tabernacle with the only Redeemer, whom we now are getting back again, as our host, the holy host, He even gets distributed, nevertheless, more is coming, the holy bread keeps multiplying as more and more ingest it; now everyone gets a piece of Him, after this Lord had disappeared for a few years, because He was stolen from us, we say it as it is, He was taken away from us. Now He is here again.

Let us turn away, the gates of this land of sorrow are unlatched, we see here the opponent writhing in his blood, so it is said. Opponents everywhere. But we are totally peaceful, we don't attack, we get attacked and must defend ourselves. In the womb of the masses lies the outcome of this campaign. The masses are like a mother to themselves. The masses are a woman who, after all, produced these human masses. Let's not be childish! But we are children, so then, why not? The crown of thorns has been removed. The God is now recognizable to those, who always were His, but did not know why. Excuse me, but we certainly have the right to mention our religion, and not always only the one that loves to kill people! Of course, that god, who, on every streetcorner can give you change for peace with war, which he feeds on, often on-screen, even though he can't be shown. Ours will show His appreciation, even of those who do not acknowledge Him, those He will know best, He'll keep an eye on them, they've been earmarked, but there will be no consequences. For our god no one must get their hands dirty. For the other one, his followers have their hands full, all those suitcases, which disappear from the conveyor belt as soon as it gets started. The trolleys always stand closest to the baggage claim. In front of all the others. Our claim tags are not tacked on to us, they are tacked to our load, which we always must tackle ourselves. Guarding this nest, the hassle, the problems with the breed, all for nothing, the wings keep rowing, the eagles can't land anymore, they come to a standstill, in the air is where they stand still, but not silent and they look: quite a sight, huh!?—they lost their homeland to eternal peace. They scream. The other birds raise their heads to heaven. Oh, My God! Eternal peace I create for you, says the Lord, no, not this one, the other. What I leave you is peace. No problem. I give you my peace—a peace, such as the world cannot give to you, only I can do that. I repeat: Peace I leave you, peace I give to you and that is everywhere, there will be eternal peace all over the world, which will go hand in hand with prosperity, they always come together, they have known each other forever, though they never arrive. The address was kept a secret from them, so now they just get going, but don't know where to, and they distribute something to some, who scrape the fiddle more darkly. I give to you not as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid. I give you a peace no one else can give to you. It will be eternal and everywhere I am. I can't repeat it often enough. No problem, the pleasure is mine.

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Well, let's see if this will be a peace! What are you saying? It can't be seen yet? The golden river flows more calmly in peacetime, the direction is set. The eagles are screaming again: we'll get you alright! The eagles will land shortly, step back from the border or else they'll get you, or else the war will get you, it will catch up with you, it will cash in on you again, and you wouldn't want that. The money we poured into war, we'll now pour into peace. We are really looking forward! Peace will get you too, but elsewhere! Stay, where you are, or it won't find you. You are in the wrong place here. Peace is nowhere in sight, it hasn't arrived yet. We can't be saved, let alone save anything right now. The water rises higher and higher, but at least people no longer talk so highfalutin'. They finally say what's what. They always said so, but we didn't understand them. They always say the same thing, why? Because they are right. And that's the truth. Though the ruler's dice always stops, wherever He happens to be, doesn't roll, doesn't swing, its number shows one side of the dice, just one of its many sides, yes, it is many-sided, everybody can see what number is up, with one hand they can grab it, the dice, oh, could they, just once, grab His hand, the sturdy ruler's, who threw it, who threw Himself at the bullet, He, from the line of David, no, not that one, different tribe, different, overactive member, with His mudslinger He stands in court, to be deported into the Never, no, not that, He didn't see it coming, that bullet and He didn't see anything else coming either. Not the other candidate, a woman, who's already gone again, they always go away, women, and it takes an eternity, until they finally come. He likes what else He has in mind. He's got all the time in the world now, which belongs to Him alone. As our guy saw her go, no, it, the bullet, He knows what He can make of it. He can make ploughs and cutlery out of it. He can make weapons for home, for violence, which can be used easily at home. But He doesn't do that. To each his bullet, *that* He can do. That works. He'll blow the heads off all of you. For Himself He'll get a headshot. More and more headshots, it seems to Him, until He loses His head. Give me my head back, He screams, and my great cap! He is still confused, the squadrons are blowing into the fluffy baby bird hair, the bullet might take something along, something of the flesh of His flesh, it doesn't take much, instead, now He is taking us along: He orders us: Strike up a dance. He is not the fastest runner, He is no Achilles, by any means. But He is a good dancer. He sways with Himself, He weighs remarkable pounds, which are on the pan on the other side of the scale.

The stars glisten and He whistles for His dogs, proud boys, to come. He takes His time. He takes His time for every single one, a generous slice of time for every little ball, to place it correctly on the lawn table, which He set himself, only for Himself. The round thing has to get in somewhere too. Another round. In this establishment no one will say anything. The ball was in the sand. Now it isn't there anymore. The ball is no longer the ball, at least not this one, the sand is no longer the sand, at least not here. Oops, the ball, no, bullet, landed in the glass, no, grass, delicious! Three bullets just for Him, where one would have been enough. The ice also knows where it belongs.

The eagle is crying now, he cries for his children. He, the old new King does not cry, His flesh can take it, with immediate effect it can take anything. You can see it, He looks it. He doesn't have to visit His dreams anymore, they realize themselves independently, on their own, they are no work for Him, are right in front of Him, He sees: Those were not dreams at all, a man like Him does not dream, He also lives in His dream, and how! This here, what is it?, the pile, what is it?, those are corpses of people surrounded by other people, lamenting, because they have nothing better to do. He'll put an end to all of this, everything, everything must end anyway, now everything must turn around, the world will be—I repeat for the last time, cross my heart—freer, safer, healthier, more wonderful with every day, who knows what it might be. Okay, so He will end violence, which nobody has any use for anyway, let's be honest, or He will turn it against His enemies. You surely see it like that, too, don't you? It makes no difference anyway. He likes to end things, because He doesn't like to work, I tell it like it is. Why don't I tell everything, because it is like it is? No idea, but at least He won't have to dress warm anymore, because He will stay naked, the Emperor, we don't mind, it's easier that way, when another disaster will be revealed again, in front of which we then will stand, speechless and cold. These flags do not rattle, they walk on tiptoes through the green front yards! And then they stand there, planted, bigger, taller than the other plants. Now cut for the vase, cut out of the protective grass. Because everything is about us, who must not be disturbed. For this ruler

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Figure 3. Endsieg*, directed by Falk Richter. Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, 2024. (Photo by Thomas Aurin © Deutsches Schauspielhaus)*

we are plants for show. And/or. Where did we put the catalog with the bad seeds? Did He already spread them all? He always is at least one step ahead of us.

The eyelids squeeze closely in one's sleep, which will, once again bring forth monsters, ractactac, here they come already!, no, it's not yet them, this is a man who puts the week's groceries into the trunk and then seats his wife in the front, so that he knows where the front is, so that he will remember. This is where he must drive. This is where we are headed, we forgot the breakfast flakes, we've got to go back! Let's hope they aren't melted yet, the Frosties! And you, Lord God, could also thaw for once! Relax. The smile of a God can't clear up any forehead, exactly above his eyebrows, that is where He rages, easy to see, everyone sees it, in words and violence, in the violence of words, in the violence without words, in the violence or the words and in the popular antiwrinkle poison, that's perfect, now He can wade around in himself, it splashes and we did not put on a mudguard, so now we have to multiply, there is no other option anymore, we simply have to become more, that's how we planned and priced it, glory and its price!, whatever, what did I want *to say?* His speeches cause something to happen, that's all, no idea, something is happening, something is definitely happening. And now it has happened, He still stares into the TV, where He stars, He is worried, if His ear will hold up, yes, it holds up, will the outcome hold up, yes, it holds up, it has the screaming in a tight stranglehold and presses it to the ground, those who were still on top, are the suckers now. That's how fast it can go. Serves them right! Why are they screaming so much? Now the ruler can't hear His own words! That's how His words hold on to Him, that He can't hear them anymore. He drops them like hot potatoes. The crowd catches everything, they latch on to it all. They wrap Him in crap with gravy. He is their main course, a court has confirmed it, after all. And you? What are you still doing here? You now must endure whatever bane He sends you, you'll also endure bigger disasters, just listen to Him!, He speaks as if in His sleep, like His opponent, a woman, whom we don't have to remember anymore, who can no longer counter Him and never could. He

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is not too old, not too weak, not too sick, not too smart, not too stupid, go ahead, please, come on in! Whoever is what He is not, is welcome here. Luckily, we don't know what He is. We only know whom we want to make the ruler over us.

This master lost His opponent, His slave. You can't find him at the moment, all of us will be slaves, everyone tears from their bones the withering flesh, old they are themselves, and the young are young, they know it themselves. Everyone is who they are. And, likewise, it is as it is. Huh? What do I think about that? The King says, that now He will most certainly return, now all the more!, and there He is. But He will, on His way back, which won't be a going back, but at least He's got the tailwind for it, He will, possibly slightly, lose His way by a few degrees, length times width. The new opponent He doesn't even recognize. But He knows, that this opponent is insane, absolutely insane. That's what He says, yes, exactly, He says it about a woman: a cackling madwoman, a grinning monkey, doesn't even know her skin color by heart, though she looks in the mirror all the time, always claims a different one, when asked. And that is exactly what she is and always will be: different! Just with whiter teeth than we have. They just can't bite. The eagle screams again, and the screams of people follow Him, there is this tremendous noise we have known for a long time. It drowns out everything. We know it and appreciate it.

They missed the last crucifixion, but now they are all part of it. They are witnesses and will surely encounter the King on their next walk, the disciples will encounter and recognize Him. Or not. Someone is already putting his hand into the wound but gets dragged away. We don't want to hear about wounds today, on this day of triumph. Whatever you died of, don't say anything now, because we already know. We know what you are saying and going to say, we are voting ourselves, and therefore, we vote for ourselves. We elected ourselves, we didn't have to look at the ballot. We are children who talk to blind old folks, we are old folks who talk to deaf children. All of them are talking at once, but the result is the same. With royal gifts the winner is welcomed into the house. We behold His storied place of rest: it is not, it is something else, where only one can throne. As for us, we do not want to sit on unconsecrated ground in the gods' grove, besides, He is already sitting there. He rules and lets us rest. He finds no rest or peace, like a ghost. He holds up a dragon kite to His entourage. It will fly off right away. There are no more pursuers. He is the Lord of money, more one cannot be. But the money can always be more. How about a little more? No. The other one has the money, the milky highwayman, the sperm whale, that big white mobile dick, votes don't count much in this regard, people don't count, only money counts, whose master He is, because He made himself into it and was also made for it, by dark foreigners, whom we shall never meet. They hold their hands under His soles and heave Him up, heave-ho! We must, of course, take our cue from the residents and do His will. That's what they want. They don't even know what they want! Do they act or hesitate? Our senses?, no, not ours, some sort of nonsenses foresee: Soon those who endured unspeakable horror, horrific pain from shared tribal blood, will soon be handed over. Nothing can be done about it. This seer wears her new sunglasses with pride, except that behind them she sees nothing. It works. No god works here, so then, we just make our own. He is made of transparent glass, but nothing can be seen. Seer she is of great battles, a storm-driven small dove who advances up to ether clouds and gloats at the sight of such battles, sucking on the bloody eye candy there. Or something like that. But she sees nothing. Can't blame me for it.

Our devoted pursuer close behind us, still devoted, but surely soon devious, referred to as "the specter" above, which someone painted on the wall in warning, rather than speaking of His vice, but bigger he is than the boss, the current winner, who still follows His little balls, rather than turning around for once, a superior who does not trust the spoken word, nor the deed, who will very soon come by in person to see if the devoted follower might not be successful, possibly marching already in front of Him, the King, because then he would have to take a step back again, at least one step into the line. So then our follower might not even follow us, he follows completely different types, who haven't turned around for him once, nor twice, they know who he is. They always know where he is. We also turn around and see nothing, we see nobody and nothing, our follower simply doesn't follow, he doesn't want to follow all the rules. I don't know where he is now, but I know, he is here.

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They are talking about all this, the pursuer talks from the Off, from the outside in, he interferes, he tells someone, his boss, who did not understand what happened, and while they talk and shout, so that they don't understand their own word and exchange thoughts about what they still can't understand, everything really, that happened, on the cross and to the left and the right, and this they don't understand at all: how could anyone put up with such a thing, and meanwhile, they go on talking and shouting, so that now it's not just their own words they don't understand, they don't understand the others' either, those least of all, all of them are shouting the same thing, but always differently, with words they want to avenge other words, the countenance of the Lord and Master, they can't kiss it, so they shout; their shouting hangs over their heads, which are getting heavy from it—okay, so, where was I?, because you constantly interrupt, asking me things I don't know either, but mind you: the white dove for the King arrived and has already gone again, you can read about it in a moment, pity, we would have loved to take a selfie, even better, a lot of them, so that everyone knows the King was here, He is here again, just because He was here once already, He is here and gone, the disciples will acquire a peaked cap with His catchy phrase that He will come again and, lo and behold, here He is already, well, that must go on your head now, but it's not worth it anymore being younger, or *jünger* in another tongue, none of us will become Jünger (I am so ashamed for saying this), the King doesn't need this anymore, He does not need to become younger, a younger one stands ready already, right behind Him, he already steps on his heels, he is more than ready to walk right through the old King, like a hot knife through brittle bones. The land is big enough for Him, now and forever, currently it is still open to anything, who knows for how long; young or old, it's all the same, it's all His, the King owns it all and even more ground for His shoes there, too, He did not have to pull them off, they are the shoes of no fisherman, just shoes, if He'll ever find them again, even though He was shot at: a miracle!, because there He is, back already, the shoes are also present, no one would step into those! But He. So, in any case, there He was, there He is again, how does He do it?, how does He do it?, He did it. Unfortunately, He can't be everywhere. His fans are disappointed. Because He is also elsewhere, not where his shoes were, but elsewhere.

He belongs to everybody. Pity, we wanted Him for ourselves only. But He belongs to all. Now He belongs to the world, we behold His retreat, let Him play out His tricks or treats, we still need Him. Where He sits, others will also settle. Do we really want a guilt-stained man in this position? We do and also will get Him, we don't see His guilt at all, not His infamous marital bond. We considered Him a native, who does not permit vagabonds to shack up among us. Trusting Him, we put our hand on this good catch, we might not have done it, had He not threatened us that without Him we won't get ahead, we'll get nowhere, see only pain and sorrow everywhere and only the dead would not be touched by misery.

All others He will beat. He is old, but all others He still can beat, hole in one! and that is His way. What do you think? You think you'll get a free lunch here?! No way, and not cheaper either, the others, all the others He still can beat, from resurrection to resurrection, forever and ever, He just has to keep an eye on the watch, on the one coast it is different from the other. Therefore, He must resurrect more often, every state wants its Savior after all. Like ebb and flow against the sea. They also keep coming. Even I understand this. Here with us it is day, while you are still benighted. And now He will safely escort His disciples through the crowd, that will divide before them on their own, no need to divide and conquer, the crowds can take care of this, any others are not around anymore, they didn't get in. The crusade is over, now it's high time to crucify.

The shepherds of nations rise, the King, once again not among them, but He will come. He'll make His appearance shortly, it is said. The havoc He wreaks He won't run into Himself, His father's soul, deceased, does not contradict Him, nobody contradicts Him, fawningly, everyone heralds His fame. He won. He kept His herd together. He shepherds separately, He has His own herd that greets Him every day with its pledge of allegiance. He is with the wolves, He is not with the sheep. Why rescue a foreign people, if no one rescues their own from their ruler. That is His first goal, because He does not have to protect them, His people, who took care of the enemy of the ruler's tilted ear. His people know how to do this. I, the Donald, could duck in time. 'Tis

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early practice for one who wants to preserve himself for posterity. He won't even have to save up Himself, His assets are so huge, no reason to save. He is not stingy with Himself. He also praises himself. This is the Boss praising! Publicly fawning on His glory seems smart to Him, since no one else does it, or do they? He boasts how wisely He will run things, whom He will sack, whom He will keep. What kind of dirt He will clean up, what then stir up, what stir He'll nip in the bud, whose butts He'll bust, whom He will dump. With all that praising He forgets this: if ever a land is adept at devoutly serving its god—this King trumps it! We'll get to that, He says, one thing after the other. The helpless will go first, we'll do away with those, we besiege God with prayers, so that everyone knows by what breed of men this land will be led and who will be helped sustainably and who then must get out instantly! Upright is the Man, who is your Master. He does not help the helpless, He helps those who don't need help.

The eagle shrieks again!, no one says Stop, nobody tells it anything, somebody's got to say Stop! But this one drives through everything, every Stop sign. Somewhere there's a big crash again. No idea. No, nobody here. Only He's still here, but He withdrew, there's something, somebody we set in motion, but where is He? Is He playing His lame, I mean lawn game again, hey, even the ball hurries away from Him. We can't do that. We have to stay. Where did He go? How come they're all here, how come no one is? Just now He's been talking to us, His wife at his side, who is everything, but certainly not His mother. Any minute her face will tear right through the middle, that's how taut it is. We are tantalized, maybe we'll see it happen. And since this bullet did not hit Him, it could not have been shot by His father. That's not the way. He would have better aimed at Him, we stay here unhindered, but beside ourselves, and nothing has been set aside for us. So, which side are you on, boys. Nobody is needed anymore, therefore He isn't here either, the big raptor on the mount, soon He will rape His prey like the car manufacturer. Because even in the future, cars will not be born by sons of man, they'll still run off the production line, but they won't be able to run away. On the street though, they will try. Nobody can stop this lucky strike anymore, least of all a nobody. Thus He stands, the Prince of Heaven, the golden locks, or whatever that is, covering old and new wounds, He doesn't seem to wonder that He wasn't even wounded then, what's there to wonder, it was a miracle! Amen to that. The noblest Führers around Him now, a golden flock, gold-plated long ago, yes, also the armor around their chest, peace it says on their license plate, but do they know it too? Do they know what to do, where to go with all those battles. Yes, sure, why not, gilded also the plume on the sparkling hair-helmet. Everything else on Him they'll also gild, wanna bet? Around Him they stand, and He, He'll be coming momentarily, it is His moment: a wondering, no, wounded God at the center. When the doctor, quickly sent for, maybe already present all the time, just to be sure, got to see the wound of the quickly passing bullet, He sucked His blood, no, He did not suck any blood, that's what the King leaves to the other bloodsuckers who want to weaken our workers, so that He will become a strong Führer and also stay one, at their expense, they, however, believe, that the powerful would rather pursue boars or bouncing balls than them: not with us!, we are not the elected, but with us elections are won. The pack of the rich, who come crawling through the eye of their needle and move instantly into palaces, as is their way of living—moving in and out of palaces—this wound-pack will now be ripped off, so get a grip and take a look under it—not camels!, wolves, the wolves of Wall Street, have already devoured everything! To the bone! This wound reeks! Gangrene! They won't get through the needle's eye, they won't get through to us, in our little white houses on the prairie, they won't go there anyway! And we would never go to where they've lost house and home, poor bastards, for whom we'll do something, we just don't know yet what. Oh, so then you can't tell us anymore, what and whom we can blame? Okay, not Him, but we can bang our head against the tabletop, which we specially cleaned before with a filthy rag. We wanted to finally make a clean sweep! Nobody tells the truth, but we are telling it all the time, it's just that no one noticed. That helped Him, no doubt. Now He stays with us, unhindered, unless He dies before and then His specter will be called into action, His shadow who will cover all of us, until we suffocate in it, because money needs no people. It needs only itself. This shadow goes in front and throws people, not the other way around. And then everything is taken from them. Take me, take me! Take you where? But nobody will ask this question anymore.

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The takers will be known to the court. Tickets are handed out, the sweat of work, no pain, no gain, which we don't have anyway, because others determine it, we don't smell our sweat, only that of the others, their panting we can hear all the way to our shacks, the comrades' rage is on fire and must be extinguished, otherwise we'll be late at the showground, where we get weighed so that the Lord, our master will remain well-disposed to us. Whom will He buy today?, someone who steals even the children of eagles?, someone who will also clean you out?,-He'll also trade you an eye for an eye!, did you already look at the new pictures of Him? No, He won't do that, He won't buy Himself anyone, He's already got him. Don't exaggerate like that, it's so typical of you!, on the contrary, He, in return, He will give everything, He doesn't have to do that, He'll let you have it, less than He's got, I just don't know what and how much! These folks ally themselves with others, there's bonding and brotherhooding, the sisters left, finally!, new bonds are in the making, bundles get packed up: beat it, under the bridge, into the vault of heaven! Now all of them are one uniquely unified People who made themselves big on their own so that His Majesty has a landing field and won't fly off the handle but rather handle us mercifully and spring for a couple of boxsprings for us. And, of course, this Lord and Master had to also enlarge the ground under him considerably, to make room for all the buckets that must be kicked, no one shall sleep, all dead!, okay, okay, His reach must also be extended, so that He can see, where He put those damn shoes. Give me my shoes, He called after the stupid assassin, who didn't know either, because he was missing, not when he was called but when he got down to action. That guy was all He needed on the cross, He can still choose the side himself, where He'll be planted on—His cross—I can already hear the cock, no, the crook cock the gun. With that one He was supposed to fraternize?, with that pig? What a dumb religion, even the virgin-chasers are better off, there they have them coming, though they'll also have to share them. Fraternizing—all humans do it. So that all of them can hang together. He too, He right in the middle of course, He is a smart and swift man at prayer, immune to any kind of miscellaneous pleas. That the land be finally big enough for all those who want it more comfortable, and bigger, and they also made it bigger, so that there is room for all of them, so that all of them have room where the King already is, where even the King goes on foot, because He doesn't want to go there at all and never gets there anyway. High praise for His consideration of us. We pass it on, He deserves it. So that all of them, without mooing, can be led to the slaughterhouse, where animals breathe out with a roar but in no longer. Yes, some, who could neither hear nor see and didn't know what hit them, have instead an understanding of the cattle and the best ways to kill them, so that they would shut up and let us get some rest, before the eternal rest: on our way on behalf of the herd, by order of the cattle we wield this pitchfork to get them in tune, just listen to their interesting pitch, gun care and health control, USA today, tomorrow the world! Riots further away over there, this pitch here was one too, a hell of a hoot, while we were just practicing on the shooting, no, the driving range.

Simply by being there, they do it, they could do it—do what? No idea. Oh, yes, sure, that's what it was. Make the land bigger, make it as big as it has always been, you just didn't notice back then! So, do it, finally, make it bigger, at least as big as it once has been. So get going, at least as big, that's how it must be once again, so that we too can finally see it! We call on everyone: Join in as support for our land and our burghers, join and we'll rock the world out of joint: O blessed spite, that ever I was born to set it right! You have resisted sleep for so long, now the King sang you to sleep. He finally got you to see the light, the blue light on the ride to the hospital, also for Himself, to the House of houses, also for Himself, but only shortly, whatever, this terrible time has ended now. He is back in the arena. The robbing He'll do Himself this time, in person, we, however, are standing there and tolerate it. The road to it, no idea, but I'll be there faster than you, leading the way to serve you as the Führer, yes, to serve, that's what it's called now, since the servants are finally silent, no more chance for them, well, I can't see any. Remember: The catcher gets caught and He, the hunter, was struck by hunter's luck. What do we say to it? We say: whatsoever is won with guile and against the law, cannot endure. Helpers He won't find either. Say what? And what about His shadow? He's already getting bigger, a man who will come, the man of the future, shortly before His arrival—who will replace Him, better than He has ever been, a right hand, that is given to the

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King, while the left hand, which knows exactly what it is doing, already clasps the land. Which means with a money clip? You surely cannot overlook Him, He knows the Volk better than Himself, this Führer of the Shadows, who will come to take away the rest of our sins. He already carries his wishes bald-faced in front of Him. Okay, but what is thrown here is quite weird, it is a man, not His shadow, the shadow throws people, I can't believe it! No one else believes it, because no one has ever seen it this way. There, behind Him a gigantic shadow, who doesn't even look like his thrower, well, so now he just turned the tables and threw his thrower. That one turns around now and then, because He does not cast a shadow, He is one, after all, He doesn't understand it, He suddenly feels so light, as to His body He is a rather grounded person, who, like all of us, came crawling out of the ground, since imagining a woman for it would really be too disgusting. No, He doesn't say this; we are saying it? A talking shadow, giant sized? I can't imagine it. I must be wrong. Well, let's hope so! Well, no one hears it anyway, let's stop it, stop it, so that He can rule in peace and quiet, so that He can get to work undisturbed, so that He can get down to business, so that He finally gets to sit down and put on His shoes, which He once lost, unseemly, never again will He come unarmed to a brazen riot, He will be loaded. He will lean on someone we don't see, His shadow, almost invisible, no, not really, earlier I described him as dark and gigantic and as the actual person, who, like a discus thrower in reverse drags his master behind him, who hauls the whole earth behind him, because it is a disc; I can't tell, as happens so often, where he is now, but he is here, what do I know, he is always here, the future one, he's waiting already in the ruler's body, that he can separate from the latter and rule himself. The ruler won't stay, no ruler stays, it would mean, after all, that He stayed behind, stayed back, no, we don't want that, He stays here with us, unimpeded, the ruler and His shadow stay, it makes no difference, who is in front and who's behind. Done. Finished. He assures us He won't die before at least four years, then His shadow can take over, let him practice in the meantime, He won't rest until all the money will be directed to those who want to marry it, He is the bride's father of the money and its bridegroom at the same time. The bride He is not. That would go too far. He also is his dowry, that righteous man has earned it.

The King will fix everything. Off with the crown of thorns!, He doesn't need it anymore, nor the band-aid on the ear—so big, they could also see it in the back rows and boxed their own ears, to get ready for the field of the battle, the battle for the field—this gauze pad He doesn't need now anymore, it was a small crumb of consolation, He doesn't need it anymore. He doesn't need consolation. He is the consolation for the ravaged land. He rushes, sprightly, to the honor-crowning open battle in front of the camera: it is over. He won. He wants to talk instantly with His shadow now, but that one already does not answer Him. All the way down the military line He reviews He does not need any answers. He is sufficient. He is not insufficient, but we certainly have enough of Him. His mouth is equipped with a golden lock, which is supposed to placate us. No chance to ever get into it, into the ruler's body! The chips are in place, the followers put in their places, the followers are plain, but they count, each one of their small votes counted—the fire is burning now, it has been burning for a long time. Nothing changed, no one walked across the water. It has been decided. That's all. It's over. The eagles pack up their picnic bags and fly away, with sad glances at the empty nest, well, they'll just build a new one. Somebody will guard it. And that will also be He.

It was all for nothing, but not for free. The battle over the Hill, the battle on the Hill, the shining light of the deity, everything vanished, the golden house gone, the disgrace of having won and still lost: vanished. Everything gone and then this! Won again! I don't believe it! Who can stand it, something like that? It's getting boring and always the same, winning, always the same, the usual suspects are always winning, that's no fun. The winner is always He and if, for once, He doesn't win, then He's the tempting profit that's worth fighting for. The shadow even turns around sometimes, if his superior, who now trots behind him is still here. Now, unknown wanderer, what do you have to say to this? Wouldn't you say your guard is a false seer? Your guard is your shadow, who is even more you than yourself? Quite close and already on the way to here, just in case the shadow would deign to turn around to see, whom else he could lead on.

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The King's victory-happy shout reaches all of us in sound and vision. Just a moment, we are coming! We are marching West, where, may I ask, is it? Excuse me, aren't all of us the West? The action of the believers will fill the breaches in this fallow earth, where there hasn't been life in a long time, in meadows, in highways, what are you doing, standing around doing nothing, you vultures? And you eagles, what about you? Break is over, break-ins are on, everything that has been locked, the last bastions, burn them down, now everything goes. Shameless and yet vulnerable, the country's sons freeze in place, exhausted from their hurried runs over the all too leisurely mowed meadows, through no longer green valleys. The last ones are already getting up again, the front lines will also have their turn, up ahead there's that shadow, he'll also have his turn, the lines are marching on, the luscious pastures, the busy meadows aren't lazy either, but the grim cuts will get them, soon. There is a reaper. Yes, but we don't see him, where is he? He's called death. Oh. Yes, the sons too. They are also into it, and in for it. They are running through the cities, which are also tired from everything that is done to them every day, let alone during the night! But no one must sleep! They can be tired, let them be tired, and inattentive too, a God will think for them, but they must not sleep, not yet, the God will put in a tree, He will put on everyone, and if He can't do it, He will pass on the garden to even stronger reapers behind it, they must never see through it, those whose representative He is, the rep of reps, those representatives whose colorful glitzy things in the sample case He does not understand, He understands nothing about them, He has no clue even about what goes into a suitcase,-how then can He sell them? But those have been sold long ago! Even when dying, will He not be totally miserable, when they come close to Him from both sides, children, cuddle up tightly to Him!, like those of the ancient, fallen king. Shadow, do what you want! Embrace the Father or don't, so that He can recover from the misery of His long voyage and His forlornness and loneliness. Let alone His legacy! Whoever can still wait will be in for a big surprise, I can guarantee it. Now I will only briefly tell what went on! As if I could really do that! At my age one loves the spare word. I don't have room for more anymore. That case He can close, the Savior, the Father: Listen to Him only: Listen only to Him! Don't listen to me, you're supposed to listen to Him! And warm regards! In the future, be as loyally concerned about me, as you have been up to now. I need it. I am all alone.

Still tired from the fast run? Abandoned by courage and strength? Then they might as well follow Him, there's no one else around. At the seashore the people, who are like the sea, boundless these days, there are no borders for them, they are everything, they are everybody, they are totally drained, but not drowned, they can play everyone else too, the eagles too, for all I care, the few that still can fly, chased by the majority, who roam through the woods with their guns. Those aren't heard of, the shooting majority is not heard of. You'll hear from them very soon. You're gonna hear from us, they say. The majority is often heard of and will be often heard of, but no one listens. He always was the winner, that's somewhat monotonous, don't you think so? Those who saw it themselves don't even listen anymore, they already know it, they remember past strifes, but are happy to let go of what's past to wherever it wants, like the shadow who lets go of his person, although all of them are distressed that now no one, besides their neighbors, wants to even argue with them. Will this speech protect? Will they be protected from this powerful speaker? No, this speech will not protect them, they don't need any protection anyway, now all of them are for the ruler, no matter what He says. Exactly, it is as I prophesied: So, there is one walking along the ocean shore who had foresworn the rage against the shepherds of nations, but He does not give a damn about those Peoples, I swear. Except for this one. Shouting horrifically, it attracts its ruler's attention always anew, whose wound has stopped hurting long ago. They are many, they are almost everybody, they girded themselves with their own strength, the pants slip down, nonetheless. One can already see their frightful balls. Sorting and ordering, they walk through the lines of warriors, who they are themselves, they are their foremost member, they stand erect, armed for the final battle, the *Endkampf*, the date is fixed already, they were told. Warm-up fucking fights no longer necessary, against whom, huh?, warm-up fights for what, when the main battle has been won already, before the warm-up fight battle started? Excuse me, against whom was the main battle? You don't have to remember it. That one's no longer necessary! That new opponent wouldn't have been necessary! A woman, gimme a break! Her we let pass, together with

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her speeches which don't reach us. No chariot needs to be prepared, no muscle tensed, no armor reached for, rage no longer produced, nor strength. Now we produce the fight, a new product we offer, but everyone from home knows about it, just in a somewhat different form, a worse form, it won't even get started, it won't win anyway. And then we export it, we export the fight, just the rage, until it wraps the land in its flowered cover, so that no one will look underneath anymore for what's there, thinking it is peace that's there, because peace can't keep itself, it must be kept, but not under wraps, it must be supported so that it won't fall at the last moment. It really sucks, that we should have to keep this kind of thing too.

Star-spangled Odysseans, you, pull yourselves together, case closed, ignore this stupid kamaleon here!, you can't even see her, don't let yourself be constricted, pour out! Hurry to the King of Shadows until you become shadows too, all of you, the new big army—just shadows who burn themselves into the walls of buildings, whole cities vaporized, the people are gone now, all gone. They are available only in gold and, optionally, set with precious stones, but not for everyone. Who could still afford people at this inflation rate! Finally, we now produce shadows only, in our shadow factories. Back to the very last lines they shall fight, the shadows, yes, but in the front too. Yes please. First, they should fight against the sun, without which, though, they wouldn't exist. But it's so hot! Every day that heat! Fighting for every single vote no longer necessary. He's got them all already, those He needed, even more than needed. This is clear as daylight. Now we know it. The protector of the dry land, but also of the oceans, He won. So many words, such outcome! We do share everything, we divide, also the votes, and then we unite them again, we cast the lots, those who had no destiny, are creating it now for themselves, the lot spoke, all of us won, it says, we will be told our win, we are still waiting for the voice to sound our vote, to each his own, to each her own, no more theirs there, right on time for the closing date, a thundering voice, not of this world, we've never heard anything like it, we are all done. Finished! Finally. All of us! Well done-in and over! Over the rainbow! That's enough. No need for more. Everyone hears it, the voice, even before there can be a hearing of the King. Everyone hears Him and His voice, which He always carries with Him. The King of Shadows, the shadow of the King, the dark of the night, the dark knight, the far heavens, where the King will soon be, luckily not yet, but soon!, the shadow waits patiently, he's got only one weird vice, but that's a laugh, he saved himself, but no one else. That cloud that slid in front of the sun, that election that went down a slippery slope against the King, this won't happen to us again, because this time He will win, finally, this time has come, springtime for the big fart, yes, this air still belongs to us, and what we don't have, He will let us have it, the shadow is thrilled, He's made of air after all, He'll *Heil* Himself in no time, wanna bet? Our balls are tough, but not tough enough. The horse chews on the bit, flakes fly, it is foam, the horse doesn't have it from talking, He does. His bit flickers in the spotlight, He thinks, we went out already, but we are still here. *Heil*. He will instruct us to whom we should allot what. *Heil*. He will take care of it. He won't care about us, but He will take care of something, He has not announced yet. He doesn't have to. Not yet, but soon. So you can take it to the bank. By the way, how is He doing anyway? Does He have a new message for us? Does that man take us seriously at all? Did the near-death experience change Him in any way? Might this victory not be as radiant as it could be? We polish and polish. What don't we know yet? What does not yet shine through the glass, which is as clear as it is invisible? And yet it is here. What will we still find out? We find ourselves in a battle of the good against the bad, it depends which side you are on. Breathing heavily, the fighters lean against their weapons, the wounds are still hurting, but it was for the cause. It paid off, now others get paid and more others are paying. And still more others are counting, yet again others are down for the count. For him they kept counting, all doubts have been removed. At long last the King of Men arrives in the hall, the site of the congregation. Who got hit? Something's ringing in our ears. Did the son of man leave and return as King? Did the shadow get back in his place? He mightily overrated himself. Exactly! Yes, this is exactly what happened. But we don't even know yet who won! But now we know. Do we act or hesitate? He wouldn't hesitate at all. We submit ourselves to Him. One of our delegations vomits. Now the next one. The serpents of people wind several times around the building. Oh, this fight will tear us apart, we tear up our breasts, that is, those who have them. The others just do something else. There are plenty of options. Who

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pours water on us to extinguish us? What does this man of God say? We are on fire! We are dying to know. All of us together have the burning earth and a high, burning mountain covered with burning trees, no, not high, just a hill we climb, are climbing again and again, with our backpacks behind and our rage up front and our weapons more to the side. We've been up there many times, meanwhile we can find the way there in our sleep. Now only our Lord and Master still has to come. Ah, we see: He has arrived. He is here. Now He is here. He never was away, but now He is here all the way. For us. Welcome, who are you, the best of immortals who calls us, who asks us? He does not have to, on fire, we say yes. Until we've come to our senses, we just keep saying, still on fire: yes.

the end

(Well, okay, the *Iliad* came in handy for this!
And what else do I see? *Oedipus at Colonus*, poor old bastard!
Paul Celan: *Death Fugue*.)
[The translator adds Ricardo Cate: *Without Reservations*.]

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