

three

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**performing | WUK
arts**

Wind in the brain.

Otmar Wagner

1.

The alarm clock rings, and my eyes spring open. No, the alarm clock is not ringing, it's playing notes from harp-strings. Because the alarm clock is no alarm clock, but rather an iPhone 3 (used; €35). And no, my eyes don't spring open. I slowly part their lids, CROSSFADE from the chaotically-colourful black of tonight's hideous dream to the monochrome white of the bedroom ceiling lamp. As so often, there in the milky glass lampshade of the recently acquired vintage lamp (€169), which unashamedly calls to mind the glans of an enormous cock, there appears the head of Ernst Bloch, with his thick glasses, all in black and white, lightly shrouded in pipe smoke; and he asks, as he so often does, without ceremony: 'Why do we get up in the morning?'

2.

My cock is hard. What annoys me most is this 'WHY', as antiquated as the vintage lamp, as penetrating as the pipe smoke, as callous as the features of Bloch's face. The question should read: 'Do you WANT to get up in the morning?' and 'CAN you get up in the morning?'. In which context the second question is more or less superfluous – it targets those persons who are much too fragile or much too old, and these are guaranteed to adopt no role whatsoever in the current game. Where I come from, the following rule applies: 'IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN.' This rule is also avail-

able on www.karriere.at. Thus: if I WANT to get up, I CAN also get up.

3.

Leni Riefenstahl showed us what is possible with the triumph of the will. My in the meantime rather shrunken cock becomes hard again (the maintenance of upright behaviour is not as difficult as the Fake News Press would claim), plus the Lower Austrian FPÖ candidate Udo Landbauer is busy posting: 'NOW MORE THAN EVER'. This slogan originated with Kurt Waldheim. It is not for nothing people say: 'Where there's a WILL, there's a WAY'. This particular way at one time led to the concentration camp; nowadays it typically leads to places where one may achieve a concentration of people, that they might better communicate with one another. These must not perforce be supermarkets.

4.

I got up ages ago, of course. The teeth have been cleaned, the body showered, everything has been switched to normal mode. And because the WILL defines the WAY, I go out, before breakfast even, to do some shopping. I set out for Hofer's – no, not to see the transport minister – and no, not because I thereby aspire to 'Return to My Roots' (German nationalism? The maternal womb?). Naturally, I'm not that stupid. It's because it's cheap: Organic minced beef, €11.18 per kilo. Which signifies that for me, an artist with a family, living in precarious circumstances, a diet-conscious life is POSSIBLE.

5.

It's all about seeing the city as a 'POSSIBILITY SPACE.' The landscape architect and city planning expert Thomas Kerekes describes it as follows: 'Possibility spaces are perceived, designed and lived-in places whose function is mutable, flexible, and remains open. They permit social and economic experiments and reveal to people the space for a variety of experience.'

6.

Everything is possible! But of course it had to be the dumbest of

things that happened to me while I was strolling amongst those beautiful supermarket shelves – the memory of last night’s hideous dream: Herbert Kickl appeared unto me, not in the flesh, but – CROSSFADE – in the hip-hop version of himself, in the shape of Udo Landbauer. Landbauer comes jogging along the political boundary of Lower Austria and keeps shouting ‘I am so fucking cool! I am so fucking cool!’ Little by little I grasp that he has an iPhone 7 in his trouser-pocket (new; €629) and ear phone buddies in his ears and that he is not listening to notes from a harp-string, nor to hip-hop, nor to Makss Damage, nor to Fler and equally not to Komplott, but to ‘Ich will’ by Rammstein. Landbauer is humming to himself, drenched in sweat, he runs until his lungs burst and suddenly he calls out to a previously not-yet-present crowd: ‘I feel misinterpreted.’

The crowd applauds. CROSSFADE. Landauer morphs back into Kickl, slightly bent but upright nonetheless, somehow a bit stiff, and he says: ‘Nobody need fear me. Apart from those who lack good intentions.’ Kickl’s head is wet, drenched in sweat, it gleams like the glances that have recently been successfully inserted into the body of the nation. The crowd applauds. They assume that this body is a female one, albeit of unknown origin, but that does not matter.

7.

Minister of the Interior Kickl stands with a package of organic minced beef at the cash desk, and the cash desk specialist is not afraid; on the contrary, she whispers to him: ‘I will suck your head, you cool bastard, till you go all stupid and daft,’ whereat the Minister of the Interior blushes and says: ‘But I am stupid and daft already.’

8.

Herbert Kickl should have said: ‘Yes, Gimme’. But he was not to know that, because I myself only discovered it on my way to the supermarket: I go past this pharmacy, and in each of its windows hangs a poster, slightly set back, with the words: ‘YES, GIMME.’ In front of this, on the actual window panes, are the supplementaries: ‘Protect myself,’ ‘Calmness and strength,’ ‘Strongly de-

fend.' Meaning that Minister of the Interior Kickl might have said, without cause for concern: 'Yes, gimme all that, and my nation will have the same.'

9.

Minister of the Interior Kickl is still standing at the cash desk. Nobody knows what's meant to happen next. But in reality the whole thing's a dream. The dream ends abruptly, but my path does not. I bag up the organic minced beef, whisper a well-intentioned 'thank you' into the ear of the confused cash desk specialist, step outside into the open, into Urban Space, which from a historical perspective has always been potentially free space. The question is only, for whom.

10.

At first I only saw it out of the corner of my eyes on the way home but then it made it to my brain as well: 'FACE THE CITY', it says, on a street furniture billboard, so I slow down and read the next part: 'Nivea Urban Facial Care'. The assortment includes the 'Urban Detox Mask' (€5.95) and the 48-hours-Moisture-Boost 'Urban Skin Protect' (€4.95). This sounds so extremely cool that it is only on my way home that it dawns on me what it might be about: when you're up against all that mental attitude shit in the Possibility Space known as the city, you should at least be able to save face in a cosmetic way.

11.

I am exhausted, completely drained, supersaturated; as a human being, as a consumer, the day has been for me a bit like a small mental Balkan Route. Especially strenuous is the fact that as a respectable member of the educated and wealthy middle-class I know all about the relative nature of poverty, but must nevertheless repeatedly stress that, as an artist, I live in precarious circumstances. And furthermore that – despite the fact that as a precarious member of the educated middle-class I already know so much – I want to know even more, because I am a high-performing individual, and knowledge is in constant flux and just like poverty is constantly growing. I want to participate in this

insatiable knowledge thing, I go on the internet, and my WILL almost gets the better of me: I had almost ordered the book 'Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?' by Mark Fisher (€12.80) on Amazon. It was already sitting in my shopping basket, a symbolic paradox. But just before I move the cursor onto the 'Checkout' button, a feeling of astonishment, of melancholy, grief, and Weltschmerz overwhelms me.

After a few seconds of immobility, I abort the transaction, close the window, click on 'Start' and 'Shutdown'. The computer shuts down, and so do I, although more slowly by comparison. Disassembly of thoughts. At some point I lie down and stare at the ceiling.

12.

'Now I lay me to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.' A futile venture. No rest is to be gained from the prospect of another day that once again will open with the question: 'Why does one get up in the morning?' Also there's no rest from this image, black and white, which is burning itself into the milky glass lampshade of the lamp on the bedroom ceiling at which I am staring.



Snail pierced by an arrow for daring to come out of its house.

Joachim Camerius the Younger, 'Symbolorum & emblematum'. 1605, Vol. 4, p. 99

Otmar Wagner is a performance artist and researcher of utopian ideas. His essay performance cycle "WUNDE WELT" was shown at WUK in November 2017: "WUNDE WELT #1: Imperatives of Identity", "WUNDE WELT '2: "Cacophony of Colonialization", "WUNDE WELT #3: Aesthetics of the Barrier". In May 2018 he will be undertaking his performative installation "WUNDE WELT #Ending: Me. Europe" at WUK performing arts.