



Götz and Meyer

David Albahari , Ellen Elias-Bursa? (Translation)

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Götz and Meyer, two noncommissioned SS officers, are entrusted with an assignment, “not a big one,” but one that “requires efficiency.” Their task is to transport prisoners from a concentration camp near Belgrade in a hermetically sealed truck, in which they are asphyxiated.

The nameless narrator of *Götz and Meyer*, a Jewish schoolteacher, discovers Wilhelm Götz and Erwin Meyer while researching the deaths of his relatives. Overwhelmed by the horror of his discoveries as they become entangled with his own feverish imaginings, he organizes a class trip. The school bus becomes Götz and Meyer’s truck, and the teacher and his students merge with Belgrade’s lost souls in a sacred act of remembering.

Götz and Meyer Details

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Author : David Albahari , Ellen Elias-Bursa? (Translation)

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Download and Read Free Online Götz and Meyer David Albahari , Ellen Elias-Bursa? (Translation)

The anonymous narrator in this novel by David Albahari becomes obsessed about the origins of evil within ordinary men when he is confronted by the names of two German officers, Gotz and Meyer, who are responsible for the deaths of his family and relatives during the Holocaust. His disparate search for any information about the details surrounding their "termination" leads him to old archival files in long forgotten

AC says

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[illegible]

???? ? ?????: <http://izumen.blogspot.com/2015/04/bl...>

Robert Wechsler says

Freud wrote about two ways of remembering trauma: (1) the narrative, which leads to understanding, and (2) repetition, acting the trauma out. Therapy deals with trauma through narrative, but what about fiction? Is narrative enough, especially when understanding is not the goal, may not even be possible?

What makes this novel so special is that its narrative is, until near the end, itself a repetitive act, as well as a narrative of the narrator's repeated search for information, for what it's worth.

The trauma here is the loss of the narrator's family (and so many others') in the Holocaust. Since the narrator knew few of them, it is more of a secondary trauma than a directly experienced trauma. As is one's reading of this troubling novel.

What happened is just as repetitive as the novel itself: the act of killing (a very specific kind, in this instance).

There is no understanding, nor any narrative that really matters. Instead, Albahari turns a traumatized man's obsession into a constant reliving and imagining of events he knows little about, even though he keeps looking for information. And there is also his attempt to humanize two individuals who are, to him, only names and jobs — the opposite of the dehumanization of those who died.

There are only two weaknesses in this superb novel. Both involve its final scene; one is a weakness for Anglos. The final scene (a shared reliving, as the novel is itself) doesn't work as well as the rest of the novel. And the emphasis on the need to remember, which might be very important for young Serbs to do, is not something that the Anglo readers of this novel need, for they have already repetitively remembered the Holocaust, if not this small slice of it. Hence a 4.5.

Dorian says

Thanks to a friend with impeccable taste, I was alerted to this existence of this quite extraordinary text, which I read over the course of an afternoon an evening, struggling between my desire to keep turning the pages, mesmerized, we might say, and a countervailing desire to put the book down and let the sour feeling in my stomach subside.

(The hurtling, monologic quality of the text, which owes a lot to Thomas Bernhard (and not much at all, *pace* the American publisher, to W. G. Sebald), does have a probably detrimental effect on one's own style--compelling one to longer and longer, ever-more nuanced and yet circular, sentences.)

There are a lot of things to like about this book--one of them is its attempt to grapple with the enormity and the precision of "the Holocaust." So we have the attempt to read or imagine or, even, mimetically, psychotically, *become* two figures, the titular Götz and Meyer, two (ostensibly) historical figures

intimately and yet detachedly concerned with one type of Aktion.

I'm really fascinated, too, by the book's relationship to genre: is this fiction, or memoir, or something else. When we learn that the author is born in 1948, and so does not share the life history of the "I" protagonist, and is thus quite likely not himself Jewish, why does this surprise so much? Why does it seem to make a difference?

And interesting text to compare to Mendelsohn's *Lost*, a book I also liked a lot, but which is generically, temperamentally, and stylistically at the other end of the register from Albahari--the former models himself on Proust, the latter, as I said, on Bernhard, or maybe Kertész.

At any rate, an utterly engrossing and intelligent book--one I'll definitely be teaching in the Holocaust Lit class I am slowly preparing.

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Tony says

Our narrator is a literature teacher but that is not what he wants to talk about. Somehow, when the Nazis decided to eradicate the Jews in Belgrade, he and his mother and father survived. He is obsessed with the minutiae, the details of the extermination. How to dispose of 5,000 living Jewish souls. It was done 100 souls at a time, in a Belgrade Saurer, a boxlike truck. The Jews were loaded in the hermetically-sealed back, with promises of a better life. Just down the road, the drivers would stop -- two such were actually named Götz and Meyer -- and with a simple mechanical adjustment, they'd turn the exhaust inward. Twice a day, excepting Sundays, Götz and Meyer made their trip, from the Fairgrounds to awaiting graves. *Death is heavy. Death is a weight.*

He takes his students on a bus. He gives them names. David, Isak, Bata, Jakov, Moric, Leon, Samuilo, Ruben, Rafael, Haim, Solomon, Ilija, Josif, Marko, Mosa, Avram. Real names. Like Götz and Meyer. And he takes them on the trip, narrating the trip that Götz and Meyer took twice a day until their work was done.

For homework, I said, and the flicker was instantly snuffed out, write a composition on the theme: "Today I Am Someone Else."

.....

It isn't easy to show someone that the world, like a sock, has its other side, and that all you need is one skillful twist to switch one side to the other, skillful and quick, so that no one notices the change, but everyone accepts that the wrong side is in fact the right side of the world.

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[illegible]

crta svoje porodično stablo, bilježi praznine, domišlja neostvarene živote; pretražuje arhive, posjećuje muzeje, piše pisma svojim dalekim, poluzaboravljenim rođacima; "nepogrešivo uleće u praznine", gubi dah. Pri tom, on opsesivno razmišlja o Gecu i Majeru, vozačima gasnog kamiona, koji su ubili na hiljade beogradskih Jevreja. Iznova i iznova on se suočava sa bjelinom njihovih lica i banalnošću njihovih života. Dok tone u sumrak istorijskih stradanja, on sa narastajućim strahom zapaža njihovu neupadljivost, njihovu nemarnu i nesvesnu surovost, naizgled tako prirodnu zaptivenost njihovih srca. Oni koračaju kroz svijet, umotani u privid uobičajenog, ušušskani u svoju površnost, slijepi za košmar koji ih okružuje i kojem doprinose, okruženi tišinom. Dolazi do raslojavanja, profesor se preobražava nekad u Geca, ili u Majera, a nekad u žrtve; lebdi u procjepima istorije, kroz paperjastu svjetlost duša koje napuštaju tijelo, tijelo u koje se podlo ušunjava ugljen monoksid; kroz svoju sopstvenu, nerješivu samoću. Očajan, zamišlja da je dječak, koji namjerno odlazi u logor, da bi proživio "avanturu svog života", ali koji umire, upucan, padajući "veoma sporo, deo po deo, kao da se kruni, kao da (...) nikada neće pasti". Na vrhuncu romana, u potresnoj, grčevitoj sceni, on nastoji da svojim učenicima prenese strahote onoga što se dešavalo, ali uvijek nailazeći na "zid otpora", zid neshvatanja, zid konačnosti. Roman o tišini, tišini koja se istrajno krije ispod svih zvukova ovog svijeta, tišini istorije koja ne prestaje, mrtvih, ubijenih i nestalih, tišini trave, snežnoj tišini utjehe, bezdanoj tišini Geca, ili Majera, tišini koja guši, raste i lije sjeme nosimo u sebi, nesvesni i srećni, spokojni.

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Jonfaith says

We'll be sorry, I told my students, if we ever stop telling stories because if we do, there will be nothing to help us sustain pressure of reality, to ease the burden of life on our shoulders. Almost at the same moment, as if on command, all of them stopped writing and looked up at me. But, they asked, isn't life a story? No, I answered, and touched my earlobe, life is the absence of story.

Gotz and Meyer begins as a detective story and concludes as sort of a field trip. How else can one describe the mechanics of a process by which women and children were exterminated? How do we portray the stewards of this process? Is it wrong to muse on their hobbies. . .their laughter and their homesickness? Albahari doesn't use paragraph breaks, much less chapters. He wants the dear readers to push through to the terminus. The conclusion isn't happy. How could it be? The novel takes place largely in Belgrade, yet the landmarks are in the skull of its bewildered protagonist. Žižek implores us not to think of the Holocaust in tragic terms; such is a disservice to the memory of the lost. Tragedy was not at play as its victims were not extended choices. Gotz and Meyer is a damning novel, though no one is to blame.

Jonathan says

Letter, sent by Willy Just to Walter Rauff on June 5, 1942:

"Previous experience has shown that the following adjustments would be useful:

- 1.) In order to facilitate the rapid distribution of CO, as well as to avoid a buildup of pressure, two slots, ten by one centimeters, will be bored at the top of the rear wall. The excess pressure would be controlled by an easily adjustable hinged metal valve on the outside of the vents.
- 2.) The normal capacity of the vans is nine to ten per square meter [= 10.8 sq. ft.]. The capacity of the larger special Saurer vans is not so great. The problem is not one of overloading but of off-road maneuverability on all terrains, which is severely diminished in this van. It would appear that a reduction in the cargo area is necessary. This can be achieved by shortening the compartment by about one meter. The problem cannot be solved by merely reducing the number of subjects treated, as has been done so far. For in this case a longer running time is required, as the empty space also needs to be filled with CO. On the contrary, were the cargo area smaller, but fully occupied, the operation would take considerably less time, because there would be no empty space.
- 3.) The pipe that connects the exhaust to the van tends to rust, because it is eaten away from the inside by liquids that flow into it. To avoid this the nozzle should be so arranged as to point downward. The liquids will thus be prevented from flowing into [the pipe].
- 4.) To facilitate the cleaning of the vehicle, an opening will be made in the floor to allow for drainage. It will be closed by a watertight cover about twenty to thirty centimeters in diameter, fitted with an elbow siphon that will allow for the drainage of thin liquids. The upper part of the elbow pipe will be fitted with a sieve to avoid obstruction. Thicker dirt can be removed through the large drainage hole when the vehicle is cleaned. The floor of the vehicle can be tipped slightly. In this way all the liquids can be made to flow toward the center and be prevented from entering the pipes.
- 5.) The observation windows that have been installed up to now could be eliminated, as they are hardly ever used. Considerable time will be saved in the production of the new vans by avoiding the difficult fitting of the window and its airtight lock.
- 6.) Greater protection is needed for the lighting system. The grille should cover the lamps high enough up to make it impossible to break the bulb. It seems that these lamps are hardly ever turned on, so the users have suggested that they could be done away with. Experience shows, however, that when the back door is closed and it gets dark inside, the load pushes hard against the door. The reason for this is that when it becomes dark inside the load rushes toward what little light remains. This hampers the locking of the door. It has also been noticed that the noise provoked by the locking of the door is linked to the fear aroused by the darkness. It is therefore expedient to keep the lights on before the operation and during the first few minutes of its duration. Lighting is also useful for night work and for the cleaning of the interior of the van.
- 7.) To facilitate the rapid unloading of the vehicles, a removable grid is to be placed on the floor. It will slide

on rollers on a U-shaped rail. It will be removed and put in position by means of a small winch placed under the vehicle. The firm charged with the alterations has stated that it is not able to continue for the moment, due to a lack of staff and materials. Another firm will have to be found.

The technical changes planned for the vehicles already in operation will be carried out when and as major repairs to these vehicles prove necessary. The alterations in the ten Saurer vehicles already ordered will be carried out as far as possible. The manufacturer made it clear in a meeting that structural alterations, with the exception of minor ones, cannot be carried out for the moment. An attempt must therefore be made to find another firm that can carry out, on at least one of these ten vehicles, the alterations and adjustments that experience has proved to be necessary. I suggest that the firm in Hohenmauth be charged with the execution.

Due to present circumstances, we shall have to expect a later date of completion for this vehicle. It will then not only be kept available as a model but also be used as a reserve vehicle. Once it has been tested, the other vans will be withdrawn from service and will undergo the same alterations.

II. To Gruppenleiter II D
SS-Obersturmbannführer Rauff
for examination and decision."
