

Plan B, *an excerpt*

Damn the consequences!
Titanic loss drives market up—
Red states rule

Over blue states.
As a consequence of illogic
All can be winners!

In *Casino Royale*.
Do not mention Plan B
On social media.

Never underestimate
The power of data analytics
To fill in blanks.

The people according
To whom? Clock into their
Diurnal routine

And normalize.
Gleichschaltung freezes
The present moment

In congealed frame.
Meaning merely the price
Of witnessing events.

To learn this word
Use it in conversation
Until it too is normal—

Watching early returns
And reading *Armed Cell*
Until nothing is normal

All is weird and strange.
Combinatorial demographics—
Algorithmic decisions.

We break ourselves up
To produce more literature
For the illiterate.

Beyond category's reach
The abstraction of number
Lays waste,

Turns psychological.
Gleichschaltung repeats
Its deadly meaning.

Is that a thing
Or an image of one?
The image detaches

And spins as a segue
To Plan B as next segment
Of the narrative.

Aggregative informatics—
Yield qualitative results.
I use the word *advisedly*

Resulting in a shift
In the quality of life
As a cognitive process.

I use the word *terrified*
In a sentence that states
Nothing is normal.

License plate reads *BRUTEST*
A message in a bottle
Driving in Michigan

Windows rolled up.
And if he bicycles to work
He'd be called out

For pedaling while black.
All data tends toward
A common center

Of means-end rationality.
The Shining screened in reverse
Disappears into itself.

[...]

Barrett Watten

PLAN B IN MÜNCHEN



BARRETT WATTEN

AMERICAN LANGUAGE WRITER/DETROIT
AUTHOR OF *FRAME*, *BAD HISTORY*, *PROGRESS/UNDER
ERASURE*, AND *QUESTIONS OF POETICS*

READS "PLAN B"

AND OTHER WORKS
"ZONE"; "THE DARK DAY";
"POETICS AS KNOWLEDGE BASE"

TRANSLATED/PERFORMED BY
FRANZISKA RUPRECHT

MUNICH PERFORMANCE POET
AUTHOR OF *MIXER-MAID*

July/Julii 6

Thursday/Donnerstag

*7:30 Doors/19:30 Einlaß
8:00 Reading/20:00 Lesung*

@ JYM

*Richard-Wagner-Str. 27
Munich/München 80333*

HOSTED BY JYM MUNICH, A PROGRAM OF WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY DETROIT



Barrett Watten



Franziska Ruprecht

On "Plan B"

This is a poem written over four days following the catastrophic 2016 U.S. presidential election in which the intensity of distorted discourse, media frenzy, and psychological projection fused a mass of contradictions so real one could simply reach out and grab them to make a poem. The resulting work stands as a kind of "knowledge base" for the symbolic detritus of the election and the state of political crisis it produced. The keyword *Gleichschaltung* is drawn from the German experience of 1933 and is used as a "discrepant analogy" to the imperative *not* to "normalize" the result of the election—an imperative that continues for many. Both terms appear at regular intervals throughout the poem. Also evoked is the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*—a 1975 maritime disaster on the Great Lakes (and a 1976 ballad by Gordon Lightfoot) that is iconic for residents of Michigan, for whom it represents the destruction of the state. One might immediately compare this reference to Gerard Manley Hopkins's "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to achieve the kinds of discrepant analogies the poem explores. For the reading in Munich, performance poet Franziska Ruprecht has translated "Plan B" into German, which she will also perform. The reading will also present other texts evoking poetry as a "knowledge base" on the one hand and as record of catastrophe on the other.

Barrett Watten