

## What Remains, Auschwitz

*I was allowed...to work under the greatest son  
that my people produced in their 1,000 year history.  
I regret nothing.*

—Rudolf Hess

In a Warsaw hotel window I saw myself  
lick my finger to pick up poppy seeds  
and crumbs from the plate,  
something Grossmutter did  
on her visits from Germany before the war  
as we savored her pork roasts and sauerkraut.

*Verschwende nichts!* I learned well, wasted  
nothing—Grossvater's command  
to turn off lights when leaving a room,  
my father's *Never leave the icebox door open!*

What remained were scraps of fabric  
Grossmutter salvaged  
from American church friends  
and Grossvater's pipe,  
as well as the Leonberg newspapers  
he'd read and reread in our basement,  
the receipts of every bill my father paid.

Now in the State Museum of Oświęcim,  
huge display cases: uncountable  
pots and sieves, in another,  
baby clothes and pacifiers,  
then a mountain of black suitcases,  
names lettered in white—camp ledgers  
listing arrivals, punishments, deaths.

Shoes, high heels, clogs and boots,  
prosthetics, prayer shawls, brushes.  
Real hair in Room 6,  
gray now from Zyklon B,  
bolts of coarse lining made from it.  
Mounds of dark curls  
on closer look are metal spectacles.

The best went to the Vaterland,  
SS families, valuables to the Reichsbank,  
the rest burned as the Allies neared.

I stand by what remains, regret everything,  
my reflection inside the glass case,  
rooted in the waste.

***Wanda Praisner***

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