

MEMORY TOSS

**A NOVEL
BY
OTTO EMERSLEBEN**

PROLOGUE

Start your computer. Turn on the screen while the machine is booting. Switch off the speakers. Have a brief look at the local weather, ignore all the invitations to download new software. Leave the formatting unchanged, font and spacing too: Times New Roman 12, one-and-a-half-spaced (or should I go double spaced?). Write the first sentence: A young man is leaving his parents' home. Check out possible other first sentences: The day promised to be a rainy one. I had never been in Toulouse before. His first thought was: impossible! Okay, she said with a nondescript smile.

The fellow is eighteen, actually too young to be a man. A growing beard does not make him any older. He leaves his parents' home to go to college – although you don't say that in German. In the upcoming years he will change universities several times (how about twice? four times?). After graduation he will work for twelve years in a job he first likes and later doesn't like anymore. Then he is going to be an author, writing books of fiction as well as non-fiction. Or is he? Maybe he is becoming a politician instead? A lawyer? Trucker? A career soldier, commissioned officer? A journalist? Anyway – I should make visible all the stations along his life's trail, even those which were never realized. Writing has become a computer game, after all. Push a button (which one?) to try another start.

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Install a new cartridge before printing the first page: Inkjet Print 92 Black. While the hard copy is produced, there is plenty of time to look for new wallpaper. Should I take this snake charmer? Or this photo of fishermen and their boats? Or rather fishermen closer to home ? A wintry landscape? Eventually I decide in favor of one of Piranesi's prison scenes. Which one? It is hard to make a choice.

The printer quietly spits out the paper. I pick it up: Start your computer. Turn on the screen while the machine is booting. Switch off the speakers. Have a brief look at the local weather, ignore all the invitations to download new software. Leave the formatting unchanged, font and spacing too: Times New Roman 12, one-and-a-half-spaced (should I go double spaced?). Write the first sentence: A young man is leaving his parents' home.

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It is easy to write: The young man in question is leaving his parents' home in West Berlin at the end of August 1958, carrying his High School diploma and a document admitting him to study physics at the East German University of Rostock on the Baltic Sea. The problem of this move should be clear from the beginning: at that time most of the internal migrants in Germany went the other way: from East to West. For the majority this was a one-way-trip, they never could return. He,

however, will be back in the West soon, maybe on the next weekend - with dirty laundry and a lot of stories to tell: about housing, everyday life, new friends.

My trail of words: gas mask, encirclement, air raid shelter, all-clear-signal, direct hit, shrapnel [Your search for *Flaksplitter* did not match any documents], missing-in-action. Der Endsieg – final victory. When everybody talked about the war being over, I asked my mother: “And what’s next? Peace?” “No”, she answered. “Just no more fighting. And no airplanes dropping bombs. Peace – that will take a while.” I remember my mother having a pile of laundry to deal with while we were talking. She put a pot of water on the roaring fire, went back to the tub with the soaking clothes, and before she bent over to work looked at me and said: “Peace will be when I don’t have to darn your socks anymore. I will just throw them away and buy new ones.” A few weeks before, we had arrived in this village, Zilly, a small place north of the Harz mountains. I was five years old.

The Zilly schoolhouse had no heat. Anyway, that’s where I learnt how to write. On a piece of slate. You were scratching and then deleting with a sponge what you had just scratched, and then scratching again: a e i o u. And now, sixty plus years later, in command of this mysterious computer keyboard, it still is a e i o u, but - I have a whole world at my fingertips: links to the internet, e-mail to write to people I know and to people I don’t know and to ask them questions, to verify facts, but how important are facts? I also write e-mails when I am stuck or undecided - to get emotional support from someone somewhere in the world (there is nothing wrong with documenting this indecision - for more meanings of the word Unentschlossenheit [click here](#)). From slate to computer in a lifetime: my life’s time.

On our slates we first tried scratches, then the easiest letters, then lines of letters. Soon we could write whole words, and eventually sentences: The flower is beautiful. The grass is green. There is a hole in my shoe. I tried hard to write more or less legibly. Once the slate was full, we erased everything and wrote anew: Door Farmhouse Apple Tree Brook Spring. And once again: The flower is beautiful.

At home I tried on my own: Is Daddy alive? What does chocolate taste like? Later I learnt to spell words like power outage, reconstruction, calories, bread ration, milk allotment. Heimkehrer, Gaskontingent, Lebensmittelkartenstammabschnitt, Kleiderpunkte. In German all these wonderful compound nouns are at your disposal. Rohrrücklauffahrbremse.

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The word *trek* entered my mind by the way of post war magazines. When my sister Herta and I lived through it, mother called it *fleeing*. We were fleeing Upper Silesia, where we had passed the months of the worst bombing raids on Berlin. We fled in the back of an open truck driven by a wood-gas generator. It must have been sometime mid January 1945. We fled the Russians who at the same time were liberating Auschwitz - not very far from the place in Upper Silesia where we had lived with my grandparents. We were fleeing the liberators of Auschwitz. Three months later we had reached Zilly.

Memory starts with forgetting. The way a child is learning to remember words describes the procedure: they have to be repeated over and over

again. Mama Boat Car. Or others.

Memory ends with forgetting – a commonplace. We will see how much is left. No doubt, it may be deformed, often beyond recognition. Very much like the negative of a photo that has been lost: you are still able to identify some important things – the general outline, contours of people, the structure of lights and shadows. Black and white tones reversed, anyway. Many details are gone once the print is lost. Sometimes they were not even visible in a regular copy, only the craftsmanship of a master photographer could make them appear on that piece of paper: by partially dodging overexposed parts of the image or by masking them altogether in order to bring more additional light to underexposed details; by holding back thin shadows with continually moving fingers. But nobody does these things anymore.

Everyone can enjoy the bright images of a digital camera – join us! Make your choice carefully and be well informed. Our products guarantee a high definition and sharp, balanced pictures. Don't hesitate, once you understand the situation. Who is the market leader? It's US! And WITH US -YOU! Check out the latest fun: Camera Toss!!! Find an object, release the delayed-action shutter, throw the camera – and catch it. Don't keep the results to yourself! Share it! Blog it!

A Young man is leaving his parent's home. I will call him E. Others have done that, too. Go East, young man! Go East! Get involved in a brighter tomorrow. Get to know a better Germany without Nazi generals and Nazi judges. Never mind the harsh facts of everyday life. How important are facts, anyway? Between a capitalist society of exploitation and a communist society of freely associated individuals there lies the period of revolutionary transformation. We live in this political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the

proletariat. Eventually we will get rid of the state altogether. Best Entertainment Value! Achieve Your Goals... Explore Beautiful East Germany - 3 Nights Free. How about a semester or two? Let's talk about more at a later time. Tired of online dating? Get FOUR Complimentary Bags of Gourmet Coffee. How many Errors Lurk on your PC? Find out NOW !! Purchase our new first aid kit and clean up your hard disk! Want another line from QuoteWizard.com? The latest and fastest and greatest in automated translation! Няма намерени резултати отговарящи на запитването Ви. Welcome to the Workers' and Peasants' State! Every Five-Year-Plan a giant step forward! Socialism is victorious! Nicht hinauslehnen bitte! Ne pas se pencher au déhors! E pericoloso sporgesi! Niet naar buiten hangen! Danger! Do not lean out! Get a translation fast and easy: ОФОРМЛЕНИЕ ШЕНГЕНСКИХ ВИЗ - быстро и дешево. We will, in fact, be greeted as liberators. Oh, no, we're not going to have any casualties. In the battle for Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. Mission Accomplished! We found the weapons of mass destruction. The surge is succeeding. The benefits of our victory in Iraq will spread through the Middle East, including a stable society, a stable government, a bastion of Democracy. We will stay there until the job is done.

In his novel "Gantenbein" Max Frisch says: *Sooner or later everyone is going to invent a story he thinks to be his life – or a whole bunch of stories.* And Umberto Eco in "Queen Loana": *... to remember is to reconstruct, in part on the basis of what we have learned or said since.*

The professor in optics talked about the shortcomings of our human eye. He mentioned the blind spot, a location with no receptors, right there, where the nerves are leaving the eyeball. He showed us how easily the

blind spot can be detected: close your right eye, and look at the circle with your left eye. Move the paper in front of you to a different distance, until the cross disappears.



Start a scrap book: a young man going East. Decades before hordes of insurance bullies, career needy intellectuals and bureaucrats, car dealers and other discount thugs went the same way claiming *unification*. Talk about his adventures, his blind spots. Tell a story of exploration and discovery in a former country named *so-called*. Maybe you will find an audience. Nothing has changed for almost two thousand years, when the Greek geographer Strabo had this to say about the Eastern realms of the Germans: Those parts of the country beyond the Elbe River that are near the Sea are wholly unknown to us.

Remember key moments of your life by using our new and unique software *Memory Toss*. Think of an event or two and push the button – we do the rest. Download now or get a CD for a breathtaking trial - free of charge plus shipping and handling. Or get it right from the start and never pay shipping and handling.

I am E. and I approve this project.