

Sonderkommando ¹ Man

When I collect my friends,
God lies on their lips.
A cuss in a synagogue,
He lurks there,
Even while their skin curls and crusts
In the wake of their suffocation.

I reach for a hand;
A body hangs over my shoulder.
Its bones jab me as I heave it to the fire,
Piano keys stripped from their instrument in
One jagged line,
A stole freshly skinned.

It is I who fastens mouths and eyes,
Shapes immortalised in my mortal mind.
Each new shell feeds my fear
Of never being known
Like I know them.

The moon my witness,
His flat face scorches my conscience.
He does not believe that when I resist,
It will be my limbs that torment
Another man's torso.

We know no common language,
I cannot tell him that this crime is not mine.
I just dispose of the scarlet letters.
Their blood blackens my fingers
But it is not on my hands.

He and his stars mock us together.
It is their remains that stain the sky.
In a few hours, mine rise in ash:
A wandering canopy,
Sheltering the ground from their glare.

¹ The Sonderkommando was a group of prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps who were forced to work for the soldiers, carrying out such grueling tasks as

disposing of the bodies of the Nazis' victims.