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Writing from the Periphery: W. G. Sebald and Outsider Art

by

Melissa Starr Etzler

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

German

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Winfried Kudszus, Chair

Professor Anton Kaes

Professor Anne Nesbet

Spring 2014

Abstract

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University of California, Berkeley

Professor Winfried Kudzusz, Chair

This study focuses on a major aspect of literature and culture in the later twentieth century: the intersection of psychiatry, madness and art. As the antipsychiatry movement became an international intervention, W. G. Sebald's fascination with psychopathology rapidly developed. While Sebald collected many materials on Outsider Artists and has several annotated books on psychiatry in his personal library, I examine how Sebald's thought and writings, both academic and literary, were particularly influenced by Ernst Herbeck's poems. Herbeck, a diagnosed schizophrenic, spent decades under the care of Dr. Leo Navratil at the psychiatric institute in Maria Gugging. Sebald became familiar with Herbeck via the book, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* (1966), in which Navratil analyzed his patients' creative writings in order to illustrate commonalities between pathological artistic productions and canonical German literature, thereby blurring the lines between genius and madness. In 1980, Sebald travelled to Vienna to meet Ernst Herbeck and this experience inspired him to compose two academic essays on Herbeck and the semi-fictionalized account of their encounter in his novel *Vertigo* (1990).

In this study, I reveal how Sebald incorporated Herbeck within his works over a thirty year period in order to provide a social commentary. Sebald looks to Herbeck to examine what had become the standards of normality in Western Germany following the Second World War from a critical perspective. Not only is Sebald's empathetic identification with the outsider Herbeck in itself a political and social act of protest, but I show how Sebald recognized in Herbeck's language an embodiment of his own viewpoints regarding (eco)politics and critical theory. Since his understanding of Herbeck is informed by a number of disciplines, various cultural discourses assist in my clarification: I turn to Sebald's interest in the Frankfurt School thinkers, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's ideas on minor literature; political viewpoints as posed by filmmakers such as Alexander Kluge and Werner Herzog; and also the socio-anthropological writings of Pierre Bertaux, Michel Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss. I furthermore provide close readings of Herbeck's poems to argue that Sebald imitates Herbeck's style. Focusing initially on archival material, I locate within Sebald's unpublished poetry and prose several thematic, linguistic and semantic characteristics which are typical of Herbeck's poetry. I then expand this analysis to incorporate

how these features also reappear in Sebald's published novels. In uncovering underexplored intertextuality, this study sheds new light both on Sebald's novels, since recognizing Herbeck's voice within his prose calls for a reevaluation of what is "Sebaldian", as well as on the broader, yet underexplored cultural movement from which I focus on Herbeck as the apex. It also locates Sebald's key political ideas and his values concerning poetics and morality as derivatives of a particular historical and psychological discourse.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the many inspirational professors with whom I have been fortunate enough to work. Each professor at Berkeley has been involved in the making of this dissertation, and I will forever be thankful for all they taught me. I am especially grateful to my dissertation committee. Winfried Kudzus rekindled my love for Sebald and inspired me to pursue my own, unconventional path. His endless patience, kindness and encouragement helped me through many difficult moments. Academically, Walter Sokel described him appropriately as the embodiment of the phrase “stille Wasser sind tief” – indeed they are. Anton Kaes consistently opened my eyes to new ways of viewing film, and taught me how to ask relevant questions and think critically. I will always value his judgment and ideas. I am grateful for Anne Nesbet’s approachability and her thoughtful and insightful comments on my dissertation. These tips have inspired me to think in new directions and to pursue new paths in my future research.

I offer my deepest gratitude to the Wylie Agency (New York) and to the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach for generously granting me permission to bring many undiscovered treasures from the Estate of W. G. Sebald to light. Additionally, none of these pages would have been possible without the generous financial assistance via the Bernhard Zeller Stipendium and the American Friends of Marbach to research in the archive, as well as the abundant years of aid from the German Department at the University of California, Berkeley.

Any accomplishments of mine are also due to the influence begot by my permanent and visiting professors from California State University, Long Beach. Jutta Birmele introduced me to Sebald many moons ago and continues to provide me with thought-provoking material, emotional support and friendship. The impact Jeffrey High has had on my life is indescribable. While he goes above and beyond any definition of *Vorbild*, this is what he will always be for me; he is both brilliant in his field and an amazing individual.

Being buried underneath Sebald’s literary remains afforded me the opportunity to become acquainted with several Sebald scholars who greatly expanded my understanding of Sebald as an academic, author and individual. Uwe Schütte well exceeded personally and intellectually all of the expectations I had made over years of devotedly following his research. I also dedicate this study to the many friends I made at Long Beach, Berkeley and in the C-haus on Schiller Heights in Marbach. They encouraged me in intellectual discussions, moved me in new directions and kept me sane. I already look forward to working with you all as my colleagues in the near future.

I am also indebted to the devoted individuals who assisted me over the years in the archive and behind the scenes at Berkeley. I am thankful for the intellectual stimulation begot by Marcel Lepper, Ulrich von Bülow, Ulrich Raulff and Nikola Herweg; and I appreciate the patience and assistance of Katharina von Wilucki and Susanne Rößler as well as from those in the aquarium: Thomas Kemme, Hildegard Dieke and Heidrun Fink. I extend a hearty thanks to Andrea Rapport, my intensive motivational speaker and therapist.

The constant love, support and encouragement of my individuality from my parents aided me in finishing this more than they can imagine. I dedicate this also to my best friend, my wonderful sister, to whom I can turn no matter what and with whom I have a psychic connection regardless of the distance between us. I also thank the ghost who is somewhere intangible and yet undoubtedly very proud at this moment, my dearest pops. Finally, this is dedicated to the one

whose presence has seeped into each page of this work, although he hasn't read a word of it. He was there in the beginning, gave me a cozy sense of home in the middle, and convinced me to make it through to the end.

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Introduction

W. G. Sebald's Pathological Library and a Brief History of "Outsider Art"

The following study explores W. G. Sebald's (1944-2001) interest in pathology and Outsider Art, paying close attention to the role the schizophrenic writer Ernst Herbeck (1920-1991) played in influencing his thought and literature. In both of the academic essays which Sebald wrote on Herbeck,¹ he identifies and admires general characteristics of Herbeck's language and yet he neglects to provide the reader with concrete examples from Herbeck's poetry to support his assertions. Inspired by this lack, one goal of this study is to fill in this blank by providing close readings of Herbeck's poems in order to illustrate what Sebald likely had in mind when he made claims about Herbeck's style, for example regarding the physiognomy of his language or his unconventional semantics which create a riddle for the reader. To demonstrate the relevance of such characteristics of Herbeck's writing, I will align them with passages from Sebald's own works to reveal his imitation of certain Herbeckian elements.

Sebald's engagement with psychology and mental illness began in the early 1960s and is apparent throughout the body of his work, yet surprisingly, within the bulk of secondary literature which has appeared in ever increasing amounts since Sebald's untimely death in an automobile accident on 14 December 2001, very few works have dealt specifically with this topic. This is likely due to the fact that most scholars have approached Sebald by way of his published novels, in which mental illness is perpetually looming between the lines and yet it is rarely thematized as explicitly as in his academic essays. Within these texts, one finds an ever present pathological fixation on death,² paranoia³ and creativity borne of psychosis.⁴ While many have examined Sebald's interest in *psychology*, focusing on Freud's influence or the manifestations of melancholy and empathetic narratives,⁵ *pathology* has been fairly neglected

¹ The first article Sebald wrote following his visit to Herbeck was "Eine kleine Traverse. Das poetische Werk Ernst Herbecks." This was originally published in *Manuskripte. Zeitschrift für Literatur* 74 (1981): 35-41 and was republished in *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks. Zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994. 131-48. Hereafter cited as: "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU*. This article was followed by "Des Häschens Kind, der kleine Has. Über das Totemtier des Lyrikers Herbeck" which was published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (8 Dec. 1992) and also in *Campo Santo*. Ed. Sven Meyer. Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003. 171-78. In English, this article appeared as "The Little Hare, Child of the Hare. On the Poet Ernst Herbeck's Totem Animal." *Campo Santo*. Trans. Anthea Bell. New York: The Modern Library, 2005. 125-35. Hereafter cited as: "Des Häschens Kind" in *CS* or "The Little Hare" in *CS*. Finally, the chapter "All'estero" from *Vertigo* fictionalizes Sebald's visit to Herbeck at the end of October in 1980. A version of this chapter is printed as "Ausflug mit Ernst Herbeck zur Burg Greifenstein" in *Ernst Herbeck, die Vergangenheit ist klar vorbei*. Eds. Carl Aigner and Leo Navratil. Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2002. 168-75. "Des Häschens Kind" is also republished in *Ernst Herbeck* 184-89.

² Sebald, "Das unentdeckte Land. Zur Motivstruktur in Kafkas Schloß" in *BU* 78-92.

³ Sebald, "Summa Scientiae. System und Systemkritik bei Elias Canetti" in *BU* 93-102, especially 99-100.

⁴ Sebald, "Unterm Spiegel des Wassers – Peter Handkes Erzählung von der Angst des Tormanns" in *BU* 115-30. And these are simply a few examples from one collection of essays.

⁵ See for example: Banki, Luisa. "Mourning, Melancholia and Morality: W. G. Sebald's German-Jewish Narratives." *Panic and Mourning: The Cultural Work of Trauma*. Ed. Daniella Agostinho, et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012. 37-48. Also see Dora Osborne's essay in which she provides a reading of *Austerlitz* involving Freud's Wolf Man and Lewis Ward's essay focuses on Sebald's insertion of an "empathic narrative persona" in his novels which enables a border crossing and a simultaneous proximity and distance between the author and the

despite the fact that writing produced from the periphery of society had always been of personal interest to Sebald. There have, however, been select publications on this theme and one scholar, Uwe Schütte, has published specifically on psychopathology and Sebald's connection to Herbeck.⁶ Such texts have highlighted the fact that an acknowledgement of the relevance of pathology for Sebald's outlook on life not only enables a profounder understanding of the core themes of his novels; but, on a broader level, provokes the reader into a critical analysis of post-World War II Western civilization.

Ernst Herbeck shall serve as the key point of reference since he is the foundation supporting the many cases of mental illness that have been woven into Sebald's novels and academic essays. He is also one of the longest standing intertextual figures within Sebald's works.⁷ He began reading Herbeck's poetry as early as 1966 and incorporated references to Herbeck in his writings over the next thirty-five years. Analyzing the three pieces Sebald composed on Herbeck in conjunction with the secondary literature Sebald was reading during the time these were composed helps to illuminate the meanings inherent in the manifestations of neurosis and pathology evident throughout the body of Sebald's works. Key to this study are also the references made to Herbeck in his early, unpublished texts which reveal how Sebald's outlook on outsiders and madness was developed by the texts related to Herbeck and to pathology that he owned. As such, my analysis relies heavily upon the works found in his personal library and literary remains housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. As will be demonstrated, while Herbeck was the primary impetus for the manifestations of mental illness in Sebald's writings, the major themes to which Sebald returned were also viewed through the pathological lens begot by his work on Herbeck. For instance, Sebald's critique of German society's repression of their involvement in the Second World War, his ideas related to mankind's inevitable degeneration, his considerations of critical theory and the Frankfurt School, and his views on environmental issues and the natural history of destruction all have direct connections to Herbeck.

In the preface to *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* (1985), Sebald writes the following quote referring to the necessity of reading multiple authors simultaneously: "Wenn es richtig ist, daß man Schnitzler nicht ohne Freud lesen sollte, so stimmt das Umgekehrte nicht minder."⁸ This sentence reveals not only a great deal regarding who Sebald was as a reader, an interpreter

subject. Osborne, Dora. "Blind Spots: Viewing Trauma in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*." *Seminar* 43, no. 4 (Nov. 2007): 517-33. Ward, Lewis. "A Simultaneous Gesture of Proximity and Distance: W. G. Sebald's Empathic Narrative Persona." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 1-16.

⁶ One chapter from Uwe Schütte's *Die Poetik des Extremen* deals exclusively with Ernst Herbeck. Schütte, Uwe. *Die Poetik des Extremen. Ausschreitungen einer Sprache des Radikalen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. 338-79. See the "Works Consulted" at the end of this study for a broader list of works by Schütte. As he has dealt with this topic most extensively, references to his other works will be frequently provided throughout this dissertation. See also, Klebes, Martin. "Sebald's Pathographies." *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*. Eds. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006. 65-76 and "If You Come to a Spa: Displacing the Cure in *Schwindel. Gefühle. and Austerlitz*." *The Undiscover'd Country: W. G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*. Ed. Markus Zisselsberger. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010. 123-41. And more tangentially, Schley, Fridolin. *Kataloge der Wahrheit. Zur Inszenierung von Autorschaft bei W. G. Sebald*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012 and Öhlschläger, Claudia. *Beschädigtes Leben. Erzählte Risse. W. G. Sebalds poetische Ordnung des Unglücks*. Freiburg i.Br., Berlin, Vienna: Rombach Verlag, 2006.

⁷ It is noteworthy that Sebald returned to Herbeck for inspiration for three pieces, the only other author Sebald wrote three essays on was Peter Handke. Sebald typically only wrote one article about each artist of interest: a few writers examined by Sebald include Thomas Bernhard, Gottfried Keller, Robert Walser, Elias Canetti, and Jan Peter Tripp.

⁸ Sebald, *BU* 9.

of texts and a writer; but also how future readers of his works can most effectively approach his texts. Sebald couldn't have been more against the predominance of *Werkimmanenz* in the 1950s and 60s since he considered this form of interpretation, which excluded the incorporation of any outside factors when analyzing a text, to be a failed attempt by post-World War II Germany to cover up its Nazi past since "das alles [war] noch kaum unter den Teppich gekehrt."⁹ In order to do justice to a work of literature or art by conducting a thorough, multi-faceted analysis thereof, it is crucial to consider a variety of factors. Sebald believes that to adequately perform a close reading of a text, one must examine several potentially influential components: such as biography, socio-historical elements, economic standing and, perhaps most importantly, current trends in political, philosophical and critical thought regardless of how controversial they may be.

Since Sebald understood that there are many forces at work in the background which contribute to the formation of an author's identity, then in order to successfully interpret Sebald's literature, it is equally essential to scrutinize the components which made him the type of writer he was in the early 1970s as well as in twenty-first century. Professionally, Sebald was both a professor and an author; personally, he was a devout researcher. It would be impossible for any study of Sebald to allude to the influence which all of the texts he read had on him, and yet it is prudent to consider the works which proved to be relevant over an extended period of time. Evidenced by his personal library as well as by the themes he repeatedly returned to in his writings, works on and related to pathology and mental illness were of interest to Sebald for well over thirty years. Thus, in an effort to clarify why madness frequently appears as a trope and how he understood and represented mental illness in his works, this study will examine what Sebald owned, read and cited. Richard Sheppard, Sebald's colleague and friend from the University of East Anglia, reiterates Sebald's statement that one shouldn't read Freud without Schnitzler and vice versa: "You also need to have read the books that were most important to him and know what [Sebald] said about his reading in his critical work. It is surprising how many critics are reluctant to do this."¹⁰ Therefore taking a lesson from Sheppard and from

⁹ Schütte, Uwe. *W. G. Sebald. Einführung in Leben und Werk*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011. 20. The above quote appears in the context of Sebald's horrified acknowledgment that nothing at his university (where Heidegger was Rector) had changed since the Nazi period: "So hatte Heidegger etwa im Jahre 1957 eine Rede auf Johann Peter Hebel gehalten 'die sich in ihrem ganzen Duktus in nichts von dem unterschied, was während der Faschistenherrschaft vorgebracht wurde'" (Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 20). Uwe Schütte refers to Sebald's abhorrence of the *Werkimmanente* approach with regard to his experience at the University of Freiburg where: "Das Curriculum war zu dieser Zeit zwar durchaus entmottet und umfasste auch frühe Modernisten wie Brecht und Musil, doch der Unterricht war noch deutlich vom textimmanenten Interpretationsansatz geprägt" (Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 20). Later Schütte considers how this education contributed to his rebellious approach to literature. Here, the quote is in reference to his *Magisterarbeit* on Carl Sternheim: "Angesichts der zahlreichen Invektiven gegen die Literaturwissenschaftler und (werkimmanente) Interpretationsmethoden der Germanistik versteht sich die Magisterarbeit als radikale Kritik an den bisherigen Erträgen der Sternheim-Forschung ..." (Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 223). Sebald's critique of teaching literature without historical context is additionally mentioned in Richard Sheppard's article on Sebald's college years and time spent as a young instructor in Manchester: "Max seemed to have felt that it [the course material] was, on the whole, taught in a restrictive and uninspiring way. He later recorded that he had attended a first-year seminar on E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Der goldene Topf* and was disturbed to find that this 'strange tale' was being studied without any reference to the 'Realien' (historical events) of the immediately preceding epoch (i.e. the turmoil of the Napoleonic period...)." See Sheppard, Richard. "The Sternheim Years." *Saturn's Moon's: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 42-107. 51-53.

¹⁰ Sheppard, Richard. "Dexter – sinister: some observations on decrypting the mors code in the work of W. G. Sebald." *Journal of European Studies* 35, no. 4 (2005): 419-63. 421.

Sebald himself, one also shouldn't read Sebald without authors such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Rudolf Bilz, Elias Canetti, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich or those affiliates of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

As the goal of this study is to examine the impact of Sebald's research on psychiatry and mental illness in his works, the next section of this introduction shall focus on establishing Sebald's foundation of knowledge and areas of focus. The bulk of Sebald's collection of psychiatric materials stems from the mid-1960s and extends into the 1980s. I will therefore work chronologically to offer a brief illustration of the works Sebald collected during these years and will highlight the key themes and ideas expressed in these twentieth-century texts on psychiatry which impacted Sebald's (political) outlook on peripheral individuals.¹¹

Readers familiar exclusively with Sebald's novels are typically surprised when they encounter the highly controversial essays on literature that he composed throughout the 1980s. These are politically driven polemics which take an anti-authoritarian stance against the institutionalization of aesthetics and academic thought. In Herbeck's poetry, Sebald found an impetus prompting him into revolutionary and critical contemplation. Sebald identifies a protest inherent in the unique form of lyricism produced by Herbeck and believes it encourages the reader to reevaluate the norm. That certain individuals are ostracized and forced to exist *am Rand der Gesellschaft* in order to maintain an unjust, conformity-based status quo is an issue Sebald tackles in the majority of his works. The manner in which Sebald looked to the abnormal as a way to identify the flaws and errs of the mainstream was almost a trend in the late 1960s and 1970s. Thus, this introduction will also explain the origins of this new cultural wave upon which Sebald was riding. I will provide an historical overview of the genesis of a major, albeit often overlooked, aspect of literature and culture in the later twentieth century: the intersection of psychiatry, sociology, madness and art. Sebald's interest in schizophrenic writing is a derivative of a key international cultural intervention and his participation in this movement solidified viewpoints which Sebald would reveal in his writings over the next three decades.

The focus of the initial chapter, "Excavating the Herbeckian Voice in W. G. Sebald's Unpublished Prose", is based primarily on archival material. This section provides a close reading of a passage from Sebald's unpublished novel in which Ernst Herbeck appears. The narrative revolves around the experiences of a young man, the semi-autobiographical Josef, who has just graduated from his university and is preparing to return to his parents' home. After an evening of celebrating the successful completion of his final exams, Josef retires to his room and focuses his attention on a text he has recently procured. This is the memoir of a former university tutor who committed suicide immediately upon the completion of the work. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the voice Sebald has used for the tutor is Herbeck's. Aligned with this exploration, I also analyze a few early, (non-)published poems by Sebald which relate to the Herbeck passage in Sebald's unpublished novel and which reveal specific resonances between his thematic, linguistic and semantic choices and those found in Herbeck's poetry. These early incorporations of Herbeck relate to how mental illness is depicted throughout Sebald's later writings; for example, in the form of neurosis derived from war-related trauma or feelings of homelessness.

Chapter Two, "Ernst Herbeck Inspires A Perspectival Exchange and Border Crossing",

¹¹ Sebald was generally interested in the developments in the fields of natural science, medicine and philosophy. He often referred to medical texts or works in *Geisteswissenschaft* from the Renaissance or the period of the French Revolution. Since his understanding of Herbeck is primarily impacted by his readings of twentieth-century psychological works, these shall be my area of concentration.

begins with an example of how Sebald creates a physical resemblance between himself and Herbeck in *Vertigo*. This physical correlation is a demonstration of a similarity of the outer person, the façade; and yet it serves as a metaphor intimating an inner correspondence underneath the surface: Sebald and Herbeck's shared feelings of a fragmented, split identity. That these identities are split implies they are also malleable or interchangeable, and this provides Sebald an entryway into assuming Herbeck's point of view. In order to see the world from Herbeck's perspective, Sebald and Herbeck engage on an outing to Mount Greifenstein. A close reading of Herbeck's poem "Eine kleine Traverse", which Sebald used as the title for his first article on Herbeck, in conjunction with the "All'estero" chapter from *Vertigo* demonstrates how this walk prompts the narrator to, like Herbeck, traverse a variety of mental and lyrical boundaries while gaining a deeper understanding of the self and one's position in the natural world. This chapter concludes with a comparison of Thomas Mann and the narrator of *Vertigo*, both of whom endure a mental breakdown followed by a confrontation with an Other that serves as the impetus for a voyage, a literal border crossing, that inspires creative discovery and aesthetic appreciation.

In Chapter Three, "Pathological Language, Historical Critique and Environmental Stance", the focus remains on a close reading of "All'estero" in *Vertigo*. I begin by exploring how the primary characteristic signifying the narrator's mental breakdown, namely the sudden failure of vision, is related to Herbeck's eyesight and the manner in which he observed the world. I next turn to a specific phrase, "Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf", in which I locate Sebald's attempt to recreate the features of schizophrenic language based on his familiarity with the descriptions thereof by Leo Navratil. This phrase also points to an intertextuality related to pathology and a mental collapse incurred by a confrontation with an incomprehensible historic event. I conclude this chapter with a close reading of two statements by the narrator which linguistically mirror Herbeck's poetic mode of expression and thematically present topics which make frequent appearances in Herbeck's poetry.

"Locating the Societal Critique in Ernst Herbeck's Poetry", the fourth chapter, begins by illustrating how Sebald viewed Herbeck's language as an answer to the call by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As someone existing in a peripheral position within society, Herbeck's language is antithetical to the mainstream and yet, as Sebald notes in his "Eine kleine Traverse" essay, it nonetheless responds to the current cultural discourse. Inspired by Sebald's desire to identify a social critique within Herbeck's poetry, I perform a close reading of several poems by Herbeck which reveal commentaries on overarching movements such as increasing consumerism or homogenization. Additionally, Sebald discusses Herbeck's style in terms of its relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss's explanation of *bricolage* and yet he neglects to illustrate specific examples from Herbeck's poems. I attempt to fill in this gap with my interpretation of Herbeck's "Die Sprache", a poem also referenced by Sebald in "Eine kleine Traverse". Finally, this chapter ends with a focus on the idea of regression which has, ironically, developed with the progression of industrialization and mechanization. I explore how the regression of human, animal and environmental nature are related to Herbeck.

Chapter Five, "Behaving Beastly: Reading Sebald and Herbeck through an Anthropological and Ecopolitical Lens", engages anthropological and sociological texts to depict how Sebald, inspired by the mode in which animals appear in Herbeck's poetry, expresses opinions which resonate with twenty-first century discussions in the field of ecopolitics. I begin with Pierre Bertaux's study on mutation (*Mutation der Menschheit*) in which he sees all of

humanity in a state of regression. He divides this regressive tendency into two fields: degeneration into an amphibian state or into an animal state. He deems the latter to be a positive regression since this state is reserved for those beings with a poetic mentality. I illustrate how the scene from *Vertigo* in which the narrator and Herbeck find themselves horrified at the sight of a caged “mad dog” demonstrates Sebald’s effort to align himself and Herbeck with the canine realm or the positive animal state. Additionally, I touch on a topic which appears in *Vertigo* and is tangentially related to the “mad dog” scene: the consumption of animals. The “mad dog” scene opens and closes with the sounds of the community eating in the background. I utilize arguments posed by Jane Bennett to interpret this scene from an ecopolitical perspective. I also read this as an homage to Elias Canetti whose ideas aided in Sebald’s analysis in his article, “The Little Hare”, in which Herbeck recalls eating a rabbit as a child, the animal with which he perpetually identified himself. In this act of consumption, Herbeck entered a liminal position between perpetrator and victim, a state Sebald points to as a metaphor for the Germans’ ambiguous position following the Second World War.

This study concludes with Chapter Six, “A Cinematic Shift: Visual Representations of Otherness.” Inspired by Sebald’s interest in cinema, the focus of this chapter switches slightly to explore how certain themes associated with representations of otherness vary between the written and the visual text. Due to Sebald’s personal fascination with the historical figure Kaspar Hauser, I will constellate Sebald’s portrayal of Ernst Herbeck in *Vertigo* with Werner Herzog’s film *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974). I shall briefly outline the cultural movements to which Sebald and Herzog are responding in order to help clarify why they chose to incorporate individuals diagnosed with mental illnesses as protagonists in their artworks. This will be followed by an analysis of how the otherness of Herbeck and Kaspar is demonstrated in a Bakhtinian carnivalesque manner, and also how the ideas posed by members of the Frankfurt School regarding the culture industry are represented in these works. Finally, this chapter ends with an example of protest: of a rebellious reversal of the anthropological gaze.

Sebald’s Budding Interest in Psychology: The Early Years

While it is difficult to pinpoint the genesis of an interest, already during W. G. Sebald’s formative years as a college student in Freiburg in the mid-1960s, he was not far removed from the field of psychiatry. Here, he became acquainted with one of his long-term friends, Albert Rasche, who later became a distinguished psychoanalyst. Rasche demonstrated the dual interest in psychology and literature which would also become Sebald’s continuous occupation. As students, Rasche and Sebald collaborated on the *Freiburger Studentenzeitung* and, while Rasche worked as the editor, Sebald assisted in the selection of works and also published several of his own materials in this newspaper.¹² Although Rasche participated in literary and artistic circles, his primary area of interest remained psychiatry. Following his studies, he earned a *Förderpreis* from the *Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft* for his work “Soziale Aspekt des Traumes.” Rasche and Sebald vacationed together in Italy¹³ and, after Sebald had moved to Britain, they maintained their correspondence, exchanging several letters over the next thirty years.¹⁴ Thus, they continued to follow each other’s work and to engage in an exchange of knowledge in their

¹² Sheppard, “The Sternheim Years” 51.

¹³ Sheppard, “The Sternheim Years” 60.

¹⁴ Included in Sebald’s literary remains at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach are letters ranging from the early 1980s up to 1997.

respective areas of expertise.

Albert Rasche, like many in this circle of friends, was deeply interested in the intellectual movement of the Frankfurt School and Sebald was also immediately inspired by their ideas.¹⁵ The works by Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and the affiliate, Walter Benjamin, had an impact both on Sebald's understanding of post-war German culture and the positioning of the mentally ill in society. Beginning in the late 1960s, Sebald became increasingly radical in his anti-institutional stance. He was incensed by what he considered to be West Germany's pathological unspoken decree to conceal under the comfortable cloak of capitalism and consumer culture all evidence related to Germany's involvement the Second World War. This was underscored by Germany's maintenance of former members of the National Socialist Party within positions of governmental power. Key for Sebald was how the Frankfurt School encouraged an investigation into the way language and modern literature could serve the critical function of voicing a protest against unjust institutions. In his search, Sebald discovered the type of critical voice which was decidedly anti-institutional since it arose from the periphery of society: the voice of madness. Walter Benjamin noted early on that society should take notice of the pathological voice. While he did not specify in his essay on works by the mentally ill exactly what this voice has to offer, based on Sebald's reading thereof, it is apparent Sebald assumed Benjamin wanted to make the public aware of how these works revealed both a revolutionary form of expression in their unique aesthetic constructions which lacked an adherence to linguistic and semantic regulations and also in their phrases which could be interpreted as political critiques.

Sebald studied the works of Walter Benjamin as thoroughly as he did those by the Frankfurt School authors. Benjamin's attempt to increase the level of awareness within the general public concerning artistic creations by the mentally ill evidently did not go unnoticed by Sebald. Most relevant in terms of a discussion of pathology is Benjamin's essay "Bücher von Geisteskranken" (1928). He begins by explaining how he came across a variety of curious works which resisted normal categorization while attempting to organize his library. These books were subsequently collected into a section Benjamin labeled his "pathological library."¹⁶ Singling out one of his earliest encounters with literature focusing on the author's pathology, Benjamin recalls: "Da fielen mir im Jahre 1918 in einem kleinen Berner Antiquariat Schreibers berühmte Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken aus dem Verlag Oswald Mutze, Leipzig, in die Hände ... Ich war sofort aufs höchste gefesselt."¹⁷ If Sebald was unaware of Benjamin's essay, then the resemblance between Benjamin's explanation of his confrontation with literature by the mentally ill and Sebald's statement regarding his own introduction to this genre is truly uncanny. In Sebald's "Des Häschens Kind" essay on Ernst Herbeck in *Campo Santo*, he writes: "Meine erste Begegnung mit den exzentrischen Sprachfiguren Herbecks geht zurück auf das Jahr 1966. Ich entsinne mich, wie ich in der Ryland's Library in Manchester ... immer wieder das dtv-

¹⁵ Sheppard, "The Sternheim Years" 53. For more on Sebald's connections to the theorists associated with the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (Institute of Social Research) in Frankfurt am Main, see for example Hutchinson, Ben. "The shadow of resistance: W. G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School." *Journal of East European Studies* 41 (Dec. 2011): 267-84.

¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. "Bücher von Geisteskranken. Aus meiner Sammlung." *Grenzgänge zwischen Wahn und Wissen. Zur Koevolution von Experiment und Paranoia*. Eds. Torsten Hahn, Jutta Person and Nicolas Pethes. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002. 17-20. Benjamin names his collection his "Pathologische Bibliothek" 17.

¹⁷ I have underlined the above passages for ease of comparison with the following quote by Sebald. Benjamin, "Bücher von Geisteskranken" 17.

Bändchen Schizophrenie und Sprache zur Hand nahm und *staunte* über den Glanz...”¹⁸ Both descriptions begin with the date of contact between the reader (Benjamin, Sebald) and the text (Schreber’s, Navratil’s) establishing this occurrence as a noteworthy, historical event. This is followed by an identification of the locations in which these books were discovered and read: the “antiquarian bookshop” and “Ryland Library”. This implies that Benjamin and Sebald want to demonstrate to their readers that, amongst the wealth of canonical literature which they are physically surrounded by, these two pathological texts have been singled out as exemplary pieces. Both subsequently follow the locative statements with information regarding the publishers, presumably in the hope that their readers shall feel inspired to seek out these books as well. Finally, both conclude with emotive statements: with these particular books in their “hands” they feel fascinated, and nearly hypnotized, by the language therein.

Following this introduction, Benjamin and Sebald turn to brief descriptions of a few of the surprising word combinations created by Schreber and Herbeck and then summarize the historical occurrences which contributed to their downfalls. The link established between anomalous language and history shows Benjamin, like Sebald, already located pathological writing to be an important vehicle for providing a societal commentary. Benjamin concludes his essay with the sentence: “Wenn diese Auszüge den Leser veranlassen könnten, Plakaten, Flugblättern von Irren, erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit zuzuwenden, wäre der Zweck dieser Zeilen erfüllt.”¹⁹ While reading literature by the mentally ill never truly became a mainstream activity, Sebald did turn his attention in this direction, in a sense fulfilling the purpose of Benjamin’s composition.

W. G. Sebald’s Pathological Collection

While it wasn’t until the mid-1960s that art by the mentally ill began to acquire a certain level of popularity, there are a few noteworthy pieces which had begun to break the boundary separating psychiatry and art long before this time. In the field of German Literary Studies, it can be claimed that the twentieth century actually began with the publication of Georg Büchner’s *Lenz* (1835) which features a naturalistic approach to portraying madness. This work presents a retreat from aesthetic idealism as a result of Büchner’s belief that the truth, while not always beautiful, but must be depicted in art. In the 1960s and 1970s, when madness came to the forefront of intellectual discussions, there was a reexamination of *Lenz* and this novella was used to make the social commentary that “Büchner wanted to portray society, not Lenz, as ‘insane;’ that he ‘critiqued a Germany that stifled the voice of social criticism and creativity.’”²⁰ Following *Lenz*, the next noteworthy works, although they were never popular with the general public, were the medical recordings by Heinrich Hoffmann. Hoffmann was the director of the state mental hospital in Frankfurt am Main and within his texts which reflect on his experiences at the institute and comment on medical developments, one occasionally find writings by his patients which he had collected. While these continue to be of interest primarily within the field of psychiatry, he is widely known as the author of *Struwwelpeter* (1845), itself a rather pathological text. However subtly, Hoffmann frequently incorporated his observations of his patient’s psychosis into his literary and satirical writings.

¹⁸ Sebald, “Des Häschens Kind” in CS 171. Navratil, Leo. *Schizophrenie und Sprache. Zur Psychologie der Dichtung*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1966.

¹⁹ Benjamin, “Bücher von Geisteskranken” 20.

²⁰ Madland, Helga Stipa. *Image and Text: J. M.R. Lenz*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994. 4.

The earliest work from the twentieth century to deal exclusively with mental illness is the aforementioned book which was lauded by Walter Benjamin: *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* (1903) by the judge Daniel Paul Schreber. Schreber spent over a decade in a psychiatric institution after being diagnosed with dementia praecox. At one point, he was able to convince the outside world of his sanity (albeit briefly) through the publication of this memoir in which he reflects on his mental breakdown and describes the ensuing psychosis. This text was frequently analyzed and cited by such authors as Sigmund Freud and Elias Canetti. In his article “Summa Scientiae. System und Systemkritik bei Elias Canetti,” Sebald looks at Canetti’s analysis of Schreber’s madness and recognizes that the example provided by Schreber’s case demonstrates: “die Kontinuität der deutschen Ideologie von dem vergleichsweise noch naiven imperialen Traum bis in die äußersten Konsequenzen faschistischer Gewalt.”²¹ Considering Canetti’s argument on the linguistic manner in which Schreber found himself controlled by the State system, Sebald explains how Schreber felt he lacked the power to regulate his own mind. If Schreber were asked his current thoughts and hesitated for a moment, the voices in his head would provide the answers for him: “An die Weltordnung sollte er denken!”²² Sebald compares the type of mind control experienced by Schreber to the case of Kaspar Hauser, a figure which shall be returned to in Chapter Six of this study. Hauser, who was completely sheltered from society until the age of sixteen, provides a profound demonstration of the way in which one becomes indoctrinated into the ideology of the State and how one key factor in this indoctrination is language. Sebald describes how this control of the individual by the state can lead one into madness. The voices in Kaspar’s mind, which were voices representing the ideology of the state as in the Schreber case, “repräsentieren Vernunft, Ordnung, Helle und Sauberkeit, fordern fraglose Anpassung ans System. Wem sie mißlingt, der fühlt sich verfolgt und umstellt von Regeln und Verboten.”²³

In 1921, the psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler published *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* in which he presents the artistic productions as well as the “Kurze Lebensbeschreibung” by the schizophrenic (whose diagnosis at that time was “dementia paranoides”), Adolf Wölfli, and professes the therapeutic benefits of artist production for mentally ill individuals. This work served as an impetus in uniting the fields of psychiatry and art as it rapidly became an underground sensation within the literary community. For example, immediately after reading the text, Rainer Maria Rilke enthusiastically wrote letters to several friends encouraging them to read it; he even ends a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé with the words “lies, lies-.” In this book, Rilke likely saw an affinity to his own works in its attempts to represent a new way of seeing and to locate the origin of artistic creative ability:

“Rilke nimmt den ‘Fall’ Wölfli,” sagt Herman Meyer in seinem Aufsatz “Die Verwandlung des Sichtbaren,” “offenbar in existentiell verpflichtendem Sinn sehr Ernst; ernster, möchte man fast meinen, als er den ‘Fall’ Klee genommen hat und es ist eigentlich nicht das gestaltete Werk als solches, das ihn hier interessiert, sondern die Frage, was für Aufschlüsse der Fall Wölfli über die inneren Bedingungen des künstlerischen Schaffens, über die ‘Ursprünge des Produktiven’ aus der Krankheit geben kann.”²⁴

²¹ Sebald, “Summa Scientiae” in BU 94.

²² Sebald, “Summa Scientiae” in BU 96.

²³ Sebald, “Summa Scientiae” in BU 96.

²⁴ I have underlined the above phrases for emphasis. Luck, Rätus. “Rainer Maria Rilke und Adolf Wölfli.” *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 14 (1987): 73-89. 82.

Coincidentally (perhaps), in an interview with James Atlas in 1998, Sebald professed that he wanted to visit Ernst Herbeck as: “I thought it would help me understand some of the basic conditions of creativity to go there.”²⁵ Another correspondence Sebald recognized between Wölfli and Herbeck was the clarity of their voices when expressing ideas in a comical or ironic manner. In his copy of Morgenthaler’s book, Sebald highlights the discussion of the lucidity of Wölfli’s writing when it focuses on a particular figure, Liseli Bieri: “Zum erstmal ist hier nicht nur von der Sinnlosigkeit seiner Reden, sondern auch von einem gewissen Humor, den er manchmal dabei Verrät, die Rede.”²⁶ In fact, another passage marked by Sebald indicates Sebald’s recognition that he shared a similarity with Wölfli as well: they often approached their artworks using the same methodology, namely by randomly shuffling through various forms of print media: “Dieser Zeitschriften und etwa ein alter Atlas sind die Quellen, aus denen er sein Material her hat.”²⁷ Finally, Sebald highlighted a passage on a stylistic tendency, the incorporation of foreign words, which is seen in Wölfli’s writing and also in Herbeck’s poems: “Die Mehrzahl der Fremdwörter sind Wortneubildungen und die geographischen Begriffe sind meist imaginär.”²⁸

A final individual worth mentioning here who also strived to bridge the gap between psychiatry and art was the psychiatrist, Hanz Prinzhorn. Prinzhorn studied art history and philosophy at the university and then acquired a job in Heidelberg which required he oversee the collection housed there by Emil Kraepelin, this included thousands of works by the mentally ill. With material gathered from this collection, Prinzhorn published the text *Bildnerie der Geisteskranken* (1922) and, nearly eighty years later in 2001, several of the works pictured and described in Prinzhorn’s book gained permanent housing, rather than temporary showings at art exhibitions, when the museum *Sammlung Prinzhorn* opened in Heidelberg. Today, the museum continues to offer visitors access to both the permanent and a rotating exhibit. While many of the art works created by the mentally ill were destroyed during the Second World War as examples of “Entartete Kunst”,²⁹ a few were protected and were gradually, especially during the

²⁵ Atlas, James. *W. G. Sebald: A Profile*. [6-7 February 1998]. *Paris Review* 41, no. 151 (Summer 1999): 278-95. 291.

²⁶ Morgenthaler, W. *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler*. Bern and Leipzig: Ernst Bircher Verlag, 1921. 10. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

²⁷ Morgenthaler, *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* 13. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA). This study will also refer to Sebald’s methodology in terms of his comparison of his mode of research to that of a dog’s (sniffing out a coincidentally discovered trail) and his and Herbeck’s use of *bricolage* style.

²⁸ Morgenthaler, *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* 14. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

²⁹ During the time when most works were being destroyed as “Entartete Kunst”, Prinzhorn’s institution put these pieces on display (though the majority of the works were safely tucked away in the attic): “Clinical director Carl Schneider adds to the touring exhibition *Entartete Kunst* drawings of the collection (from 1938, Berlin station). He describes the collection and its creators as pathological proof material against Modern Art, however, does not discredit the collection.” Jagfeld, Monika. “The Prinzhorn-Collection of the Psychiatric University Hospital in Heidelberg: History.” 15 Nov. 2010. Web. 28 Feb 2014. http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gf7/geschichte_eng.shtml. The allure of “Entartete Kunst” has not waned over the years. In fact, the *Neue Galerie* in Manhattan currently houses the exhibition “Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937”. An article from the *New York Times* describes this as: “The show itself is one of the few in an American museum in the past two decades to address, on a large scale, the Nazis’ selective demonizing of art, how that helped foment an atmosphere of permissible hatred and forged a link between aesthetics and human disaster.” Cotter, Holland. “First, They Came for the Art. ‘Degenerate Art,’ at Neue Galerie, Recalls Nazi Censorship.” *The New York Times*. 13 March 2014. Web. 24 March 2014.

1960s and 1970s, brought to light.

Dubuffet's "Mad" Collection and the Sociological Dimensions of "Outsider Art"

The fact that the world suddenly began to turn its eyes towards the intersection of psychiatry and art during the second half of the twentieth century is due in part to the antipsychiatry movement which questioned the foundations upon which the psychiatric institution was based (diagnostic processes, treatment methods, doctor-patient relations, etc.), and also to the critiques of capitalism which were supported by the aforementioned ideas posed by the Frankfurt School of Critical Thought. The capitalist critique was prompted by societal discontent arising from issues related, for example, to civil rights or to the Vietnam War. It is no coincidence that the criticisms which targeted both capitalist and psychiatric institutions appeared and then escalated around the same time (the 1960s and 1970s) since they were inherently linked. Online, one blog dealing with this movement opens with an image of a protest poster upon which is scrawled: "Kapitalismus und Irrenhaus nur der Volkskrieg löscht sie beide aus."³⁰ Inherent within this slogan is a demand for equal rights, as what is implied via the mental health issue is that capitalist society was supporting a form of repression: "Es geht immer auch um die Herrschaft der 'Gesunden' über die 'Kranken'."³¹

David Cooper, the South African Marxist psychiatrist who coined the term "antipsychiatry", played a key role in organizing the Congress on the Dialectic of Liberation in 1967. Amongst the representatives in attendance were Herbert Marcuse, Ronald D. Laing, Allen Ginsberg and Stokely Carmichael (a Black Power leader).³² From these few names, one notes that a variety of fields and areas of interest were represented at the Congress: at least one member of the Frankfurt School, psychiatrists, (politically engaged) artists and individuals concerned with civil liberties. In line with this growing focus on civil liberties,³³ many began to wonder how the mentally ill were being treated behind the walls of the institutions. Already following the publication of "The Myth of Mental Illness" (1960) by psychoanalyst Thomas Szasz, professionals from the field of psychiatry as well as from the general public started to wonder if the treatments patients were receiving in mental healthcare facilities were doing more harm than good. Many asked if mental institutions could be fostering an unjust and oppressive power relation between the physicians and their patients, a consideration which prompted further explorations since the psychiatric institute was simply one of many potentially corrupt institutions. The perceived problem with the organization of the psychiatric system was increasingly viewed by the public as a microcosm: a small-scale manifestation of a defect inherent in capitalist society.

This attack upon psychiatry's knowledge base and overarching structure became an

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/arts/design/degenerate-art-at-neue-galerie-recalls-nazi-censorship.html?src=dayp&_r=0

³⁰ sometimes explode. "The eclipse and re-emergence of the antipsychiatry movement." 1 Oct. 2013. Web. 28 Feb. 2014. <https://libcom.org/blog/eclipse-re-emergence-antipsychiatry-movement-01102013>

³¹ Gorsen, Peter. "Literatur und Psychologie heute. Zur Genealogie der grenzüberschreitenden bürgerlichen Ästhetik." *Literatur und Schizophrenie. Theorie und Interpretation eines Grenzgebiets*. Ed. Winfried Kudszus. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977. 13-68. 13.

³² For a complete list of attendees see: Tyson, Michael. "1967 Dialectics Participants" *Dialectics of Liberation*. 2010. Web. 28 Feb 2014. <http://www.dialecticsofliberation.com/1967-dialectics/dialectics-participants/>

³³ Other minority groups of this time which also gained attention were the feminist and the African-American Civil Rights Movements.

extended metaphor employed to reveal that it wasn't the individual that was (mentally) ill, but rather the system itself: "Der Kranke erscheint dementsprechend als Opfer gesellschaftlicher Fehlentwicklungen, sein sogenannter Irrsinn entspricht einem pathogenen Sozialzusammenhang."³⁴ It was no longer simply a biological defect which made an individual mad, but rather a conglomerate of contributing factors, all of which could be located in "normal" daily life such as an upbringing in a flawed familial structure and coming of age within a corrupt societal system. In this line of thinking, what was considered to be normal suddenly was placed under the suspicion of being abnormal. While this idea gained in popularity during the 1960s and 1970s, it had been expressed earlier by the Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno, who wrote in *Minima Moralia*:³⁵ "Wäre etwas wie eine Psychoanalyse der heute prototypischen Kultur möglich, ... so müsste eine solche Untersuchung dartun, dass die zeitgemässe Krankheit gerade im Normalen besteht."³⁶

From the ideas and concerns related to the examination of psychiatry, there developed a call for revolution against an unjust state which used power relations to control its citizens. This transition is evidenced in Winfried Kudszus's quote: "Ronald D. Laing etwa erkennt nicht zuletzt im Double-Bind die Antinomien einer Gesellschaftsordnung, die das Individuum systematisch in Widersprüche verstrickt, um es dann leichter manipulieren zu können."³⁷ By the 1970s, the antipsychiatry movement had gained international recognition and support and a general trend of employing the abnormal as a way to analyze and question the standard of the norm had been solidified, including within the art world: "Die Antipsychiatrie hat mit ihrer Kritik normaler Verhaltensweisen auch den Blick für die produktive Abnormalität einer Kunst und Literatur geschärft, die sich entschieden vom normalen Wirklichkeitsverständnis entfernt."³⁸

On the one hand, art by the mentally ill was used as a way to point out idiosyncrasies of the norm; on the other hand, it was used to show that the lines separating normal from abnormal are vague at best. This antipsychiatric argument that normal and abnormal, sane and insane are indistinguishable can be seen as a leitmotif throughout Sebald's novels and essays. In his personal copy of *Literatur und Schizophrenie*, Sebald highlighted the following sentence: "Für Wilhelm Reich ist der 'homo normalis' der eigentlich abnorme Fall, während der Schizophrene mit einer hochentwickelten Sensibilität, die ihn für die Widersprüche der 'normalen' Welt empfänglich macht, begabt ist."³⁹ Inspired by this idea, in his own work Sebald uses Ernst Herbeck's poetry as the prime example for the difficulty of separating sane from insane:

Die an den Texten Herbecks ablesbare Möglichkeit eines Übergangs von diskordanten in konkordante Vorstellungen widerlegt die These von Gegensatz zwischen Sinn und Unsinn und spricht dafür, daß es zwischen diesen beiden Polen sehr viel mehr unterirdische Verbindungen gibt, als unsere Schulweisheit sich träumen läßt.⁴⁰

³⁴ Kudszus, Winfried. "Einleitung. Literatur und Schizophrenie. Forschungsperspektiven." *Literatur und Schizophrenie. Theorie und Interpretation eines Grenzgebiets*. Ed. Kudszus. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977. 1-12. 3.

³⁵ Sebald read this text so closely that he at one point contacted Adorno while writing his book on Carl Sternheim in order to clarify the meaning of a certain quote. Hutchinson, "The shadow of resistance" 268-69.

³⁶ Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1951. 65.

³⁷ Kudszus, "Einleitung. Literatur und Schizophrenie" 3.

³⁸ Kudszus, "Einleitung. Literatur und Schizophrenie" 3.

³⁹ Kudszus, "Einleitung. Literatur und Schizophrenie" 7. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁴⁰ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" 135. Similarly, Sebald also begins his article on Peter Handke's *Erzählung von der Angst des Tormanns* with the sentence: "Bei der Lektüre von Krankengeschichten, die nach den Schnittmustern

While Sebald tends to point out the difficult nature of determining where the normal ends and the abnormal begins, he is keenly aware of mainstream society's views on where these distinctions lie. He therefore specifically uses extreme examples, such as the schizophrenic Herbeck, to illustrate and critique various aspects of the norm. Turning to what society would generally agree to be unambiguous products of madness as a way to rebel against the norm began in the art world earlier than the official antipsychiatry movement, namely with Jean Dubuffet's promotion of *art brut*.

As of 1945, the artist Jean Dubuffet began visiting psychiatric institutions in order to collect the art which was created by the patients therein. Dubuffet was vehemently opposed to the rules, regulations and standards of institutionalized art and believed the world would be better off if it would forget the past entirely and start fresh. It was in the artistic creations by the mentally ill that Dubuffet found hope for an art form which was pure and had not been manipulated by cultural influence. These works were not only aesthetically pleasing but also beautifully ahistorical. In an interview from 1956, Dubuffet stated: "In delirium I see salvation ... I am very taken by madness ... In it I see our only chance ... Art only interests me insofar as it is an exercise in this direction. Reasoned art makes me laugh. It is nothing in my opinion."⁴¹ In this turn against reasoned art, Dubuffet was also intrigued by the tendency of the mentally ill to create works out of found objects, namely whatever happened to be on hand:

... the idea of creating an entire environment out of *objets trouvés*, as pioneered in Dada and Surrealism, was also explored by amateur builders sometimes grouped together under the term *art brut* ... Many of the smaller examples of *art brut* collected by Jean Dubuffet, who coined the term, consisted of large quantities of found objects.⁴²

This method is highly reminiscent of what Claude Lévi-Strauss would refer to in his book *Das wilde Denken* (1962) as *bricolage*: art which was made out of odds and ends or a recycling of materials from objects which have fallen into disuse. While Lévi-Strauss employs this term in an anthropological connection with the mode of creation demonstrated by native tribes, this is the definition to which Sebald would turn in order to describe his own and also Ernst Herbeck's methods: "Das Werk des Bastlers, das sich aus Abfällen und Bruchstücken, aus 'den fossilen Zeugen der Geschichte eines Individuums oder einer Gesellschaft' zusammensetzt."⁴³ Key here is the phrase "the fossilized witnesses of history" since, unlike Dubuffet's desire to forget, Sebald wants to remember and reconstitute the past (and the objects from the past) in meaningful ways in the present.

Finally, in 1972 the art critic Roger Cardinal coined the term and published a book on "Outsider Art". While following in the footsteps of Dubuffet in terms of being inspired by works which were created outside of commercial culture and thereby challenged definitions of art, Cardinal's term refers not only to art by the mentally ill, but also to art created by people who felt inspired to create despite the lack of any official training or education in the field. Both *art brut* and "Outsider Art" are perhaps best defined by Michel Thevoz:

Art Brut, or Outsider Art, consists of works produced by people who for various reasons

der Psychiatrie gefertigt wurden, nimmt es immer wieder wunder, wie wenig sie angeben können über die Phase, in der die Grenze zwischen normalem und pathologischem Verhalten überschritten wird." Sebald, "Unterm Spiegel des Wassers" in *BU* 115.

⁴¹ Da Costa, Valérie and Fabrice Hergott, eds. *Jean Dubuffet: Works, Writings, and Interviews*. Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2006. 140.

⁴² Gale, Matthew. "Objet trouvé." Oxford University Press, 2009. Web. 1 March 2014. http://www.moma.org/collection/details.php?theme_id=10135

⁴³ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 138-39.

have not been culturally indoctrinated or socially conditioned. They are all kinds of dwellers on the fringes of society. Working outside the fine art system (schools, galleries, museums and so on), these people have produced, from the depths of their own personalities and for themselves and no one else, works of outstanding originality in concept, subject and techniques. They are works which owe nothing to tradition or fashion.⁴⁴

Although select books on the poetry and writings by patients at psychiatric institutions existed, the primary interest in *art brut* or Outsider Art revolved around visual artistic creations. The publications by Leo Navratil would, however, successfully combine the literary and visual arts by the mentally ill.

“Anreger, Arzt und Mentor”: Leo Navratil and the Artists in Maria Gugging⁴⁵

One of the most influential individuals in terms of helping to develop Sebald’s interest in and knowledge of mental illness was the psychiatrist and author Leo Navratil. Born in Türritz in 1921, Navratil began working at the *Landesnervenheilanstalt Maria Gugging* just outside of Vienna in 1946 and remained active at this institution until his death in 2006. Navratil, following especially in the footsteps of Walter Morgenthaler from a quarter-century prior, believed that participation in creative activities could assist in the treatment of mentally ill patients. Beginning in the mid-1950s, he encouraged his patients in Gugging to draw figures which he would then use as aids to conduct his diagnosis. Navratil noticed that varying states of psychosis which the patients had trouble expressing verbally could be expressed artistically.

Not all patients were particularly drawn to the visual arts however, and on one occasion while the patient Ernst Herbeck was struggling to draw a picture, Navratil was struck by the idea to have him write a poem instead. Moved by the language of this text, Navratil expanded this experiment and requested the same of other patients, giving them topics to which they would compose a poem or write a brief response in prose. While the majority of patients continued to draw or paint, a few were like Ernst Herbeck and were more inclined towards writing. Arnold Schmidt and Edmund Mach also exhibited profound skills in this area and have both had their poetry published in collections within the past decade, thereby demonstrating the continued interest in this type of literature.⁴⁶ While this artistic process was therapeutic and enjoyable for the patients, many did not spontaneously take up the task, instead Navratil would prompt his patients by providing them with a title and a postcard sized piece of paper and then request they write freely on the term. These tasks were exercises in artistic creativity and they also served as an outlet for the patients to express their emotions in an uninhibited manner. Additionally, as individuals who had been outcast from mainstream society, Navratil claimed creating works of art provided many patients with the means to form a new identity – that of an artist: “Die Schreib-Therapie lasse Patienten, die ihre ‘bürgerliche Identität’ verloren haben, ‘als Künstler eine neue Identität finden.’”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Michel Thevoz is the original curator of the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne. “What is Outsider Art.” *Raw Vision*. 1996-2014. Web. 1 March 2014. <http://www.rawvision.com/what-outsider-art>.

⁴⁵ For a brief overview of Leo Navratil’s accomplishments, see: “Leo Navratil: Anreger, Arzt und Mentor der ‘Gugginger Künstler.’” *News.At*. 19 Sept. 2006. Web. 8 May 2014. <http://www.news.at/a/leo-navratil-anreger-arzt-mentor-gugginger-kuenstler-151585>.

⁴⁶ Schmidt, Arnold. *Arnold Schmidt - 111*. Ed. Otmar Schmid. Vienna: minimal, 1997. Schütte, Uwe. *Edmund Mach: Meine abenteuerlichen Schriften - Gedichte und Prosa 1965 bis 1996*. Vienna: Picus, 2009.

⁴⁷ Rumler, Fritz. “Ich kann mich nicht einordnen.” 28.11.1977. *Der Spiegel* 49 (1977). Web. 30 Oct. 2011.

It wasn't long before the products of this creative and therapeutic process made their way beyond the walls of the Gugging institution. Appreciating the unique artistic abilities revealed in the pictures and writings created by individuals who had no prior exposure to the institutionalized art world, Navratil collected these images and pieces of prose. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Navratil published books which focused on his exploration of the relationship between psychosis and artistic production. His earliest works include *Schizophrenie und Kunst* (1965) followed by *Schizophrenie und Sprache* (1966), in which Navratil points out the many poetic characteristics occurring in verses written by individuals with schizophrenia. Providing examples of poetry from Dadaist writers as well as from the classic and arguably schizophrenic author Hölderlin, Navratil compares these works to those created by his patients, claiming that there are several underlying commonalities between professional writers and schizophrenics, primarily in terms of their emotional states and linguistic specificities. Because Navratil's books balanced psychiatry with art, they appealed not just to psychiatrists, but also to many prominent as well as promising young European visual artists and writers.

Navratil's contribution to the field of psychiatry and to the art world is his analysis of the commonality between schizophrenics and creative writers occurring on a linguistic and pictorial level. He argues that the symptoms of schizophrenic illness cause people with this disease to use literary devices such as neologisms, oxymora or ellipses. By way of such a comparison, it becomes clear that within the language of illness something very sane can be recognized: the use of poetic expression as an attempt to reflect on one's view of and position in the world. Like many inspired by the antipsychiatry movement, Leo Navratil wanted to show through language that if artists can mimic the language of the mentally ill and if schizophrenics can create the language of writers, then it becomes impossible to identify the boundary separating genius and madness. Thus, creativity is not only for the trained artist, but for everyone attempting to locate their place in the world: "... die schöpferische Begabung zeigt uns nicht nur ihren oft grandiosen Werkaspekt, ihre ästhetische Leistung, sie ist immer auch Teil eines Menschen im Umgang mit sich und seiner Welt."⁴⁸ Additionally, creativity is essentially the capability to make the commonplace seem new again, so all individuals are eligible to be artistic creators: "Wenn eine Definition des Schöpferischen in der Fähigkeit besteht, Wahrnehmungen, Erfahrungen neu, 'frisch' machen zu können, dann braucht diese Kraft nicht mehr für das Genie oder das große Talent allein beansprucht zu werden."⁴⁹

Thanks in part to the spirit of the 1960s and the many cultural movements which inspired people to turn against institutions (psychiatry, art or government) and seek out that which qualified as abnormal, Navratil's books quickly gained in popularity. The more widely read Navratil's collected editions became, the more artists wanted to engage with the authors at Navratil's institution firsthand. The mental institution in Gugging became a celebrated destination for literary artists who also seemed to balance on the precarious border separating sane from insane. Authors such as Peter Handke, Gerhard Roth, Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker visited Gugging. A few of them composed short essays in which they reflected upon their meeting with Ernst Herbeck (aka "Alexander") and these responses were published as part of *Alexanders poetische Texte* (1977).⁵⁰ In 1981, Leo Navratil revamped his institution by creating another residence for his artistic patients next to the original facility, it became known as

<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40680457.html>.

⁴⁸ Mitscherlich, Alexander, ed. *Psycho-Pathographien des Alltags*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972. 8.

⁴⁹ Mitscherlich, *Psycho-Pathographien des Alltags* 9.

⁵⁰ Navratil, Leo, ed. *Alexanders poetische Texte*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977.

the *Haus der Künstler*. To this day, the general public is welcome to visit the *Art Brut Center* in Gugging to explore the atelier; the museum, which has a rotating and a permanent exhibit showcasing the visual arts by residents of the *Haus der Künstler*; and the gift shop featuring information about the history of the institution and the collected writings by the patients. There are several artists from the *Haus der Künstler* who have since become world renowned; including Oswald Tschirtner, Otto Prinz, August Walla and Johann Hauser.

Sebald not only kept up with the publications released by Navratil, he also expanded his personal collection of pathological literature by saving various articles and news reports on Outsider Artists throughout the 1980s.⁵¹ Within Sebald's literary remains, he has collected several articles, for example, on the highly eccentric Jörg Janzer. Originally trained and employed as a neurologist and psychiatrist, his colleagues deemed Janzer insane. He has, incidentally, been professionally diagnosed with schizophrenia, and yet he claims "dass er zu gesund für seinen Beruf als Nervenarzt sei."⁵² While Janzer attempted on several occasions to maintain his position in the medical profession, in the end, he realized he was more inclined towards the arts. He became a musician, a poet and the author of "Romanoide". His works are only comparable to those by Outsider Artists, and his self-proclaimed hero is Antonin Artaud. Aside from Janzer's personal history which definitively places him in the "outsider" category, Sebald likely would have been drawn to his book *Fleischesfleisch* as it relates the experiences of the first person narrator who finds himself wandering through foreign territories, much like the narrators of each of Sebald's novels. In the journal *Der Tagesspiegel*, Janzer is described as a Beat poet who in *Fleischesfleisch* "beschreibt darin sein Leben, die Odyssee eines Wanderers und großstädtischen Einsiedlers in Paris." To this day, Janzer continues to create radical works of art and occasionally delivers lectures.

Another artist represented in Sebald's collection is Heinz Braun (1939-1986), a former postman who gave up his steady job in order to act and to paint eclectic works which resemble, in no small way, the paintings by the schizophrenic patients in Gugging. Braun's frenzy to experience life in all its possible excessive wonder is evident in his artwork: "Und wie in einem Rausch schuf er ... eine Unmenge an Bildern, heftige und leidenschaftliche Arbeiten, in denen sich häufig expressive Wucht und skurriler Witz paaren."⁵³ Known by his colleagues as a "bunter Vogel", Braun became popular with artists as an underground sensation primarily following the publication of an article devoted to him in the journal *Der Stern* in 1982. He also gained wider recognition as the star of various Herbert Achternbusch⁵⁴ films. In terms of the

⁵¹ These materials are housed in W. G. Sebald's literary remains at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁵² All of the quotes in this paragraph related to Janzer are taken from the article in *Der Tagesspiegel*. Hennig, Falko. "Meine Mundhöhle ist ein Kunstraum." *Der Tagesspiegel*. Berlin. 28 Feb. 2006. Web. 19 March 2014. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/meine-mundhoehle-ist-ein-kunstraum/688868.html>

⁵³ Kelber, Ulrich. "Bilder eines zarten Beserkers." *Mittelbayrische Zeitung*. 12 Sept. 2013. Web. 19 March 2014.

⁵⁴ Braun met Achternbusch in 1974 and regarding his film roles: "Im 'Andechser Gefühl' spielte er einen Schulrat, in 'Bierkampf' einen Neger, in 'Servus Bayern' einen Reporter, als 'Atlantischwimmer' trat er an, wo es hieß: 'Du hast keine Chance, aber nutze sie'. Es waren Rollen, die seiner anarchischen und rebellischen Lebenshaltung entsprachen." Kelber, "Bilder eines zarten Beserkers." Achternbusch, to whom Sebald devoted two essays, was also a figure of interest in terms of Outsider Art since he was viewed by Sebald to be similar to Herbeck in many ways. He too creates works which are vehemently opposed to the standards and norms expected by the institutionalized art world. Uwe Schütte explains that: "Achternbusch wird verstanden als ein 'primitiver' Schriftsteller in dem Sinne, daß er die zur Aufnahme in den Kulturpantheon notwendige Produktion kommensurabler Literatur bewußt verweigert. Gerade aber die Ungeschliffenheit und das Rohe seines Schreibens begründet sein künstlerisches Gelingen." Furthermore, Schütte argues that he, like Herbeck, belongs more to the

motifs which appear in Braun's visual arts, his tendency to combine the human and animal realms is reminiscent of Herbeck's poetics. Braun, however, lacks the childlike innocence of identification and empathy with animals found in Herbeck, Braun's paintings are rather symbolic portrayals in an almost Orwellian manner: "Schweine malt er und Kühe, teils ganz bäuerlich, dann wieder bekommen die Viecher anthropomorphe Züge, etwa Stöckelschuhe an die Hufe oder werden mit allerlei drastischer Sexuelsymbolik versehen."⁵⁵

To underscore the relevance of this material, while regrettably no projects by Sebald came to fruition as a direct result of this collection, the fact that he had likely intended to work more on Outsider Artists is evidenced by a series of notes recorded on a single sheet of paper within Sebald's literary remains.⁵⁶ On this sheet, he has included a list of the names of various Outsider Artist (the aforementioned Adolf Wölfli, Teresa Ottalo, Aloïse Corbaz, Clarence Schmidt, Auguste Forestier and Emile Ratier)⁵⁷ accompanied by brief descriptions or keywords indicating particular stylistic tendencies. This intimates that Sebald may have planned to either integrate references to these artists within his own literary works or to devote an academic article to them. Perhaps in the end, the plan to work on a series of Outsider Artists was simply replaced by Sebald's focused representation of Ernst Herbeck.

Ernst Herbeck: A Brief Biography of a Liminal Poet

Ernst Herbeck was born in Stockerau, near Vienna, in 1920. His childhood was marked by exclusion, which was likely due to health problems: Herbeck had extremely poor vision in his left eye and he was born with a cleft-lip. He underwent several operations for his lip, but the most successful procedure didn't occur until he was already eighteen and, even after this surgery, he was left with a speech impediment.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that he worked industriously as a student, due to the various medical visits, he was held back in school and he found himself isolated from his peers. In terms of his education, he had no poetic training and only the most basic exposure to literature. At the age of twenty, he went to a psychiatric clinic for the first

periphery: "Als eine Art literarischer Schamane betreibt Achternbusch eine empathische Identifikation mit all dem, was durch den Zivilisations- und Modernisierungsprozeß in eine Außenseiterposition gedrängt wird: den Verrückten, den Tiere, der Natur." Achternbusch will appear again in this study in Chapter Six as an actor in Werner Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. For more information on Sebald's approach to Achternbusch see Schütte, Uwe. "Der Hüter der Metaphysik. W.G. Sebalds Essays über die österreichische Literatur." *manuskripte* 155 (2002): 124-28.

⁵⁵ Kelber, "Bilder eines zarten Beserker."

⁵⁶ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1960s (date not provided), 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁵⁷ Perhaps Sebald had been exposed to some of these Outsider Artists by way of Michel Thevoz's book *Art Brut*. New York: Rizzoli, 1976. Very little literature exists nowadays on these individuals, but there are references to Teresa Ottalo's work in *Art Brut*, complete with images of the impressive letters which she had embroidered. Aloïse Corbaz is also mentioned by Thevoz, her colorful paintings of voluptuous women were displayed by Jean Dubuffet. Clarence Schmidt is still well-known for the houses he built for himself in New York out of found objects such as shards of mirrors and dolls. The French Outsider Artist, Auguste Forestier, created intricate sculptures, many of which were anthropomorphic creatures, out of objects such as wood, metal, leather and even animal teeth. Emile Ratier, another French artist, impressively created a variety of sculptures out of wood, such as merry-go-rounds or the Eiffel Tower, following the onset of his progressive blindness.

⁵⁸ This statement is based on the firsthand experience of Winfried Kudszus who visited the institution in Maria Gugging on several occasions. Kudszus, Winfried. "Sprachprozesse in moderner Lyrik: Herbeck, Celan, Hölderlin." *Anstösse* (1984): 137-43.

time. He experienced severe mood swings and claimed a girl had been attempting to hypnotize him through Morse code. Over the next few years, Herbeck was treated in several hospitals for his psychiatric issues and, in 1946, he was transferred to what would become his most permanent residence, the mental institution in Gugging, where he was cared for by Leo Navratil who had started there that same year.

While Herbeck's poetry appeared throughout the books published by Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* (1977) was the first to be devoted solely to him. This was followed by *Bebende Herzen im Leibe der Hunde* (1979) and *Alexander. Ausgewählte Texte* (1982). In 1989, Gisela Steinlechner published an analytical study of Herbeck's writing and she edited a collection of his poetry in 2013.⁵⁹ Almost immediately following Herbeck's passing in 1991, *Im Herbst da reihet der Feenwind. Gedichte* (1992) was published. Most recently, due perhaps in part to the popularity of Sebald's novels and Herbeck's appearance in *Vertigo*, works such as the collection *Ernst Herbeck die Vergangenheit ist klar vorbei* which features commentaries and responses to Herbeck's poetry by various artists including two previously published works by Sebald, as well as *Wenn man so die Welt durchblickt. Gedichte* (2006) and the English translation of various poems by Herbeck *Everyone Has a Mouth* (2012)⁶⁰ have been released. In April of 2014, there was even a theatrical performance entitled "Ein schöner Hase ist meistens der Einzelle" at the *Schauspielhaus* in Vienna devoted to Herbeck and featuring his and August Walla's poetry.

"Fulguration": Sebald's Amalgamation of Natural Science and Poetry

In his attempts to understand the type of creative process which serves as the impetus for Herbeck's literature, Sebald would rely on his readings from a variety of disciplines. Throughout this study, I shall examine how he incorporates discourses such as those from anthropology, the natural sciences, critical theory or psychiatry in his interpretation of Herbeck's poetics. To set the stage for this interdisciplinary undertaking, it is useful here to explain why Sebald felt the need to turn to these alternate discourses and to include a brief example of how he combines literature by Herbeck with one of these areas. The following section will explore how Sebald looks to the writings of the natural scientist Konrad Lorenz to clarify an aspect of Herbeck's creative tendency.

In his "Eine kleine Traverse" essay, Sebald claims that there are no terms in our everyday language which can adequately describe the spontaneous instances of "irrationale Inspiration" or "rationale Montage" as experienced by Herbeck.⁶¹ Since there are a plethora of terms in the Humanities which prove themselves to be insufficient, Sebald refers instead to Konrad Lorenz's description of the scientific process of "Fulguration." In his discussion of nature, Lorenz also illustrates the failure of language to properly describe how "immer wieder etwas völlig Neues in Existenz tritt, etwas das vorher einfach nicht da war."⁶² He finds the terms we currently use to be satisfactory in a depiction of the origination of an object which has evolved or even been created (since the word "creation" already implies that there is an existing creator working

⁵⁹ Steinlechner, Gisela. *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache. Analytische Studien zu den Texten Alexanders*. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989. Herbeck, Ernst. *Der Hase!!!!: Ausgewählte Texte*. Ed. Steinlechner, Gisela. Salzburg: Jung und Jung, 2013.

⁶⁰ Herbeck, Ernst. *Everyone Has a Mouth*. Trans. Gary Sullivan. New York: Ugly Duckling, 2012.

⁶¹ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 135.

⁶² Lorenz, Konrad. *Die Rückseite des Spiegels. Versuch einer Naturgeschichte menschlichen Erkennens*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977. 47.

behind this process), but our language falls short when we attempt to verbally portray the spontaneous emergence of something completely new. In Lorenz's referral to the spontaneous generation of completely new natural objects, he means those which were "previously not present, not even hinted at. The new qualities arise in conjunction with two or more systems in a new unity."⁶³

Sebald adapts Lorenz's observations of nature to apply them to linguistics and the instantaneous combination of otherwise unrelated words or grammatical elements. Sebald was likely drawn to Lorenz's description of "Fulguration" due to the term's association with that particular aspect of nature which is often linked to a spontaneous creativity occurring either in the genius or madman. The phrase "Fulguratio" essentially means "Blitzstrahl" or "lightning bolt".⁶⁴ One cannot help but think here of the lightning bolt as a symbol or vehicle of communication with higher spirits. For example, in Daniel Paul Schreber's explanation of his ability to speak with the dead, he compares this experience to a holy intervention featuring "rays" (essentially lightning bolts):

It is true that at first one still attempted to interrupt it [otherworldly communication]; one then still differentiated "holy times," that is times when nerve-contact or communication with rays or talking of voices – after all only different expressions for one and the same phenomenon – were to occur and "unholy times" when it was intended to give up the communication with rays.⁶⁵

Aware of the potential metaphysical or religious connotations, such as the implication of the sudden formation of a new being due to a godly intervention, a researcher of nature like Lorenz is quick to point out that "Fulguration" implies a collision of two natural objects which then make something entirely original and unexpected. The result at the end of this process is a simplified unity, a "unity out of diversity."⁶⁶ In his example of how Lorenz's discoveries could be applied to Herbeck's poetry, Sebald provides the following statement: "Sätze wie 'Es geht bergup in jenes Tal' ... zeigen an, wie man auf 'falschen' Wegen in die Nähe richtiger Einsicht gelangt."⁶⁷

Out of a process likened to "Fulguration" which Sebald locates in the mind of a schizophrenic, words which normally would not coalesce come together to reveal a unifying, harmonious image. While Sebald doesn't elaborate on this example, one can speculate how such an assessment originated. In this sentence, one recognizes a clear doubling of unconventional combinations. Much like the process of "Fulguration", there are a variety of collisions and transgressions which defy the normal rules of both linguistics and nature at work here. The word "bergup" is a linguistic impossibility, a peculiar mixture of a German noun with an English preposition. Yet, despite the previous nonexistence of this word, its meaning is instantaneously recognizable and, probably due to the close relation to the German term "bergauf", the word comes across as a harmonious symbiosis of the two languages. In terms of a transgression of nature, there is the image of a valley which is somehow at enough of an incline to lead one essentially up a mountain. While this is also a natural impossibility, in a flat valley the direction implied is horizontal and not vertical, one can easily interpret this brief sentence as a metaphor

⁶³ Löw, Reinhard. *Concepts and Approaches in Evolutionary Epistemology: Towards an Evolutionary Theory of Knowledge*. Ed. Franz M. Wuketits. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1984. 221.

⁶⁴ Lorenz, *Die Rückseite des Spiegels* 47.

⁶⁵ Schreber, Daniel Paul. *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. Eds. and Trans. Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter. New York: New York Review of Books, 2000. 81-82.

⁶⁶ Lorenz, *Die Rückseite des Spiegels* 50.

⁶⁷ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 135.

for life. It is difficult to relax during times of rest, peace or general stability since one is constantly aware that unexpected turmoil and strenuous upheaval can lie just around the corner, ready to break the harmony of the “valley” at any time. By way of such spontaneous, unconventional combinations of images, poetry by schizophrenics provides new perspectives and insight into the daily aspects of our world which often go unnoticed or are taken for granted by the norm.

Sebald’s Psychiatric Diagnosis of Carl Sternheim

While this study focuses on Sebald’s incorporation of Herbeck’s style within his own writing, it is worth mentioning that his profound familiarity with the characteristics that make a work Herbeckian is due to his extensive study of the methods of analyzing schizophrenic writing employed by Leo Navratil. Sebald was, in fact, so taken with Navratil’s approach, that he also employed these methods in his analysis of canonical literary authors, albeit in a tongue in cheek manner in order to offer a controversial critique. Sebald read Navratil’s *Schizophrenie und Sprache* in 1966 while he was working on an interpretation of Carl Sternheim’s (1878-1942) writings. In the opening of Sebald’s article “The Little Hare” on Ernst Herbeck, he mentions that he would turn to Navratil’s book as a distraction and reprieve from his Sternheim work.⁶⁸ That Sebald’s reading of this text was more than a simple “distraction” from his Master Thesis on Sternheim is evidenced in his direct adaptation of Navratil’s interpretive methods within this Thesis. In *Carl Sternheim: Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära*, Sebald essentially puts himself in Navratil’s position as a psychiatrist whose study of his patient’s psychosis is aided by an analysis of their artistic productions. In examining Carl Sternheim’s linguistic choices, Sebald, playing the psychiatrist, pronounces Sternheim to be schizophrenic based on the qualities of his writing which resemble those trends pointed out by Navratil in *Schizophrenie und Sprache*.

In general, Sebald’s analysis of Carl Sternheim reads more like a work of psychology than a literary critique. In an effort to revise the view of Sternheim in the field of German Studies in the mid-1960s, Sebald conducts what is essentially a case study of Sternheim the individual: he reflects on his pathology and its determination by society, and then demonstrates how this pathology is, unbeknownst to Sternheim, revealed in his works. Sebald concludes that Sternheim’s pathology is caused by his failed attempt at assimilation. Looking at societal trends, Sebald sees two primary tendencies occurring towards the end of the nineteenth century: on the one hand, there were many instances of acculturation, primarily Jewish individuals who adapted to the moral maxims and modes of behavior of the late bourgeoisie; and on the other hand, there was a revival of awareness of the Zionistic doctrine.⁶⁹

Comparing Sternheim to other authors at the turn of the century like Kafka and Hofmannsthal, Sebald claims the need to assimilate forces Sternheim to unwittingly become a prisoner to the symbolic or pseudo-traditions of Wilhelmina Germany. Sebald mentions Sternheim’s family background, how his Jewish father managed to assimilate within his society completely: he worked as a banker and married a Christian woman. Unlike his father, Sternheim always felt he was outside of this society, and since he lacked the Zionistic tradition which could have been passed down to him by his father, he unconsciously adopted the

⁶⁸ Sebald, “Des Häschens Kind” in CS 171.

⁶⁹ Sebald, Winfried Georg. *Carl Sternheim. Kritiker und Opfer der Wilhelminischen Ära*. Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: W. Kohlhammer, 1969. 49.

Bürgertum as a surrogate. As evidence for this claim, Sebald cites certain passages from Sternheim's literature where, despite the fact that it is obvious that Sternheim is attempting to be revolutionary in his writing and to maintain a critical distance from the society in which he lived in order to legitimize his existence as an artist, his unconscious desire to assimilate within the *Bürgertum*, to please his audience and to receive acknowledgement and acclaim for his work, results in the insertion of stereotypes and clichés within his literature which have been taken from the "imaginary past" of Wilhelmina Germany.⁷⁰

Sebald looks at Sternheim's characters and claims they lack unique or individual voices, they simply regurgitate phrases which are typical of their types.⁷¹ Sebald argues Sternheim's attempt to be revolutionary in his writing, and yet to simultaneously conform to the standards and expectations of his society, result in his mixed or "schizophrenic" feelings.⁷² While it is difficult to determine at this point in Sebald's work if he is using the term "schizophrenic" primarily as a metaphor for the dividedness one sometimes feels in a given society, because he places such heavy emphasis on the validity of psychoanalytical interpretations, including quotes by Joseph Gabel on the occurrence of mass delirium or mental disturbance (*Geistesgestörtheit*)⁷³ and devoting a subsection of Chapter Two to Sigmund Freud,⁷⁴ it appears that he is using this term quite literally. This naturally makes Sebald's argument more problematic in the academic world than a metaphor of madness would for example.

In chapter three of *Carl Sternheim*, Sebald quotes Navratil several times to demonstrate how Sternheim's schizophrenic tendencies manifest themselves. Like Navratil, who looks at the language of various canonical authors in order to show the resemblance to the language of diagnosed schizophrenics, Sebald looks closely at Sternheim's language to demonstrate its schizoid characteristics.⁷⁵ He begins by pointing out the manic use of alliteration and assonance which are apparent in sentences such as: "...der Fleisch gehügelt über Bünde hüpfht, die, während Fülle sich überall freidrängt, mit einer Hand die üppigen Brüste zwingt..."⁷⁶ Taking the following quote from Navratil on how typically in schizophrenic language the "gedanklichen

⁷⁰ "Dieser Pseudotraditionalismus mit seiner germanizistischen Ideologie, die sich auf eine imaginäre Vergangenheit beruft, zeigt sich am deutlichsten in den dekorativen Klischees des wilhelminischen Staates, in der Ausstaffierung einer auf allen Ebenen des gesellschaftlichen Lebens verarmten, rationalistischen Wirklichkeit mit theatermäßigem, irrationalistischem Pomp; diese dekorativen Klischees waren – wertneutral genommen – in einem ähnlich umfassenden Sinne für die gesamte Gesellschaft repräsentativ, wie es der Künstler nach der Erreichung seines Assimilationsziels zu sein hofft." Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 51.

⁷¹ Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 90.

⁷² "Aus der Addition der Symptome – Angst und Unsicherheit auf Grund eines Gefühls der Ausgeschlossenheit, Versuch einer Selbstbestätigung durch primitivste Überheblichkeit und Eigenlob, stereotype Anschuldigung anderer Individuen und Gruppen, kontinuierliches Umschlagen rationalistischer Denkmechanismen in irrationalistische Ergebnisse – ergibt sich eindeutig das Syndrom einer Neurose mit bereits schizoidem Charakter, deren strukturelle Identität mit den Mustern der spätbuerglerischen Ideologie auffallen muss." Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 61.

⁷³ "Joseph Gabel hat in seiner umfassenden Studie 'La fausse conscience' auf die Möglichkeit einer Geistesgestörtheit einer ganzen soziologischen Gemeinschaft hingewiesen und sie am Beispiel vor allem der totalitären Staaten demonstriert, deren Symptomatik die Diagnose einer kollektiven Schizophrenie erlaubt." Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 61.

⁷⁴ While Freud is not directly quoted, the influence Freud had on Sebald is impossible to overlook. Within the first paragraph alone, Sebald mentions the "Über-Ich", the "Es", the "orale Fixierung" and the "Ödipus-Komplex." Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 62.

⁷⁵ A subsection of chapter three is entitled "Der schizoide Charakter der Sternheimischen Sprache." Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 94.

⁷⁶ Sebald's italics. Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 95.

und bildlichen Assoziationen um so mehr zurücktreten, je stärker sich die Klangassoziationen ausbreiten,” Sebald claims that Sternheim’s sentences mirror those typically used by schizophrenics in that the choice of words in his sentences is determined by their sound rather than their meaning. Sebald states that such literary devices cannot be seen as being used here only as a means of artistic expression because such phrases occur at completely random points throughout Sternheim’s writing, not just in cases where such language would intensify a given situation. Instead, they demonstrate the last hope for the schizophrenic: a feeling of security and comfort imbued by the repetitive sounds within language. Although Sebald doesn’t quote this idea directly from Navratil, the supposition that the repetitive use of words or sounds can be of comfort to someone with schizophrenia does occur in *Schizophrenie und Sprache*:

Die absurd anmutenden sprachlichen Stereotypen der Schizophrenen haben oft einen geheimen Sinn; manchmal lassen sich den ständig wiederholten Äusserungen Ängste oder wahnhafte Vorstellungen entnehmen; oder die Aussprüche werden wie Zauberformeln gebraucht, um drohendes Unheil damit abzuwenden.⁷⁷

As evidenced throughout Sebald’s reading of Sternheim’s literature, his interpretation accords with the sociological take on mental illness. Sebald claims that, due to conflicts in Sternheim’s background, it is society that ultimately caused his schizophrenia. This sets the stage for Sebald’s reading of Herbeck. Since the same analytical methods used to reveal schizophrenic tendencies can be uncovered just as easily in the literature by “normal” authors as by diagnosed schizophrenics, then perhaps these manifestations of madness are a derivative of societal impact on the individual. As such, if society can make one mad, then the individual is likely a microcosm or mirror reflecting the madness underlying a particular societal structure. Thus, Sebald will turn to Herbeck in order to critique the madness evidenced in post-war German capitalist culture.

⁷⁷ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache*. 49.

Chapter One

Excavating the Herbeckian Voice in W. G. Sebald's Unpublished Prose

An Undiscover'd Gem: An Introduction to Sebald's "Josef"⁷⁸

Within the corpus of W. G. Sebald's writing, there is perhaps nothing which so effectively reveals the way in which he would incorporate Herbeck as an intertextual figure over the years as his earliest, unpublished novel, which I shall refer to eponymously as "Josef". While all of Sebald's works are highly intertextual, and this early novel which is imbued with references to various (mostly British) authors is no exception, what "Josef" establishes is the sheer endurance of Sebald's fascination with Herbeck. Assuming this novel was completed in 1967, these allusions qualify him as one of Sebald's longest-standing intertextual literary figures.⁷⁹ There are two drafts of this work housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach and in both Herbeck appears in the same context, albeit in varying ways.

Within the secondary literature, information on "Josef" is vague; this is not particularly surprising considering even the folder in which this document is preserved in the archive is labeled "W. G. Sebald?" For readers familiar with Sebald works, however, the voice is unmistakable. It is likely Mark M. Anderson is alluding to this novel in his claim: "His first unpublished novel, written while he was still a student, is set in the Allgäu, as are the autobiographical sections of his first three published works."⁸⁰ In terms of setting, this is partially true of the novel but there are also many scenes where Josef is in transit or at the university. Above I claimed "Josef" was likely finished in 1967; this is based on my assumption that this is the novel Uwe Schütte mentions in his introductory book on Sebald. In Schütte's study, he refers to an autobiographical work Sebald composed "in dem er Erfahrungen seiner Freiburger Studentenzeit verarbeitete und frühere Lebensphasen als Erinnerungen des Protagonisten einbezog."⁸¹ This description aligns with the plot of "Josef", as does Schütte's additional claim that "das Manuskript wurde im März 1967 abgeschlossen und von mehreren Verlagen abgelehnt, worauf Sebald es für immer in die Schublade legte."⁸² This date corresponds with the references made in "Josef" to certain events and other literary texts which would have been current for Sebald at this time. For example, the protagonist receives a letter from his friend asking if he has been following the discussions on the American professor who has decided to freeze himself at the age of 73 so that he may be awoken once a cure for cancer

⁷⁸ This is an allusion to Sebald's title: "The Undiscover'd Country: The Death Motif in Kafka's *Castle*." *Journal of European Studies* 2 (1972): 22-34. As will be demonstrated, the primary theme of this article resonates well with "Josef".

⁷⁹ There are references to canonical authors such as Eduard Mörike, although the work mentioned here is the rather pathological novella *Maler Nolten*, and Elias Canetti and Franz Kafka are woven subtly throughout this novel as well. In addition, above I state intertextual "literary" figures, as the ideas of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School also appear in this early work. Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁸⁰ Anderson, Mark M. "A Childhood in the Allgäu: Wertach, 1944-52." *Saturn's Moon's: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 16-41. 18.

⁸¹ Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 21.

⁸² Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 22.

has been discovered.⁸³ This is a reference to James Bedford, the psychology professor who was the first person to be cryogenically preserved in January of 1967. The narrator also speaks of Saul Bellow's novel *Herzog* from 1964 and refers to a lecture being held in town at the America House on President Johnson's Policy on Vietnam (Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnam beginning in 1965).⁸⁴

In addition to these historical and literary allusions are also the personal references. "Josef" revolves around the narrator returning to his small hometown following his college exams for a visit before travelling abroad. Therefore, the events recorded in the work are likely a combination of Sebald's experiences in Freiburg as well as at the University of Fribourg since this description coincides chronologically with Sebald's time in Switzerland where he, like Josef, received his *licence èt lettres (summa cum laude)* in 1966.⁸⁵ Select acquaintances of Sebald's also have cameo appearances as characters in "Josef", including his friend mentioned in the introduction of this study who later became a well-known psychoanalyst, Albert Rasche. In one scene for example, Josef is sitting with a group of friends listening to the radio and reminiscing. A question is posed and the answer is expected to come from Albert. One character asks: "Was sagt die Psychoanalyse dazu? Albert?!"⁸⁶ This question reveals both that Albert was viewed by his peers to be the expert on psychoanalysis and also that this topic was already of general interest to Sebald and his friends. One can therefore assume that Rasche was someone who shared his knowledge in this field with Sebald and was likely also a contributor to Sebald's own interest and future inquiries into psychology.

In terms of his incorporation of Herbeck in "Josef", I shall demonstrate how Sebald applies a Herbeckian mode of speech to a minor character, the tutor, and I will also analyze the context in which Sebald has included a poem by Herbeck into this novel. Around the middle of both drafts, Josef completes his final exams and, after celebrating a bit with friends, he retires to his dormitory room where his attention turns to a collection of papers he recently procured. While in the first draft these papers are given to Josef by his friend Lulef, in Draft Two, Josef stumbles across these tucked away in the attic of one of his university buildings. Within the text in Josef's possession, the memoirs of a former university tutor have been meticulously recorded. While the name of the tutor changes in each draft, the role he plays in the plot remains the same. Years prior, the tutor had suddenly left town for an extended period of time. Although he was cordial to the members of his community upon his return, he nonetheless retreated from society and spent his days alone at home from morning until night frantically writing down his recollections. Immediately after completing his memoirs, the tutor put on his suit, gathered his briefcase and left town once more. Within in a few days, his body was discovered in the woods, his death presumed to be a suicide. As Josef reads the tutor's memoir (and we along with him), what is revealed is that the voice Sebald creates for the tutor entails many qualities which are

⁸³ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁸⁴ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁸⁵ Sebald attended the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg im Breisgau from autumn 1963 to summer 1965 and the University of Fribourg between October 1965 and summer 1966, immediately thereafter he travelled to the United Kingdom to begin working as a *Lektor* at the University of Manchester. Sheppard, Richard. "W. G. Sebald: A Chronology." *Saturn's Moon's: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 619-60. 622-23.

⁸⁶ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

typical of Herbeck. The sentences of the memoir are written in a style which contrasts with the rest of the work, thereby demonstrating Sebald's mimicry of the abstract, expressionistic and symbolic nature of Herbeck's writing.

What is especially interesting regarding a discussion of Sebald's interest in Herbeck is the fact that, in addition to the two complete drafts, the Herbeck scene, where I see Herbeck represented by the tutor, has been rewritten a third time. According to the papers collected in Sebald's literary remains, this is the only section which Sebald reworked (or at least typed out a third time) and kept within his paperwork. In "Draft One", the passage regarding the tutor's memoir occurs between pages 43 and 47, and yet between pages 45 and 46 there are two pages without numbering which have been inserted and which reveal that this passage was written a third time, I will refer to these as the "Supplementary Pages". "Draft Two" refers to the tutor's memoir as it appears in the regularly numbered pages between 70 and 72 of what is presumably the final version of "Josef". Since this is an analysis of the incorporation of Herbeck's voice, I shall focus primarily on key passages from Draft One as this is where Sebald inserted the most direct references to Herbeck. Additionally, towards the end of Draft One (between pages 59 and 60), there are four pages of hand written notes by Sebald which appear to be further ideas he considered incorporating within his novel. The first page of these notes is comprised of a list of ten points, one of which I see to be a direct derivative of Sebald's study of Herbeck's language. Although the tutor scene demonstrating Herbeck's influence is brief, encompassing only two to three pages out of over seventy-five, it offers the reader valuable insight regarding key motifs and ideas which Sebald would return to in his writing over a thirty year period. What shall be explored here in a close reading of the tutor / Herbeck passage are the aspects of Herbeck's language to which Sebald was most drawn and therefore attempted to recreate, as well as the themes of Herbeck's poetry which Sebald wanted to include in his own works.

Before turning to the examples of Herbeck's language in "Josef", it is interesting to note that general issues of psychology served as the impetus for this text. Especially in the section on the tutor, one sees war-related trauma and feelings of homelessness integrated in a way which would be repeated in Sebald's later novels. The first section of this chapter will briefly outline how, even in 1967, Sebald felt compelled to incorporate outsider figures with whom he could identify and express his empathy as a way to partially deflect undercurrents of his own experienced trauma due to his problematic relationship to his (father)land. To show his desire to represent the tutor as an outsider figure, I will discuss how Sebald alters his name throughout the various drafts in order to associate him with European Jewry. Actually, the tutor is doubly marginalized: a poem by Herbeck, which is meant to be the tutor's voice, has been added to the memoir, meaning Sebald aligns the tutor with another group which was persecuted during World War II: the mentally ill. Furthermore, Herbeck is not the only marginalized figure associated with the tutor in this passage, I shall also explain how Sebald incorporates his grandfather and Franz Kafka, a constellation to which Sebald would return in *Vertigo* (1990), to reveal his sympathy for those individuals who suffer from feelings of homelessness. As a contrary figure to the sympathetic wanderer, Sebald includes the defender of the homeland. I will demonstrate how Sebald utilizes another individual who is frequently associated with pathology and whose literature also embodies qualities Sebald recognized in Herbeck's voice, namely Ezra Pound, to provide a critique of his father's generation.

Branching out to examine Sebald's broader, late 1960s critique of Western society's waning interest in environmental issues, I will show how Sebald uses intratextuality by adding a portion of one of his poems within "Josef" to express his opinions regarding man's hubris and

violent intrusion into the natural world. I shall align Sebald's intratextual passage with the poems "Der Herbst" and "Die Erde" by Herbeck to show not only the identical ideas expressed, but also their similar employment of irony and anthropomorphism. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of Sebald's imitation of key elements, such as images of animals and misspellings, from Herbeck's poetry. In looking at what he selected to recreate from Herbeck's works, one sees Sebald's attempt to also approach grave subjects – a critique of religious hypocrisy, Hitler's totalitarian regime and the (natural) history of destruction – with a lighthearted, childlike playfulness.

Sebald's First Attempt at "Imaginative Empathy"⁸⁷

In terms of the presence of psychology in his early work, the Herbeck scene in a sense reveals one of Sebald's own pathological tendencies: the compulsion to return to the site of childhood trauma. Already the reader sees an expression of the issue which would be brought to the foreground in Sebald's novels; namely, the dichotomy between those melancholy figures unable to move beyond trauma and those who are incapable of mourning due to a repression of past events. This theme would first be discussed in direct, autobiographical terms after Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*⁸⁸ became a topic of debate. *On the Natural History of Destruction* was not only a harsh critique of mainstream German society's willful amnesia in order to avoid mourning their past and sympathizing with the victims, but as David Kaufmann points out, it also reveals Sebald's recognition of the Allied Bombing as the source of his own trauma.

One typically associates the origination of this type of trauma with highly personal experiences. For example, in his consideration of Herbeck's mental illness, Sebald alludes to Herbeck's childhood and locates the cause of his schizophrenia in his repressive relationship with his overly authoritarian father. This turn against the parental figure is frequently referenced in psychiatric studies on the genesis of schizophrenia. Around the 1960s, the idea that social and familial dynamics could have as much to do with the onset of schizophrenia as heredity became widely accepted. Since the primary stages of socialization occur in the home, then this arena necessarily contributes to individual development and, in certain cases, psychosis: "So weist die kommunikationstheoretisch orientierte Schizophrenieforschung nachdrücklich auf die krankheitsfördernde Rolle der Familie hin und hebt das Double-Bind hervor..."⁸⁹ Sebald points to this connection in *Vertigo* in his discussion of Herbeck's illness: "Life in the family, and especially his father's incisive thinking, were corroding his nerves, as he put it. In the end he lost control of himself..."⁹⁰ That madness can be linked with the forced suppression of ideas, thoughts or characteristics of one's identity which do not conform to expected standards is a topic often grappled with by Sebald. And yet, Sebald also tends to broaden this phenomenon to encompass the collective trauma an entire generation suffered at the hands of an oppressive fatherland.

Sebald claims he is born of trauma, making himself the child of an abusive and

⁸⁷ This phrase is borrowed from Kaufmann, David. "Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace: Melancholy and Trauma from Sebald to Benjamin and Back." *Cultural Critique* 70 (Fall 2008): 94-119. 108.

⁸⁸ Sebald, W. G. *Lufkrieg und Literatur*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2001 (originally published in 1999). Sebald, W. G. *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Trans. Anthea Bell. New York: Random House, 2003.

⁸⁹ Kudzus, "Einleitung. Literatur und Schizophrenie" 2.

⁹⁰ Sebald, W. G. *Vertigo*. Trans. Michael Hulse. New York: New Directions, 2000. 38.

malfunctioning parental society. Concerning the genesis of childhood trauma and Sebald's self-diagnosis, he states:

Yet to this day, when I see photographs or documentary films dating from the war I feel as if I were its child, so to speak, as if those horrors I did not experience cast a shadow over me, and one from which I shall never entirely emerge. . . . I know now that at the time, when I was lying in my bassinet on the balcony of the Seefeld house and looking up at the pale blue sky, there was a pall of smoke in the air all over Europe.⁹¹

Thus, despite the fact that these were events Sebald never experienced directly, Kaufmann claims: "Sebald argues that through imaginative empathy, he has somehow experienced *more* than others have and has been truly scarred by events while the others have skated by on the surface of memories they have repressed."⁹² It is this scarring which served as the lifelong impetus for the repetition compulsion apparent in Sebald's writing. Throughout his works, one sees a reflection of the distanced nature of his childhood trauma. Since Sebald lacks direct experience with war and yet realizes he has been impacted by this event, his narrators represent this personal conflict as they are always only semi-autobiographical figures held at a slight remove. Thus, being unable to make direct contact with the site of his own trauma, Sebald's figures seek out individuals that have more direct experiences with war. In "Josef", one recognizes Sebald's budding attempts at "imaginative empathy" by way of his linguistic assumption of the position of a traumatized individual (the tutor / Herbeck). Additionally, one sees Sebald's compulsive tendency to return to his childhood trauma (the Allied Bombings) in a roundabout manner; namely, by placing the primary focus on the experiences of a traumatized medium (here again the tutor / Herbeck).⁹³

Throughout Sebald's novels, he tends to focus on this trauma incurred by mankind's destructive inclinations by consistently depicting individuals who have been made pathological by war-related events. The eponymous hero of Sebald's last published novel, Austerlitz, studies architecture due to his compulsive obsession with railway tracks. It is clear the neurosis exists, not because Austerlitz is actually ill, but because he has not yet uncovered and come to terms with that aspect of society which caused his pathology; namely, the outbreak of the war and his forced participation in the *Kindertransport*. By contrast, when Sebald includes Herbeck as a character in *Vertigo*, what stands out is a striking lack of pathology in this diagnosed schizophrenic. Of all Sebald's characters, Herbeck seems the least neurotic, not because he successfully repressed his personal trauma, but because he projects his madness into his writing, thereby producing a commentary on and protest against trauma and illness in his poetics.

Sebald's alter-ego narrators are all pathological to a certain degree, which necessarily reflects upon his own psychological state as their creator. In Sebald's copy of *Psychopathien des Alltags*, he highlighted a section from an article by Lawrence Kubie which discusses how an author's childhood trauma will be returned to by the subconscious and thus will continually be represented in the work in a disguised form. Sebald marked the following

⁹¹ Kaufmann, "Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace" 108.

⁹² Kaufmann, "Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace" 108.

⁹³ See Stephanie Bird's article on touch and tact for more on Sebald's use of mediums and on his attempt to create narrators who remain distant observers in his later novels. In her article, she claims that "Sebald points to the significance of the narrator 'who brings the tale but doesn't install himself in it' . . . and who approaches his subject 'with the greatest possible discretion.'" Bird, Stephanie. "'Er gab mir, was äußerst ungewöhnlich war, zum Abschied die Hand': Touch and Tact in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* and *Die Ausgewanderten*." *Journal of European Studies* 41 no. 3-4 (2011): 359-75. 365.

passage and above it he handwrote the words “Wiederholung // Symptomatik”.⁹⁴

Ebenso mag ein Dramatiker ein halbes Dutzend Stücke schreiben, die das gleiche Thema in verschiedener Verkleidung behandeln ... Dieses Thema wird in einer Reihe von Verkleidungen ausgedrückt, ohne Lösung und mit einer sich steigenden Frustration, die jede folgende Fassung färbt.⁹⁵

That Sebald was acutely aware of this tendency to return to the same topic in camouflaged form was demonstrated in the Introduction of this study which showed his analysis of Carl Sternheim’s repetitious expression, in varying forms, of the neurosis derived from his inability to assimilate. This makes one wonder why Sebald would consciously repeat in his writings exactly this compulsion to repeat. It seems this “child of war” confronts the site of his trauma in literature in a hopeful attempt to come to terms with this collective past by way of a type of “writing cure”, not unlike the kind of writing cure Navratil prescribes for Herbeck. In both cases, these therapeutic efforts manage to hold trauma at bay, but the undercurrents of neurosis are inevitably inextinguishable.

Kubie further writes: “So lernen wir am Sektionstisch das, was es letztlich ermöglicht, todbringende Krankheiten zu verhindern. In gleicher Weise begreifen wir an den Extremen des Krankseins, wie das Normale erkannt und letztlich gerettet werden kann.”⁹⁶ I believe in Sebald’s works when he imitates Herbeck’s language, as is the case in “Josef” where Herbeck is an integral aspect of the tutor’s character, he is engaging in a linguistic attempt to tear apart, fragment and dissect the illness of our world in order to repair it, piece by piece. As Kubie states: if one can identify an illness, one is then capable of recognizing and creating what should be the norm. For Sebald, World War II and its aftershocks provided evidence that the norm in Western Society had become ill; an illness which manifested itself as a widespread lack of humanity. Therefore, one way to return to the norm and reclaim humanity is through empathetic identification with what society has labeled abnormal. In artistically recreating the language of the schizophrenic Herbeck, Sebald strives to undergo a process of defamiliarization in order to see the world in an unconventional, and thereby ironically healthy way. This process should prompt critical thinking and reflection on who we are, were and could be. Sebald’s early experimentation with the language of madness in “Josef” results in a fragmented, alienating form. This is a dissection of language which, by attacking the rules and utilitarian structure of linguistics, should cause the reader to question the institutionalization and organization of society at large since this extreme example of abnormality is not meant to draw attention to its own flaws but rather to those of the norm.

On Labeling: An Identifier of Heritage and Outsider Status

While the tutor’s background remains ambiguous, it is safe to assume his view of himself as an outsider and his retreat from human contact is prompted by Jewish heritage and linked with World War II. Here, one sees a resonance with Sebald’s later novels in which the narrator is destined to encounter a traumatized individual in order to help them recover repressed memories.

⁹⁴ Quotations attributable to W.G. Sebald, as collected in *Psycho-Pathographien des Alltags* (Suhrkamp). Copyright © 1972 by W.G. Sebald. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁹⁵ Kubie, Lawrence S. “Die Wechselwirkungen zwischen schöpferischen und neurotogenen Vorgängen.” *Psycho-Pathographien des Alltags*. Ed. Alexander Mitscherlich. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972. 13-52. 21. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁹⁶ Kubie, “Die Wechselwirkungen zwischen schöpferischen und neurotogenen Vorgängen” 22.

Josef's procuring of the tutor's memoir could be Sebald's earliest recreation of a type of "purloined letter". Jan Ceuppens examines a short piece by Sebald in which this phenomenon appears: "'La cour de l'ancienne école' revolves around a picture reaching its real addressee by pure accident ... one of the many improbable coincidences in Sebald's work, and an original variation on the theme of the 'purloined letter'."⁹⁷ Perhaps when Sebald wrote "Josef" he also had Edgar Allan Poe's detective story (1844) in mind⁹⁸ as here too he incorporates the inexplicable, but as he sees it very real, role fate and coincidence play in our lives. The papers were destined to land in Josef's hands as he is the one meant to preserve the memoirs therein within his own story. Throughout his novels, Sebald's narrators acquire bits of a story and feel prompted by sociological and ethical imperatives to seek out the missing details to reclaim and memorialize repressed segments of history.

I base my assumption of the tutor's Jewish heritage not only on Sebald's interest in issues of assimilation and German-Jewish conflicts, but also in the manner in which he alters the tutor's name throughout the drafts. It appears that by the late 1960s, onomastics had already become a topic of interest for Sebald.⁹⁹ Beyond the intensive consideration for the tutor's name, Sebald includes within this novel a moment of self-reflexivity in which Josef considers his moniker as well. As Josef places a letter he has received back into its envelope, he examines the words written upon it and notes: "'An Josef Amberg.' Der eigene Name. Ein verlegtes Spiegelbild persönlicher Antike."¹⁰⁰ This comment is also interesting in its connection to Herbeck. As will be demonstrated throughout this work, the consideration of one's name, in terms of revealing social standing and familial history, and the process of naming, as in claiming possession of an object by labeling it, prompts a questioning of how each individual, regardless of their societal position, is inevitably intertwined with and impacted by the scope of history.¹⁰¹

In an attempt to establish a distance from the labels society has placed upon him, or to at least gain an element of control over his own identity,¹⁰² Herbeck refers to himself in his poetry in aggrandized form: "Ernst Heldentum". Josef expresses similar discontent in his consideration

⁹⁷ In the short piece to which Ceuppens is referring (which is printed in the collection *Campo Santo*), the narrator is supposed to write a story on a picture by Buchholz of an abandoned schoolyard and, having difficulty coming up with a theme, he lays the picture off to the side of his desk. Later, the narrator accidentally and coincidentally drops the image into a letter to a Corsican friend who claims the image is of the school she attended as a child. Ceuppens, Jan. "Transcripts: An Ethics of Representation in *The Emigrants*." *W. G. Sebald: History, Memory, Trauma*. Eds. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006. 251-63. 251.

⁹⁸ Sebald was, if not a devoted fan, at least familiar with Poe's works. One book can be located within Sebald's personal library: *Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of Mystery and the Imagination*. London: J. M. Dent, 1912.

⁹⁹ For more information on the relevance of names in conjunction with Herbeck see the section "Tra-versing Nature or One within a Multitude" from Chapter Two of this study.

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¹⁰¹ For more on this topic, also see Chapter Two and the discussion at the beginning of Chapter Four of this study on how Sebald alludes to the similar points of view expressed by Ernst Herbeck and Alexander Kluge on the role of the individual within an historical context.

¹⁰² Herbeck had already been labeled via his diagnosis of schizophrenia, and after Navratil began collecting his poetry, he was given his pen name "Alexander" by Navratil without being previously consulted on the moniker: "Alexander ist aber auch ein Name für einen *Autor wider Willen*, es ist kein selbstgewählter, sondern ein zufälliger, beliebiger Name, ein Pseudonym, das von Navratil, dem Initiator und Herausgeber der Texte, ohne Wissen des Autors ausgesucht wurde." While most of his initial poems appeared under the name Navratil had chosen for him, there are a few which include Herbeck's reworking of his own last name: Alexander Herbrich. Steinlechner, Gisela. *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache. Analytische Studien zu den Texten Alexanders*. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989. 16.

of the grossly archaic manner in which individuals are labeled via naming. One automatically inherits familial history, which can seem arbitrary or even completely disconnected from one's sense of self: a "misplaced mirror of personal antiquity" according to Josef. Josef's name further provides a commentary on the ambiguity and contradictory nature of one's identity. As a surname, "Josef" has positive connotations in its allusion to Sebald's grandfather (Josef Egelhofer) but the last name demonstrates how one can feel crushed under the weight of history inherent in a name. While "Amberg" could be a reference to the Bavarian city,¹⁰³ it can also be read as "am Berg" implying the hubris of mankind, here one envisions a solitary figure gazing down from the peak of the mountain at the territory he has conquered. This is of course another theme Sebald would return to in his later novels: man's attempt to appropriate the world by claiming, naming and cataloguing it.¹⁰⁴ Aside from the world of fiction, Sebald did name himself "Max" as a means of distancing himself from this inherited history¹⁰⁵ and, as a demonstration of Sebald's ability to address this topic in a more light-hearted fashion, he named his dog "Moritz".¹⁰⁶

Examining the tutor's name change throughout the versions of "Josef", one notes that while it initially sounds Eastern European, in Draft One, it could be either German or Jewish, and in the final draft, Draft Two, it has become decidedly Jewish. In the supplemental pages, the tutor is called Jesus Wperceck, which was perhaps too over the top with its blatant association with martyrdom and persecution of innocents. This is changed to the more German sounding name, Friedrich Mannersheim, and yet it also is reminiscent of the famous Finnish Feldmarschall Mannerheim. It is said that during the Second World War when Himmler encouraged Finnish leaders to participate in Jewish deportation to concentration camps he claimed: "While Jews serve in my army I will not allow their deportation."¹⁰⁷ In Draft Two, the name has become the Jewish "Ruben Lantmann". Etymologically the name Ruben means "behold, a son". In Genesis, Leah, unloved by her husband, is blessed by God with the birth of a child at which point she exclaims: "Behold, a son ... the Lord has seen my misery. Surely now my husband will love me."¹⁰⁸ What would have been primarily interesting to Sebald, and likely why he chose this as the final name, is the meaning of the first syllable, "to see" (Ru + ben, son), which then

¹⁰³ If Josef's last name was selected with considerations of the city in mind, perhaps Sebald already knew and is therefore alluding to the fact that "The Viennese Peter Altenberg ... advertised his attachment to his lost 'Heimat', the town of Altenberg on the Danube, by adopting its name as a pseudonym." Robertson, Ritchie. "W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature." *Journal of European Studies* 41, no. 3-4 (2011): 305-22. 310. As a side note, it would seem that when Sebald wrote *Vertigo* he, like Herbeck, still considered the importance of names to be a relevant topic. When the narrator and Herbeck begin their journey, there is a reference to, if not Peter, at least the city of Altenberg. The narrator states: "At my suggestion we took the train to Altenberg, a few kilometers up the Danube." Sebald, *Vertigo* 40.

¹⁰⁴ "'To catalogue the world,' writes influential geographer J. B. Harley, 'is to appropriate it'. In a Foucauldian account of cartography, Harley notes that maps, polity and territory are fused in images which are part of the intellectual apparatus of power. In particular, maps were central to the project of colonialism and empire-building." For more on Sebald's symbolic representation of space, see: Long, J. J. *W. G. Sebald – Image, Archive, Modernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 78.

¹⁰⁵ "Den Namen, mit dem ihn später Familie und Freunde anreden, Max, hat er sich als Student Mitte der sechziger Jahre selbst gegeben – ein Mittel zu Abgrenzung und Neuanfang." Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 17.

¹⁰⁶ I thank Uwe Schütte for reminding me of this anecdote.

¹⁰⁷ Bayvel, Rachel. "'While Jews serve in my army I will not allow their deportation': Rachel Bayvel reveals the extraordinary story of the Finnish Jewish soldiers who fought alongside the Germans in the Second World War." *Jewish Quarterly* 202 (Summer 2006). Web. 31. Dec. 2013.

<http://www.jewishquarterly.org/issuearchive/article8d14.html?articleid=194>

¹⁰⁸ *New International Version*, Genesis 29.32.

combined with the second syllable can also mean “son who has seen” and includes the prophetic sense of vision. Presumably, Ruben’s suicide is prompted, as it is for many of Sebald’s characters in his novels, either by the horrors he *saw* during World War II (physically or retroactively as Sebald would encounter the war in personal accounts or photographs) or assumes he *will see* based on the downward spiral of humanity.

It is likely that when Sebald composed the character of Ruben he had Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History in mind. Benjamin’s angel is primarily characterized by its ability to see. It is a powerless, static figure which is fated to gaze upon the culminating horrors, the natural history of human calamity and destruction, with grief. Benjamin’s angel appears in *Vertigo* as well in the form of Giotto’s fresco which is described as having the ability to overwhelm the viewer with the “silent lament of the angels who have kept their station above our endless calamities for nigh on seven centuries.”¹⁰⁹ As with Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History, Sebald sees these angels as helpless witnesses and the final words that come to the narrator’s mind in contemplation of this fresco are “*gli angeli visitano la scena della disgrazia*” (the angels visit the scene of disgrace).¹¹⁰ One can assume Ruben’s sudden disappearance is likewise prompted by a pathological drive to visit the scene of disgrace to locate the root of his melancholy and then to preserve, or perhaps to try to distance himself from, this memory in written form. As in his later novels, the events of the Second World War are not blatantly thematized here, but due to Sebald’s concern regarding endowing the tutor with a Jewish moniker as well as the frequent allusions to death and even subtly to war, it seems safe to assume that the Shoah is the shadow which has been cast over the tutor’s memoir. As is also the case with his other novels, Sebald is as interested in what isn’t said as he is in what a text directly expounds. Perhaps this silence regarding the tutor is an imitation of the phenomenon Sebald discusses in his essay on Adalbert Stifter. Ritchie Robertson summarizes the line of argumentation Sebald poses in this article with: “The psychic wounds inflicted on Stifter by his early poverty are supposed to be apparent, not from obsessive references to money, but from the *absence* of such references.”¹¹¹

With the concern over the tutor’s name as an identifying mark in mind, one can see how Sebald’s application of Herbeck’s style of writing to the tutor is an alignment of two groups of historically persecuted individuals: Jews and the mentally ill. In using Herbeck as inspiration for the character of the tutor, Sebald demonstrates his eagerness to express his sympathy for marginalized, outcast individuals. By the time Sebald wrote this first novel, his ideas on the silencing of the voice of the mentally ill by the psychiatric institution had likely already been informed by his reading of Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* (1961).¹¹² In applying Herbeck’s voice to the tutor, Sebald is, on the one hand, speaking for the silenced individuals as it is *his* attempt to recreate the qualities of Herbeck’s voice; on the other hand, Sebald also includes an (unquoted) original passage from Herbeck’s poetry. In an alignment of Herbeck (representing the mentally ill) with the figure of the tutor (representing European Jewry), Sebald is drawing attention to a specific form of silencing and persecution, namely that which occurred during the Second World War.

Sebald was undoubtedly aware of the Nazi’s equation of mentally ill individuals with the

¹⁰⁹ Sebald, *Vertigo* 84.

¹¹⁰ For more on Benjamin’s Angel of History in connection to Sebald’s literature see: Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace”.

¹¹¹ Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 307.

¹¹² See the Preface in Foucault’s study in which he discusses his attempt to write the history or archaeology of this silencing. Foucault, Michel. *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft. Eine Geschichte des Wahns im Zeitalter der Vernunft*. Trans. Ulrich Köppen. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969.

other groups that they condemned for being burdensome for German society. It is also likely that by the late 1960s, Sebald was familiar with the “euthanasia” programs which were first designed to target the mentally ill, such as “Action T4”. This experiment initiated the extermination of individuals suffering from chronic psychiatric or neurological disorders in 1939. In Sebald’s poem *Kalter Zug*, he makes a subtle reference to this historical misfortune. Sebald provides a list of various images of the landscape which he passes by while travelling by train to his childhood home. The fourth line of the second stanza reads: “die Irren von Kaufbeuren.” What Sebald is alluding to here is a mental institution in which 2,000 patients were “euthanized”.¹¹³ Thus, the extermination of the mentally ill was an event that literally occurred close to home, which may have in part prompted Sebald to seek out Herbeck as not only an artist and an outsider, but also as a survivor.

Josef Egelhofer and Ernst Herbeck’s Bodies of Writing in “Josef”

One final point to be addressed before turning to the tutor’s language and how it reflects Herbeck is that the way the memoir is introduced within “Josef” also reveals an intertextuality which Sebald would recreate twenty years later in *Vertigo*. Sebald provides a constellation between Ernst Herbeck, his grandfather and Franz Kafka; albeit vaguely camouflaged with Herbeck represented by the tutor, while the grandfather appears in a purely autobiographical manner here as Josef Egelhofer, and Franz Kafka via allusions to his character the Hunter Gracchus.¹¹⁴ Mark Anderson claims that when Sebald associates Herbeck and his grandfather in *Vertigo*, what he wants to demonstrate is his grandfather’s “link with the marginalized and the dispossessed ... his grandfather came to symbolize for Sebald an idealized, itinerant marginality, a ‘wanderer’ in the German Romantic sense, isolated and ‘homeless’.”¹¹⁵ In reality, his grandfather shared very little in common with Herbeck, and yet it is important for Sebald to connect these two as perpetually homeless wanderers, and this transient state also provides the association between them and Franz Kafka. Sebald was so fascinated by Kafka’s Hunter Gracchus, that he incorporates this figure within each chapter of *Vertigo*. Based on sheer coincidence or bad luck, Gracchus is unable to voyage to the hereafter and therefore remains an endless wanderer, border-crosser and outsider lost between the land of the living and the dead. He is the quintessential figure of the nomad, the Wandering Jew.

In Draft One of “Josef”, the tutor is aligned with the Hunter Gracchus not only via his position as a wanderer but also in the description of his death. The tutor “schrieb ... seine Erinnerung leer. Als er fertig war, stand er auf, nahm seine Aktentasche und ging in den Schwarzwald, um sich umzubringen.”¹¹⁶ It is the location in this passage which is revealing: the tutor is found dead in the Black Forest, like Gracchus who “dies in a mountain accident in the

¹¹³ “...dass es für Sebald keine unschuldige Landschaft in Deutschland gibt, wird auch eine Institution wie die im selben Gedicht erwähnte psychiatrische Anstalt in Kaufbeuren erkennbar als Teil der Nazivernichtungsmaschine, fielen doch rund 2.000 der dortigen Patienten dem Vernichtungsprogramm ‘Lebensunwertes Leben’ zum Opfer.” Schütte, Uwe. *Figurationen. Zum lyrischen Werk von W. G. Sebald*. Eggingen: Edition Isele, 2014. 30.

¹¹⁴ Likely the name for the protagonist of Sebald’s first novel was inspired by another combination of Sebald’s grandfather, Josef Egelhofer, and Franz Kafka with his repetitive figure Josef K.

¹¹⁵ Although I have not included him here as he will be discussed in Chapter Three regarding this constellation, Robert Walser is also mentioned by Anderson in this passage. Anderson, “A Childhood in the Allgäu” 34.

¹¹⁶ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

Black Forest, where Sebald first attended university.”¹¹⁷ While in the novel Josef’s grandfather and the former tutor may have passed on, they, like Gracchus, still inhabit this world, if no longer in a physical way, then in the ghostly body of their textual remains. Furthermore, what is visually represented in these remains is a border crossing that also mirrors Gracchus. The letters upon the page assume a physical nature; a body in excess that not only wanders upon the page, but that transcends this barrier and acquires multi-dimensionality.

In *Vertigo*, Herbeck and Egelhofer are physically linked when the narrator states that Herbeck had a summer hat “which he later took off when it grew too warm for him and carried beside him, just as my grandfather often used to do on summer walks.”¹¹⁸ The physiognomy Sebald uses to connect Herbeck and Egelhofer appears in “Josef” as well, only here the two are conjoined by a physical resemblance within their bodies of writing. At the beginning of Chapter Three in Draft Two, Josef, alone in his room, turns his attention to his suitcase, which is already packed for his trip home the following day. Within this suitcase there are two texts: a recipe book from his grandfather (*Rezeptheft*) and the first six hundred pages from the memoir (*Aufzeichnungen*) written by the former tutor, Ruben Lantmann.¹¹⁹ While the language Lantmann employs is aurally reminiscent of Herbeck, the recipe book from Josef’s grandfather is a pictorial representation of Herbeck’s poetry.

Due at least in part to Herbeck’s influence, if not entirely, Sebald harbored a lifelong interest in and desire to incorporate physiognomy within his literature. Immediately after his visit to Herbeck in 1980, Sebald wrote his “Eine kleine Traverse” essay in which he proclaims that he sees a hopeful outlet in Herbeck’s language to escape from regulated linguistics. This is particularly due to the physiological features of Herbeck’s writing: “die ... kreative Tendenz zur Symbolisierung und *Physiognomisierung*, von der die Sprache der Schizophrenen geprägt ist, den Ort unserer Hoffnung genauer bestimmt als der geordnete Diskurs.”¹²⁰ Twenty-one years later in an interview, Sebald would speak of his own attempt to bring a certain physiognomy into his writing:

Ich glaube, dass es bei der Prosa sehr darauf ankommt, dass die Dinge visuell werden, das heißt, dass der Leser aus diesen Blei Buchstaben, die da auf der Seite herumschwirren, ihm Bilder entgegenkommen; so das visuelle Element halte ich für sehr sehr wichtig und auch das prosodische, also den Rhythmus, nicht? Und der hat sicher etwas mit der Art der Fortbewegung zu tun, nicht? Also nicht hastig, und ich glaube schon, dass es so etwas wie eine Physiologie der Literatur geben kann, das heißt, dass unsere Körperlichkeit und die Art wie wir unsere Körper bewegen sich übertragen kann auf die Literatur, und wenn darauf nicht geachtet wird dann fehlt etwas.¹²¹

In what follows, I perform a close reading of the description of the grandfather’s recipe book in comparison with a poem Sebald analyzed by Herbeck in order to demonstrate Sebald’s application of those qualities of Herbeck’s texts which he most admired to his grandfather. Through this association, Sebald not only illustrates a commonality in their writing, but tangentially what he saw as their similar approach to and appreciation of nature and metaphysics.

¹¹⁷ Anderson, “A Childhood in the Allgäu” 35.

¹¹⁸ Sebald, *Vertigo* 39. Walser enters this constellation as it is his photograph, rather than one of Herbeck or Egelhofer, which is provided to depict Herbeck.

¹¹⁹ In each draft the number of pages varies, but it is consistently over several hundred.

¹²⁰ My italics for emphasis. Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 140.

¹²¹ Von Mannstein, Shenja. “‘Was in der Vergangenheit liegt, liegt alles in gleicher Entfernung zu unserer Existenz heute.’ Der Schriftsteller W.G. Sebald.” *dérive – Radio für Stadtforschung*. CBA - Cultural Broadcasting Archive. Verband Freier Radios Österreich. 5. Nov. 2013. <http://cba.fro.at/249200>. Radio.

Examining the words written in his grandfather's recipe book, meaning how they visually appear on the page, Josef describes them as: "Die violetten, stellenweise metallisch glänzenden Buchstaben standen eng...."¹²² The image conjured up by this sentence mirrors the line to which Sebald devoted special attention in his "Eine kleine Traverse" (1981) essay from Herbeck's poem "Die Sprache" which reads: "a + b leuchten im Klee."¹²³ In both lines, the letters (*Buchstaben* and *a + b*) are able to transcend their flat, two-dimensional state on the page by acquiring a unique three-dimensional physicality. Extending beyond print form, they display themselves as a peculiar mixture of organic (vegetable) and metallic (mineral) elements. The grandfather's letters with their natural hue, violet as opposed to black ink, prompt the reader to think of viola plants (*violetten Buchstaben*) just as Herbeck's alphabet flowers sprout up amidst a field of dark green clovers (*Klee*). While these letters are endowed with a vegetal nature, they simultaneously allude to precious metals. The grandfather's letters are described as gleaming (*glänzend*) as if they were comprised of silver, and in Herbeck's line the letters of the alphabet are shining (*leuchten*) like gold or bronze to contrast with the deep green *Klee*.

Transgressions of nature, such as eliminating the boundary between vegetable and mineral, puts one in mind of magic, alchemy and metaphysics. That there are phenomena in this world which we can't explain scientifically and which would therefore be more effectively clarified by a primitive or natural approach to knowledge and understanding is a topic which interested Sebald¹²⁴ and which he also connected with Herbeck and his grandfather. In his articles, Sebald refers to Herbeck's magical thought in terms of his "totemic imagination" which is an illustration of his harmonious state with nature by way of his equation of the human and animal kingdoms.¹²⁵ Presumably Sebald associated his grandfather with more metaphysical,

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¹²³ This poem is also analyzed in Chapter Four as a representative example of *bricolage*. Sebald "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 140.

¹²⁴ Uwe Schütte points out how this interest appears throughout Sebald's poetry: "In der Lyrik finden sich wiederholt Indizien für Sebalds Auseinandersetzung mit dem Abergläubischen, Esoterischen und insbesondere Mantischen." Schütte, *Figurationen* 38.

¹²⁵ In terms of Herbeck's closeness to nature, Sebald understood this relation as it is clarified by Rudolf Bilz. Bilz discusses *Mythologeme*, or fantastical ideas that give the impression that certain things (which are actually concepts such as God or justice for example) exist on their own; but *Mythologeme* are tied to words essentially describing a nothing, a nothing which is nonetheless extremely important to us (Bilz, Rudolf. *Studien über Angst und Schmerz*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1971. 276-294. 277). We need these myths in our daily lives to provide us with comfort as, during the evolutionary process, we lost the original harmonious state we once enjoyed in nature. Sebald sees Herbeck as capable of seeing past these myths since they are irrelevant to him due to his close tie to nature. And yet, Herbeck has his own set of myths, those which are directly derived from nature as is the case with primitive tribes who have a "totemic imagination" (Sebald compares Herbeck's thought process to that of Native American tribes). Revealing a closeness to nature, a result of this totemic imagination is the ability to erase the lines between the human and animal world: "Insofern in den sogenannten Geisteskrankheiten regelmäßig artgeschichtlich ältere Denk- und Ordnungsstrategien wieder zum Vorschein kommen, ist es alles andere als abwegig, zur Erschließung des von Herbeck verfolgten Sinns zurückzugreifen auf die Grundregeln der totemischen Imagination" (Sebald, "Des Häschens Kind" 176). Herbeck's closeness to nature is additionally informed by Lévi-Strauss's *Das wilde Denken*. In this book, Lévi-Strauss looks at native tribes to explore how their closeness to nature is not only physical but also mental and emotional. This closeness influences the way primitive people formulate their system of ideas and beliefs. Due to the means by which native tribes study their environment, primarily an analysis based on corporeal and emotional impressions, their methods are frequently stigmatized as they are not seen as scientific but rather as "magical". Therefore, Lévi-Strauss begins his book by discussing where society currently stands regarding the dichotomy between magical and scientific thought. The term "magic" can be misleading due to its implication of supernatural (religious) beliefs. However, based on the examples of magical thought provided by

esoteric forms of thought based on his impression of his great-grandfather which he depicts in a poem as: “Der Urgroßvater / im bunten Rock / erstellt er ein Horoskop.”¹²⁶ From the colorful sorcerer’s cloak to the horoscope, one can easily see how Sebald would have enjoyed the thought that the great-grandfather’s magic could have results in his own time. As Schütte states: “Man wird die Strophe daher interpretieren dürfen als Versuch des Urgroßvaters, ein Horoskop zu erstellen, das eine glückliche Zukunft ohne negative Einflüsse oder Schicksalsschläge für den Urenkel voraussagt.”¹²⁷

To return to the alignment of Sebald’s description of the letters in the grandfather’s recipe book with Herbeck’s “a + b leuchten im Klee” line from “Die Sprache”, one sees a resonance between Herbeck and Egelhofer’s depiction of nature as a combination of graphology and botany. Due to Egelhofer’s influence, it is likely that Sebald was already interested in an amalgamation of organics and literature as a child. Even the following sentence which describes Sebald’s relationship with his grandfather unintentionally demonstrates an alignment of these areas: “Many of Sebald’s passions later in life – for long walks, gardening, maps and country almanacs, for the natural world in general – can be traced back to these early lessons with his grandfather.”¹²⁸ While it is a coincidence here that the words “gardening” and “maps” are placed together, it is nonetheless reminiscent of a literal example of Egelhofer’s combination of plants and books which Sebald provides in Draft Two of “Josef”. Near the end of the second chapter, there is a description of how Josef experienced his grandfather’s death as a child and this is followed by a reference to his grandfather’s writing.¹²⁹ Josef thinks back upon a visit to his grandfather’s grave and, while collecting flowers with his mother, he was reminded that:

Der Grossvater hatte diese Pflanzen gesammelt, auf Packpapier ausgebreitet und in die Sonne ... gelegt, um sie zu trocknen. Und er hatte ein Heft besessen, in dem er die verschiedenen Weisen, auf die man die von ihm gesammelten Heilkräuter anwenden konnte, mit seiner umständlichen, in sich verschlungenen Schrift beschrieben hatte.¹³⁰

Based on this description, one can assume that the “recipe notebook” described previously and this text providing recipes for healing herbs are one in the same. The connection between botany and literature could not be described in a more literal fashion: the plants which have been laid out on the paper to dry are immediately aligned with the phrase “and he owned a notebook.” The period after “trocknen” becomes obsolete since the next sentence begins with “And”, thereby arousing an image of the dried plants seeping into and becoming one with the page. This image is underscored by the description of the handwriting in his grandfather’s recipe book given at the beginning of Chapter Three of “Josef”. The grandfather’s careful and ornamental style waves and curves around the page in a manner identical to the drying plants themselves. Perhaps this is also why the narrator of Sebald’s Corsica piece finds himself so fascinated with an artistic

Lévi-Strauss, it becomes clear that, in exploring the commonly accepted assumption that magic is the opponent to science, he finds this dichotomy to be a further separation of nature and technology and he again stresses the validity of primitive, or magical thought: “Anstatt also Magie und Wissenschaft als Gegensätze zu behandeln, wäre es besser, sie parallel zu setzen, als zwei Arten der Erkenntnis.” Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Das wilde Denken*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main. 1968. 25.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Schütte, *Figurationen* 39.

¹²⁷ Schütte, *Figurationen* 39.

¹²⁸ Anderson, Mark M. “A Childhood in the Allgäu: Wertach, 1944-52.” *Saturn’s Moon’s: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 16-41. 32.

¹²⁹ I assume this is also based on Sebald’s own experience as his grandfather died when he was eleven years old, on April 14, 1956. Sheppard. “W. G. Sebald: A Chronology.” 622.

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representation of Napoleon's family tree which utilizes actual leaves and various local plants to represent the foliage higher up on the tree and the artist's wound hair to represent the tree trunk.¹³¹

Looking at his grandfather's recipe book, Josef claims that the letters "waren umgeben von Schnörkeln, Haken und Häubchen und bildeten eine schwer durchschaubare Ornamentik."¹³² The idea underlying this sentence is also duplicated in Sebald's "Eine kleine Traverse" essay. In consideration of the line "Die Schloß + Das Schloß" from Herbeck's poem "Blau", Sebald writes:

"Die Schloß + Das Schloß" setzt noch einen mit falschen Artikeln versperrten Schnörkel unter ein Schriftbild, das zu verstehen gibt, daß das Ziel unserer Wünsche – entsprechend den von K. im *Schloß*-Roman gemachten Erfahrungen – nichts anderes ist als die blaue Leere im Innern der von uns fort und fort gezogenen konzentrischen Kreise.¹³³

Although this quote is also analyzed more deeply in Chapter Three of this study, the meaning of the sentence is worth noting in this context as well. Sebald argues that Herbeck's linguistics form a cyclical pattern mirroring K.'s seemingly purposeless physical movements in Kafka's *The Castle* which lead him in endless circles, making it impossible for him to reach his goal. In this way, K.'s wanderings are also a parallel for those of Sebald's fictional narrators who engage in cyclical journeys. John Zilcosky claims that, in these instances of travel, Sebald "demonstrated how our disorientations never lead to new discoveries, only to a series of uncanny, intertextual returns."¹³⁴ While this may be the case for his narrators, Sebald undoubtedly recognized that there are discoveries to be made in wandering and this positive aspect is evidenced by his association of walking without a purpose with his grandfather. The recurrence of the word curlicue or squiggle (*Schnörkel*) is revealing in terms of the thought process which drove Sebald to connect Egelhofer to this Herbeck-Kafka constellation. The idea that the process of wandering itself is what is important had already been implanted within Sebald's mind during his childhood years as it was during this time that he would frequently engage in long walks with Egelhofer. As he claims in an interview with Joseph Cuomo: "... as you walk along, you find things. I think that's the advantage of walking ... you find odd details which lead you

¹³¹ "Kleine Exkursion nach Ajaccio" in *CS* 7-18, here see 15.

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¹³³ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

¹³⁴ Zilcosky, John. "Lost and Found: Disorientation, Nostalgia, and Holocaust Melodrama in Sebald's *Austerlitz*." *Modern Language Notes* 121, no. 3 (2006): 679-698. 680. Later in this essay, Zilcosky provides a unique take on the wandering of Herbeck and the narrator of *Vertigo*: "... Austerlitz can *only* get lost, at least at the outset. And this lostness is dangerous, leading toward madness, as it did in a rare moment of disorientation from *Vertigo*: the narrator's friend, Ernst Herbeck, was permanently committed to a mental institution because of his aimless wandering through the streets of Vienna. Herbeck's peregrinations were precisely what deemed him mad, enforcing a long-standing linguistic connection between disorientation and insanity: *der Irre* (the madman) goes into *die Irre* (loses his way)." Zilcosky, "Lost and Found" 688. Within the page-long description of Herbeck's biography provided by Sebald explaining the various factors which contributed to his illness (familial conflicts, the war) only the final line has to do with wandering, though perhaps this is why Zilcosky deemed it the most relevant: "He had been wandering the streets of Vienna at night, attracting attention by his behavior, and had made incoherent and confused statements to the police." Sebald, *Vertigo* 38. Whether or not the wandering made Herbeck mad or he was institutionalized due to his inability to clarify the purpose of his nightly peregrinations to the representatives of the norm, the police, the correlation between insanity and losing one's way via the German term "Irre" is undeniably insightful.

somewhere else, and so it's a form of unsystematic searching."¹³⁵ Inherent within these wanderings were countless moments of discovery for Sebald, thus the goal is never the physical destination, but the journey itself. Aimless wandering, ornamental movements (or Herbeck's ornamental language) allow one to unearth hidden secrets, overlooked objects or forgotten facts regarding our world.

That this type of physical wandering can be carried over into literary wanderings as well is evidenced in Sebald's recurrent use of the term *Schnörkel*. Regarding the above quote from "Josef" describing the grandfather's recipe book, immediately following the words "schwer durchschaubare Ornamentik" Sebald writes: "Wir entwickeln eine Zuneigung zu gewissen Dingen, aber sie bleiben uns fremd. Erst nach langem, geduldigem Entziffern erschließen sich die Bedeutung von Wörtern und ein Sinn erweist sich, hinter den Verzierungen."¹³⁶ The grandfather's handwriting, in its ornamental nature which buries certain codes and messages waiting to be uncovered, again matches the ornamental linguistics of Herbeck about which Sebald claims that he was "amazed by the brilliance of the riddling verbal images conjured up, evidently at random, by this most unfortunate of poets."¹³⁷ After contemplating the notebook from his grandfather riddled with *Schnörkel*, Josef sets the work aside and turns his attention to the memoir by Lantmann which visually provides a contrasting image due to its "klare Schriftbild." And yet, despite the fact that the letters themselves may appear clear, the content is another *Schnörkel*, a vertiginous conglomeration of various images, individuals and ideas. The quote given above from Sebald's "Eine kleine Traverse" in which he states, "'Die Schloß + Das Schloß' setzt noch einen mit falschen Artikeln versperrten Schnörkel unter ein Schriftbild,"¹³⁸ demonstrates Sebald saw this combination of seeming clarity (*Schriftbild*) and imperceptibility (the *Schnörkel*) as simultaneous manifestations in Herbeck's poetry. Sebald's effort to recreate Herbeck's voice in Lantmann's language therefore also reveals an incorporation of these contradictory elements.

From Authoritarianism to Humanism by Way of Ezra Pound

Already from the title of Lantmann's memoir, "er-Innerung" in the first edition, one sees an allusion to Herbeck.¹³⁹ As will be demonstrated in Chapter Two, the division of a word by way of a hyphen in order to defamiliarize the reader from the predominant meaning and include additional modes of interpretation also appears in Herbeck's writing. This is both referenced by Sebald in his "Eine kleine Traverse" article on Herbeck and is recreated in his own works. The title of this essay is taken from Herbeck's poem in which the word "traverse" is divided over two lines (Tra- / verse). In "Josef", one sees the emphasis which is placed on the psychological dimension of the text by way of this division: the "er" implies the narrator (the tutor) who will reflect upon occurrences which have been internalized within (*inner*), or also Josef as another "er" who will travel into the inner world of the tutor. As is the case in Sebald's later novels, this recreation of events through memory is somewhat unreliable since there are always elements of

¹³⁵ Cuomo, Joseph. "A Conversation with W. G. Sebald." *the emergence of memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald*. Ed. Lynne Sharon Schartz. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2007. 93-118. 94.

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¹³⁷ Sebald, "The Little Hare" in *CS* 125.

¹³⁸ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

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interference which come between the real events and the recollection thereof. This occurrence allows for the broadening of the spectrum of interpretation: it becomes conducive to an incorporation of a political dimension or intertextual cross-references, both of which shall be addressed in this section.

The intertextual references which occur in the tutor's memoir are interesting as one sees not only the earliest instance of Sebald's recreation of Herbeck's style, but also an allusion to another author who is linked by way of expressionistic writing and also with pathology: Ezra Pound. While there are moments throughout "Josef" in which the narration switches to a stream-of-consciousness style, the text runs primarily in a linear fashion with most of the events reported chronologically and with flashbacks occurring in conjunction with Josef's current experiences. For example, his return to his parents' home naturally conjures up reminiscences on his childhood. Contrastingly, the text written by the tutor is composed solely in a stream-of-consciousness style; it lacks all chronological arrangement and is devoid of key players. There seems to be nothing which allows for a correspondence between each of the tutor's recollections and yet as the character, Lulef, who discovers the memoir in Draft One explains: "... er hat keine Handlung. Es kommen nur unheimlich viel verschiedene Leute drin vor, aber man glaubt, dass es immer derselbe ist."¹⁴⁰ This aspect of Sebald's literature certainly didn't change over the years; while his later novels are full of different characters, each one is a reflection of several other likeminded thinkers (Kafka, Nabakov, Bernhard, etc.). As will be seen in the next quote from "Josef", what is recounted in the tutor's memoirs are a series of seemingly unrelated vignettes, and yet death and/or war is thematized in each section. The first section to be analyzed here is the third paragraph of the tutor's memoir from Draft Two. In this section, the memoir switches from a series of vignettes narrated in the third person (by characters called Carlos and Ming Tong) to the first person account by the tutor. Here, Sebald conflates the tutor's voice and Ezra Pound.

Within the memoir, there are segments which indicate that the tutor is, like Josef, another one of Sebald's alter egos. In this alter ego, Sebald represents his desire to identify with politically and artistically inclined outsiders. In the following quote, Sebald's biography becomes blended with the tutor's via an indirect connection to war.¹⁴¹ The tutor writes:

Jawohl mein Vater. Jawohl. Ich bin das zweite Kind und der erste Sohn eines Offiziers ... Später war mein Vater ein Margarinekonzern mit einem Seitenzweig in Liechtenstein, der orangemarmelade fabrizierte. Aprikosenmarmelade. The flowers of the apricot blow from the east to the west. I have tried to keep them from falling. Der arme Ezra stirbt langsam wie eine Schildkröte, und keiner in Meran merkt etwas davon.¹⁴²

Although this is the tutor's voice, the "second born child and the first son of an officer" also reflects Sebald, who had an older sister (Gertrud who was born in 1941) and a younger sister (Beate 1951). The critique of his father's generation is heartfelt and remained a point of contention throughout Sebald's life, even if such direct autobiographical references vanish from his novels. Here, the affront is mediated through the tutor, in whose form Sebald can freely express the anti-authoritarian stance he adopted due to personal experiences. Inherent in this

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¹⁴¹ Again, I am presuming here that the cause of the tutor's trauma is, like all of Sebald's melancholic characters, associated with war.

¹⁴² The word "orangemarmelade" is not capitalized in Sebald's original. Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

representation is a critique of the father's blind obedience (signified through the repetitious "Jawohl" / "Yes, Sir!") during the National Socialist regime and his ensuing expectations for his son's equally blind obedience to his rule. Commenting on this relationship, Uwe Schütte points out:

Obgleich Georg Sebald nie Mitglied der NSDAP gewesen war, sah Sebald in seinem Vater als einem Mitläufer zugleich einen Komplizen der Nazi Herrschaft, nicht zuletzt durch dessen Teilnahme an der allgemeinen Verschwörung des Schweigens, die den Umgang mit der Vergangenheit in der Adenauer-Ära prägte.¹⁴³

The way in which the above phrase from Draft One has been modified for the second draft heightens Sebald's identification with the figure of the tutor. The slight alteration which appears in Draft Two is that the first person perspective is changed to: "Man ist das zweitgeborene Kind eines zu spät geborenen Vaters." With the neutral phrase "one is the second born", the scope of individual voices which could be speaking here not only widens to encompass every "one" from Sebald's generation, but it is also distanced and impersonal. The shift from the fixed identity of the first person to "one" demonstrates the tutor's attempt at alienation from his father by disassociating himself from his personal identity and thereby also this close familial relation. It intimates another Sebaldian critique as well. Sebald, in the guise of the tutor, attacks the passive nature of his father's generation. He saw a mirror for this passive tendency in the language itself. Thus, the son ironically parrots this grammatical distancing in the generic "one" to point out this generation's denial of responsibility both in terms of their involvement in World War II and their later refusal to deal with this event.

The English portion of the quote is taken from Ezra Pound's unfinished *The Cantos* (begun in 1923), here the Confucian canto (XIII) which concludes with the three lines from above, albeit with minor variations, from Pound's original: "The blossoms of the apricot / blow from the east to the west, / And I have tried to keep them from falling". The changes Sebald made do not alter the meaning: "The blossoms of the apricot" have become "the flowers" and Pound's "And" has been deleted.¹⁴⁴ In his linking of the authoritarian father-figure (the producer of apricot marmalade)¹⁴⁵ with Ezra Pound (collector of apricot blossoms), Sebald demonstrates his ambivalent relationship to these two individuals. While intrigued by Pound's poetry enough to incorporate references to him in his own writing, Sebald rejected his and his father's political stance, although Pound was by far more extreme than Sebald's father. By the 1930s, Pound's "language is vitiated by virulent anti-Semitism" and throughout the war he vehemently defended fascism in a series of radio broadcasts which culminated in his arrest by partisans in 1945. Following his repatriation to the United States, he was found unfit to stand trial for his treason charge on grounds of insanity. Pound was subsequently incarcerated in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D. C. from 1946 to 1958.¹⁴⁶

Commenting on Pound's lines, Feng Lan states the apricot blossoms symbolize the

¹⁴³ Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 19.

¹⁴⁴ Sebald returned to this line several times, rewriting it for example in the poem, *Erinnertes Triptychon einer Reise aus Brüssel*. "Dieses Gedicht unternimmt einen offensichtlichen Versuch, im eigentlichen Sinne zu 'verdichten', d. h. in loser Anknüpfung an Techniken von T. S. Eliot oder Ezra Pound eine abundante Vielzahl an Anspielungen, Referenzen und Zitaten aus dem Fundus der westlichen Kultur zu verarbeiten." Schütte, *Figurationen* 25.

¹⁴⁵ "Später war mein Vater ein Margarinekonzern mit einem Seitenzweig in Liechtenstein, der orangemarmelade fabrizierte. Aprikosenmarmelade."

¹⁴⁶ Wilmer, Clive. "Pound's Life and Career." *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-century Poetry in English*. Oxford University Press, 1994. Web. 6 March 2014.

http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/bio.htm

ancient master's teachings and "through the voice of the poetic persona with whom he identifies, Pound is proclaiming his self-ordained mission of transmitting the legacy of Confucius from the East to the West."¹⁴⁷ In Sebald's linking of his father and Pound in "Josef", one can see that the father, in connection with apricot marmalade and thereby with a fruit which has been frozen in time and preserved, is in possession of stale and outdated knowledge.¹⁴⁸ Pound, however, is connected to the flowers or blossoms implying contemporary, relevant thought. The inclusion of this reference would then imply that the tutor, and thereby Sebald as his alter-ego, is likewise striving to impart a fresh perspective on an area of knowledge through art which he believes is lacking in his society. In fact, what the tutor wishes to impart may be exactly what Pound also had hoped to reinterpret from Confucian's ideas to make them relevant for Western society: humanity and empathy. While Pound was by no means an unproblematic poet in terms of his political standing, in his approach to Confucianism he remained a humanist whose "discourse is primarily characterized by the following beliefs: the human mind as the source of creation, the individual's moral will as the basis of truth and social order, the human partnership with nature...."¹⁴⁹ That Sebald incorporated Ezra Pound's voice within a passage which would culminate in a poem by Herbeck is logical considering the fact that Sebald saw each of these qualities in Herbeck. In an interview, Sebald claims he felt driven to meet with Herbeck in order to understand "the basic conditions of creativity,"¹⁵⁰ he further believes Herbeck can access and express in his poetry a deeper truth about the world due to his close connection to nature.

Incidentally, Sebald's poetics reflect the political message underlying Pound's Vorticism. At the beginning of 1914, Pound coined this term to refer to a rebellious movement in art which wanted to move beyond the legacy of the past and the stifling traditions of the Victorian age. The stark abstract lines which imbue a machine-like quality to Vorticist works of art as well as the fragmented literary forms demonstrate "a cool, clear-cut consciousness of the impersonal harshness of the twentieth-century world, and in this respect they prophesy the destructive machine power that became so horrifyingly evident in World War I."¹⁵¹ Sebald's early rebellious, experimental literature can be seen as a post-World War II parallel to the artistic movement with which Pound was engaged. Sebald was also struggling to separate himself from an inherited legacy while vehemently reacting against the overblown industrialization which had culminated in the dehumanization that made the mass killings of the Second World War possible. To conclude these thoughts, a description of Vorticism by Wyndham Lewis runs thusly: "at the heart of the whirlpool is a great silent place where all the energy is concentrated."¹⁵² This description can't help but remind the reader of Sebald's *Vertigo*, and more broadly of the general theme expressed throughout Sebald's works. He is writing from a silent center amidst a whirlpool of World War II trauma. While the Shoah is perpetually lurking

¹⁴⁷ Lan, Feng. *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: Remaking Humanism in the Face of Modernity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 3.

¹⁴⁸ While this argument may seem outlandish at first glance, it is worth noting that Sebald was interested in the symbolic nature of still life portraits. In fact, in the opening of Draft Two of "Josef" such a portrait has been incorporated into the text: "Josef zog die Lade heraus, auf der mit goldenen Buchstaben 'Gemüse' stand. Äpfel, Zwiebel, Tomaten, Lauch, Bananen, ein halbes Weisskraut, einige gelbe Birnen." *Nature morte*." Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

¹⁴⁹ Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism* 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Atlas, *W. G. Sebald: A Profile* 291.

¹⁵¹ Cork, Richard. "Vorticism." *MoMA: The Collection*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Web 6 March 2014. http://www.moma.org/collection/details.php?theme_id=10964

¹⁵² Cork, "Vorticism."

in the background, it is typically approached via silence, from the periphery in allusions and symbols.¹⁵³ This paragraph in “Josef” which refers to Pound does not, however, end on a subtle or silent note. The last sentence reads: “Natürlich fallen jetzt keine Blüten mehr, weil alle schon gefallen sind.”¹⁵⁴ In the mode of the Frankfurt School, Sebald sums up this section with the gradual downfall of mankind since the Age of Enlightenment. All of our knowledge, all of our humanitarian values vanished during World War II with the complete mechanization and objectification of mankind.

From the “Schimml” in “Himml” to “Die Erde”: Reflections on Mortality

Following the Ezra Pound section in Draft One, there is a paragraph from the perspective of the character Ming Tong which focuses on considerations on death as an alternate state of being and makes references to Expressionist works by Franz Marc and Gottfried Benn. Josef pauses in his reading, takes out a cigarette and notes that the next page of the tutor’s text ends with a poem, “soweit wollte er noch kommen.”¹⁵⁵ On page 46 of Draft One, Sebald has written in the left-hand margin “Navratil!” and what is typed at the end of the second paragraph on this page are the words: (Ged. aus Navr.), a shortened phrase for “a poem out of Navratil’s book”. Several lines have been left blank, and in this space Sebald has written, by hand, Herbeck’s poem “Die Rose”. At the end of this poem, the story continues on its normal course with Josef laying aside the book by the tutor. Herbeck is therefore given the last word within the tutor’s memoir. Just before the actual poem by Herbeck, there are several allusions to his writing which occur in the preceding paragraph. What I shall focus on in this section is Sebald’s insertion of a phrase from one of his own poems which resonates linguistically and thematically with Herbeck’s poetry. One sees their similar portrayals of man’s violent intrusion into the animal world as well as an acknowledgement of how powerless we, despite our hubris, actually are when confronted with the forces of nature. Sebald’s recreation of schizophrenic language here shows his recognition of the irony, humor and absurdity which typically appear in relation to a schizophrenic writer’s expression of the ways of the natural world and also of religious situations.

The paragraph preceding Herbeck’s poem begins with an instance of Sebald’s intratextuality. This section opens with another figure, Mike Orlando, who is contemplating the rain and assumes someone must be building an ark. This is followed by the rather peculiar sentence: “Aber wie will man den Himml Schimml bei der Stange halten, wenn der Mond nicht

¹⁵³ In contemplating whether or not Sebald approaches the Holocaust in an appropriate manner, Zilcosky writes: “The majority of critics claim that he does, agreeing with Sebald’s self-defense: that he avoids melodrama by, first, depicting only a ‘Holocaust-in-absence’ (on the model of Lanzmann’s *Shoah*) and, second, using only ‘mediated’ narration (‘said Agáta, said Vera, said Austerlitz’).” While the footnote following this quote provides several additional examples of Sebald’s peripheral manner of speaking about the Holocaust, Zilcosky rightfully points out that: “whereas *The Emigrants* ... maps centrifugal attempts to move *away* from the historical sites of trauma, *Austerlitz* centripetally takes us to the heart of the atrocities, down the narrative road to Theresienstadt.” Zilcosky, “Lost and Found” 693 and 694. For another example of Sebald’s effort to speak about the Holocaust from the periphery, see Morgan, Peter. “The Sign of Saturn: Melancholy, Homelessness and Apocalypse in W.G. Sebald’s Prose Narratives.” *German Life and Letters* 58, no. 1 (2005): 75-92.

¹⁵⁴ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

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in Dose geht....”¹⁵⁶ This is a variation on a two-line stanza from Sebald’s unpublished poem “Ballade vom Licht der Welt” which runs: “& im Stall steht der Schimml / & Gott ist im Himml.”¹⁵⁷ This poem begins with nine stanzas which focus on daily activities on a farm, featuring the slaughtering of animals (& um Mitternacht / hat der Bauer g’schlacht ... & das Blut wird zu Harz / & die Zäun sind ganz Schwarz), the animals themselves (& der Has rückt ins Holz / & am Ast hockt der Golz), and the anthropomorphized natural world (& der Stern hint im Morgen / versinkt voller Sorgen). While this opening is reminiscent of countless Herbeck poems, I shall turn to his “Der Herbst” to provide an example of how the beginning of Sebald’s poem, in its emphasis on man’s violent attack on nature as well as its concentration on the physicality and transience of organic bodies, thematically aligns with Herbeck’s poetry.

In Herbeck’s poem “Der Herbst”, he focuses on the changing of the seasons: “Es fallen die Blätter von / den Bäumen und Sträuchern; / Der Wald verfärbt sein / Kleid, wird gelb, braun, und / hellgelb und gold. Die Jagden / beginnen. Der Jäger geht zur Jagd. / Die Jäger bilden Kreisjagden und schliessen die Hasen ab.”¹⁵⁸ Both Sebald and Herbeck have personified nature within their poems. Recognizable in Herbeck is the human quality with which he imbues his forest – it seems to have the desire to dye its dress in ever-increasing resplendent hues, shifting from the dull brown to the shimmering gold. He represents the simultaneity of the liveliness of the fall season with its vibrant colors and the darkness since the fall, hunting season, also ushers in death. Interestingly, the stark contrast existing here between the way Herbeck depicts the beauty of nature personified to resemble a vain individual who is so fixated on their own appearance that they are blind to the darkness and death (of the hunt) surrounding them is also reflected in Sebald. The face of Sebald’s star, “[der Stern] versinkt voller Sorgen”, is also personified and yet it, unlike Herbeck’s fall, seems emotionally impacted but unable to intervene in the violence it witnesses on earth, again, reminiscent of Benjamin’s Angel of History. It is contrastingly mournful as it sinks full of worry much like an individual falls into depression – *in Depressionen versinken*. Perhaps Sebald was already inspired here by the Dog Star which would guide the narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* on his melancholic voyage.¹⁵⁹ In Sebald’s “Ballade vom Licht der Welt” and Herbeck’s “Der Herbst”, the relationship between man and animal is also portrayed in an equally violent manner. In his poem, Sebald focuses on the shockingly gruesome nature of the scene: “ganz Schwarz sind die Zäun / & das Blut friert am Stein // & das Blut wird zu Harz / & die Zäun sind ganz Schwarz.” This almost cinematic close-up on the image is depicted in slow-motion. The emphasis on the violence is underscored via the repetition over two stanzas of the animal’s blood gradually coagulating. The animal leaves evidence of its unceremonious end as a permanent stain on the stony earth.¹⁶⁰ In Herbeck’s

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¹⁵⁸ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 100. For an analysis of a similar example see the sections in Chapter Four of this study on Herbeck’s poem “Das Eichkätzchen”.

¹⁵⁹ “I wonder now, however, whether there might be something in the old superstition that certain ailments of the spirit and of the body are particularly likely to beset us under the sign of the Dog Star.” Sebald, W. G. *The Rings of Saturn*. Trans. Michael Hulse. New York: New Directions Book, 1999. 3. The title which Sebald had originally planned for this novel was *Unter dem Hundstern*. Schütte, *Figurationen* 41.

¹⁶⁰ Perhaps by the time Sebald composed these lines, he had already become familiar with the Austrian tradition of the “Heimatroman” which idealized and celebrated rural farm life. As Ritchie Robertson explains: “In the Corporate State set up after the defeat of Socialism in the Austrian Civil War of February 1934, ‘Heimtdichter’

poem, the impact of the violence is derived from psychological terror. Within the three lines which are focused on hunting, five of the six nouns are variations of the word hunt while the only remaining noun signifies the hunted *Hase*. Considering these nouns in combination with the active verbs in these lines: “begin – go – form (a hunting circle) – shoot”, the reader can’t help but identify with the terrified rabbit in the middle of the field, slowly being tracked and encircled by the hunters. Whether through personification or identification with the animal kingdom, Sebald and Herbeck prompt a contemplation of our place in the natural world and what we take from it.

To return now to the “Aber wie will man den Himml Schimml bei der Stange halten, wenn der Mond nicht in Dose geht” sentence from Sebald’s novel, it is possible that he took inspiration from a southern Tyrolean folk song, “Aber Heitschi Bumbeitschi”. This song features the lyrics: “Aber heitschi bumbeitschi, in Himml / da führt di a schneeweißer Schimml.” The plot of this song is reminiscent of Goethe’s poem, “Der Erlkönig”, in which a young boy has feverous visions of the elf king while dying in his father’s arms. In the folk song, Heitschi Bumbeitschi stands in for the Erlkönig and attempts to lure a child to follow the path of its recently deceased mother by riding the white horse to heaven. In the novel, the “Himml Schimml” sentence also appears as a reflection upon mortality. Mike Orlando thinks of a contemporary Noah who is building his ark to save animal/humankind, which is however undermined by “Aber wie will man den Himml Schimml bei der Stange halten”, implying the hopelessness of such a task. This seems to be a comment on the hubris of man and his inherently doomed attempts at outwitting nature.¹⁶¹ We can try to force nature to do our bidding and yet she will inevitably refuse to conform: “der Mond [geht] nicht in Dose”. Once nature has begun on her course, it is useless to attempt to contain our escort to the other side, be it in the form of the “Himml Schimml” or “Heitschi Bumbeitschi”.

The futility of our efforts to control the forces of nature is also a topic thematized in Herbeck’s poetry, again through anthropomorphosis. Herbeck’s poems often depict the gradual demise of everything on earth and one recognizes a playful commentary on the position of mankind in nature. As in Herbeck’s “Der Herbst” which shows the consuming vanity of nature that results in its indifference to the actions of animals or men, his poem “Die Erde” demonstrates just how inconsequential we truly are. “Die Erde” depicts a human confrontation with the overwhelming (literal) face of nature. Herbeck writes the lines: “... Die Erde weil stirbt sie ab / muß die Erde alles sehen. ... Der Mann im Monde sieht und grüßt. / Dir Erde auch reich ist.”¹⁶² The anthropomorphized moon smiles an ironic greeting to the world as humanity feebly tries to control it (by putting it *in Dose* as in Sebald’s sentence) or, as in Herbeck, to ignore what the moon sees (that the earth is dying all around us).

(regional writers) such as Karl Heinrich Waggerl, author of *Schweres Blut* (1932), were feted for their conservatism: Waggerl was typical in adopting Nazism after the Anschluss in 1938.” Because of this history, many of the post-war writers such as Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke “concentrated on exposing the misery of rural life.” In the preface to *Unheimliche Heimat*, Sebald “stress[es] the physical destruction of the landscape which ought to be the predestined setting for human life.” If he was aware of this literary tradition when he wrote “Ballade vom Licht der Welt”, this would account for the violent nature of the imagery. It is an expression of Sebald’s vehement critique of the “physical destruction of the landscape” and also of course those creatures within it. All of the quotes used in this footnote are from: Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 309. See also Sebald, W. G. *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004.

¹⁶¹ As previously mentioned, James Bedford, who attempted to be cryogenically preserved, also appears in “Josef” as an allusion to man’s attempt to overcome the limits imposed by nature.

¹⁶² Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 117.

In the final four stanzas of Sebald's "Ballade vom Licht der Welt", I see him paying homage to another schizophrenic writer, Adolf Wölfli. Each of these stanzas include one line related to religion which is presented in conjunction with a rather irreverent line: "& der heilige Klaus / fährt beim Kamin ein und aus // & im Stall steht der Schimml / & Gott ist im Himmel // & der Herr Jesus in Flander / bei alle die andern // & immer noch bitten die Weisen fuers Kind / & draussen weht schon die Schweinsblas im Wind."¹⁶³ Sebald has combined serious concerns over religion and our fleeting mortality with the mundane (Jesus is "bei alle die andern"), the absurd (the formerly holy identity of the miracle worker for those in need, St Nikolaus, has literally become soiled by commercialism – indicated in his travelling through soot filled chimneys to deliver gifts to children) and the earthly (the setting of the Magi bearing their gifts for Jesus is adorned with pig bladders blowing in the wind). Here, the sacred is combined with the banal and the serious situations are undermined by absurdities. This not only resonates with tendencies seen in Herbeck's poetry, but it also adheres exactly to Leo Navratil's description of the qualities of the writings by Adolf Wölfli: "Erhabenes und Banales, Ernstes und Komisches mischt sich in diesen Versen. Häufig werden ein oder zwei Sätze variiert: der Anfang eines bekannten Gedichts, eine Redensart oder ein Sprichwort."¹⁶⁴ A few emblematic lines from Wölfli's poetry run thusly: "D'Gott- Vatt'r, -Bull- Dogga!" or "Ist 32 Schläge Gott-Vatter-Hunde-Waltzer".¹⁶⁵ Additionally, in Sebald's own copy of Morgenthaler's book on Wölfli, he highlighted the following quote: "Gott-Vatter-Riesen-Birne."¹⁶⁶ While he likely readapted the "Himml Schimml" from a folk song, as will be demonstrated shortly, Sebald also incorporates at least one idiom in the Herbeck passage in "Josef". Before turning to this example however, it is worth looking at how Herbeck also approached religion in an equally irreverent fashion.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Questioning the Pinnacle of Humanity

In Sebald's copy of Navratil's book *Alexanders poetische Texte*, he underlines the following sentence from Herbeck's poem "Der Rabe": "Der Rabe führt die Frommen an."¹⁶⁷ To further underscore the relevance of this line, he adds two exclamation marks next to the text. Additionally, this sentence is quoted by Sebald in two of the three pieces he wrote on Herbeck. It is thus likely that Sebald had this line in mind when he wrote the following sentence in his own poem "Zeitzeichen um Zwölf" ("Time Signal at Twelve"): "Ein Rabe hockt / In Gottes Ohr."¹⁶⁸ The intonation of these sentences is the same, as is the number of syllables (eight). But most striking is the rather irreverent visual imagery created by these lines. Beginning with "der Rabe" immediately conjures up the mental picture of a raven within the reader's imagination. This then makes the second half of the sentence all the more startling as one expects a

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¹⁶⁴ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 86.

¹⁶⁵ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 86.

¹⁶⁶ Morgenthaler, *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* 19. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

¹⁶⁷ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 83. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

¹⁶⁸ This poem is translated into English for the collection *Across the Land and Water* (26). Sebald, W. G. *Across the Land and Water. Selected Poems, 1964-2001*. Trans. Iain Galbraith. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2011. It was originally written in 1967 and published in German in 2003. Tabbert, Reinbert. "Max in Manchester." *Akzente. Zeitschrift für Literatur* 50, no. 1 (2003): 21-30. 30.

continuation of this avian theme, and yet the remainder of this passage is not associated with nature but rather with religion (*die Frommen*, the pious ones; and *Gottes Ohr*, God's ear). The connotation forces the word "der Rabbi" to mind, and yet this word-association is delayed by the pause between the first and second halves of the sentences. This results in a humorous, or scandalous depending on the reader's point-of-view, equation of the raven with the rabbi.

In both Herbeck and Sebald's poems, the agency of religion is undermined in these passages. Herbeck's poem throws into question the devotedness of religious individuals by intimating an underlying hypocrisy. His poem continues: "Der Rabe führt die Frommen an / und gaustert sich herum als / Schwan." Not only is the legitimacy of the identity of the raven / rabbi questionable since it seems the blackbird has concealed his true form or dark nature within the guise of the purity of the white swan, but the manner in which the tasks of the raven are conducted appear suspect as well. In Northern Bavarian dialect, the verbs "gauschtern" or "gaustern" refer to work conducted in a rushed or shoddy manner.¹⁶⁹ This could then imply a failure on the part of religious leaders to uphold such duties as insuring that the population leads humane and ethical lives. Furthermore, there seems to be a conscious or willful neglect: that the leaders have allowed these responsibilities to fall by the wayside is implied by Herbeck's creation of "gaustern" as a reflective verb. The critique here is of the general population who refuse to take notice of this phenomenon: they let themselves be blinded or satisfied with the impressive, beautiful façade of the swan.

Sebald maintains this idea of hypocrisy and concealment in his poem "Time Signal at Twelve". Immediately before the raven passage, Sebald writes: "There is / Skulduggery / Afoot" which is followed by: "A raven alights / At God's ear / Tidings he brings / Of the battlefield // Father has gone to war / The monk from Melk / Sleeps quiet in his grave."¹⁷⁰ Sebald's façade is similar to Herbeck's: he also focuses on the culpability of the church's involvement in anti-Christian behavior. The small town of Melk in Lower Austria is currently, and has always been, known for its Baroque Benedictine monastery, Melk Abby. This pillar of the spiritual community was spared during the Allied Bombing of the Second World War, as was the crematorium from the concentration camp located directly in Melk, a sub-camp of Mauthausen. This camp housed on average 8,000 prisoners and saw the deaths of 10,000 victims between 1944 and 1945.¹⁷¹ Sebald's critique of the church, and thereby the entire city since religion is essentially what this town stands for, is clear – the inhumanity and the horrors of the camp were ignored by the religious townsfolk.¹⁷² In the end, the monks were able to sleep peacefully in their graves. The controversial nature of these themes is delivered with a new profundity due to Herbeck's seemingly innocent, absurd and childlike impression of a raven /

¹⁶⁹ "Gauschtern oder gaustern bedeutet in Oberbayern unordentlich arbeiten oder hudeln." "Gauschtern." *Lateinische Sprachrelikte im bayrischen Dialekt*. Web. 15 March 2014. <http://www.boari.de/woerterbuch/gauschtern.htm>

¹⁷⁰ Sebald, *Across the Land and Water* 26.

¹⁷¹ For further information on the camps at Mauthausen and Melk see the website sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

¹⁷² The willingness to ignore an incomprehensible reality with which one is confronted puts one in mind of Claire Feehily's claim that "The arguments of both Adorno and Habermas provide an important context for Sebald's focus on exposing deficiencies in memory. Adorno maintains that a 'diminished faculty of memory' is part of a particular mindset of fascism which allowed open secrets to exist, arguing that it explained how people could claim not to have seen deportations as they were taking place and allowed for the postwar continuation of denial." Feehily, Claire. "The surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution." *The Work of W. G. Sebald as Counter-Monument*. *W. G. Sebald. Schreiben ex patria / Expatriate Writing*. Ed. Gerhard Fischer. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009. 177-192. 180.

rabbi as a dark / immoral figure which is leading the pious people while in disguise, and Sebald's raven / rabbi which is crouched within God's ear whispering the horrific secrets of the horrors of the battlefield and the camps.

“HerrHittler”: The Downfall of Humanity and Mythologizing Monikers

Religion is not the only topic depicted in Herbeck's poetry with a comical undertone: a tragic-comic outlook on life is also expressed in the context of grave sociopolitical subjects. I have selected two poems by Herbeck, “Weltuntergang (1)” and “WELTUNTERGANG (2)”, as key examples to demonstrate the similar manner in which he and Sebald approach the earnest topics of politics and death with childlike playfulness. Keeping in mind Sebald's spelling of “Himml Schimml”, Herbeck also tended to misspell certain words, occasionally as a reflection of a regional dialect, but more frequently in order to place heavily-laden words, either with religious or political connotations, into a diminutive form. The overall effect is an innocent undermining of serious topics. “Weltuntergang (1)” begins with “Heil Österreich mein Heimatland. / Die WÖTLT geht UNTER ----- da is Pfand” and in “WELTUNTERGANG (2)” one reads “Heil Österreich mein Heimatl. / DIE WELT GEht unter – da ist Pfand.”¹⁷³ The apocalyptic scenario is linguistically placed in the context of the Second World War via “Heil” and the disappointment and resignation of the culpability of an entire country is underscored by the diminutive “Heimatl”. This spelling of “my little homeland” makes Austria's participation in the Second World War all the more shocking as the quaint native land which should be a nurturing source of comfort has turned out to be the opposite. This is reminiscent of the diminutive “Himml Schimml”, its well-meaning intention comes across as a false comfort for children despite its simplistic, sing-song rhyme scheme. In the melodic diminutive, there exists the absurd hope of overshadowing an awareness of death.

Herbeck's spelling of “world” as “die WÖTLT” personalizes this term and makes it seem as though the world is something that we can control, much as we claim possession of objects (or bodies of land) by naming them. In this possession which defamiliarizes the object from its own independent state of being to that which relies on human governance, one loses sight of the way in which we take advantage of the world. The exploitation of the earth's resources accelerated during the 1950s and 1960s, and Herbeck's poem provides a humorous commentary on the damage we reap with “DIE WELT GEht unter – da ist Pfand” – “Pfand” being an object which guarantees the repayment of a debt, as if mankind could somehow pay the earth back for the resources it took. This idea is all the more profound due to its childlike approach of viewing the ways of the world. In the comparison between the destruction of the world and the philosophy of paying a “Pfand”, the world is personified with the ability to loan out a piece of itself with the expectation of reparation. The irony of course is that this innocent approach is how the world should be, and yet isn't; there remains a gross lack of consideration for the irreplaceable resources of the earth.

Following the “Schimml Himml” phrase in “Josef” is a politically charged sentence which, in a childlike manner similar to Herbeck's black humor as expressed in his “Weltuntergang” poems, critiques the absurdity of Germany's enchantment with Hitler. From the idiomatic way in which Sebald describes Hitler to the misspelling of his name, it mirrors the sarcasm evidenced in Herbeck's “Weltuntergang 1 / 2”. Sebald's sentence reads: “Und

¹⁷³ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 85.

HerrHittler ein österreichischer Hillbilly lief im Regen zu einer Frau....”¹⁷⁴ Navratil points out that Herbeck’s misspelling of words such as “partzifall” instead of “Parzival” are purposeful and are used as a means of persiflage, to question and illustrate the arbitrary nature of language and signification. With “HerrHittler”, Sebald is likewise critiquing the symbolic significance attached to this individual. The danger with such signification is that it can result in a disconnection between the signified (Hitler / ruler) and the signifier (Hittler / Austrian hillbilly). This serves as a reminder of the power which inevitably became entwined with the moniker and how the name contributed to the mythologizing of the man. It is also interesting to keep in mind here that at on at least two occasions, Sebald came across Wölfli’s spelling of the word father (*der Vater*) as “Vatter” and in each case the “Vatter” was linked with “Gott”. If it is possible that he had Wölfli’s father-God constellation in mind when he spelled Hitler as “Hittler”, then this spelling can be viewed as an instance of Sebald’s irony. Sebald could be self-reflexively considering the hyperbolic manner in which he imbued his own father with inflated authoritarianism and control “Gott-Vatter-Hittler” due to his association of his father’s involvement in the Second World War.

What is not included in the tutor’s memoir are Sebald’s further experiments with the name “Hitler” by way of alliteration. In the random handwritten notes included in Draft One of “Josef” between pages 59 and 60, Sebald wrote: “Heinrich Heinrich Himmel Hitler Himmel Heinrich Hitler Heil Heil Heil.”¹⁷⁵ Sebald begins this line of association with the common name, Heinrich, which then becomes the heavens (*Himmel*), thereby adding a sardonic element of fate as this association implies this everyday man was chosen by the heavens to become “Hitler”, the myth of the man (Heinrich) who rises to power and is worshiped by his people (*Heil*). As Navratil points out, alliteration was one of Herbeck’s preferred literary devices, even if he on occasion would simply repeat a given word (Leben, liebe, leben, Leibe, Leben, lieb...).¹⁷⁶ In an example which resembles Sebald’s play of the alliteration of “Hitler”, in the poem, “Wörter, die mir einfallen”, Herbeck writes: “... Hubano Herodek ... Heidl, Heidt, Herbeck ... Ernst Heldentum...”¹⁷⁷ In varying his moniker, Herbeck also illustrates how easily an identity can shift and one can transcend the everyday, normal state of being. Herbeck makes himself into what seems to be a wizard or magician “Hubano Herodek”, a woman “Heidl”, “Heidt” is reminiscent of the pagan “Heide” and finally the hero “Heldentum”.

“Unter Hempls Sofa” and the “Resenrose” – A Recognition of our Self-Incurred Chaos and a Natural History of Destruction

As previously mentioned in the example of Adolf Wölfli, schizophrenics tend to

¹⁷⁴ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

¹⁷⁵ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. These pages seem to have been arbitrarily placed within the novel. In an article by Ritchie Robertson, he summarizes the aspects of poetry which Sebald felt drawn to enough to quote in his essays on Herbeck, one of the few mentioned being: “He is impressed also by some poems in which Herbeck alludes to Hitler and World War II. By introducing both himself and Hitler into a cryptic poem, Herbeck suggests the symbiotic relation between power and powerlessness which, as Sebald notes, is also a central theme in Kafka” Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 316.

¹⁷⁶ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 130.

¹⁷⁷ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 107.

incorporate idioms or proverbs in their writing. In the passage from the tutor's memoir, Sebald uses an idiom in the sentence following the appearance of Hitler which provides a commentary on the very real effects of Hitler's regime. Pointing to the immediate post-war chaos, Sebald writes: "Auf der Welt siehts aus wie unter Hempels Sofa."¹⁷⁸ This idiom also makes an appearance in an unpublished poem by Sebald called "Elizabethan World Picture." Despite the title, it is apparent that Sebald had the Second World War in mind when he wrote this poem as well since, in the third of the five strophes, there is a reference to a father who lost an ear while he was engaged in war in the Caucasus. The second strophe reads: "Vielleicht dass es reicht dass ich weiss: / Es hinkt der Lauf der Welt / Und auf der Welt sieht's aus / Wie unter Hempels Sofa."¹⁷⁹ Sebald illustrates how, ironically, despite Hitler's efforts to create a pure, healthy German body, a deficiency exists: not only has the father lost an ear, but the world's turn has taken on a limp.¹⁸⁰ According to one theory, the idiom "Hier sieht's aus wie bei Hempels unterm Sofa" originated in the early twentieth century as a group of circus performers was travelling from one city to the next and, while the majority of the performers took great care in the orderliness of their campers, Herr Hempel simply piled up all his belongings underneath his caravan.¹⁸¹ This idiom correlates not only with the "HerrHitler", but it also reflects back upon the "Himml Schimml" sentence at the beginning of the paragraph. The paragraph leading up to Herbeck's poem therefore begins and concludes with a focus on a repressive tendency: the desire, especially following the devastation of the war, to conceal everything that could provide evidence of an unordered state or one's inability to control fate and chaos. While the "Himml Schimml" quote demonstrates our fear of facing mortality, the Hempel quote comments on the ineffective attempt to cover up the chaos we bring upon ourselves and each other, either through war or through our contribution towards the natural history of destruction.

Sebald concludes this paragraph with the handwritten sentence: "& Charlie Chaplin verliert die Hose. Die Welt ist komisch."¹⁸² Charlie Chaplin shall be discussed periodically throughout this study as Sebald frequently aligns him with Herbeck, at this point it should be simply noted that that the summation of this paragraph via an alignment of Chaplin and Herbeck alludes to the fact that Sebald viewed these two as ideal figures. They have the ability to comment on the absurdities and idiosyncrasies of society in a light hearted, comical manner. In the Chaplin sentence Sebald has included here, for example, Chaplin embodies the plight of the individual struggling to overcome financial hardship. Chaplin's character loses his pants which not only reveals his inability to afford clothing that fits, but he is also physically exposing the world to the faults of the societal structure which makes such financial hardship possible. While humor is present throughout the works of Herbeck and Chaplin, there is nonetheless always an

¹⁷⁸ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

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¹⁸⁰ "Es hinkt der Lauf der Welt" is also a play on the idiom "Das ist der Lauf der Welt" as a resigned, that's how it goes, or "that's the way the cookie crumbles." The inclusion of this saying can be viewed as a critique of German society's resignation and passive stance during the war. It distances the situation from human agency and makes it seem as though, regardless of our actions, the world follows a teleological path upon which "everything happens for a reason".

¹⁸¹ Foussier, Gérard. "Der Ausdruck: Wie bei Hempels unterm Sofa." *Arte.TV*. Kehl. 14/01/07 Web. 10. March 2014. <http://www.arte.tv/de/der-ausdruck-wie-bei-hempels-unterm-sofa/1404826,CmC=1404824.html>

¹⁸² Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

aura of tragedy and melancholy surrounding these figures, as evidenced in the Herbeck poem which Sebald selected to include in “Josef”.

The Chaplin line is immediately followed by the blank space in which Sebald handwrote Herbeck’s poem, “Die Rose”, which reads in its entirety:

Die Resenrose im Herbst auch blüht.
Der Weidmann in die welken
Augen leht.
Stumm sehen dich die Augen an.
der stumme Blick der Rose.
Die Blätter der Rose waren blind.
lagen auf der Erde.
Und warten der Landschaft kühlen.
Wind.¹⁸³

In many ways, this poem points back to themes already addressed in the tutor passage. Within personified nature, one sees the strength in its persistence, yet not its immortality. Along with the primacy afforded to nature comes a reminder of the inconsequentiality of man. While the first sentence of the poem begins on a hopeful note, a pessimistic turn occurs immediately thereafter in Herbeck’s portrayal of those topics to which Sebald would return in his writing over the next thirty years: decay and the natural history of destruction.

The initial sentence alludes to a utopian view of nature with the “Resenrose”, putting one in mind of permanence. The antiquated German word “Resene” with its association to the English “resin” causes the reader to envision a rose which was once, somehow, in a liquid state and yet, like sap, it has hardened to forever maintain its form, regardless of the seasonal changes. This is followed by another image which seems to transcend the border separating not only liquids from solids, but also plants from humans. With “Weid” one expects a “Weidenbaum” or willow tree, but instead the reader is confronted by a willow man. Here, the poem has already begun to take a mournful turn, not only does one think of weeping willows, but “in die welken” (in the withering) initiates a process of decay for this anthropomorphized, willow creature with which one can’t help but feel pity. Actually, it is uncertain what is withering but, since this verb is provided in the infinitive and not as a participle modifying “Augen” (as in “die welkenden Augen”), it could be applied to either the personified tree or the eyes. These eyes are also ambiguous; it is unclear at this point if they belong to a viewer, the reader, the tree itself or if they are simply disembodied. Either way, the withering tends to express a blurring of vision, another theme to be discussed throughout this study, as a parallel for a failure of knowledge, understanding or comprehension. The “Augen” are followed by the unusual “leht”, which could imply that Herbeck meant “lehnt”: perhaps the willow man is leaning in towards the withering of the eyes and succumbing to his deterioration?¹⁸⁴ Herbeck could have alternately been phonetically spelling the word “lädt”, as if the willow man is being loaded down by a burden. In the context of the remainder of the poem, this would seem a viable option as the reader learns that these eyes are, like the willow man, a decaying object in nature: they belong to the petals of

¹⁸³ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 109.

¹⁸⁴ Although it seems unlikely, Herbeck could be using another antiquated term here, “Lehen”, as a noun which refers to a piece of land that was given to an individual to grow crops, but a large portion of the goods had to be handed over to the ruler. This definition would coincide with the way possession and ownership of property are thematized in Herbeck’s poems, especially the property of land since Herbeck depicts it and everything else within the environment as all shared parts of one life (as the willow man is both organic and human), thus the idea of possession of an aspect of nature is absurd to Herbeck.

the rose which are in fact gazing at the reader. Within this gaze there is however nothing left, the eyes are “blind” and “stumm” lying on the earth and waiting to be swept away by the breeze. Nonetheless, this dead glance is directed at the reader “sehen dich an” which implicates, almost accusatorily, the involvement of the general population in the eradication of nature. The image of the disappearing rose is, in a sense, reminiscent of Sebald’s “Ballade vom Licht der Welt” in which, after the animal had been slaughtered, its blood solidifies into a resin (“& das Blut wird zu Harz”) which serves as a powerful reminder of what once was in nature and yet is slowly vanishing like the blind petals of the rose. This integrates both Sebald’s concern regarding the natural history of destruction and the commentary that we contribute to and help this history along its way.

In Draft Two of “Josef”, Sebald has interestingly created a shorthand version of Herbeck’s “Die Rose” in which one automatically notes that it is not only edited, but that it no longer is purely Herbeck’s voice: Sebald has conjoined his own elements and made his interpretation of Herbeck’s poem evident. He has eliminated everything except “Der Waidmann! In die welken Augen lehnt.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, he has replaced Herbeck’s willow man with the hunter, followed by an exclamation point which is incidentally Herbeck’s favorite punctuation mark. This exclamation adds the appropriate emphasis to adequately summarize Herbeck’s fear of hunters.¹⁸⁶ He has also explicitly changed Herbeck’s ambiguous “leht” to “lehnt”. The obscurity of the “welken” as a verb in the infinitive form has been maintained, thus rendering it unclear if it is the hunter withering or the many disembodied eyes observing the approaching doom of the hunter. “Lehnt” as leaning also implies a resignation, whether it is the willow man, the blind rose or even the hunter; it serves as a mournful acknowledgement of the transience of all things. In the following chapter, these considerations of nature shall be returned to, reexamined and expounded upon within an intertextual context.

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¹⁸⁶ Herbeck’s identification of himself with rabbits, but also the general empathy he felt for the animal kingdom, shall be reiterated throughout this study. His fear of hunters will be dealt with explicitly in the final section of Chapter Five.

Chapter Two

Ernst Herbeck Inspires A Perspectival Exchange and Border Crossing

During the autumn term of 1980, W. G. Sebald was on study leave from his position as Lecturer at the University of East Anglia to research “problems of literature and psychopathology” with a grant from the British Academy.¹⁸⁷ Sebald’s first destination was the psychiatric hospital *Landesnervenheilanstalt Maria Gugging* located just outside of Vienna, to meet with the former patient Ernst Herbeck. Due to the fact that this experience inspired him to write several articles based on this encounter,¹⁸⁸ the term “interconnectedness” would have perhaps been more suitable than “problems”. “Problems” is appropriate when applied to Sebald’s extensive writings on the concealed psychopathology of certain authors¹⁸⁹ or an author’s ability to realistically portray pathology in a fictional work,¹⁹⁰ and yet it falls short when associated with Ernst Herbeck. It is clear that Sebald considered Herbeck’s literature to be inspirational particularly because it derives from, and thereby is closely interconnected to, his psychopathology.

Quoting Leo Navratil, Sebald states in one of his pieces on Herbeck that what allows him to see and interpret the world in a novel way is his mental state or his statebounded art “zustandsgebundenen Kunst”.¹⁹¹ When Herbeck is in an excited state of psychosis, he creates images through his unconventional word combinations “die unsere Spracherwartungen in positivem Sinn übertreffen.”¹⁹² While Herbeck’s word combinations are particularly unique,

¹⁸⁷ Sheppard, “W. G. Sebald: A Chronology” 629.

¹⁸⁸ Uwe Schütte recognizes that the articles Sebald wrote on Ernst Herbeck are fairly unique both for the focus which is placed solely on the written material by this author, and also for the attempt to explore and then promote the literary worth of the poems: “Schon die Beschäftigung mit Herbeck setzte ein deutliches Signal: Sebald machte die Germanistik auf ein kapitaales Versäumnis aufmerksam, hatte doch die Kunstwissenschaft schon seit Längerem den bildnerischen Produktionen unter der Bezeichnung *art brut* Obdach gewährt, während die Texte schriftstellerisch begabter Anstaltspatienten als ästhetisch wertlos ignoriert worden” (Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 226). Although examining literature by the mentally ill was by no means a common practice, throughout the 1970s and by the time Sebald wrote his first article on Herbeck in 1981, there had been several attempts within the field of German Studies to bridge the gap existing between the fields of psychiatry and literature as evidenced in the writings by Gerhard Roth and Ernst Jandl, for example.

¹⁸⁹ See for example Sebald’s book on Carl Sternheim (this is a revised version of his MA thesis written at the University of Manchester). As explained in the Introduction to this study, Sebald looks at the “schizophrenic” tendencies in Sternheim’s language. He claims this is the result of Sternheim’s mixed feelings which stemmed from his conflicting desire to create revolutionary works on the one hand; and yet to conform to societal expectations in terms of literary standards on the other.

¹⁹⁰ See for example Sebald, “Unterm Spiegel des Wassers” in *BU*. Regarding Handke’s ability, Sebald states: “Im Gegensatz aber zu einer literarischen Praxis, die der Psychiatrie aus guten Gründen suspekt erschienen sein mag, führt der Text Peter Handkes nicht in die Sackgasse pathetischer Identifikation, sondern zu einer durchaus nüchternen, geradezu unterkühlten Erschließung der spezifischen Form schizophrener Wirklichkeitsflucht” (116).

¹⁹¹ The following sentence is marked in Sebald’s copy of *Alexanders poetische Texte*: “Alexanders Poesie ist zustandsgebunden: die Eigenart seines Stils ist nicht von einer literarischen Strömung, nicht von kultur- und zeitbedingten Umständen abhängig, sondern auf seinen durch die Psychose veränderten Bewußtseinszustand zurückzuführen.” Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 26. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA). Sebald reiterates this point in “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 138.

¹⁹² Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 132.

Sebald declares that professional writers also require a certain level of emotional arousal to create a work of art. Sebald therefore analyzes Herbeck's poetry as an attempt "die Äusserungen eines eigentlich normalen Menschen zu verstehen."¹⁹³ While Herbeck's psychosis admittedly makes his style of writing atypical, Sebald argues his poetry deserves the same consideration granted other writers as he too has an observable technique and consistently stays on topic throughout his poems and short essays.¹⁹⁴

From the beginning, the impetus for Sebald's visit to Gugging was a combination of literary and personal consideration. He explains exactly why he felt the need to visit Herbeck during an interview with James Atlas in 1998: "I thought it would help me understand some of the basic conditions of creativity to go there."¹⁹⁵ The fact that Sebald commented on his visit to Herbeck in this interview which occurred eighteen years later demonstrates the profundity of this event, as does the lengthy letter correspondence between Sebald and Herbeck as well as between Sebald and Navratil.¹⁹⁶ This visit not only aided in Sebald's understanding of Herbeck's writing, but it also secured, despite the brevity of the meeting, a friendship which was maintained over the ensuing years. In this chapter, I will show how this meeting allowed Sebald to identify himself with Herbeck and how his admiration for Herbeck and his unique style of writing are woven throughout *Vertigo*.

Due to the dense nature of the "All'estero" chapter from *Vertigo* which depicts Sebald's visit to Herbeck, the analysis here will be limited to a few key passages from the first ten pages thereof. The study of this scene shall proceed chronologically through the events recorded in "All'estero" except for a detour at the beginning to set the stage for Sebald's imitation of Herbeck's style. Thus, this chapter opens with a demonstration of how Herbeck's key physical trait, his cleft palate, is manifest in the narrator of *Vertigo*. This shall reveal Herbeck and Sebald's common pathological feelings derived from a crisis of identity which is linked to an awareness of residing within a split self. Furthermore, I argue for a recognition of the physiological resemblance because Sebald believed that such an identification with Herbeck, who viewed himself as split between his human and animal (specifically rabbit) nature, could serve as the impetus for a perspectival exchange which would contribute to literary production. Since the main event in which Herbeck and the narrator are engaged is a walk along the Donau River, what shall also be focused on is a close reading of Herbeck's poem "Eine kleine Traverse". Sebald used this poem for the title of his primary article on Herbeck's poetics and it resonates well with a discussion of *Vertigo* since the impetus for the walk is the narrator's desire to follow Herbeck as he "tra-verses" certain boundaries.¹⁹⁷ The hyphen in tra-verse is taken

¹⁹³ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 132.

¹⁹⁴ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 137.

¹⁹⁵ Atlas, *W. G. Sebald: A Profile*. 291.

¹⁹⁶ Sebald's regular correspondence with Navratil began shortly after his initial visit to Herbeck in October. By December, Sebald had completed the first of three pieces of writing focusing exclusively on Herbeck. Both the lengthy span of time between the essays on Herbeck, the last text was published in 1992 following Herbeck's passing on 11 Sept. 1991, as well as the life-long correspondence Sebald had with Navratil, the final letter Navratil sends to Sebald was written in December of 2001, the same month as Sebald's own passing, demonstrate the impact Herbeck and Navratil had on Sebald.

¹⁹⁷ Throughout this chapter, I will refer primarily to situations involving the "narrator" rather than "Sebald" despite the fact that this is based on an event which helped Sebald gain a deeper understanding of himself. Again referring to the interview in which Sebald mentions the visit to Gugging, he says: "There is always the desire to find out how one is made up, to get to those layers that are out of sight, but I would find it hard to write anything confessional. I prefer to look at the trajectories of other lives that cross one's own trajectory – do it by proxy rather than expose the self" (Atlas, *W. G. Sebald: A Profile* 291). Thus, while Sebald is not directly "exposing the self" since he is

from Herbeck's poem and in my analysis I will demonstrate how this split word also points to a split state: it divulges the interconnectedness of crossing various physical, mental and lyrical borders. This poem further reveals the typical manner in which Herbeck portrayed nature and his position within it. I will show how the viewpoint depicted in Herbeck's poetics regarding nature can be linked to history and politics and how Sebald mirrors these views in his novel *The Emigrants*. Finally, this chapter shall conclude with Sebald's allusion to Thomas Mann. I read this as Sebald's recognition that Thomas Mann also valued the aesthetic lessons to be learned from "naïve" individuals.

The Physical Manifestations of the Split Self

Before turning to a discussion of Sebald's imitation of Herbeck's language within *Vertigo*, it is interesting to note that even beyond the linguistic mimesis, Sebald created a physical identification between himself, his narrator and Ernst Herbeck. Within Sebald's literature, a physical link is often illustrated to promote an alliance of certain characters: it intimates that between these individuals a profound affinity exists. This connection can result in an unspoken exchange of viewpoints and perspectives. Since this form of communication via physicality encourages both self-reflexivity and an identification with the Other, it raises questions regarding the stability and intactness of identity. In *Vertigo*, Sebald establishes a physical link between himself, Herbeck and the narrator as a way to allude to the fragmented nature of their identity.

Herbeck's one physical trait which is mentioned in nearly every piece of writing recounting his life history is his cleft palate and the devastation he suffered as a result. As a child, he was operated on several times to fix this defect and was held back in school due to post-surgery absences. Herbeck mentions this repeatedly in his own poetry and Sebald uses it as a key point in his interpretation of Herbeck's outlook on life (and its potential role as contributor to the onset of his schizophrenia) in his article "The Little Hare" in *Campo Santo*. Discussed in this article is Herbeck's identification, because of his harelip, with his totemic animal, the hare.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, since he associated Herbeck with the hare, it is safe to assume that a reference to Herbeck is being made when this animal appears in Sebald's novels. For example, in Bettina Mosbach's article "Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung,"¹⁹⁹ she discusses how the narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* (a Sebald double) encounters a rabbit and finds himself immediately becoming one with the animal: feeling its fear and viewing the world from its perspective. Though she doesn't directly mention the relation to Herbeck at this point in the article, knowledge of Sebald's "The Little Hare" makes this clear. Mosbach quotes a section from *The Rings of Saturn* which reveals the narrator's shifting point of view. When he observes the border of the grey asphalt and each blade of grass, he states: "Ich sehe den Rand des grauen Asphalts, jeden einzelnen Grashalm..."²⁰⁰ I believe seeing through the eyes of the rabbit implies the

concealed behind the shadowy figure of the narrator, this passage still alludes to what Sebald learned from Herbeck about creativity and mental illness.

¹⁹⁸ This relationship between Herbeck and the animal realm will be returned to for a more in-depth discussion in Chapter Five.

¹⁹⁹ Mosbach, Bettina. "Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung : zur Tieranalogie bei W. G. Sebald." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 126 (2007): 82-97. Edition: *Texte, Tiere, Spuren*.

²⁰⁰ "Das intensive Erlebnis eines hypertropischen Sehens ... erscheint als Spaltung der eigenen Wahrnehmung ... von der visuellen Perspektive des Hasens durchdrungen erscheint." Mosbach, "Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung" 88.

narrator gains the ability to see the world from a Herbeckian point-of-view and this is underscored in the vocabulary employed in this phrase. The term itself “Rand” (margin / border) corresponds to Herbeck’s mental and physical peripheral position in society (*am Rand der Gesellschaft*). It also shows Herbeck’s distance from and lack of contribution to the negative progression of society and the technological innovations which are ultimately leading us towards destruction. From an objective distance (within nature) the rabbit (an innocent creature) can observe the encroachment of technology and mechanized life (represented by the grey asphalt) and can gaze upon it with shock and awe but cannot alter the course of events. Additionally, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter in the section “Tra-versing Nature or One within a Multitude”, I read the “blades of grass” as an allusion to Herbeck by way of an alignment illustrated in Sebald’s *The Emigrants* between Herbeck, Sebald’s character, Henry Selwyn, and Walt Whitman.

While the manner in which it is established is more subtle in *Vertigo*, Sebald can be seen to link himself with Herbeck via the hare here as well. In *Vertigo*, seeing through the eyes of the hare enables a metamorphosis which can be used for creative production. Quoting Sebald, Mosbach writes: “Im gespaltenen Gesicht des Hasen spiegelt sich mithin die ‘Verwandlungsfähigkeit’ der literarischen Imagination selbst, die als Kunst der Synthetisierung der eigenen mit einer fremden Wahrnehmung entworfen wird.”²⁰¹ Thus, the hare’s split face metaphorically alludes to the possibility for a “metamorphosis of the literary imagination.” This means the result of this creative exchange is a synthesized work of art in which multiple perspectives are conjoined. What is also entailed in seeing the world through Herbeck’s eyes is, of course, his psychosis, therefore the illustration of a physical parallel between the narrator of *Vertigo* and Herbeck implies that both the narrator’s semantics (as an adaptation of Herbeck’s literary imagination) and his psychological state shall reflect a Herbeckian mode.

In Sebald’s “The Little Hare”, it is clear that Herbeck’s cleft palate is the key identifying mark which reveals his dual nature. Sebald states his belief that Herbeck’s “split face” points to a divided self – a physical feature symbolically illustrating a split psychological state.²⁰² A parallel to this outer manifestation of an inner psychosis occurs in *Vertigo*: the narrator suffers from a split sense of self and this psychological crisis is mirrored in a corporeal form which alludes to Herbeck’s defect. In *Vertigo*, the narrator has lost his passport while traveling through Italy and thus needs to be issued a new one. What the reader sees is not a fictional document, but rather a photocopy of Sebald’s passport which has been added to page 129 of the German edition. In terms of psychology, this insertion already reveals a split self. In printing his own passport as evidence that the narrator has acquired this document, Sebald is pointing to his awareness of his own dual-nature. Sebald’s image, his face, is shared between himself (the real Sebald) and the narrator (the fictional Sebald).²⁰³ Additionally, Sebald is illustrating the ambiguity of such documents due to their insufficiency in terms of establishing an identity.

With the disappearance of this personal item, the narrator notes that he has simultaneously lost a piece of his own identity. He recognizes that the self is split between the inner world, or way in which one knows oneself, which is comprised of the conscious awareness

²⁰¹ Mosbach, “Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung” 90.

²⁰² Sebald, “The Little Hare” in *CS* 132.

²⁰³ Such an identical alignment of the narrator and Sebald also appears in *Austerlitz*. Sebald’s provides photographic support of the narrator’s voyage to Theresienstadt with the inclusion of an image of a window display for the store *Antikos Bazar*. While what is pictured most predominantly is the porcelain figure of a horse and riders, a close observation of the reflection in the window reveals Sebald is the man behind the camera. W. G. Sebald. *Austerlitz*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003. 284.

of individuality based on personal characteristics, values or beliefs; and the outer bureaucratic world where one is known by another and existence is proven by paperwork or other similar official documentation. The narrator demonstrates the absurdity of situations in which a detachment occurs and, despite a confident awareness of the self, the validity of identity can be thrown into question if the necessary paperwork (a passport) is lacking: "... it took a long while until my identity had been established, by several phone calls to the relevant authorities."²⁰⁴ While missing bureaucratic paperwork can negatively impact an individual, so too can an excessive amount of recorded official information. Once one has been defined via paperwork – or even stigmatized such as through a diagnosis of schizophrenia – it becomes increasingly difficult to prove oneself to be different from what has been stamped on the documents. The idea that one's official and psychological identity is always indistinct, malleable and wavering is underscored by the addition Sebald makes to his passport photograph in *Vertigo*. This addition, along with the other alterations Sebald made to this document, reveals his identification with Herbeck by means of a replication of Herbeck's distinctive physical feature.

From this reinstated passport which is represented in the novel, only the right half of the dual-sided first page is shown. There has been one change made to the image: a thin black bar has been placed over the middle of Sebald's, now the narrator's, photograph. This bar renders the image so enigmatic that it becomes difficult to confirm his identity. Sebald's precarious positioning of the black bar has literally split the narrator's face in two, thus endowing him with a hyperbolic harelip and connecting him to Herbeck. A reference can be added here to underscore Sebald's tendency to illustrate how identification with the (animal) Other can be made by way of physical resemblance. This reference is taken from Elias Canetti's *Masse und Macht*, a work which profoundly influenced Sebald. Canetti also was of the opinion that individuals are capable of identifying with animals, and the example he provides is of "der australischen Buschmänner, die die Nähe der Springböcke als ein 'Gefühl im Gesicht' spüren, welches das Gefühl des schwarzen Streifens im Gesicht des Springbocks ist."²⁰⁵ The Canetti reference is essentially depicted by Sebald in *Vertigo* in a literal manner. The physical black stripe across the face of the springbuck is projected onto the human as a "feeling in one's face" which illustrates an emotive exchange. The close physical proximity of the Australian Bushmen to the springbucks results in their empathetic identification with the animal. In the insertion of the "black stripe" of the springbuck over his own image, Sebald asserts his close relation to and sympathetic view of the animal Other, the hare Herbeck.

Due to the alteration of the black bar, the most apparent attribute becomes the narrator's mustache, also physically linking him with Herbeck who, self-conscious regarding his harelip was never seen without facial hair.²⁰⁶ Since in Sebald's article on Herbeck he discusses how his

²⁰⁴ Sebald, *Vertigo* 113. "nach mehreren Telefongesprächen mit Amtstellen ... [war] meine Identität sichergestellt." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994. 129.

²⁰⁵ Mosbach, "Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung" 90. Mosbach uses this quote as an example of the "Affizierung des Erzählers durch den Hasen als Spielart jener ekstatischen Verwandlung" (90).

²⁰⁶ As a side note, while the mustache connection could be viewed as a mere coincidence, one must keep in mind that Sebald linked several individuals for whom he had great respect by way of their physiognomy. Ernst Herbeck, Robert Walser and Sebald's grandfather, Josef Egelhofer, are all associated for example in *Vertigo* on page 39. The narrator claims that Herbeck's appearance resembles his grandfather and, instead of providing an image of Josef Egelhofer, he inserts an image of Robert Walser taken by Carl Seelig. The image has been edited and only shows Walser from his shoulders down to his waistline. In the pictures Sebald includes in "Le promeneur solitaire. Zur Erinnerung an Robert Walser" to demonstrate the similarity between Walser and his grandfather (the full shot of Walser which is edited to become Herbeck in *Vertigo* is included in this series on page 136), more detailed images are included which, incidentally, feature the mustaches of Robert Walser and Josef Egelhofer (in Sebald, W. G.

cleft palate can be viewed as the physical manifestation of a split-self, then Sebald's division of the narrator's face aligns him with Herbeck and likewise reveals in a physical manner the identity crisis lurking underneath. This is essentially not a surprise, as from the beginning the reader notices the narrator's neurosis; and yet since it is actually Sebald's image used here, this psychosis reflects on Sebald as well: his true identity has been obscured and split. The black bar has intentionally been placed over Sebald's image, demonstrating his potential questioning of his own state of mind which has been camouflaged and concealed behind his double, the narrator.

What is also invisible to the reader due to the edited left hand side of Sebald's original passport page in *Vertigo* is the notation: "Besondere Kennzeichen: GESPALTENER DAUMENNAGEL RECHTS."²⁰⁷ The edited split nail of the left hand side of the passport page has become the split face on the right in *Vertigo*. Within even this small detail, one sees the combination of literature and pathology. Since the author's primary task requires the use of his hand, then this hand is intimately linked to the literature it produces.²⁰⁸ Thus, the split nail can be interpreted as the physical representation of a resulting split or schizophrenic mode of writing. In a sense, fictional writing is inherently schizophrenic as the author always, if even to a minor extent, fragments him/herself into pieces (a division between the author and narrator). In this particular case and what shall be focused on more closely in the following sections is how many characteristics of Sebald's works demonstrate his attempt at linguistically and visually creating a Herbeckian style of writing. While it may seem an exaggeration to make such a connection between the split nail and writing by schizophrenics, this would not have been far-fetched for Sebald. Sebald frequently demonstrates his continuous and devoted attention to detail and coincidence and because of this, it is highly conceivable that this would not have been overlooked. The detail itself on the passport is anything but obscure: the words describing his "distinguishing mark" are typed in capital letters and thereby make it impossible for the eye to concentrate on anything on this passport page other than the words "split right nail".

Sebald would likely have viewed this coincidental overlapping of split-features (his nail and Herbeck's lip) as physical evidence revealing the invisible network which connects certain individuals. Since Sebald's connection to Herbeck extends beyond the physical realm into linguistics, the following sections shall look closely at Sebald's literature to explore a few examples from *Vertigo* in which one sees Sebald's attempt at mirroring Herbeck's style. This analysis shall begin with the closest similarity to this revelation of split-identities via physical evidence; namely, words that have literally been separated in order to show their own split-

Logis in einem Landhaus. Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere. Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1988. 135-37). Hereafter the works from this book will be cited with the title of the article in quotation marks followed by "in *LieL*". In a lecture given by Uwe Schütte, he pointed out how Sebald's mustache could be seen as an homage to his grandfather, and to this intentional physical emulation I would add Robert Walser, Ernst Herbeck and even Charlie Chaplin. Schütte, Uwe. "Interventionen. Literaturkritik als Widerspruch bei W. G. Sebald." Mittwochseminar. *Deutsches Literaturarchiv*, Marbach am Neckar. 23 Oct. 2013. Lecture.

²⁰⁷ "Distinguishing Mark: Split Right Thumbnail." Sebald's passport is located in his collected materials housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

²⁰⁸ Nearly everything Sebald wrote (letters, drafts of essays, novels) was completed originally per hand. He would then make corrections to the drafts and finalize them on the typewriter. He avoided working on the computer at all costs. To underscore the profound literal connection between the hand and the writing process, what should also be alluded to here is the plaster cast of Métilde's left hand (the love interest in the first chapter of *Vertigo*) which Beyle uses as his muse once she has rejected his advances as a paramour. Like Sebald's split nail, this hand is characterized by a defect: "In particular, the slight crookedness of the ring finger occasioned in him emotions of a vehemence he had not hitherto experienced." Sebald, *Vertigo* 21.

identities, here in the sense of inherent multiple meanings or modes of understanding.

Tra-versing Spatial, Societal and Lyrical Boundaries

Turning the focus to the second chapter of *Vertigo*, “All’estero” begins with the narrator’s reminiscence on the journey to Vienna in October of 1980. Although the trip is prompted by the narrator’s desire to escape through travel “a particularly difficult period,”²⁰⁹ which is likely an allusion to Sebald’s own mental instability at this time,²¹⁰ the narrator experiences the initial phase of a psychological breakdown. The narrator adds that, immediately following his arrival, he feels he has no idea where to turn or what to do with himself now that he is not preoccupied with writing and gardening (*Schreib- und Gartenarbeiten*).²¹¹ While many of Sebald’s novels open with a character in a state of crisis or stasis resulting from a fixation upon recovering repressed memories from childhood, the narrator of *Vertigo* reveals an additional element contributing to his psychological stand-still: writer’s block. Thus, the narrator imparts on a quest in order to enter into a new creative phase, to discover a new mode of representation or to express himself in unconventional ways. The first source of information and inspiration for the narrator is Ernst Herbeck.

That Sebald, and thereby the narrator of *Vertigo*, seeks out Herbeck in order to accompany him on a walk (traverse) partially in order to gain lyrical inspiration comes as no surprise. What is already apparent from the title of Sebald’s article on Herbeck, “Eine kleine Traverse. Das poetische Werk Ernst Herbecks”, is that Sebald was attracted to the fact that Herbeck was able to cross over certain boundaries physically, mentally and lyrically. The title for Sebald’s article is taken from Herbeck’s short poem which reads:

Ich habe eine kleine Tra-
verse
früh um inn einer Sod.

Sebald, whose writing is filled with border crossings, was undoubtedly drawn especially to Herbeck’s use of the term “traverse”. Herbeck was perpetually kept behind a boundary; namely, the walls of his psychiatric institution. Thanks to Navratil’s publication of his poetry, Herbeck was able to transcend this physical border and he quickly became well-known within literary circles. He was thereby capable of transgressing the societal barrier which could have easily confined his voice within the walls of the institution. The extension of Herbeck’s voice beyond the institution is, however, a problematic traversal of a boundary since it is one which Herbeck was originally (and somewhat controversially) unaware of. The poems were collected and published by Leo Navratil under the pseudonym “Alexander” (also chosen by Navratil) without Herbeck’s knowledge or permission.²¹² While Herbeck’s scope of existence had expanded in the

²⁰⁹ Sebald, *Vertigo* 33. “... eine besondere un gute Zeit.” Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 39.

²¹⁰ As Richard Sheppard comments at the end of his essay “W. G. Sebald’s Reception of Alfred Döblin”: “The choice of topic and location gives one some sense of his growing sense of personal stress and crisis, and he followed this visit with a journey into the past (29 Oct. - 12 Nov.) that would become the first part of *Schwindel. Gefühle* a decade later.” Sheppard, Richard. “W. G. Sebald’s Reception of Alfred Döblin.” *Alfred Döblin: Paradigms of Modernism*. Eds. Steffan Davies and Ernest Schonfield. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 350-376. 376.

²¹¹ “In Wien erwies es sich aber gleich nach meiner Ankunft, daß mir die von den gewohnheitsmäßigen Schreib- und Gartenarbeiten nun nicht mehr ausgefüllten Tage ungemein lang wurden und daß ich tatsächlich nicht mehr wußte, wohin mich wenden” (Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 39).

²¹² See Schütte, Uwe. “Herbeck, nach Kafka. Zur ‘minderen Literatur’ des schizophränen Dichters Ernst Herbeck.” *Modern Austrian Literature* 3, no. 4 (2005): 37-63. 38.

eyes of the artistic world, he was highly conscious of his physical limitations. In this context, the first half of Herbeck's poem is interesting for his inclusion of the phrase "ich habe". As an individual denied access to what most take for granted, such as basic possessions, what is revealed in the phrase "I have" is a protest. Although Herbeck's physical possessions were scarce to say the least, these words demonstrate his ability to at least possess ownership of his poetry.²¹³ "Eine kleine Traverse" therefore points to his possession of the ability to transgress/traverse via his poetic imaginary the confinement of the institution.

Connected with the desire to cross a physical boundary is also the desire to enter into a new mental state or a new mode of thinking. In order for the narrator of *Vertigo* to transgress his current state by opening his mind so that a new form of creativity may enter, he must first endure a mental breakdown. Thus mirroring to a lesser extent Herbeck's madness and enabling him to better understand Herbeck's means of viewing the world (Herbeck, prompted by Navratil, only began writing after the complete mental breakdown which resulted in decades of institutionalization). Sebald recognized that writing always borders madness. He claims: "One could not say whether one goes on writing purely out of habit ... or out of sheer wonderment, despair or outrage, any more than one could say whether writing renders one more perceptive or more insane."²¹⁴ In order to enter into a creative or inspired mindset, one needs the necessary level of emotional arousal.²¹⁵ For Herbeck, this state was acquired via psychosis and, since the narrator here serves as a type of double for Herbeck, it is logical that "All'estero" also begins with a psychological breakdown. While the severity of the narrator's psychosis is not great enough to require he be institutionalized, the threat is intimated via a force which drives the narrator ever closer to the institution.

²¹³ As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, Sebald would have been interested in Herbeck's phrase of protest "I have" as it is an ironic, joyous exclamation celebrating his possession of something which does not hold monetary value. It is thus not a possession typically celebrated by Western capitalist society which tends instead to prioritize material objects. Sebald's vehement adherence to the Frankfurt School of Thought enabled him to see many of the ideas of these Critical Theorists expressed in Herbeck's poems, not the least of which was Herbeck's thematization of consumer culture and the pressure placed upon the individual to possess material objects.

²¹⁴ This statement is from *The Rings of Saturn* and occurs when the narrator and Michael Hamburger are discussing the process of writing. This is quoted in Cuomo, "A Conversation with W. G. Sebald" 113.

²¹⁵ Roland Fischer, the experimental psychiatrist and psychopharmacologist, analyzed the various levels of emotional arousal, graphing these on a scale from one (normal daily perception) to ten (an ecstatic state). The higher the degree of excitement, the more difficult it becomes to express the emotional experience linked to that particular state of arousal. For example, at level ten the individual turns inward becoming, from an outer perspective, increasingly catatonic and yet inwardly they can examine the Self but tend to lose physical capabilities, such as the ability to express in verbal or written form an emotional state. For more information, see Fischer, Roland. "A Cartography of the Ecstatic and Meditative States." *Science* 174, no. 4012 (26 Nov 1971) and Fischer, Roland and G. M. Landon. "On the Arousal State-Dependent Recall of 'Subconscious' Experience: Stateboundness." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 120 (1972): 159-172. Sebald was well aware of Fischer's theory on the levels of emotional arousal and the corresponding degree of expressive and creative ability. In Leo Navratil's article "Psychopathologie und Sprache," Navratil discusses many of the key points of Fischer's hypotheses and several of these passages are marked by Sebald in his personal copy (Navratil, Leo. "Psychopathologie und Sprache." *Literatur und Schizophrenie. Theorie und Interpretation eines Grenzgebiets*. Ed. Winfried Kudszus. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977. 113-134). For example, he highlighted the following sentence from this article on "State-Boundaries" ("Zustands-Grenzen") which: "beruht zunächst auf der Erfahrung, daß für die Erlebnisse in einem bestimmten Bewußtseinzustand häufig Amnesie besteht, sobald man sich in einem anderen Bewußtseinzustand befindet" (Navratil, "Psychopathologie und Sprache" 119). This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA). To see how Sebald integrates this scientific theory into his analysis of Herbeck and the spontaneous creation of literature, also see the final section of this Chapter on Herbeck and Thomas Mann.

In the opening of *Vertigo*, the narrator finds himself continually confronted with an invisible border which, regardless of the direction in which he moves, he cannot cross.²¹⁶ As he wanders the streets of Vienna, he inevitably lands in the same pathological place: at the border of the hospitals (“beziehungsweise bei den großen Spitälern des Alsergrunds”).²¹⁷ Continually approaching and ultimately being unable to surpass or avoid this boundary, the narrator is led to a mental state in which he feels on the edge of sanity “am Rand seiner Vernunft”.²¹⁸ David Kaufmann has examined the pathological nature of the narrator’s walk through Vienna in order to connect Sebald’s elaborative and repetitive writing style with the way the narrator’s mental state is reflected in his surroundings. I see this as an additional example of Sebald’s use of physicality to represent an inner state of being:

The absent-minded wanderer of this passage is a creature of unconscious imperatives. He describes himself as being like a man who tries to pursue new thoughts and cannot, a man in thrall to obsession. And, of course, his analogy is apt to the extent that his limited forays across Vienna literalize in space precisely the repetitive loops and circles of obsessive thought.²¹⁹

Confronted with the border to the hospital, which also implies the border separating the narrator’s mindset (reason) from Herbeck’s (madness), he decides to visit Herbeck. The narrator thereby “traverses” a physical location which further enables his ability to “traverse” his mental state and to banish his lyrical block by entering into a mild state of psychosis and observing the world in a defamiliarized manner.

Returning briefly to consider another aspect of the first sentence of Herbeck’s poem, “Ich habe eine kleine Tra- / verse”, one notices that this key word, traverse, has been split in two. As mentioned in the previous section, the division of the face (Herbeck’s lip and the narrator’s / Sebald’s face in the passport photograph) indicates a physical representation of a split psychological state. Similarly, the split term indicates a division of meaning which encourages an alternative, if unconventional, interpretation. The partition of *Tra-verse* visually encourages the reader’s eye to linger over the second half of the term which stands alone on the second line: “verse”. Therefore, the reader is made aware of the relation between the concepts “traverse” and “verse”. Because of the subsequent focus on “verse”, the conventional ideas associated with traversing (crossing a physical threshold) have been connected to lyricism and literature by way of the word “verse”. This results in an interpretation of the two lines as a crossing of a literary threshold.

When Sebald titled his article on Herbeck “Eine kleine Traverse. Das poetische Werk Ernst Herbecks”, he rejoined the two halves of Herbeck’s word and thereby reintegrated the allusions to both “traverse”, in terms of surpassing a physical and mental boundary, with “verse”, in terms of literary inspiration. And yet, as if to ensure that Herbeck’s revelation of the connotation of “verse” in “traverse” should not be lost, Sebald added to Herbeck’s phrase “das poetische Werk Herbecks”. Similarly, the title Sebald chose for his *Vertigo* chapter in which Herbeck is introduced, “All’estero”, mirrors these ideas of physical and mental transgression. As Claudia Öhlschläger clarifies, “Sebald [entwickelt] in *All’Estero* (‘Im/Ins Ausland’) ein Konzept von Räumen des psychisch Inneren ... Seine Fahrt ins Ausland, wie der Titel sagt, ist eine Fahrt

²¹⁶ “... völlig willkürliche Grenzlinien” (Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 40).

²¹⁷ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 39.

²¹⁸ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 40.

²¹⁹ Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace” 97.

ins innere Ausland.”²²⁰ This journey is not only about physically traveling into a foreign area, it is also about tapping into areas of the mind which had been formerly unexplored and, once this region has been discovered, the possibility for lyrical transgression opens up as well.

The idea of travelling by way of a mental journey had long been present in Sebald’s mind,²²¹ as had his own use of hyphenation to arouse defamiliarization and multiple interpretations.²²² This is revealed in one of Sebald’s earliest works: namely his unpublished novel housed in the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. In the first draft of this work, Josef, the protagonist is presented with the memoirs from the former tutor at his university. The tutor’s writing style is decidedly different from Josef’s and I argue this voice is specifically inspired by Herbeck. As related in Chapter One, the tutor had suddenly cut himself off from society, left town and then returned years later only in order to write these memories. Upon completion, the tutor entered the Black Forest where his body was discovered a few days later. The title of this memoir is only given in the first draft of the novel: “er-Innerung.”²²³ The hyphen inserted in this term encourages viewing the act of reminiscing as engaging in a spatial journey – travelling to the “psychisch Inneren”. Much like the title “All’estero”, one sees here a collapse of boundaries. Within the tutor’s memoir there are many references to specific journeys throughout the natural world and this spatial wandering becomes enmeshed with the mental journey.

Due to the hyphen separating “er-Innerung”, the typical assumptions made when one reads the term “Erinnerung” are shifted slightly. Here, the emphasis is placed on the personal “er”, the protagonist (he) who will travel in the memoir throughout the inner (*Innerung*) realm of the various bodies of characters and places. Since the voice of the tutor mirrors Herbeck’s, it is crucial that it be a modest one. The non-capitalized “er” is decidedly male, but it is not the type of masculine voice to which Sebald was vehemently opposed. Thus, it contrasts with the patriarchal, tyrannical voice of an individual attempting to maintain a hegemonic grasp on memories and history.²²⁴ It is rather a small voice, coming from the margins of society and yet it strives to locate in writing its meager position within the overwhelming scope of history. Unlike the capitalized “Innerung”, “er” prompts one to think of a person in the diminutive, of a dwarf, of Robert Walser and Ernst Herbeck.

Sebald’s affinity for the idea of making oneself as small as possible was likely first inspired by Elias Canetti. Canetti uses the Benjamin Button idea of “growing young” (described

²²⁰ Öhlschläger, *Beschädigtes Leben* 142, 144.

²²¹ For further information on Sebald’s figures which undertake mental journeys while their bodies remain in a state of stasis see Zisselsberger’s introduction, especially pages 6-7. Zisselsberger, Markus, ed. *The Undiscover’d Country: W. G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010.

²²² Sebald’s unconventional use of the hyphen was likely inspired to a great extent by Herbeck’s poetry. Regarding Sebald’s interest in the employment of symbolic language by marginal authors (Gerhard Roth and Herbeck are discussed here), Ritchie Robertson points to an example of Sebald’s own experimentation with the hyphen, one that occurs in his “Eine kleine Traverse” essay on Herbeck, no less. “What especially intrigues him about all such socially marginal modes of utterance, however, is that they reach back to a symbolic form of thinking that antedates the instrumental use of language: ‘For symbolic thought, the utilitarian conception of language is either alien or absent; it does not intend a final de-scription of reality, but a continuous engagement with it’ (*BU*: 134). The hyphen in ‘de-scription’ (Sebald wrote ‘Be-schreibung’) implies that utilitarian language forcibly inscribes its own purposes onto a passive, subjugated reality.” Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 316.

²²³ The second draft of this work has removed the title of the memoir. Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

²²⁴ For deeper insight regarding Sebald’s stance on masculinity, see Finch, Helen. *Sebald’s Bachelors: Queer Resistance and the Unconforming Life*. Oxford: Legenda, 2013.

using the physical word “smaller” / “kleiner”) as a way to erase hegemonic historical voices. In Sebald’s article on Canetti he includes the quote:

“Es ware hübsch, von einem gewissen Alter ab, Jahr um Jahr wieder kleiner zu werden und dieselben Stufen, die man einst mit Stolz erklimm, rückwärts zu durchlaufen ... Die Geschichte würde an Bedeutung durch ihr Alter verlieren ... und die Vergangenheit hätte das Glück, endlich übersehen zu werden.”²²⁵

In this quote, one sees Canetti’s argument, which enjoyed a lifelong presence in Sebald’s mind, against the conventional, teleological understanding of history’s progression. The only elements of the past which are currently overlooked are those which originate in the margins and are antithetical to the historical occurrences viewed from the standpoint of those in power “Geschichte vom Standpunkt der Stärkeren”. This is where the parallel can be drawn between the minor voice of the small “er” (the tutor / Herbeck figure) and the voices of that other important “dwarf” (*Zwerg*): Robert Walser. Sebald concludes his essay on Walser with the claim that Walser reminds him of Nabokov’s characters “der schwarze Golliwogg und seine Freunde, zu denen auch eine Art Zwerg oder Liliputmensch gehört” and Walser is additionally described as “der kleine Soloist.”²²⁶ The “Eine kleine Traverse” essay on Herbeck similarly ends with what Sebald refers to as Herbeck’s dream of becoming smaller, “Traum von Kleinerwerden,”²²⁷ and how he identified with dwarves. Sebald includes a poem by Herbeck to underscore this idea which ends with two lines on rigorously breathing in air, alone, like a dwarf: “Und atmet streng allein / die Luft ein wie ein Zwerg.”²²⁸

Tra-versing Nature or One within a Multitude

Sebald’s selection of the “Eine kleine Traverse” poem for the title of his essay on Herbeck in 1981 was likely prompted in part by this poem’s explication of a theme which Sebald returned to frequently in his own works: taking comfort in the recognition of our oneness with nature. The line following “Ich habe eine kleine Tra-verse” reads “früh um inn einer Sod” which poses problems for translation, but at face value seems to mean “early around him of a patch of grass”. Due to the unique spelling and declination used in this phrase, I argue this sentence can be read as a revelation of Herbeck’s self-reflexivity as well as his understanding of his place within nature. I will demonstrate how the meanings which can be derived by an interpretation of Herbeck’s contemplation of sod (*die Sode*) or grass are mirrored in Sebald poetry and in *The Emigrants*. Herbeck and Sebald’s meditation on the earth illustrates the, sometimes mournful but often comforting, interconnectedness of everything in the natural world.

Considering the phrase “früh um inn einer Sod”, one can interpret this fairly directly as a German sentence in which Herbeck has misspelled the word “in” as “inn”.²²⁹ Thus, this term can be interpreted as “in einer Sod.” And yet, one aspect of Herbeck’s writing which also interested Sebald was his frequent use of English phrases, perhaps because this was one of the school subjects in which he was most keen.²³⁰ In this case, one can also read this term “inn” in

²²⁵ Sebald, “Summa Scientiae” 99-100.

²²⁶ Sebald, “Le promeneur solitaire” in *LieL* 168.

²²⁷ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 147.

²²⁸ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 148.

²²⁹ On at least one other occasion, Herbeck did replace “in” and “inn”: “Nachmittags ging ich inn die Lähre.” Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 95.

²³⁰ “Er war stets ein fleißiger Schüler ... und [hat] für Sprachen, besonders für Englisch auch nach dem Schulaustritt noch Interesse gezeigt.” Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache*. 88. That English was frequently on Herbeck’s mind

connection with the English term meaning hotel, but also as a word play referring to the German word for inn, *die Herberge*. Reading the term thusly demonstrates a self-reflectivity on Herbeck's part since the term for "inn" in German closely resembles Herbeck's name. It is likely that Herbeck would have made such a connection since this tendency for paronomasia, or associating words which may have different meanings but are vocally similar, is typical of schizophrenic thought. One example from Herbeck's poetry which Navratil provides is "Ehe mann die Ehe spann."²³¹ Therefore with this linguistic replacement, Herbeck's poem can be read as "früh um Herbeck einer Sod." Another argument for Herbeck's awareness of the possible interpretation of "inn" as a reflection upon himself is his tendency to replace "ihn" (him) with "in" as well as "ihm" (him) with "im" (in),²³² again implying "früh um ihn (Herbeck) einer Sod." Navratil emphasizes that Herbeck's misspellings are not a result of his illness but rather an intentional act:

Der Kranke beweist damit, daß er auf gewisse Vorschriften – welche meist überhaupt nicht so sehr in das Blickfeld treten – genau achtet; er persifliert sie, so daß die Fragwürdigkeit dieser Regeln zutage tritt, das Reguläre zum Irregulären und die Form zur Unform wird. Formalismus wird zur Deformation.²³³

Navratil's description enables the reader of Herbeck's poetry to recognize a rebellious act: he is counteracting the hegemony of linguistic rules by pointing out their arbitrary, mutable nature in a playful manner.

Interpreting "*inn*" as the English "inn" would demonstrate a high level of self-awareness on Herbeck's part regarding his illness. As a schizophrenic, he would occasionally hear voices which attempted to influence his thoughts and actions, implying that there were many voices (individuals) collected under one roof, as in an inn (*Herberge*). If this is Herbeck referring to his possession of a collective identity as the *Herberge*, it also reveals an example of Herbeck's self-aggrandizement. This is a self defense mechanism and an ironic way of opposing his more frequent feelings of smallness (his identification with *Zwerge*). For instance, when Herbeck was given the task by Navratil to compose a list of all the words that spontaneously came to him, his name occurs in various forms: initially as "Herbeck", but later it is changed to the more impressive, if somewhat vainglorious Ernst the Brave (*Ernst Heldentum*).²³⁴ He is larger than life and the area around him diminishes as he becomes the focal point. That Sebald enjoyed reading Herbeck's humorous alterations to his name is demonstrated in his highlighting of these instances in his personal copy of *Alexanders poetische Texte*.²³⁵ Additionally, this name-play also appears in Sebald's writing. In *The Rings of Saturn* for instance, Sebald mentions two names which are obviously fictional but are reported with a tone of historic accuracy:

Around 1870, when projects for the total illumination of our cities were everywhere afoot, two English scientists with the apt names of Herrington and Lightbown investigated the unusual phenomenon in the hope that the luminous substance exuded by

when composing poetry is evidenced in the first line of his poem "Der Tod.": "Der Tod ist ein englisch-deutsches Wort". "English" is the only word in this sentence which Sebald underlined in his personal copy. Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 127. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

²³¹ For a more detailed description and further examples see Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 131.

²³² Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 126.

²³³ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 127.

²³⁴ From "Wörter, die mir einfallen" in Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 106.

²³⁵ This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

dead herrings would lead to a formula for an organic source of light that had the capacity to regenerate itself.²³⁶

The final element of Herbeck's "Eine kleine Traverse" poem left to examine is the remaining, equally ambiguous term "Sod" which likely refers to either the English term "sod" or the German noun "*die Sode*" for grass. That this noun occurs here in the genitive can then imply that "früh um Herbeck einer Sod" means "early around Herbeck of a patch of grass". This would demonstrate nature's possession of Herbeck, however, since the ambiguity can be read as Herbeck's understanding of himself as a multitude (within an inn), then he is intimately linked with nature in a way that is ultimately a mutual relation since nature is also a unified being comprised of many singular parts (as sod is a patch of grass made of single blades).

As will be demonstrated in Chapter Six, Sebald associated Herbeck with the historical founding Kaspar Hauser. In Peter Handke's drama, *Kaspar*, and in Werner Herzog's film, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, Kaspar remains in an undifferentiated state until the age of sixteen when he is released from his cell. He is incapable of recognizing the boundary separating himself from the objects around him.²³⁷ As he is forced to acquire language, he simultaneously loses parts of himself and his former identity. Each new word represents a further fragmentation of the world; the objects surrounding Hauser which he once understood to be interconnected extensions of his physical person are torn apart and become separate objects which exist independent of Hauser. Sebald sees in Herbeck's poems a similar means of viewing the world that allows for the preservation of this interconnected and unified state. In fact, Ritchie Robertson notes that this unified state also extends into Herbeck's linguistics since he refuses to allow the objects of the world to be subjugated under the confinement of language: "Herbeck does not use language to represent reality but engages with language as an equal partner in dialogue."²³⁸ Herbeck, like Hauser, also in many ways mirrors nature in its wild, untamed free state,²³⁹ and yet the particular consideration of "sod" reveals Herbeck's ironic self-reflexivity: he can flourish, but only within the boundary of the institution; as sod, a patch of grass, can grow wild, but only within its groomed, confined space under the control of the individual who cuts and forms it.

Sebald certainly would not have been averse to the idea of interpreting this poem as Herbeck's play on the English "inn" since viewing Herbeck as a cohesive body comprised of a multitude of singular parts conveys a desire for an expansion of the self. Herbeck equates himself with, and therefore becomes one with, the natural environment (*die Sode*) around him. In his novels, it is apparent that many of Sebald's characters shared the same goal. The character, Dr. Henry Selwyn, from *The Emigrants* is worth mentioning in this context as he demonstrates the closest reflection of Herbeck's portrayal of this aspect of nature. Selwyn's desire is to become one with nature, to melt into the grass/sod. The first time the narrator meets Selwyn, he is sitting in his garden staring at the ground. As the narrator approaches, Selwyn states in an embarrassed manner: "I was counting the blades of grass, sagte er zur Entschuldigung für seine Gedankenverlorenheit. It's a sort of a pastime of mine. Rather irritating, I am afraid."²⁴⁰ The combination of languages (in the original German version) adds

²³⁶ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 58-59.

²³⁷ For more on this topic, see the section "Communal Responsibility: Identifying the Other" in Chapter Six of this study.

²³⁸ Robertson, "W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature" 316.

²³⁹ The association between Herbeck and nature shall be dealt with more deeply later in the next chapter during the discussion on Sebald's and Herbeck's walk along the Donau-Auen.

²⁴⁰ Sebald, W. G. *Die Ausgewanderten*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994. 10-11.

an emphasis to this English passage and encourages the reader to associate Selwyn's voice not only with Herbeck, but also with other like-minded (English speaking) thinkers who desired a communion between individuals and all living creatures within the natural world. Perhaps the clearest association is with Walt Whitman. In Selwyn's statement, one sees an allusion to Whitman's poem "Leaves of Grass" and his meditation therein on the cycle of life as well as on the role of the individual as a cohesive part of nature.

Whitman's poem opens with: "I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass."²⁴¹ Like Herbeck's positioning of himself within the patch of grass and thereby becoming one amongst the multitude, the focus here is a contemplation of the singular blade amongst the many within the summer grass. As in Herbeck and Whitman's poems and in Sebald's novel, the observation and positive feelings associated with a communion with nature also turns slightly mournful. While Herbeck can appreciate nature, he will never be able to grasp it in its true, boundless state as he is physically confined to remain close to the institution, thus writing on nature is freeing yet also restricting. For Whitman and Selwyn the contemplation of grass shares this mournful tone as it prompts the observer of the grass to also consider their physical limits in terms of mortality. Within the grass, Whitman hears a multitude of voices speaking at once. He writes:

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues ... I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women ... They are alive and well somewhere / The smallest spout shows there is really no death ... And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

Arguably, the dead young men to whom Whitman is referring would be those who died during the battles of the Civil War, and yet the image is all-encompassing: everyone returns to nature.

A similar association regarding a direct return to the earth (grass) through violent means is evident in Sebald's literature. As evidenced by his Corsica writings (1996), he was fascinated by the idea of Napoleon's presumed inability to differentiate between the colors red and green and thus, "je mehr das Blut floß auf dem Schlachtfeld ... desto frischer schien ihm das Gras zu sprießen."²⁴³ That death here literally seeps into the earth and, from Napoleon's perspective, causes nature to flourish provides a visual representation for Sebald's considerations of the apocalyptic natural history of destruction. Sebald re-writes this idea in the form of a poem: "They say / that Napoleon / was colour-blind / & blood for him / as green as / grass."²⁴⁴

Knowing a contemplation of nature can prompt a reflection upon war and politics, it is arguable that Sebald intended for the reader to imagine Selwyn as having similar ruminations while observing the grass. Presumably, Selwyn commits suicide because of the feelings of foreignness resulting from his childhood exodus from Lithuania to London. Selwyn likely also suffers from a form of survivor guilt as a result of ruminating on the scenario: what if he had remained in Lithuania with his Jewish family during World War II? Assuming Selwyn, like Whitman, is reminded of the dead in these blades of grass, then the fact that Selwyn apologizes for counting the blades is an acknowledgement of what the general public would view as a psychological shortcoming: his fixation on the past and otherworldly realms inhibits his ability to carry on with

²⁴¹ Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself" in the poem "Leaves of Grass" (the poem was reworked several times between 1855 and 1881). *The Walt Whitman Archive*. Eds. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price. Web. 20 Aug. 2013. <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/poems/27>

²⁴² Whitman, "Song of Myself".

²⁴³ Sebald, "Kleine Exkursion nach Ajaccio" in CS 17.

²⁴⁴ Sebald. W. G. and Jan Peter Tripp. *Unrecounted*. Trans. Michael Hamburger. New York: New Directions, 2004. 61.

his life in the present and the future in a “normal” manner. Selwyn counts the many blades of grass, those “smallest sprouts”, which also however prompts a questioning of the finality of death. These sprouts are simultaneously the ghosts of the dead, the remnants, remainders, reminders. In counting the blades, Selwyn wards off the melancholy for a moment as he is comforted by the fact that, in the end death is sometimes “luckier”, everything and everyone is reunited and becomes one with nature.

Sebald and Mann: Bridging the Gap between the Canonical and the Primitive

While the previous section concluded with the idea of becoming one with nature, here the focus will be on the artistic inspiration acquired via an interchange with a natural or “naïve” thinker. This idea is illustrated by way of a connection made between Herbeck and Thomas Mann. If one is unaware of the “Eine kleine Traverse” article Sebald wrote on Herbeck and the revelation therein of the role Herbeck’s poetry played in inspiring Sebald, one can still deduce that this is the role Herbeck will also play in *Vertigo* based on an analysis of the vision the narrator experiences during his mental collapse. In the paragraph preceding the decision to visit Ernst Herbeck, the narrator remembers how on his last trip to Vienna he, after feeling weakened and disoriented following his cyclical wandering through the streets, underwent a mental breakdown which was prompted by “singenden Kindern” and “herrenlosen Schuhen”.²⁴⁵ As stated previously, this mental breakdown is related to the process of creative writing, and therefore the rather eclectic figures of singing children and ownerless shoes are metonymical devices pointing beyond themselves to refer back to literature. During the narrator’s collapse, he claims to have experienced a dreamless sleep and yet, just before opening his eyes, he saw himself on the gangway of a large ferryboat and felt subsequently inspired by this vision to take the evening train to Venice.

Before examining more closely the “singende Kinder” and “herrenlose Schuhe”, it is worth taking a slight detour to look at the narrator’s vision of Venice. As has been noted already in the secondary literature, this indicates Sebald’s nod to Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*.²⁴⁶ Both Gustav Aschenbach and the narrator of *Vertigo* have arrived at a point of writer’s block and consequently embark on a voyage of inspiration, in search of an aesthetic ideal. Like the narrator of *Vertigo* who suffers a breakdown and envisions the ferryboat which will take him to Venice, Aschenbach undergoes a similar mental collapse. During a walk through the cemetery, Aschenbach suddenly takes note of a “foreigner” who has almost magically appeared and consequently finds himself accosted by a series of “hallucinations” of jungle landscapes which prompt an overwhelming *Wanderlust* that ignites his desire to venture to Venice. Aschenbach states:

Mochte nun aber das Wandererhafte in der Erscheinung des Fremden auf seine Einbildungskraft gewirkt haben oder sonst irgendein physischer oder seelischer Einfluß im Spiele sein: eine seltsame Ausweitung seines Innern ward ihm ganz überraschend bewußt, eine Art schweifender Unruhe.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 44.

²⁴⁶ See for example the section “Near Death in Venice” in McCulloh, Mark R. *Understanding W. G. Sebald*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003. 91-94 or Hutchinson, Ben. *W. G. Sebald – Die dialektische Imagination*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 79.

²⁴⁷ Mann, Thomas. *Tod in Venedig*. 1912. Project Gutenberg Release Date: April 22, 2004 [EBook #12108] Web. 26 Feb. 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/12108/pg12108.html>

Aschenbach's confrontation with the "stranger" who happens to be the face of death²⁴⁸ already signals the fate to come: he will discover an aesthetic ideal, poetic beauty, but will pay for this experience with his life. The narrator of *Vertigo* experiences hallucinatory visions and then begins his journey accompanied by the schizophrenic "outsider", thereby prompting the reader to compare the narrator with Aschenbach and wonder if he too shall engage in a role reversal. Aschenbach becomes the death mask; will the narrator succumb to mental illness as the price he must pay for creative inspiration? Based on Sebald's opinions that writing and madness could be one in the same, the answer seems to lean towards the positive.²⁴⁹

While Thomas Mann alludes to many authors throughout *Death in Venice*, relevant here is the citation at the beginning of the second chapter regarding Aschenbach's work, *Geist und Kunst*, of which Mann writes: "deren ordnende Kraft und antithetische Beredsamkeit ernste Beurteiler vermochte, sie unmittelbar neben Schillers Raisonement über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung zu stellen."²⁵⁰ Ellis Shookman comments on this reference to Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795): "in Schiller's sense, a 'naive' poet is in harmony with nature, realistic, and spontaneous. By contrast, a 'sentimental' poet is alienated from nature, idealistic, and reflective. Such a modern poet is aware of his alienation and wishes to overcome it, to return to nature."²⁵¹ Surprisingly, the placement of this reference to *Death in Venice* in *Vertigo*, namely as part of the sentence in which the narrator decides to visit Herbeck, has been overlooked: "Before I opened my eyes I could see myself descending the gangway of a large ferry, and hardly had I stepped ashore but I resolved to take the evening train to Venice, and before that to spend the day with Ernst Herbeck in Klosterneuberg."²⁵² That

²⁴⁸ "... seine Lippen schienen zu kurz, sie waren völlig von den Zähnen zurückgezogen, dergestalt, daß diese, bis zum Zahnfleisch bloßgelegt, weiß und lang dazwischen hervorbleckten" Mann, *Tod in Venedig* (online). The bared teeth intimate the face of a skeleton: Aschenbach has been confronted with death.

²⁴⁹ Various quotes have been provided which demonstrate Sebald link between writing and madness, and it seems a requirement for Sebald's narrators (and alter-egos) that their creative ability stem from an initial mental breakdown. His most autobiographical novel, *The Rings of Saturn*, begins with a first person narrator who awakens in a hospital following a collapse. On the first page of the novel, Sebald demonstrates his awareness of the link between mental disturbance and creative ability by claiming: "I was taken to the hospital in Norwich in a state of almost total immobility. It was then that I began in my thoughts to write these pages." Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 3-4. Perhaps these ideas originated while Sebald was considering Herbeck's emotional states when writing. In his "Eine kleine Traverse" essay on Herbeck, Sebald comments on how his illness brings forth a new style of writing: "Führt ein hoher Grad an psychotischer Erregung zum Sprachzerfall, so ist dieser Zustand in gemäßigterer Form die Voraussetzung fuer die Synthese von Bildern, die unsere Spracherwartung im positiven Sinn übertreffen." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 132. Sebald repeats this idea a few sentences later by claiming that, while Herbeck lacks the mental equilibrium of conventional authors, his way of writing cannot be differentiated from these authors because they also require a certain level of emotional arousal: "Abgesehen davon jedoch differiert seine zustandsgebundene Kunst nicht prinzipiell von der Lyrik regulärer Dichter, deren Produktivität gleichfalls an einen ganz spezifischen Erregungszustand gebunden ist." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 132. Sebald, however, also viewed writing as a potential way to heal a mental disturbance. On Sebald's version of the "writing", as opposed to "talking" cure, he states that the fourth part of *Vertigo* is "an attempt on my part to shed light on an emotional propensity of which I became extremely conscious for the first time when I experienced it in the late 1970s: the crisis that besets you in midlife. I wanted to know where it came from. I wrote the final part as a search for my own." Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 78.

²⁵⁰ Mann, Thomas. *Der Tod in Venedig*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2008. 17.

²⁵¹ Shookman, Ellis. *Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice": A Reference Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004. 73.

²⁵² Sebald, *Vertigo* 37-38. "...faßte ich den Entschluß, mit dem Abendzug nach Venedig zu fahren, vorher den Tag aber noch mit Ernst Herbeck in Klosterneuberg zu verbringen." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 44. This is also used

a connection between these two journeys should be made is further highlighted by the words "...vorher den Tag *aber noch* mit Ernst Herbeck...", thus to travel to Venice but, and equally important for similar reasons, to Klosterneuberg.

Based on this association, one can see the parallel between Aschenbach and the narrator of *Vertigo* since they are both authors who have become "sentimental" in their writing. Aschenbach has already gained accolades for his work as a writer, and yet he notices that there is something missing. The creative process has become sterile, forced and has taken its toll on him. He therefore needs to once more find the intellectual stimulation which has diminished over time. For Aschenbach, this means he must leave his ordered, ascetic lifestyle and seek out "nature" which is aligned for him with passion and desire. Similarly, if the narrator of *Vertigo* can be seen as a double for Sebald, one can argue that this journey is also prompted by the urge to be more creative as, up until this point (in late 1980), Sebald had been busy publishing primarily academic articles with the book-length, poetic *Nach der Natur. Ein Elementargedicht* (1988) being the only exception. The inspiration acquired on Sebald's voyage can therefore be seen as the impetus for the development of the style which would become the characteristic prose fiction of *Vertigo* and his later novels.

As two "sentimental" poets who have become alienated from nature, in order to return to it, they must be guided by that which is "naïve". Aschenbach's passion is reignited by Tadzio, an innocent child and free spirit. Because he is spontaneous and in harmony with nature, he is the embodiment of the qualities required to inspire the "sentimental" poet. While a direct comparison between Tadzio and Herbeck cannot be made, Sebald likely alluded to this text not only because his sense of humor drove him to draw a parallel between himself/his narrator and one of the most canonical German literary figures, Aschenbach, but also because what Tadzio represents for Aschenbach is quite similar to what Herbeck represents for the narrator of *Vertigo*. The narrator finds himself inspired by Herbeck, who also fulfills Schiller's requirements of the naïve artist both personally and in his writing style. Naïve art should be spontaneous; meaning it should be the result of an instinctive drive or natural inclination rather than studious observation and readjustment. Naïve art should also be realistic and, as a schizophrenic author, Herbeck can be seen as childlike in his innocence. Since he was secluded from the outer world for the majority of his life and his poems were never written with thoughts of future publication, his writings are an honest and unprejudiced portrayal of his viewpoints. Furthermore, Outsider Art is frequently also referred to as "Naïve Art" which is "characterized by a refreshing innocence [and] child-like perspective."²⁵³ Thus, Aschenbach and the narrator of *Vertigo* are equally inspired by their encounters with two individuals who react to the world with spontaneous veracity. While Aschenbach absorbs this inspiration by appreciating it for the brief moments preceding his death, the narrator of *Vertigo* projects it. Namely, he attempts to imitate and capture in writing Herbeck's innocent and yet profound way of observing the world.

as the first sentence in the additional publication of this recorded outing in *Ernst Herbeck die Vergangenheit ist klar vorbei* (Sebald, "Ausflug mit Ernst Herbeck zur Burg Greifenstein" 168).

²⁵³ The following description was taken from the website for the GINA (Gallery of International Naive Art) in Tel Aviv. Chill, Dan. "What is Naïve Art?" *Gallery of International Naive Art*. Web. 7 Aug. 2013. <http://www.ginagallery.com/asp/WhatIsNaiveArt.asp>

Chapter Three Pathological Language, Historical Critique and Environmental Stance

This chapter shall continue in a similar manner to Chapter Two with a focused reading of the section devoted to Ernst Herbeck in the first ten pages of “All’estero” in *Vertigo*. I shall begin with an explanation of how the narrator’s mental breakdown, which is foreshadowed by an obscurity of vision, relates to Herbeck’s own poor eyesight and the manner in which he visualized the world. I will then switch to an analysis of the phrase “heaps of shoes and snow piled high” (*Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf*) to show how it reflects Sebald’s general interest in pathology and how his linguistic choices therein embody the characteristics of what he, inspired by his reading of Leo Navratil, believed to be representative of schizophrenic writing. In this phrase, one sees how the narrator’s pathological feelings of vertigo are induced by a sensory overload caused by intertextuality and an inability to cope with the historical messages inherent in each voice. The final sections of this chapter focus on two key statements thought by the narrator. In the initial phrase in which he contemplates the word “Urlaub”, I recognize the narrator’s attempt to adopt the poetic mode of expression typical of his travelling companion, Herbeck. I then undertake an analysis of a sentence from *Vertigo* which lyrically reflects both Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poem “Ein Gleiches” as well as Herbeck’s reinterpretation thereof. This discussion serves as the impetus for this chapter’s concluding focus on issues regarding nature: the hubris of man, nature’s ephemerality and gradual environmental deterioration.

Obscured Vision and the Confrontation with the Incomprehensible

In *Vertigo*, the narrator’s mental breakdown is indicated by two symptoms and, in terms of pathology, it is the second symptom which is particularly relevant. While looking down at his shoes, the narrator realizes they are “literally falling apart” and states “I felt queasy, and my eyes dimmed.”²⁵⁴ This is by far not the only instance in Sebald’s literature in which the onset of a psychological collapse is indicated via obstructed vision. Sebald maintained both a lifelong interest in vision as well as a fear regarding the sudden loss thereof. His consideration of eyesight is reminiscent of those occurring during the Age of Enlightenment. Nearly each of Sebald’s scenarios encompasses questions pondered by those early nineteenth century thinkers, such as to what extent is our vision, used as a metaphor for our knowledge capabilities, adequate in acquiring an understanding of our world? Sebald frequently incorporates a breakdown of vision within his literature to indicate a confrontation with an incomprehensible historical event; namely, the Second World War.

An early example of Sebald’s contemplation of this theme occurs in his poem “Time Signal at Twelve”. Sebald begins with “His eyes / Home in / On the real” and concludes with “Something not a soul / Has ever seen.”²⁵⁵ Between these phrases is an allusion to the concentration camp in the town of Melk: “The monk from Melk / Sleeps quiet in his grave.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Sebald, *Vertigo* 37. “Es würgte mich im Hals, und die Augen trübten sich.” Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 43.

²⁵⁵ Sebald, *Across the Land and Water* 26-27.

²⁵⁶ Sebald, *Across the Land and Water* 26.

On the one hand, the poem opens with an expression of the third-person narrator's desire for knowledge, to understand the historical reality confronting him in the landscape. On the other hand, the ending is a critique of the averted gaze of the citizens in Melk, not a soul (controversially implying no one with a conscience) saw what happened, for if they had, how would it have been possible for 10,000 people to be eliminated in this camp? Within a few words, this poem successfully summarizes Sebald's critique of Western civilization. The desire for ever-increasing knowledge which was ignited during the Age of Enlightenment gradually resulted in the prioritizing of this drive over our sense of humanity. The disastrous results of which, many prefer not to confront or *see*. In another poem, Sebald points out how artists are particularly sensitive to this phenomenon. On the painter Joshua Reynolds, whose eyes blur as an ominous and portentous signal of impending violence, Sebald writes for example: "My Eye // begins to be obscured / bemerkte Joshua Reynolds / am Vorabend des Sturms / auf die Bastille."²⁵⁷ This would account for the susceptibility of Sebald's narrators, as alter-egos of Sebald the literary artist, to a sudden loss of vision when accosted by thoughts of a historic scenario which is unthinkable and therefore also impossible to be witnessed optically.

Sebald's novels deal with attempts to see, and yet the reality of our past is horrific enough that at points it is incomprehensible. In Sebald's novels, this confrontation with such moments in the past is represented though the temporary blindness and obscurity of vision experienced by his characters. Sebald never abandoned this idea: the most recent incorporation of a mental collapse following a blurring of vision occurs in his last published novel. In *Austerlitz*, the narrator claims: "I do remember that there in the casemate at Breendonk a nauseating smell of soft soap rose to my nostrils. Black striations began to quiver before my eyes, as the nausea rose in me."²⁵⁸ The soap prompts the narrator's nausea since the scent of this cleansing agent serves as a reminder of the feeble attempts to wash away and purify the location where Jean Améry, a political prisoner, had been tortured by the Gestapo in 1943. Thus, the psychosomatic obscurity of vision prompted by a sudden awareness of an historical (man-made) catastrophe is a reminder of our anti-enlightened state as evidenced by our tendency to destroy ourselves and each other.

The narrator's breakdown in *Vertigo* embodies this idea while also entailing a connection to Herbeck. As mentioned in the Introduction to this study, Herbeck suffered from extremely poor vision in his left eye; a deficiency which becomes a focal point for Sebald. This detail is one of the few that Sebald deems relevant enough to include in his brief biographical sketch of Herbeck's life in *Vertigo*. In a slightly varied reformulation of Herbeck's own statement regarding his vision, Sebald writes: "er [hatte] die Dinge wie durch ein feines Netz vor seinen Augen wahrgenommen."²⁵⁹ The literary nature of this description by Herbeck is undeniable. The picture Herbeck paints in his reflection on his faulty eyesight is, ironically, overtly visual. It is impossible for the reader confronted with this sentence to not envision the world shrouded by a veil and to not endeavor with Herbeck to distinguish objects through the netting over his eyes. That the reader experiences and *feels* this struggle along with Herbeck is a key example of the physicality of his language. I believe Sebald had these ideas in mind when he composed the scenes in his novels which depict a blurring of vision. However, Sebald's adaptation of Herbeck's quote is hyperbolized: both the literary and physical nature of Herbeck's original

²⁵⁷ Schütte, *Figurationen* 128.

²⁵⁸ Sebald, W. G. *Austerlitz*. Trans. Anthea Bell. New York: Modern Library, 2001. 25-26.

²⁵⁹ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 45. This quote from *Schwindel. Gefühle* is taken from Herbeck's description "Es ist, wie wenn ein feines Netz vor den Augen wäre" (Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 14).

comment are incorporated in a manner which makes the *net* cast over Herbeck's eyes a parallel for Sebald's fictional characters' inability to see through a literary *network*.

For example, when narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* wakes up in the hospital following his breakdown, he tries to focus on the world outside but finds his view is obscured by a literal net: "I felt a desire to assure myself of a reality I feared had vanished forever by looking out of that hospital window, which, for some strange reason, was draped with black netting."²⁶⁰ That this net is simultaneously an allusion to a literary network is made apparent in the continuation of this sentence. The narrator explains how he, like Franz Kafka's protagonist in *The Metamorphosis*, dragged himself to the window to gaze out and "could not help thinking of the ... poor Gregor Samsa ... [whose] dimmed eyes failed to recognize the quiet street."²⁶¹ Thus, whereas Herbeck struggled to gain perspective of his direct surroundings, Sebald expands this net to lyrically intimate how one struggles to understand the workings of the broader societal network – the intertwining of art, history, politics and ethics.

In terms of enlightenment, this net also alludes to another reference in *The Rings of Saturn*: Thomas Browne's ordering of things. Browne acknowledges the five-point, net-like pattern of the *quincunx* within everything in nature. While Browne attempts to eliminate the chaos of nature via the *quincunx*, Sebald points to an area where this pattern falls short. While it may be applied to demonstrate order within the environment, it is insufficient in a clarification of the workings of the mind. Sebald writes: "Thomas Browne too was distracted from his investigations into the isomorphic line of the quincunx ... by work on a comprehensive pathology."²⁶² What expands this statement is Sebald's inclusion of the brief word "too". Not only Browne, but also the narrator, the reader and effectively anyone who has tried to make sense of the world can be distracted by pathology. While here Sebald refers to Browne's particular area of study, he intimates that this distraction is itself pathological and universal.²⁶³ Therefore, madness comes into play: in our efforts to achieve an enlightened view of the world and to understand how history can take such horrific turns, we are confronted by our mental limitations and our inherently pathological and chaotic nature.

As a side note, one of the earliest ways in which Sebald represents madness and mental limitation symbolized by obstructed vision is as a natural phenomenon. Sebald comments on the genesis of this interest in an interview with Michael Silverblatt from 6 Dec. 2001, Sebald states: ... these kinds of natural phenomena like fog, like mist, which render the environment and one's ability to see it almost impossible, have always interested me greatly. One of the great strokes of genius in standard nineteenth century fiction, I always thought, was the fog in *Bleak House*. This ability to make of one natural phenomenon a thread that runs through a whole text and then kind of upholds this extended metaphor is something

²⁶⁰ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 4.

²⁶¹ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 5.

²⁶² Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 22.

²⁶³ The idea that the attempts to bring order to the world by way of a simple pattern will be foiled by man's susceptibility to distraction or to becoming engrossed with the façade of the pattern which has been placed over chaotic reality is reminiscent of theories posed by another influential individual for Sebald, Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer looks at the mass ornament which is an aesthetic representation of the state of capitalist economy in the form of a pattern which resembles the monotony of factory work. The primary attributes of which are anonymity and nature deprived of substance. Kracauer, Siegfried. "Das Ornament der Masse" (1927). *Das Ornament der Masse. Essays*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977. 50-63.

that I find very, very attractive in a writer.²⁶⁴

This statement reveals Sebald's long-standing desire to integrate this "thread" or "extended metaphor" of madness as a natural phenomenon within his works. As discussed in Chapter One, in the first draft of "Josef", a friend of the protagonist, Lulef, discovers the former tutor's memoirs and describes this work as: "[es] hat keine Handlung. Es kommen nur unheimlich viel verschiedene Leute drin vor, aber man glaubt, daß es immer deselbe ist. Außerdem regnet es die ganze Zeit. In allen Szenen regnet es."²⁶⁵ Despite the initial appearance of structure, meaning the pattern which demonstrates the sameness of the characters, this order has been obscured through the chaos of the rain. This shroud over the tutor's world renders the explicable inexplicable and each character and event becomes part of an insolvable puzzle. Sebald likely still had the ideas inherent in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* in mind when he composed *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). Commenting on this work Roberta Silman writes:

... vapors [and] Turner-like mists ... wend their way through this book. "Life is pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us," says Browne. "Combustion is the hidden principle behind every artifact we create," Sebald says as he forces us to face the horrors of industrialization, of war, of man's ingenuity in destroying not only himself but others.²⁶⁶

While the above quote illustrates the recurring Sebaldian critique of how human creation inevitably ends in devastation, he likely also considered how Dickens' idea of combustion resonates with his own ideas on the natural history of destruction. *Bleak House* begins with a case of spontaneous human combustion and continues with a portrayal of how the resulting attempts to make sense of this event are obscured by the fog or mist representing the limits of our knowledge.

In Sebald's association between madness and meteorology, he was also inspired by Adalbert Stifter²⁶⁷ and Thomas Mann. Stifter incorporates ceaseless snowfall within his works and Thomas Mann has pointed out how this demonstrates Stifter's "Neigung zum Exzessiven, Elementar-Katastrophalen, Pathologischen' Ausdruck."²⁶⁸ Claudia Öhlschläger discusses how Mann uses Stifter's motifs in the *Zauberberg* in which the protagonist, Hans Castorp, leaves the boundaries of the sanatorium and comes into contact with the "tödlichen Natur". Castorp subsequently experiences a dissipation of the "Ich" (his ego or identity) within a snow-white fog (*schneeverwüsteten Gebirg* and *Nebelgebirg*).²⁶⁹ This of course also resonates with the narrator's experience in *Vertigo* just prior to his collapse when he is confronted with the vision of the "heaps of shoes and snow piled high".

²⁶⁴ Silverblatt, Michael. "A Poem of an Invisible Subject." *the emergence of memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald*. Ed. Lynne Sharon Schartz. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2007. 77-86. 82.

²⁶⁵ Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1967, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. As a side note to the idea of having natural phenomenon serve as a thread throughout his work, Richard Sheppard has pointed to this tendency as derivative of Sebald's ecological awareness rather than personal mood: "Alan Bennett put it thus: 'Sebald wants to stage-manage both the landscape and the weather to suit his (seldom cheerful) mood'. But Max the person, like the Austrian novelist Stifter whom he so admired, was also very conscious ecologically and had a great respect for the natural world that manifested itself in a love of gardening." Sheppard, "Dexter – sinister" 421-22.

²⁶⁶ Silman, "In the Company of Ghosts."

²⁶⁷ See Sebald, "Bis an den Rand der Natur. Versuch über Stifter" in *BU* 15-37.

²⁶⁸ Öhlschläger, *Beschädigtes Leben* 228.

²⁶⁹ Öhlschläger, *Beschädigtes Leben* 228.

“Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf”: An Intertextually and Historically Induced Mental Collapse

In *Vertigo*, it is the end of the 1980s and the narrator finds himself sitting in his hotel room and gazing towards the floor to observe his “in Fetzen aufgelösten Schuhwerks.”²⁷⁰ This reminds him of the day in 1980 when, after wandering the streets of Vienna, he ended up near a Jewish community center in which there were children “singing, unaccountably, ‘Jingle Bells’ and ‘Silent Night’ in English.” It is the culmination of the memory of “the voices of singing children” combined with the “and now in front of me my tattered and, as it seemed, ownerless shoes” which cause his breakdown. This observation is followed by the sentence: “Heaps of shoes and snow piled high – with these words in my head I lay down.” The “shoes” and “children” reveal the narrator’s recognition of the inevitable network and interconnectedness of everything, and our inability to clearly see through, to make sense of or to distance ourselves from these connections. As this collapse signifies the way in which a confrontation with literature and history can overwhelmingly impact the individual, this section shall pursue various intertextual considerations and will demonstrate how they are linked to pathology and to Herbeck’s writing.

In a way, one can argue that intertextuality itself flirts with a type of schizophrenic experience as it mirrors the madness of hearing voices. This is what Ben Hutchinson argues in his illustration of the pathological effect intertextuality has on the narrator of *Vertigo*. He looks at how the spiral movements of the narrator throughout Vienna are a parallel for Sebald’s vertiginous style. Hutchinson argues Sebald’s style derives in part from his pathological relationship to literature, claiming: it “is precisely that [Sebald] remembers *too much*, that his ‘Beziehungswahnsinn’ connects everything to everything in ever-increasing circles.”²⁷¹ And yet, he continues, the allure of literature is irresistible for the narrator of *Vertigo*: it is this passion to follow the trails left by literature which prompts him to chase the ghostly Dante through the streets of Vienna. This pursuit “draw[s] him on and fire[s] his imagination, but then deceive[s] him and leave[s] him on the verge of a nervous breakdown.”²⁷² In chasing literature, a distance to reality gradually emerges and there is the risk that one may succumb completely to fiction and lose sight of the real world entirely. Despite the potential for losing oneself in the world of fiction, one must follow this path as it can also open perspectives on reality which are normally overshadowed or concealed. How this is possible is through an exchange of information, messages between likeminded individuals and this exchange can be discovered, according to an example provided by Sebald, through chance occurrences in literature.

While the possibility of sheer coincidence is always present, the manner in which Sebald discusses this topic makes it clear that he is hopeful of a greater metaphysical power behind such similarities. In Sebald’s article on Robert Walser, “Le promeneur solitaire”, he mentions a coincidence reported by Carl Seelig and follows this with an example from his own experience. He talks about the scene from his novel, *The Emigrants*, in which a woman appears who has “eine Vorliebe für braune Glacéhandschuhe ... und, wie Ambros einmal bemerkte, am Anfang seiner Trauerlaufbahn gestanden sei.”²⁷³ Sebald then claims that he later happened to encounter a text by Rousseau which features a woman dressed entirely in brown and, a few pages later, the

²⁷⁰ All the quotes in this paragraph are from Sebald, *Vertigo* 37 or Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 43, 44.

²⁷¹ Hutchinson, Ben. “Umgekehrt wird man leicht selbst zum Verfolgten: the structure of the double-bind in W.G. Sebald.” *Revista de Filología Alemana* 14 (2006): 101-111. 107.

²⁷² Hutchinson, “Umgekehrt wird man leicht selbst zum Verfolgten” 103.

²⁷³ Sebald, “Le promeneur solitaire” in *LieL* 138-39.

word “Trauerlaufbahn”. Sebald formerly believed he had invented this term himself. For Sebald, the discovery of this seeming coincidence was a breakthrough. Perhaps he had somehow read this work previously and integrated this information in a subconscious way to recreate it in his own novel. Another possibility is of course that Sebald intentionally created this connection and pretended it was a coincidence, but in the end it is irrelevant. What Sebald valued in such overlapping of information within literature is the comfort that he found in the thought that two completely unrelated individuals could share the same ideas, could think and express themselves in an identical manner because this demonstrates that there is ultimately an order to the chaos of our human relations (*eine Ordnung in dem Chaos menschlicher Beziehungen*).²⁷⁴

Sebald forces his alter-ego narrator to experience a similar confrontation; he becomes entangled within such ordered chaos in which a cyclical conglomerate of literary voices are speaking at once on an historical misfortune. The way in which the voices overlap and intermingle in the “tattered shoes” phrase leaves no filter to pinpoint the primacy of one voice over the others. Each voice which made a similar reference to the “tattered shoes” instilled their version thereof with its particular meaning and here each of these voices is demanding the primacy of interpretation. It is impossible to focus on one reference conjured up by the “tattered shoes” and draw a direct line of association (between Sebald and Robert Walser, for example). Each attempt to draw a single line will be foiled by the inevitable crossing over of another line and then another, until one is left with a literary referential network so thick that it is impossible to penetrate and see through.

In terms of intertextuality, the “tattered shoes” example points to various authors of pathology. The authors whose voices are heard within the phrase “zerfetzte Schuhe” are linked both by their expression of an existential breakdown reflecting larger societal problems and also by their connection (personal and artistic) to mental illness. The quote relates directly to Robert Walser, who spent a quarter of a century in psychiatric hospitals; as well as to Patrick Süskind and Thomas Bernhard,²⁷⁵ whose literary figures frequently demonstrate symptoms of pathology and, in the case of Bernhard, schizophrenia.²⁷⁶ A few questions provoked by this intertextual “tattered shoes” reference are: since the sentence is laden with prior signification, how does Sebald build upon the meanings already inherent in this phrase by constellating himself with the authors whose voices are reverberating in the background? Also, what is it about this phrase which aids in understanding Sebald’s views of pathology in literature?

Beginning with the second question, a brief explanation of what Sebald considered to be pathological writing is useful. This enables the reader to recognize both Sebald’s irony and the rebellious stance inherent in the “tattered trousers” reference. In his book, *Carl Sternheim*,

²⁷⁴ Sebald, “Le promeneur solitaire” in *LieL* 138.

²⁷⁵ I have chosen for this section examples which I considered to be exemplary, but the “tattered shoes” reference can be expounded well beyond these in a multitude of directions. Other examples which relate closely to this and could have also been included here would be Bertolt Brecht’s account of an experience in exile where he is invited to a party in Paris at which he suddenly is shocked to look at the floor and notice he is wearing “Emigrantenschuhe”. These shoes automatically signal his status as an outsider of the community. One could also consider the participation of the Jewish art historian Meyer Schapiro in the discussion regarding Vincent van Gogh’s painting “Shoes” (1886). Since Schapiro immigrated to New York from Lithuania at the age of three, Jacques Derrida considers his interpretation of van Gogh’s work to reflect more on Schapiro’s life than on the work itself. In Schapiro’s thoughts on “Shoes”, Derrida saw: “die Spuren des Einwanderers”. Baier, Uta. “Wie sich Forscher über van Goghs Schuhe streiten.” *Die Welt*. 24 Oct. 2009. Web. 8 Aug. 2013.

<http://www.welt.de/kultur/article4909929/Wie-sich-Forscher-ueber-van-Goghs-Schuhe-streiten.html>

²⁷⁶ See for example the chapter on *Frost*, especially page 37, in Long, J. J. *The Novels of Thomas Bernhard: Form and Its Function*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001.

Sebald argues that Sternheim's writing is the product of a schizophrenic state of mind resulting from frustrated attempts at assimilation. On the one hand, Sternheim's efforts to create controversial works of art show his protest against a society in which he will, due to his Jewish heritage, never be fully accepted; on the other hand, he wants nothing more than to be lauded by this society for his artistic abilities. Sebald points to how Sternheim's endeavors to produce controversial, rebellious texts are failures and how his figures are simply reiterating stereotypical phrases.²⁷⁷ Although Sternheim tries to be unique by endowing his characters with archaic speech, the language is misapplied to policemen and prostitutes and comes across as ridiculous rather than ironic.²⁷⁸ Whereas Sternheim's voice, which has lost its uniqueness due to its entwinement within his historical situation, unintentionally regurgitates the language of the masses, Sebald achieves the irony Sternheim lacked by intentionally regurgitating voices which stem from the periphery of society.

Sebald incorporates what has become an emblematic, if not stereotypical, phrase and yet he aligns himself via the "tattered shoes" with the voices of Walser, Bernhard and Süskind, writers who embody a position in no-man's-land. On the one hand, they are embraced by the canon; on the other hand, they remain problematic as outsiders who don't participate in the bureaucratic side of the public literary sphere. Mimicking the language of literary outsiders can be considered a rebellious act since it shows Sebald's defiance of the idea that to be a successful writer, one must adhere to the language and format of texts which are suitable for the mainstream and expected by the literary world. Whereas Sternheim's pathological writing is the consequence of his subconscious feeling of exclusion, ultimately making him the tragic victim who remains unaware of how society twisted his psyche,²⁷⁹ Sebald sees the mindset of mainstream society as inherently twisted, patriarchal, oppressive and problematic and therefore willfully excludes himself in his personal life (in self-exile in Britain) and in his literature by embracing the voice of the alternative, pathological Other.

In order to see how the "tattered shoes" quote relates to pathology, a detailed examination of the phrase is necessary. The intertextual connection most frequently noted with regard to these shoes is to the tattered trousers which appear in Robert Walser's *Geschwister Tanner* (*The Tanners*). In Walser's text, the protagonist, Simon, is criticized by his sister for wearing ragged trousers as what they truly indicate is the presence of a ragged soul. In "Le Promeneur Solitaire: A Remembrance of Robert Walser", Sebald points to how this scenario is actually a reflection of Walser's own life which was darkened by shadows, or psychological turmoil, that he'd hoped to alleviate in writing.²⁸⁰ A parallel can easily be made to Sebald since, as a writer, he also tried to alleviate certain dark (psychological) shadows through art – typically those created by the forgotten individuals endlessly haunting him whose lives were no longer their own due to war experiences. He desired to gain a slight form of restitution by memorializing these types of individuals in literature. Similarly, the impetus behind Navratil's encouragement of his patients to write or create sketches was always therapeutic. In art, the patients could not only express their concerns or problems in an uninhibited manner, but Navratil noticed the creative process could also temporarily halt the onset of psychosis. That Herbeck could control his own dark shadows by writing is clearly stated in Gerhard Roth's description of how Herbeck's trembling

²⁷⁷ Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 90.

²⁷⁸ Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 91.

²⁷⁹ Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 94.

²⁸⁰ See Sebald, W. G. Introduction. Trans. Jo Catling. *The Tanners*. By Robert Walser. Trans. Susan Bernofsky. New York, NY: New Directions Books, 2009. 1-36. 12.

hands suddenly became calm when holding his pencil: “Die Hände, die er zuvor nervös gerieben hatte, zitterten jetzt nicht mehr, sondern hielten ruhig den Bleistift.”²⁸¹ While the psychological breaks experienced by Herbeck, Walser and Sebald’s narrator mark the definitive end of a phase (or here a mental state of being), they also serve as the impetus to create and overcome the blockage through writing. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Sebald chose to begin his essay “Eine kleine Traverse” with Herbeck’s phrase “Das letzte ist der Anfang der Dichter” since Sebald was intrigued by the idea that the creative process which results in a new type of poetics could be triggered by an initial mental breakdown.²⁸²

In terms of psychology, the tattered trousers are a literary reflection of a mental state which is gradually being worn bare and heading in the direction of a breakdown. In *Vertigo*, Sebald refers to the actual conditions which led up to Herbeck’s mental collapse in the paragraph following the narrator’s breakdown using terminology which equates the fictional with the real experience. Sebald writes how Herbeck’s neurosis is derived in part from his family relations. He records how the thoughts of his father corroded (*zersetzte*) him – the linguistic similarity to “zerfetzte Schuhe”²⁸³ is apparent. Additionally, the pressure he felt from his father made him lose control of himself, which is expressed here as “dadurch verlor er die Herrschaft über sich.”²⁸⁴ Again, one sees here the linguistic resonance between the narrator’s “herrenlose Schuhe”²⁸⁵ and the “Herrschaft” lost by Herbeck. Typically, ownerless shoes are those which have been worn-out and thus rejected, discarded and deemed no longer useful by the former owner. Reacting to his relationship with his father, Herbeck displays an emotional outburst which causes him to lose his “Herrschaft”. Once this is lost, Herbeck lacks the impetus to conform to societal rules and is thus, like *herrenlose Schuhe*, cast out. While the Herbeck example demonstrates a breakdown resulting from personal relations, in the narrator’s case the reason for such a mental collapse is historical.

Based on the summary provided by Sebald, the reader infers that, since the father plays a key role in contributing to Herbeck’s breakdown, the father is then also partially responsible for Herbeck’s consequential feelings of isolation and alienation from society. This feeling of alienation prompted by the father-figure can also be extended to the father-land. In her analysis of the narrator’s breakdown in *Vertigo*, Claudia Öhlschläger looks at the sentence “heaps of shoes and snow piled high” which immediately follows the narrator’s acknowledgment of his “ownerless shoes” (*herrenlose Schuhe*). She searches for an interpretation of this phrase in connection to Robert Walser. She writes: “liest man die Nachlässigkeit als Rückzug von gesellschaftlichen Anforderungen, so erscheint die Schneelandschaft als ein von Walser privilegiertes Refugium der Natur im Licht der ersehnten kindlichen Unbedarftheit.”²⁸⁶ While her interpretation of the snow and its connection to Robert Walser as a means of escape is as

²⁸¹ Roth, Gerhard. “langsam scheiden. Ein Besuch bei Alexander.” *Alexanders poetische Texte*. Ed. Leo Navratil. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977. 193-99. 196.

²⁸² This line “the last is the Beginning [of] the Poet” is interesting in that, while I have used the genitive form (of the Poet) for ease of reading here, Herbeck actually grammatically makes each element of the sentence the subject “the last is the Beginning the Poet”. This phrase is taken from the poem “Das Letzte” in Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 90. This quote was used in the opening of the first publication of Sebald’s essay “Eine kleine Traverse” in the journal *Manuskripte* in 1981, it was replaced by a different quote by Herbeck when it was published as part of *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks*.

²⁸³ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 45.

²⁸⁴ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 45.

²⁸⁵ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 44.

²⁸⁶ Öhlschläger, *Beschädigtes Leben* 146.

convincing as it is interesting, what is important for this discussion is the fact that she sees the neglect of one's possessions (trousers or shoes) to be a representation of a retreat from societal demands or expectations. This interpretation can be equally applied to the novels by Thomas Bernhard and Patrick Süskind which also include variations of the "tattered trousers" theme.

In Thomas Bernhard's *Gehen* (1971), the narrator recounts the character Karrer's mental breakdown which occurs when Karrer notices a threadbare pair of pants. His subsequent fixation on and overreaction to the pants causes the narrator to explain that he witnessed at this point the clear sign of madness "zum erstenmal ganz deutlich Anzeichen von Verrücktheit."²⁸⁷ Karrer becomes so obsessed with the pants that he repeats the words "*diese schütterten Stellen*" (these sparse spaces) eleven times in a row.²⁸⁸ As this indicates that Karrer is definitively mad (*Karrer endgültig verrückt ist*),²⁸⁹ he is placed in the mental institution *Am Steinhof*, which is incidentally a very short distance from Ernst Herbeck's institution in Gugging. The onset for Karrer's madness is, of course, not the threadbare pants which are simply the form under which the real trauma has been sublimated, but rather the suicide of his friend, Hollensteiner. Hollensteiner was a scientist who considered briefly going to Göttingen for work, but then it is revealed he was actually "unfähig, nach Göttingen zu gehen, überhaupt nach Deutschland zu gehen, bevor ein solcher Mensch nach Deutschland geht, bringt er sich um."²⁹⁰ "Such an individual" refers here to Hollensteiner's Jewish heritage, thus, even if travelling to Germany had been his desire, there was no hope for a future for him in Nazi-Germany, or, ultimately, in his own clinic in Austria. When his suicide is referred to early in the text, the words chosen to depict this event are linguistically reminiscent of the phrase Karrer repeats during his mental breakdown "*diese schütterten Stellen*", thereby providing a linguistic link between the two occurrences. The earlier phrase reads: "... ist sein Selbstmord und ist er selbst vergessen, kein Mensch denkt mehr daran und die *Erschütterung stellt sich* als Heuchelei heraus."²⁹¹

Similarly, in Patrick Süskind's *Die Taube* (1987), the protagonist who works fairly contentedly as a watchman is suddenly thrown into a mental breakdown when his uniform, this outer shell of order, rips as he leans over to pick up a piece of trash which someone had not properly discarded. This event is described in the novel in vividly violent terms as blood oozing out of a twelve centimeter flesh wound: "Ihm war, als klaffte da nicht nur in seiner Hose, sondern in seinem eigenen Fleisch eine zwölf Zentimeter lange Wunde, aus der Blut quölle, sein Leben."²⁹² What is revealed at the end of the novel is, once more, that the true source of this nervous breakdown was not a minor incident, but rather a deep-seeded childhood trauma incurred by the Second World War: "du bist ein Kind und sitzt im Keller des Hauses der Eltern, und draußen ist Krieg, und du bist gefangen, verschüttet, vergessen."²⁹³ The term used here *verschüttet* (buried), with its context of displacement evidenced by the *ver-* also reminds the reader of the *schütterten Stellen* and the emotional *Erschütterung* caused by war, the effects of the devastation, the rubble (*Schutt*). Sebald's phrase "snow and shoes" (*Schnee und Schuhe*) linguistically demonstrates an adaptation of the recurrent "sch" seen in Bernhard and Süskind. It also intratextually alludes to Sebald's own analysis of a type of "schizophrenic" writing and a

²⁸⁷ All of the italics from the Bernhard quotes are in the original unless otherwise indicated. Bernhard, Thomas. *Gehen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971. 71.

²⁸⁸ Bernhard, *Gehen* 73.

²⁸⁹ Bernhard, *Gehen* 74.

²⁹⁰ Bernhard, *Gehen* 34.

²⁹¹ My italics for emphasis. Bernhard, *Gehen* 41.

²⁹² Süskind, Patrick. *Die Taube*. Zürich: Diogenes, 1987. 63.

²⁹³ Süskind, *Die Taube* 91.

thematic connection in its reminiscence on the Second World War.

I believe Sebald specifically constructed the phrase “Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf”²⁹⁴ for the last sentence in the narrator’s mind before his mental collapse due to his own particular understanding of the linguistic tendencies which appear in the writings by schizophrenics. Thus this phrase, which Sebald would have labeled pathological had it been written by Carl Sternheim for instance, points to the neurosis of the narrator, but at the same time it blurs the boundaries between pathological and literary expression since this sentence is a construct. It thereby becomes a metaphor which points beyond the narrator’s “madness” to something greater. That Sebald’s poetic phrase “Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf” can be linked to his understanding of schizophrenic language is evidenced via a comparison to a passage from Sebald’s Carl Sternheim book in which he argues, based on his close reading of Navratil’s identification of qualities typical of pathological writing, for an interpretation of Sternheim’s language as schizophrenic. Part of the example from Sternheim which Sebald uses as exemplary for revealing his schizophrenic tendencies begins thusly: “*Stille des Städtchens fiel ein Bausch Watte auf.*”²⁹⁵ Sebald analyzes this quote as:

Die manische Verwendung von Alliteration und Assonanz kann vor allem deshalb nicht als Mittel künstlerischen Ausdrucks allein interpretiert werden ... weil Sternheim sie zumeist gar nicht dort praktiziert, wo sie auf Grund einer gespannten Situation sinnvoll und zurecht intensivierend wirken würde, sondern vielmehr dort, wo sie sich zufällig ergibt.²⁹⁶

While Sebald clearly uses alliteration in his “Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf” sentence as a literary device to “intensify” the situation, it nonetheless playfully reflects what he qualified as schizophrenic writing. Sebald points to Sternheim’s alliteration as the by-product of a psychosis in which: “gedanklichen und bildlichen Assoziationen um so mehr zurücktreten, je stärker sich die Klangassoziationen ausbreiten.”²⁹⁷ I therefore argue that it is no coincidence that the Sternheim sentence in which Sebald saw a schizophrenic tendency in many ways mirrors the sentence which appears as an indicator of the narrator’s mental breakdown and results in his ensuing visit to Ernst Herbeck. Linguistically, there is a repetition of the sounds which occur as part of the alliteration “*Stille des Städtchens*” and “*Schnee und Schuhe*” as well as “*Bausch Watte auf*” and “*zuhauf*”. Visually, there is a resonance between the stillness, the slowness expressed in the phrases “*Stille des Städtchens*” and “*Schnee und Schuhe*”. The recurrence of the sibilants in the alliteration as well as the proceeding long vowel have an arresting effect and force one to read the “*Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf*” phrase in slow motion. Thus, here we have poetics used to express an historical occurrence in a succinct yet powerful manner. This coincides with Herbeck’s description of poetics as an oral form of representing the imprint of history in slow motion; as he wrote in his poem on “Die Poesie”: “Die Poesie ist eine mündliche Form der Prägung der Geschichte in Zeitlupe.”²⁹⁸ The view of the connection between poetics and history serves as a point of transition to thematics, whereby the word combinations in these phrases are not immediately logical but rather metaphorical and have to do with history.

²⁹⁴ “Schnee und Schuhe zuhauf – mit diesen Worten im Sinn legte ich mich nieder.” Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 44. “Heaps of shoes and snow piled high – with these words in my head I lay down.” Sebald, *Vertigo* 37.

²⁹⁵ Italics in the original. Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 95.

²⁹⁶ Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 95.

²⁹⁷ This quote from Navratil’s *Schizophrenie und Sprache* is used in Sebald’s analysis of Sternheim (Sebald, *Carl Sternheim* 95).

²⁹⁸ This quote is underlined in Sebald’s copy of Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 98. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

When the voices collide in the mind of the narrator, outer reality begins to blur and fade away and he experiences a feeling of vertigo – a dizzying instability resulting from a confrontation with the meanings of these words. When Hutchinson claims that “the recurrences of this leitmotif ‘Schwindel’ seem always to be associated with a discrepancy between ... imagination and reality,”²⁹⁹ he is arguing that the feelings of vertigo result from the conflict which arises when personal memories are obscured by fiction or the literary imagination. The meaning of *Schwindel* comes into play here as “swindle”. Hutchinson looks at the opening chapter of *Vertigo* which illustrates Stendhal’s (Marie-Henri Beyle) recognition that “his memory of the town of Ivrea, for instance, is irretrievably distorted by a picture of it which he happens to chance upon years later.”³⁰⁰ Thus, Stendhal/Beyle has been swindled out of his actual memory as it has been replaced by an image, by fiction.

The narrator’s breakdown comes immediately after the “tattered shoes” comment, which encompasses not only a literary swindle (between the aforementioned authors), but a historical one as well. The “tattered shoes” image conjures up various associations with World War II, and while these images control the narrator’s (unconscious) mind (and Sebald’s conscious one), they also are part of the “swindle”. Not having experienced the war first-hand, Sebald’s interaction with this historical misfortune is always distanced and encountered via the precarious world of borderline “fiction” (second hand accounts, films, or documentary material) rendering the “truth” always just out of reach.

Within the combination of snow and shoes (*Schnee und Schuhe*), there is an underlying historical connotation: what comes to mind via this association are the images of the piles of shoes collected in concentration camps during World War II.³⁰¹ Such an image would have been present in Sebald’s mind as he admits during an interview how profoundly impacted he felt upon viewing the footage from the Bergen-Belsen film: “Der englische Bergen-Belsen Film wurde uns gezeigt – ohne Kommentar, als moralische Pflichtübung. Seit damals ist dieses Thema in meinem Kopf präsent.”³⁰² The fact that the narrator specifies “zuhauf” – piles – indicates that the impetus for his breakdown is not simply the thought of his own “herrenlose Schuhe” but rather their connection to the mountains of ownerless shoes which serve as a remaining physical representation of those individuals to whom they once belonged.

The piles of shoes alluded to here could also represent the lack experienced by those suffering on the other side, namely German civilians. In *On the Natural History of Destruction*, Sebald references Victor Gollancz who travelled through Germany in 1946 and wrote reports for the British press on the population’s poor living conditions. Sebald mentions the piece “This Misery of Boots” which he finds “startling not so much for the text itself³⁰³ as for the

²⁹⁹ Hutchinson, “Umgekehrt wird man leicht selbst zum Verfolgten” 103.

³⁰⁰ Hutchinson, “Umgekehrt wird man leicht selbst zum Verfolgten” 102.

³⁰¹ This association is also made in Julia Kraushaar’s book *Kaleidoskopisches Erzählen: Die gegenseitige Durchdringung von Fotografie und Prosa bei W. G. Sebald*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag, 2013. 35. “Sebald setzt durch die Alliteration Schuhe/Schnee in Verbindung mit dem Wort ‘zerfetzt’ vor dem Hintergrund der singenden jüdischen Kinder eine Assoziationskette in Gang, die in das Bild der zurückgelassenen Schuhe in Auschwitz, dem sinnbildlichen einen Ort der Shoa mündet.”

³⁰² Löffler, Sigrid. “‘Wildes Denken’ Gespräch mit W. G. Sebald.” [Interview probably occurred 9 Feb. 1993]. *W. G. Sebald*. Ed. Franz Loquai. Eggingen: Edition Isele, 1997. 135-37. 135. Sebald was shown this film at his school (the *Oberrealschule* in Oberstdorf) in April 1962. Sheppard, “W. G. Sebald: A Chronology” 622. At the Bergen-Belsen detention camp many prisoners worked as part of the “shoe commando” to salvage useable leather.

³⁰³ The numbers included in the text itself are, in fact, quite startling. Gollancz writes: “in Schleswig Holstein, for instance, it is estimated that *only* 300,000 or 400,000 children will be without reasonable shoes this winter, as against say three-quarters of a million last.” My italics for emphasis. Gollancz, Victor. *Germany Revisited*.

photographs that illustrated it when Gollancz's articles came out later in book form."³⁰⁴ Sebald includes two images of children's feet wrapped in cloth with a piece of wood to serve as the "shoe's" sole. This combination of images, from the piles in concentration camps to the shoes missing in the civilian areas, provides an all-encompassing image of suffering, one that Sebald recognizes points to inevitable destruction. Referring to the Gollancz images, Sebald writes: "Photographs like these, making the process of degradation visible in very concrete form, are surely part of a natural history of destruction as Solly Zuckerman envisaged it."³⁰⁵

That Sebald had Jewish persecution particularly in mind is naturally also revealed when the narrator encounters the "singende Kinder" who are "seltsamerweise" singing Christmas carols such as *Jingle Bells* and (the Christian song) *Silent Night, Holy Night* within a synagogue. Even the combination of these particular songs arouses uncanny connotations via contrast. Whereas *Jingle Bells* is upbeat and celebratory, this jubilation is immediately brought to an end with *Silent Night*, which, seen in this context, is reminiscent of *Kristallnacht*.

***Ur-laub*: A Demonstration of Sebald's Schizophrenically Informed Writing**

In this section, I will analyze two particular quotes by the narrator once he and Herbeck begin their outing. In these statements, I see instances of Sebald's homage to Herbeck via his mimetic adaptation of certain qualities typical of Herbeck's language. The outing starts with a train ride along the Donau and, although one reads the narrator's description of the landscape, there seems to be a collapse of the border separating the narrator and Herbeck's voices. From the window of the train, the narrator takes note of the vegetation: "Outside in the flood plain there were willows, poplars, alders, and ash trees, allotment gardens."³⁰⁶ This is followed by the narrator's observation of Herbeck's silent viewing of the scenery and how his eyelids remained half-closed, reminiscent of one in a trance. The next passage with the variations of the word "vacation" is one of the very few in this novel which is not translated in the English version: "Das seltsame Wort Urlaub fiel mir ein. Urlaubstag, Urlaubswetter. In den Urlaub fahren. Im Urlaub sein. Urlaub. Ein Leben lang."³⁰⁷ Claudia Öhlschläger's comment on this suits an argument for a linguistic connection with Herbeck: "Das Wort Urlaub ruft das aus Musils *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* bekannte Diktum des 'Urlaubs vom Leben' auf, den Ausstieg aus der Schrecken erregenden Normalität."³⁰⁸ Öhlschläger concludes this thought here, but it is worthwhile in this context to examine this *Urlaub* phrase more closely to show how it demonstrates both linguistically and thematically that this voyage with Herbeck indeed encourages a departure from Angst-provoking normalcy.

As mentioned, the narrator observes the expression on Herbeck's face and, because it conjures up an image of a trance-like state, the subsequent "Urlaub" passage becomes more ambiguous. The reader has been told Herbeck is silent, thus the highly repetitive and

London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947. 7. Web. 13 Dec. 2013. <http://library.fes.de/fulltext/sozmit/1947-104-Iorg.pdf>

³⁰⁴ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* 38.

³⁰⁵ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* 38.

³⁰⁶ Sebald, *Vertigo* 40. "Draußen im Inundationsgebiet Weiden, Pappeln, Erlen und Eschen, Schrebergärten und Siedlungshäuschen." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 47.

³⁰⁷ The above sentence can be directly translated as: The unusual word "vacation" came to me. Vacation day, vacation weather. To go on vacation. To be on vacation. Vacation. For one's whole life. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 47.

³⁰⁸ Öhlschläger, *Beschädigtes Leben*. 147.

fragmentary passage must be the product of the narrator, and yet it is a drastic variation from the other sentences in the novel. In the unusual nature of this passage, I see the narrator's attempt to imagine how Herbeck might lyrically formulate a reflection on the term "Urlaub" – though, as will be demonstrated shortly in a comparison with the narrator's sentence, at one point Herbeck was asked by Navratil to create a poem based on the title "Der Urlaub". This passage resembles Herbeck's poetry in both its punctuation and in its employment of paronomasia. One automatically sees a parallel between the fragmentary nature of the sentences in this passage and those used by Herbeck, especially since he always preferred to use periods over commas: "Im Gegensatz zum Beistrich ... gebraucht [Alexander] den Punkt mit großer Vorliebe."³⁰⁹ Herbeck writes for example: "Der Elefant geht auf. den Zehen."³¹⁰

The *Urlaub* passage could have been written more logically by adding a colon after "fiel mir ein" and then separating the phrases with commas. The exaggerated and unnecessary use of the periods makes the reader pause and consider each word. Controlling the reader in this way can be seen as the anti-authoritarian Sebald's ironic commentary on the reader-author relationship; here the author has the ability to place the reader within the realm of ambiguous, Herbeckian language. The phrases are embedded with a false profundity due to the excessive pauses, which encourages the reader to look for a puzzle (to ask why is there this emphasis?) and then seek a potential solution. The problem however is there may be no way out of this labyrinth. Thus, the reader's mind remains unable to work its way through the dilemma, much like the phenomenon experienced by schizophrenics: the sudden entanglement within a particular phrase which results in an uncontrollable repetition thereof.³¹¹ In this case, Sebald is illustrating that it is the process itself, the close examination and defamiliarization of words which is an important departure from normalcy. In terms of paronomasia or "die Häufung verschiedener Flexionsformen desselben Wortes,"³¹² one can also see a resemblance between the narrator's inflection of the term "Urlaub" and the word games Herbeck plays with "Auge" and "Blick" in his poetry for example. In a few sentences from his poem "Das Auge" Herbeck writes: "Die Augen-Liebe und das Auge. / Die Augenlicht die Farbe auch. (Hu) / Die Augenfarbe auch das Pik."³¹³ Similarly, in "Der Blick" one reads: "Der Augenblick, der Durchblick / durch ein Tunnel – der Anblick."³¹⁴ One sees a clear resonance between such examples and the variations found in "Urlaubstag, Urlaubswetter. In den Urlaub fahren."

What is also interesting about this "Urlaub" passage is that the narrator's impression of this word is almost more Herbeckian than Herbeck's. The narrator points out that this term is unusual (*seltsam*). My argument that this passage is the narrator's attempt to write in a Herbeckian mode is underscored by the narrator's parallel comment "[Ernst] observed ... he had collected postage stamps, from Austria, Switzerland and the Argentine ... he repeated ... that single word 'Argentine', which possibly struck him as far too outlandish."³¹⁵ The narrator's

³⁰⁹ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 124.

³¹⁰ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 124.

³¹¹ Navratil refers to this as *Verbigeration*: "Von Schizophrenen wird der Impuls zur Verbigeration oft als etwas Zwanghaftes erlebt ... [for example] 'Ich weiß die Grunde nicht, ich weiß die Grunde schon. Ich weiß die Grunde nicht, ich weiß die Grunde schon....'" Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 49.

³¹² Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 131.

³¹³ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 117.

³¹⁴ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Text* 155.

³¹⁵ Sebald, *Vertigo* 42. "Marken, sagte er zwischenhinein einmal, habe er früher gesammelt, österreichische, Schweizer und argentinische. Dann rauchte er stillschweigend noch eine Zigarette und wiederholte, als er sie ausmachte und wie in Verwunderung über sein ganzes vergangenes Leben, das ihm vielleicht allzu ausländisch

assumption that Herbeck possibly finds this term “outlandish” (like he found “Urlaub” to be “seltsam”) reveals Sebald’s alignment of himself, by way of his narrator, with Herbeck via what he depicts as their common consideration of the arbitrary manner in which words are applied to concepts. The original meaning of the word had to do with taking leave; and to depart one needed to first ask permission – *Urlaub*, from the Old and Middle High German *urloup*, which is connected to *Erlaubnis* (permission). In Herbeck’s poem “Der Urlaub”, this term is still inherently connected with the idea of permission. What is most important about an *Urlaub* is the official nature of an underling asking for approval, secondary is the idea of relaxation. Herbeck writes: “Der Urlaub ist Gesetzespflicht ... sich zeigen nach der Unterschrift, n. (FA) / Der Urlaub ist Gesetzespflicht ... Er ist auch pünktlich ganz und gar rein / und sicher ANGEZEIGT.”³¹⁶ This emphasis on the bureaucratic nature of the *Urlaub*, with the terms referring to registration, law and requirements; reveals the playful nature of Herbeck’s writing. One can see a type of black humor in the societal critique offered in his poem. The hypocritical nature of the *Urlaub* is illustrated here: while the connotation should be relaxation, reality tells a different story. In Herbeck’s poem, thinking about *Urlaub* means actually thinking of division (the individual with the lower class status must ask the ones higher up on the social ladder for permission to take leave) and regulation (paperwork is involved, the amount of time granted must be regulated).

The way the term *Urlaub* appears in *Vertigo* differs greatly from the way Herbeck’s poem presents it. Because the word does not show variation by adding another noun to the front (*Erziehungsurlaub*, *Pflegeurlaub*, *Sonderurlaub*), the emphasis remains on the repetition of *Urlaub*. The nouns that have been added, *Tag* and *Wetter*, are related to nature and since the phrase appears almost immediately following the narrator’s observation of the vegetation, as illustrated in the previous quote where four types of trees are listed,³¹⁷ the term makes one think of the outdoors rather than vacation or permission. Essentially, if one breaks this word down and focuses on the meaning of each syllable, this can be read as *Ur-laub*, a primordial (*Ur-*) greenery (*Laub*), a retreat from modernity and structure to a lush, wild realm. Thus, along with entering into the freedom of nature, one is also free to reject literary rules and experiment with unconventional language. Additionally, the tendency to question the origination and appropriateness of certain words by dividing them into their various parts is frequently employed in schizophrenic writing, as seen in the earlier example in which Herbeck divides the term *traverse*. Gisela Steinlechner points to this aspect of Herbeck’s poetry in the title of her book, *Die Ver-rückung der Sprache*. Here, the hyphen is employed to emphasize the displacement of language itself. Within the secondary literature on Sebald’s novels, the division of words to reveal a psychological aspect has been noted: Deane Blackler writes that the narrator of *Vertigo* is “wandering in a state of dis-ease, psychic dis-ease.”³¹⁸ Finally, the concluding sentence of the *Urlaub* passage in *Vertigo*, “Ein Leben lang,”³¹⁹ is reminiscent of Herbeck’s voice in its curtness, the alliteration and the content: in one particular poem Herbeck writes: “langsames Leben ist lang”.

Sebald’s use of the term *Urlaub* is, like Herbeck’s, not devoid of humor. With Sebald,

vorkommende Wort ‘argentinsche.’” Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 49.

³¹⁶ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 85.

³¹⁷ “Outside in the flood plain there were willows, poplars, alders, and ash trees, allotment gardens.” Sebald, *Vertigo* 40.

³¹⁸ Blackler, Deane. *Reading W. G. Sebald: Adventure and Disobedience*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. 122.

³¹⁹ Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache* 131; Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 47.

this is seen in the form of association. The *Urlaub* passage is another example of Sebald's condensation of a multitude of voices all demanding to be heard at once: he is not the first to associate the word *Urlaub* with nature. It had already been famously used by the comedian, musician, actor and poet; Heinz Erhardt (1909-1979), who wrote: "Ich geh' im Urwald für mich hin ... Wie schön, daß ich im Urwald bin: man kann hier noch so lange wandern, ein Urbaum steht neben dem andern. Und an den Bäumen, Blatt für Blatt, hängt Urlaub. Schön, daß man ihn hat!"³²⁰ If through Sebald's allusion to *Urlaub* in the context of nature one is reminded of the Erhardt poem, then one must simultaneously add Wolfgang von Goethe's voice into the mix since Erhardt's work is a creative, humorous reworking of Goethe's poem which is titled and begins with the words: "Ich ging im Walde / So vor mich hin." While above it was demonstrated that Herbeck's poem revealed the bureaucracy behind the term *Urlaub* with black humor, here *Urlaub* is considered in a playful manner by Erhardt by considering it based on the literal nature of the term as primordial greenery, the interpretation also encouraged by Sebald. The inclusion of Goethe's voice informs the reader that tradition, here Goethe's canonical text, is meant to be questioned, examined and reworked. This collision of voices encourages free-thinking: seeing the world from as many perspectives as possible.

Vertigo above Castle Greifenstein and Herbeck-Inspired Imagery

The lyricism and playfulness of *Urlaub* continues as the narrator and Herbeck climb the path leading to Castle Greifenstein and the narrator describes this castle as: "a medieval fortress that plays (*spielt*) a significant part not only in my own imagination (*Phantasie*) but also, to this day, in that of the people of Greifenstein..."³²¹ Since Sebald mentions the important role of the castle and yet doesn't say specifically what this roll is, I deduce what is truly important about it is the inspiration it grants the aesthetically inclined viewer. In this case, I argue that the way in which the poetic observer, Sebald, perceives this castle is influenced by his travelling companion, Herbeck. Much as the word *Urlaub* was divided in a playful manner to imply the primordial greenery, so too is the castle played with in a lyrical and visual form which alludes to Herbeck. One would assume the castle would serve an important role based on its embodiment of various historical phases, and yet the image provided in the book is not a photograph of Castle Greifenstein, but rather a photograph of a flowerpot for growing cacti which is, nonetheless, shaped like a castle.

Due to the inclusion of this image surrounded by the words *Phantasie* and *spielt* from the phrase quoted above, I see a combination of Herbeck's viewpoint (due to the unusual replacement of the castle with a cactus planter) as well as Sebald's (using his fantasy to think more like Herbeck). At this point, it is worth reiterating Sebald's argument that Herbeck's poetry should be read as the "Äußerungen eines eigentlich normalen Menschen"³²² since in his combination of heterogeneous material, he always manages to stay on topic.³²³ Furthermore, Sebald states Herbeck's disparate combination of discordant material results in *constellations*

³²⁰ This poem was reprinted in the article "Heinz Erhardt zum 100. Geburtstag – Von der Pampelmuse geküsst" in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Feb. 2009. Web. 15 Aug. 2013. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/heinz-erhardt-zum-geburtstag-von-der-pampelmuse-gekuesst-1.476490-4>

³²¹ Sebald, *Vertigo* 40-41. "einer Festung aus dem Mittelalter, die nicht nur in meiner Phantasie, sondern auch in der der am Fuß des Felsens lebenden Greifensteiner bis auf den heutigen Tag eine bedeutsame Rolle spielt." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 47.

³²² Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 132.

³²³ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 137.

and *images* which, despite their contorted character, nonetheless correspond to the *fantasy* of the reader typically accustomed to ordered linguistics.³²⁴ In the above example, I see Sebald's adaptation of this quality which he expressed as typical of Herbeck: there is the combination of discordant material, the castle and the cactus planter, and yet these materials harmonize in a visual and thematic way which stays on topic. The actual castle and the cactus planter (which appears to be a castle when perceived peripherally or with a fleeting glance) represent an architectural and an environmental construction used for the purpose of defense characterized by their powerful outer facades, the stone castle and spiked cactus, to protect that which lies inside.

Keeping the image of Castle Greifenstein in mind in conjunction with the quote that immediately follows, "ein blauer Dunst [schwebte] über dem Laubmeer, das heraufreicht bis an das Gemäuer der Burg,"³²⁵ I shall refer to Sebald's reading of Herbeck's poem "Blau" ("Blue") in order to explore the various associations I believe Sebald had in mind when he composed this passage.³²⁶ While this poem of Herbeck's will be looked at more closely later in this section, a brief description runs thusly: it is essentially thirteen lines long, beginning with a list of colors (blue isn't included although it is the title), continuing with a list of typical features found in nature (the sky, a rainbow, the sea, leaves) and concluding with the rather cryptic lines "Der Schlußesl (R) 'r.' / Die Schloß + Das Schloß."³²⁷ Writing on "Blau", Sebald refers to how simple words such as sea and water (*Meer, Wasser*) acquire a poetic life of their own.³²⁸ One can say the same about Sebald's line in *Vertigo*, whereby the terms *schwebte* and *blauer Dunst* enter the realm of poetics as a meditation upon the feeling of vertigo with which the narrator is overcome while gazing over the cliffs at Castle Greifenstein. Sebald locates an element of vertigo in Herbeck's poem as well and provides an interpretation which employs Franz Kafka's *The Castle*.

Commenting on the final phrase of Herbeck's poem, Sebald states:

"Die Schloß + Das Schloß" setzt noch einen mit falschen Artikeln versperrten Schnörkel unter ein Schriftbild, das zu verstehen gibt, daß das Ziel unserer Wünsche – entsprechend den von K. im *Schloß*-Roman gemachten Erfahrungen – nichts anderes ist als die blaue Leere im Innern der von uns fort und fort gezogenen konzentrischen Kreise.³²⁹

While it is highly unlikely that Herbeck had Franz Kafka in mind when he composed the final line of this poem, for Sebald, such an association is always evident. Sebald claims in his article on Kafka's *The Castle* (*Das Schloss*) that the peace of the blue emptiness, *blaue Leere*, is a symbol for death since this is the only means for K. to escape eternal tortuous wandering.³³⁰ In Herbeck's poem, Sebald sees a linguistic wandering similar to K.'s physical movements. K. wanders in circles and always finds a new trajectory, yet he is unable to follow the line to the end (there are no direct lines to the castle; he is forever diverted by new acquaintances who lead him onto different paths). In Herbeck's poem there is a goal, to describe the color blue, and yet the

³²⁴ "Dem an sprachliche Ordnung gewöhnten Leser geht die positive Funktion der Dissoziierung freilich erst auf, wenn aus den Inferenzen und katachretischen Verschiebung Bilder entstehen, in denen des diskordante Material zu Konstellationen zusammentritt, die trotz ihres zwanghaft verkehrten Ansehens seiner eigenen Phantasie annähernd entsprechen." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 134.

³²⁵ Sebald, *Schwindel, Gefühle*. 48. "a blue haze lay upon the sea of foliage that reaches right up to the walls of the castle." Sebald, *Vertigo* 41.

³²⁶ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145-46.

³²⁷ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

³²⁸ "ein poetisches Eigenleben Erlangen." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

³²⁹ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

³³⁰ Sebald, "The Undiscover'd Country" 34.

trajectories which cross over his line of focus lead to new paths, always taking him close to, but never actually achieving, the pure description of the color blue.

Sebald sees this type of movement as exemplified in the final line of Herbeck's poem "Die Schloß + Das Schloß". Sebald visually describes this by referring to the incorrect article (*die*) as an ornamental, spiral design (*Schnörkel*) which has been attached to the term castle (*Schloß*).³³¹ If the article "die" implies the plural form and yet the noun modified by this "die" is written in the singular, then there is a grammatical overlapping and interweaving producing clashing images in the reader's mind between many castles and the one. This is similar to the movement between the idea of the actual Castle Greifenstein and its fictional counterpart, the cactus planter. There is no way out of this circle, one can think neither exclusively of a singular versus plural castles nor of the true castle versus the flower pot; and in this dizzying mental back and forth, one thinks of the quote from *Vertigo* regarding "the blue haze ... upon the sea of foliage"³³² above the Donau River.

Gazing upon the Donau also produces a clash of images: through the hazy blue of the scene, the narrator and Herbeck can distinguish the snake-like Donau beneath (a photograph of which is provided in *Vertigo* on page 42). Coinciding with this image in the narrator's mind is the interference of the knowledge of what ultimately happens to this river; namely, that it will be straightened out and tamed by a series of dams (pictured on page 43). The visions of the spiral form, which aligns with the terms *Schnörkel* and *konzentrischen Kreise* (concentric circles) in Sebald's essay on "Blau", are a parallel for the dizzying feeling created by the *schwebte* and the ever-expanding sea of foliage, *Laubmeer*; but also by the knowledge of inevitable loss, the idea of progress in a negative sense. Nature, exemplified by the once wild and beautiful Donau River, has been tamed and irretrievably lost.

Kafka's K. is haunted by the knowledge that he must get to the castle, and yet there is no direct path, each new trajectory drives him cyclically back to his starting point, narrowing the scope. Herbeck's poem "Blau" also features a narrowing, cyclical pattern. He begins with a color scheme and a rainbow, all of which collapse into the grey of the castle, and yet the conflicting articles used to modify the castle (*die, das*) also prompt new mental images and lead Herbeck ever further away from the original goal. For the narrator of *Vertigo* (or Sebald), the blue haze is a parallel for the indistinct thought process driving the narrator to envision a once glorious sight of nature which has been destroyed. In an interview with Steve Wasserman, Sebald mournfully reflects and comments on what has been lost since his voyage along the Donau in 1960 in terms of the industrialization of this river by building dams and weirs across it:

... if you have a recollection, at least a mental one, of what these landscapes looked like fifty ... years ago and see how they have been sanitized now, straightened out, controlled, hemmed in, then you realize that much has been lost and what's been lost is some kind of freedom and some form of beauty which we no longer have access to.³³³

For each of these figures, a feeling of vertigo is experienced due primarily to an abundance of information. This stems from the inability to approach a definitive goal as, in each case, there

³³¹ While the German article, *die*, identifies a noun as feminine or plural, in this case, I believe Sebald would have been more inclined to interpret this as the plural form since the identification of the ambivalent article occurs in a discussion of trajectories and being led in a variety of directions. However, due to the ambiguity of this article, one could read it as the feminine *die* since Sebald claims it puts one in mind of the ornamental, spiral design of the *Schnörkel* which could imply an excess of femininity and curviness.

³³² Sebald, *Vertigo* 41.

³³³ Wasserman, Steve. "In This Distant Place': ALOUD at Central Library." [17 Oct. 2001]. *Saturn's Moons: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Leeds: Legenda, 2011. 364-75. 370.

will be lines which cross one's path. These force the individual to follow new trajectories into deeper understanding, but also into the network of an endless system of cyclical connections and associations which bring one to a self-reflexive rather than an outer goal-oriented point.

Shifting Perspectives: From Goethe to Herbeck

In the sentence following the *Laubmeer*³³⁴ passage in *Vertigo*, I see Sebald alluding to the poetry of both Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and to Ernst Herbeck. It reads: "Luftwellen durchliefen die Wipfel der Bäume, und einzelne losgelöste Blätter fanden den Aufwind und stiegen so hoch, daß sie allmählich den Augen entschwanden."³³⁵ Here, one can see a linguistic association with Goethe's "Ein Gleiches" or "Wandrer's Nachtlid II" (1780), the parallel phrase of which reads: "In allen Wipfeln / Spürest du / Kaum einen Hauch."³³⁶ From the treetops to the breeze (*Wipfel* and *Wipfeln*, *Luftwellen* / *Aufwind* and *Hauch*), the resonance is clear. As this sentence occurs during the narrator's outing with Herbeck, I believe Sebald was likely inspired to incorporate Goethe's voice due to his familiarity and appreciation of Herbeck's reworking of "Ein Gleiches". On occasion, Navratil would present Herbeck with canonical poetry and then request that he recreate the poem in his own words.³³⁷ Herbeck would typically maintain the general theme of the original text and yet he would alter the semantics, the sentence structure, certain phrases and at times even the perspective of the narrator or the tone of voice. One aspect which drew Sebald to Herbeck's rewriting of such texts was the way in which he employed *démontage*. Sebald claims: "Demontagen dieser Art sind ausgesprochen bezeichnend für die schriftstellerische Praxis Herbecks, in der etwas, das fertig schon vorliegt, umgefertigt und verschrieben wird, bis die Antwort in eine Frage und das Bild in ein Rätsel sich verwandelt."³³⁸

That Sebald would have been particularly interested in Herbeck's reworking of Goethe's poetry is undeniable. Generally, Martin Klebes has illustrated that Sebald tended to show canonical figures as traditionalists and those neglected authors as groundbreakers and, in this way, Sebald was able to provide an ideological critique.³³⁹ In terms of this specific association, Uwe Schütte has pointed out how Goethe was viewed by Sebald to be the polar opposite of Herbeck:

Mit seinem Interesse an dem von der Germanistik nicht wirklich als Lyriker akzeptierten Herbeck, den Sebald als paradigmatischen Vertreter einer 'minderen Literatur' im Sinne von Deleuze/Guattari betrachtet hatte, ist der Gegenpol zum hehren Begriff traditioneller Lyrik zu sehen, wie ihn in der deutschen Literatur am bezeichnendsten wohl die Gedichte Goethes verkörpern.³⁴⁰

That Herbeck's style is not the result of years of training in the field of Humanities, but rather stems from a natural creative drive is, for Sebald, a positive and refreshing approach to writing. Goethe's works, as exemplary of the German literary canon, reflect the ordered product of

³³⁴ "... ein blauer Dunst [schwebte] über dem Laubmeer, das heraufreicht bis an das Gemäuer der Burg." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 48.

³³⁵ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 48. "Currents of air were stirring the tops of the trees, and stray leaves were riding the breeze so high that little by little they vanished from sight." Sebald, *Vertigo* 41.

³³⁶ The terms from Goethe's poem can be directly translated as "in all the treetops / you sense / scare a breeze."

³³⁷ For examples of Herbeck's reworking of poems by such authors as Matthias Claudius, Heinrich Heine or Rainer Maria Rilke, see Navratil, *Alexander's poetische Texte* 131-32, 134-38, 140-46 and 149.

³³⁸ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 139.

³³⁹ Klebes, "Sebald's Pathographies" 65.

³⁴⁰ Schütte, *Figurationen* 17.

creative pursuit; Herbeck's works, written from the periphery of society, resemble natural inspiration in a state which is untamed, untouched, innocent and playful.

Underscoring the relevance of the Goethe poem for Sebald; it is one of the few which he highlighted in his personal copy of *Alexanders poetische Texte*.³⁴¹ I will interpret Herbeck's rewriting of "Ein Gleiches" to reveal how the views expressed therein align closely with Sebald's opinions regarding an acceptance of the sentience and power of the environment and the smallness of man in comparison with natural forces. While the breeze (*Hauch*) is not recreated in Herbeck's "Ein Gleiches", the overall serenity of the text remains. Goethe's poem reads: "Über allen Gipfeln / Ist Ruh, / In allen Wipfeln / Spürest du / Kaum einen Hauch; / Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde. / Warte nur, balde / Ruhest du auch." Herbeck maintains the peaceful nature of these few lines in his rendition thereof: "Über den Bergen, ein gleiches Bildnis; / Ruhesant, gewährt für Augen; / Die Wipfel schlummern in –er Ruh, / Und siehet jen, der siehet zu..."³⁴² What Sebald arguably would have found appealing in Herbeck's reworking of these lines is the perspectival shift. Goethe's lines begin with a godlike view, a gazing down from above the mountains to the treetops and finally to the birds below in the forest. The perspective is one of declension and therefore one which prioritizes a particular viewpoint. God's perspective is naturally given primacy over the other actors in this poem, namely the animal world and man (*du* or the narrator). Man is positioned just beneath God, high enough to be on level with the treetops; and the animal world, the birds, are positioned below.

In Herbeck's line "Die Wipfel schlummern in –er Ruh", the serenity of "Ist Ruh" is kept with "in –er Ruh" and yet the point of view is decidedly different. In Goethe's poem, it is an observation from above that "over all the mountain peaks / is peace"; whereas in Herbeck's version there is an ambiguity regarding the origin of the perspective expressed here. It is unclear whether this gaze is projected from a narrator or from the treetops themselves. It is possible that the treetops are the key agents in this passage, "the treetops doze in (inn)-er peace" or there could be dual actors, the treetops are dozing and this feeling of peace extends to the narrator who consequently feels "in (inn)-er peace". Therefore, rather than granting primacy to any particular perspective, there is a balance and equal transition between the peace experienced by (sentient) nature and by man.

The final line of Herbeck's poem couldn't vary more greatly from Goethe's original. Goethe ends with "Warte nur, balde / Ruhest du auch." Herbeck's conclusion is "Und siehet jen, der siehet zu..." While Goethe's last line ruminates on mortality and eternal rest, Herbeck's line continues with the idea of a dynamic, mutual relation between nature and man; the endlessness of which is further emphasized by the ellipses. The introduction of eyesight into this poem is Herbeck's invention. One imagines a double gaze in this final line: the particular wording makes it seem as though the treetops are watching the individual who is simultaneously gazing upon the treetops. Although this transference is absent from Goethe's poem, it occurs in *Vertigo* in the sentence "Luftwellen durchliefen die Wipfel der Bäume, und einzelne losgelöste Blätter fanden den Aufwind und stiegen so hoch, daß sie allmählich den Augen entschwanden."³⁴³ Due to the active verbs, one gets the sense again of sentient nature: various elements of the environment seem to be engaging with man in a game of hide and seek. The

³⁴¹ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 146. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

³⁴² The ellipses at the end of this poem are in Herbeck's original.

³⁴³ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 48. "Currents of air were stirring the tops of the trees, and stray leaves were riding the breeze so high that little by little they vanished from sight." Sebald, *Vertigo* 41.

leaves from the treetops are agents willfully seeking out (*fanden*) and riding high (*stiegen so hoch*) upon the breeze (*Luftwellen*). This breeze is just as lively as the leaves: it is participating in that activity Sebald deemed so important for Herbeck, traversing (*durchliefen*) a border, here the leaves transcend atmospheric boundaries, climbing ever higher on the waves of air. This is in an effort to evade (*entschwanden*) the gaze of the individual. Sebald's line refuses to grant priority to man over nature, here the prying and curious eyes of the individual are foiled by the evasion techniques of the leaves.

The Leaves: A Reflection on Bodies of Poetry and Nature

To return again to look more closely at Herbeck's poem "Blau" and how it was analyzed by Sebald,³⁴⁴ one sees that Sebald's words *losgelöste Blätter* from his "Luftwellen durchliefen die Wipfel der Bäume, und einzelne losgelöste Blätter fanden den Aufwind und stiegen so hoch, daß sie allmählich den Augen entschwanden"³⁴⁵ sentence in *Vertigo* resonate with two terms Herbeck uses in "Blau": *Auenblättern* and *Blattnarben*. The term "Blatt" appears frequently in Herbeck's poetry, and in her analysis of the lines from another poem by Herbeck, "Die Zeitung", which reads "Das Blatt das den Nenner hat / muss 3-sein wie das liebe GRAB.- ... Ich gebe Dirs...", Gisela Steinlechner comments of the leaf of paper (*das Blatt*) on which Herbeck would write a poem that was subsequently released ("Ich gebe Dirs") into the hands of Navratil.³⁴⁶ Similarly, since Sebald's *losgelöste Blätter* are combined with verbs (*fanden, stiegen, entschwanden*) to personify the leaves: one sees them as active figures or bodies soaring away – much like the leaves of the page once a work has been completed or even rejected and cast off.

Another resonance which occurs in the image of the *losgelöste Blätter* is the association between a loose piece of paper and a butterfly. An allusion to this occurs in the following quote from *Schmetterlinge in der Weltliteratur*, a book found within Sebald's personal library: "Von da ist es zum Papierschnipsel, zum losen Zettel oder Kleber ("papillon") nicht weit. Falter und gefaltetes Papier sind nahe Verwandte. Sie gleichen sich nicht nur in der äußeren Form, sondern auch in ihrer Funktion als Überbringer von Botschaften."³⁴⁷ To demonstrate Herbeck's presence within this constellation, I turn to Sebald's character Ambrose Adelwarth from *The Emigrants*. Ambrose is placed in a mental institution where he undergoes electroshock therapy until he finally gains mental freedom by way of a literary figure: the butterfly man. Just before Ambrose engages in the session of electroshock therapy which ends his life, he is seen looking out the window and apologizes for his tardiness to the session as he "was waiting for the butterfly man."³⁴⁸ The connection between the butterfly man and Nabokov is already made explicit in the first chapter of *The Emigrants*, in which a photograph of Nabokov, holding his butterfly net, is

³⁴⁴ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

³⁴⁵ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 48.

³⁴⁶ Regarding the sentence between these lines, Steinlechner sees the grave as a parallel for the space from which Herbeck's poetic texts are written: an area of silence and isolation. Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 100.

³⁴⁷ Although this book was published several years after the release of *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, one can assume that Sebald would have already been aware of this association as his interest in butterflies (and their connection to Nabokov) began well before Sebald's novels were released. *Schmetterlinge in der Weltliteratur*. Ed. Charitas Jenny-Ebeling. Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 2000. 353. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

³⁴⁸ Sebald, W. G. *The Emigrants*. Trans. Michael Hulse. London: Vintage, 2002. 115.

reproduced.³⁴⁹ Thus, the butterfly man conjures up visions of escape, through literature and thereby through fantasy. As the narrator and Herbeck stand on the edge of the cliff and view the *losgelöste Blätter* slowly vanishing into the air above, one is reminded of Herbeck's own ability to escape his situation through literature. He experiences a sense of freedom by transcending the borders of the institution through the composition of his poetry (in fantasy) and the release thereof to Navratil for publication which delivers his voice from the institution to the world.

I will look at a few specific aspects of Herbeck's "Blau" in connection with the parallel terms Sebald uses to describe the view from above Castle Greifenstein to explore what I interpret as Sebald's incorporation of particular words from "Blau" to visually and thematically capture the essence of Herbeck's poem. Sebald mentions, for example, the *Donauauen*, the *Luftwellen* and the *losgelöste Blätter*; each word of which resonates with the concluding lines of "Blau": "Das Meer / Die Auenblättern / Das Wasser / Die Blattnarben."³⁵⁰ Along with the linguistic repetition between Herbeck's *Auenblättern* and Sebald's *Donauauen*, the visual images conjured by these terms is also identical. The contrast offered in Herbeck's list alternates between the colors blue and brown. The blue of the vast body of water (*Meer*) is reminiscent of Sebald's sea of green (*Laubmeer*). The brown of the fallen leaves calls to mind images of autumn – the time of year in which Sebald and Herbeck went on their outing. Within these terms one also sees that the most relevant aspects of our world are represented: Herbeck describes the water (blue) and the earth (brown), while Sebald's passage similarly provides an all-encompassing image of nature (blue water – the Donau, green earth – *Laubmeer*, brown leaves – *Blätter*). Inherent in Herbeck's picture is also the parallel to the human body. One envisions the combination of water, symbolic of blood, along with leaves which are complete with veins reminiscent of those on physical bodies. "Blattnarben", entailing the word "die Narbe" (scar), brings to mind the idea of a scarred body and it would not be surprising if Herbeck had this idea of the scarred body in mind when he wrote this word considering how self-conscious he was regarding his cleft palate. While his terms don't specifically point to a scarred body, once the observations turn more closely to focus on the Donau River, Sebald acknowledges the irreversibly scarred landscape.

Though he doesn't offer an in-depth analysis of Herbeck's "Blau", Sebald highlights how the poem expresses the beauty of nature, "die Schönheit der Natur, das wie ein lang ausgedehnter Schmerz wirkende Staunen darüber, daß sie trotz allem noch vorhanden ist, wird in seinen meisten Gedichten thematisch,"³⁵¹ and mourns its inevitable corruption, "die letzten Zeilen schaffen aus Auenblättern und Blattnarben ein Laubhüttenfest der Erinnerung an das verlorene Leben der Natur."³⁵² It is perhaps the order in which Herbeck lists his terms that inspired Sebald to recognize a poignant picture of a "lost life" in "Blau"; namely, the vanishing body of a natural landscape. The words in the conclusion of Herbeck's poem first conjure up images of the vast sea (*das Meer*) but then switch to the *Auenblättern*. Thus, one imagines a landscape which is

³⁴⁹ For further articles analyzing the connections between Kafka, Nabokov and Sebald see for example R. J. A. Kilbourn "Kafka, Nabokov... Sebald: Intertextuality and Narratives of Redemption in *Vertigo* and *The Emigrants*." *W. G. Sebald: History - Memory - Trauma*. Eds. Scott Denham and Mark R. McCulloh. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, Fall 2005. Also in *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*. Eds. Long, J. J. and Anne Whitehead. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004 see John Zilcosky, "Sebald's Uncanny Travels: The Impossibility of Getting Lost" (102-22), Martin Klebes, "Infinite Journey: From Kafka to Sebald" (123-39), Jan Ceuppens "Seeing Things: Spectres and Angels in W. G. Sebald's Prose Fiction" (190-202), and Maya Barzilai, "Facing the Past and the Female Spectre in *The Emigrants*" (203-16).

³⁵⁰ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

³⁵¹ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

³⁵² Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

still large, a meadow covered with leaves, and yet it is no longer the limitless space of the open sea. Next comes the water (*das Wasser*) which like the sea can be interpreted as endless, but because it follows the *Auenblättern*, the mental image is reduced and one envisions a smaller body of water as part of the meadow, a brook or a stream perhaps. The final term, *Blattnarben*, offers an extreme close up on the veins of leaves. The rapid reduction in the landscape from the borderless sea to the microscopic view of the leaf, a transition invoked by merely four words, therefore encourages the reader to focus in the end on the one sign of life – the vein – as though it were the only remnant of a once spacious world.

This concluding image of the microcosm, of the world reduced to a single leaf, is mirrored in the picture Sebald paints before he turns his focus to the Donau River. The narrator of *Vertigo* observes the vast landscape (*Laubmeer*)³⁵³ before focusing on the final image of the fleeting leaves (*losgelöste Blätter*). These remaining leaves serve as the embodiment for the overall sea of foliage (*Laubmeer*) and, although the phrase occurs in the plural form (*losgelöste Blätter*), the image has diminished in size to a single leaf (*das Blatt*) floating in the endless sky. The leaf serves as the microcosm for the former sea of foliage which is being carried away by the breeze and vanishing from sight. The disappearance of an aspect of nature due to its gradual reduction or deterioration provides for the subsequent transition to the reminiscence by the narrator of *Vertigo* on the loss of the wild Donau River. This river has been tamed by the process of industrialization and, while this formerly wild aspect of nature has been lost, the leaves vanishing in the air represent the possibility for transcendence once a natural, earthly body has come to an end. This image serves as a parallel for the freeing of the spirit through literature (fantasy) or death.

Sebald's choice of words in his interpretation of these final lines of Herbeck's "Blau" is also interesting: "ein Laubhüttenfest der Erinnerung an das verlorene Leben der Natur."³⁵⁴ To Sebald, the image of the leaves is reminiscent of a *Laubhüttenfest* which refers to the Jewish holiday, Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated in autumn to commemorate the time in which the Jewish people traveled for forty years through the desert following the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. As in Chapter One of this study, where I argued Sebald used Herbeck's voice as inspiration for the tutor who is thereby doubly marginalized in his association with Judaism and mental illness, an identical alignment of societal outsiders is recreated here. The *Laubhütten* were the temporary huts with leaves and branches for roofs used as shelter. This type of a dwelling, while offering a sense of security, is ultimately impermanent and serves as sign of transience. His interpretation thereby offers an example of how Sebald recognized commentaries on the ephemeral state of nature in Herbeck's poetry.

³⁵³ "... ein blauer Dunst [schwebte] über dem Laubmeer, das heraufreicht bis an das Gemäuer der Burg."

³⁵⁴ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 146.

Chapter Four

Identifying the Societal Critique in Ernst Herbeck's Poetry

The previous Chapter concluded with a brief segment on the taming of the Donau River. The narrator reports on this occurrence with a mournful tone, regretful of humanity's desire to control nature and bring order and sterility to that which was once beautiful and wild and is now forever lost. Keeping the Donau River in mind, this chapter will begin with a section devoted to Sebald's interest in the critiques of the mechanization of nature posed by the members of the Frankfurt School. In Ben Hutchinson's book, *W. G. Sebald – Die dialektische Imagination*, he looks at Sebald's language to illustrate out how he advocates several of the ideas expressed by the Frankfurt School affiliates by employing, as the title indicates, dialectical syntax within his literary writings.³⁵⁵ He points specifically to the terms progress (*Fortschritt*) and *Regression*. In this chapter, I take inspiration from the annotations I discovered in Sebald's German copy of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and focus on the term "regression" since this is the word handwritten in the margins on page 40, 77 and 189.³⁵⁶ Hutchinson's claim that "die beiden dialektischen Begriffe können mit Recht als die zwei Pole von Sebalds ganzem Schaffen aufgefasst werden" is not an exaggeration.³⁵⁷ The irony of the fact that society's attempts at progression typically result in a form of regression is a theme Sebald returned to throughout his academic and literary writings. While various forms of regression can be located in Sebald's texts, I shall analyze particularly how the regression of human, animal and environmental nature which results from the "progressive" process of increasing industrialization and mechanization relates to Ernst Herbeck.

A Brief Introduction to the Frankfurt School of Critical Thought

After the Second World War, discussions on the negative ramifications of devout consumerism and the mechanization of nature within capitalist societies became increasingly popular.³⁵⁸ By 1963, Sebald had already begun purchasing books by Walter Benjamin and members of the Frankfurt School.³⁵⁹ The relevance in particular of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's examination of the regressive tendencies of Western society in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) should not be underestimated.³⁶⁰ The impression these works had on

³⁵⁵ Hutchinson, *W. G. Sebald – Die dialektische Imagination* 5.

³⁵⁶ Quotations attributable to W.G. Sebald, as collected in *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (S. Fischer). Copyright © 1969 by W.G. Sebald. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

³⁵⁷ Hutchinson, *W. G. Sebald – Die dialektische Imagination* 6.

³⁵⁸ These discussions naturally existed earlier. Many sociologists considered for instance the effects of industrialized society on humanity, whether it be the mechanization of human nature or the possible psychological ramifications of living in a world where machines were beginning to replace the work of men and women. See for example such writings as Siegfried Kracauer's (1889-1966) "The Mass Ornament" (*Das Ornament der Masse*, 1927) or Georg Simmel's (1858-1918) "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (*Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903).

³⁵⁹ Sheppard, "W. G. Sebald: A Chronology" 622.

³⁶⁰ Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. 1944. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969. For ease of reading, I will quote this work using the English version and will provide the German translation when the passage has been explicitly highlighted or marked in Sebald's

Sebald is not only evidenced in his integration of the ideas and opinions expressed therein throughout his own essays and novels, but also in his interpretation of Herbeck's poetry. Despite the fact that Ernst Herbeck never read or likely had even heard of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Sebald's essay "Eine kleine Traverse" is undeniably informed by his profound familiarity with the ideas held by the Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt School. Andrew Fagan defines Critical Theory as "a philosophical form which takes the stand that oppression is created through politics, economics, culture, and materialism, but is maintained most significantly through consciousness."³⁶¹ Thus, in order to see through the façade erected by capitalist society, one must be able to think in a way which is decidedly different from the majority of individuals who unquestioningly accept the ideology promoted by the state: Herbeck is one such individual.

Although Sebald does not cite the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in his bibliography at the end of "Eine kleine Traverse", the terminology Sebald employs makes it apparent that this text provided a framework for his analysis of Herbeck's poems. Sebald writes:

Auf die *gegenwärtige Situation* übertragen,³⁶² in der die *technische Progression* sich bereits *teleologische* an der *Katastrophe* orientiert, bedeutet das, daß die der *verwalteten Sprache* *diametral* engengesetzte kreative Tendenz zur Symbolisierung und Physiognomisierung, von der die Sprache der Schizophrenen geprägt ist, den Ort unserer Hoffnung genauer bestimmt als der *geordnete Diskurs*.³⁶³

Here, Sebald has clearly incorporated the key phrases and ideas of the Frankfurt School thinkers to argue that Herbeck's writing offers a hopeful means to escape from the net cast by Western consumerist and capitalist culture. Based on this quote, Sebald viewed the technological progression (*technische Progression*) of his current situation (the early 1980s) as a parallel for the *Fortschritt* described by Horkheimer and Adorno in which the technological advancement that began during the Age of Enlightenment culminated in the mechanized mass killings in World War II. While Horkheimer and Adorno saw "Auschwitz [as] the last of the escalating catastrophes of modernity," Sebald believed society was continuing on its downward spiral. The subsequent events which appear in his novels, such as "industrial pollution of Manchester" and the "extinction of the North Sea herring", demonstrate that "industrialism, colonialism and ecological catastrophe are the harbingers of the apocalypse."³⁶⁴ Although Sebald viewed the collapse of Western civilization as imminent, in Herbeck's language he experienced a slight reprieve as within it he saw a rebellious stance, at least in language, against society's destructive tendency.³⁶⁵

personal copy. Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

³⁶¹ Fagan, Andrew. "Theodor Adorno (1903-1969)" *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Originally published 9 March 2003 and updated on 20 July 2005. Web. 17 Sept. 2013. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/adorno/>

³⁶² Despite the fact that this essay was written in 1981, nearly thirty-seven years after the first publication of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Sebald shows that he considers the arguments posed therein to be as important for the 1980s as they were in the 1940s.

³⁶³ The idea of physiognomy shall be returned to later in this chapter. I have italicized the phrases borrowed from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* for emphasis. Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" 140.

³⁶⁴ Morgan, "The Sign of Saturn" all of the above quotes are from page 86.

³⁶⁵ This is a rebellious stance which Morgan argues Sebald was incapable of taking due to the melancholy nature of his generation. Unlike those who could rebel, Morgan associates Sebald with the left-wing intellectuals who suffered from a restrictive type of melancholia. Using the theories of Wolf Lepenies, Morgan describes Sebald's melancholy as: it "can contain a critical and utopian moment, in which social goals and the means to social acceptance are questioned. However, this moment remains isolated, often submerged in the pessimism and

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Since much of Herbeck's life was spent in seclusion, Sebald appreciates how his observations of the world entail an innocence and honesty as they are not skewed by a particular societal, cultural or artistic movement. For Sebald, he is a figure of "minor literature" in the Deleuze and Guattarian sense. Herbeck, like Franz Kafka albeit to a greater extent, existed on the border of mainstream society and this position allowed his worldly observations to be at once objectively distanced but also prompted by current events: the "cramped space (occupied by the majority) forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics."³⁶⁶ What is so appealing to Sebald in Herbeck's language is both its linguistic uniqueness, which does not adhere to canonical literary expectations, and its political value since Herbeck's responses to societal events are uninhibited and unbiased.

Following the war and the rise of capitalism, Horkheimer and Adorno called for individuals to "refuse obedience to the current linguistic and intellectual demands."³⁶⁷ Sebald answers Horkheimer and Adorno's entreaty for an alternate approach to language with the example of Herbeck. As demonstrated in the previously quoted passage from "Eine kleine Traverse", Sebald sees the hopeful possibility, "der Ort unserer Hoffnung", in his language to break out of the current linguistic and intellectual demands, referred to here as the "verwaltete Sprache" and "geordnete Diskurs". Sebald considered Herbeck's language to be inherently antithetical to the mainstream ordered discourse, and yet it provides a critical commentary as one can read Herbeck's poetry through a sociological and historical lens. To demonstrate how Herbeck's writings can be interpreted from a political angle, Sebald constellates him with another affiliate of the Frankfurt School, Alexander Kluge,³⁶⁸ whose works frequently express a reaction to World War II.³⁶⁹ Sebald writes:

Die Verstrickung des einzelnen in den planlosen Ablauf der Geschichte – "Der Krieg i. S. R. änderte sich seinem Ende zu" – wird dabei in einem ganz ähnlichen Sinn faßbar wie in Alexander Kluges dokumentarischer Beschreibung der Schlacht um Stalingrad, in der die Komplexität des organisatorischen Aufbaus eines historischen Unglücks als der Grund der scheinbaren Irrationalität unseres persönlichen und kollektiven Schicksals

depression born of despair and the conflict between personal goals and social order." Morgan, "The Sign of Saturn" 89.

³⁶⁶ Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. 17.

³⁶⁷ This quote is highlighted in Sebald's copy. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xv; "den geltenden sprachlichen und gedanklichen Anforderungen" (Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 1-2). This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

³⁶⁸ Kluge performed legal services and wrote stories until he was encouraged by Adorno (at the Institute for Social Research) to pursue a different profession. As Kluge claims: "[Adorno] sent me to Fritz Lang in order to protect me from something worse, so that I wouldn't get the idea to write any books. If I were turned away, then I would ultimately do something more valuable, which was to continue to be legal counsel to the Institute." Instead of continuing legal services, Kluge continued writing and began his long-term career as a filmmaker. See Langford, Michelle. "Alexander Kluge." *Senses of Cinema*. July 2003. Web. 16 Oct. 2013. <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/kluge/>

³⁶⁹ This is not the only time Sebald draws a parallel between Herbeck and Kluge in a World War II context. In his *Campo Santo* article he states: "Wartime Christmas as Goebbels envisaged it, and as recalled to memory by Kluge and Reitz, flares up again in Herbeck's poetry." Sebald, "The Little Hare" in CS 126-27.

identifiziert wird.³⁷⁰

The “Der Krieg i. S. R...” quote by Herbeck which Sebald provides here is a sentence out of the poem “Ein Brief an meine Frau!” in which Herbeck imagines himself to be a soldier writing to his beloved to ask if she has remained faithful while he has been away at war. Although “Ein Brief an meine Frau!” is based on the fantasy of the eternal bachelor Herbeck, Sebald recognizes in his envisioned scenario an expression of how the solitary individual becomes inevitably entwined within the course of history. Alexander Kluge’s historical novel, *Schlachtbeschreibung* (1964), which is the text Sebald is referring to in the above quote, likewise focuses on individuals who have been caught up in the “organized construction of a historical calamity.”³⁷¹ The text features personal accounts by officers, soldiers and doctors in interview or diary form. Sebald uses this alignment between Herbeck and Kluge to express his own opinion that the majority, those many average individuals, are powerless when confronted with the disastrous course of history. Destruction is inevitable, be it “planlos” (referring to the innocent bystanders caught up in the history of destruction) or an “organisatorischer Aufbau” (meaning those who actively contribute to our demise).³⁷²

Sebald sees a symbiotic relationship in which those in power rely on those who follow commands just as much as the oppressed enable the oppressors. He returns to this idea in several of his essays³⁷³ and apparently had this in mind during the composition of “Eine kleine Traverse”. Sebald refers to Herbeck’s poem “Adolf” which begins with the lines: “Adolf ist ein Werewolfname Name, und / heißt ERNYst HITL’ER und will...”³⁷⁴ Despite the fact that Herbeck was already socially an outsider before the onset of the war due to his illness and physically following his confinement, Sebald points to Herbeck’s alignment of himself with Adolf Hitler to support his claim “daß der etwas verkorkste kleine Mann (Hitler), der die Geschichte angerichtet hat, identisch ist mit dem, der sie erleidet.”³⁷⁵ Based on such lines from Herbeck’s poetry, Sebald argues that Herbeck has “einen durchaus kritischen Begriff von der

³⁷⁰ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 142.

³⁷¹ This quote used by Sebald is taken directly from Kluge’s *Schlachtbeschreibung* but is not written in quotation marks in the article on Herbeck in which it appears. Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 142. See also Winkler, Willi. “‘Ich könnte einen Nazi umdrehen.’ Schriftsteller und Filmemacher Alexander Kluge über das Ardennenschwein, Außerirdische und Revolution.” *Süddeutsche.de*. 17 May 2010. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/im-gespraech-alexander-kluge-ich-koennte-einen-nazi-umdrehen-1.167267>

³⁷² In an article by Stephanie Bird, she comments on how the individual, even a well-meaning individual, can become destructive when influenced by an inherently flawed system. She gives a few examples from *The Emigrants* such as: Paul “Bereyter, an exemplary teacher who nevertheless reaches the point on more than one occasion when the system under which he is forced to work almost causes his fondness for his pupils to tip over into an ‘utterly groundless violence’ towards them.” A more extreme case provided by Sebald seems to have been directly inspired by critiques posed by members of the Frankfurt School, whereby the individual becomes so enthralled with the increasing mechanization of society that “with terrible irony, the doctors’ healing hands become, in an increasingly mechanized age, the instruments for administering the violent electric shock treatment that hastens Ambros’s death.” Bird, “‘Er gab mir, was äußerst ungewöhnlich war, zum Abschied die Hand’” 364.

³⁷³ He looks into this symbiotic relationship of power most directly in “The Law of Ignominy: Authority, Messianism and Exile in *The Castle*.” *On Kafka: Semi-Centenary Perspectives*. Ed. Franz Kuna. London: Paul Elek, 1976. 42-58; but it also appears in various articles from *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* such as “Summa Scientiae. System und Systemkritik bei Elias Canetti” (93-102) or “Wo die Dunkelheit den Strick zuzieht. Zu Thomas Bernhard” (103-114).

³⁷⁴ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 144.

³⁷⁵ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 144. This idea will also be returned to later in Chapter Five in Herbeck’s positioning of himself in the position of power and then expressing guilt at having taken on the roll of oppressor.

Rolle, die *seiner* Geschichte innerhalb der Geschichte zukommt.”³⁷⁶ While Sebald utilizes Kluge and Herbeck to express the inevitability of the individual becoming entwined within the course of events, he simultaneously directs the reader’s attention to the potential revolt against this tendency which can be manifest in language.³⁷⁷

Though not at easy task,³⁷⁸ the goal for members of the Frankfurt School is to separate themselves from the mainstream in order to critically comment on society. In terms of providing such a critique via artistic invention, Sebald’s technique to break out of society is reflected quite literally in the method he uses and claims is also employed by Herbeck and Kluge. Sebald discovered this method within the field of anthropology. This mode of creation, *bricolage* (in German *Bastelei*), is described by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) in his book *Das wilde Denken* (1962).³⁷⁹ *Bricolage* can be linked with the Frankfurt School since Lévi-Strauss’s study was similarly prompted by his recognition of the teleological destruction of nature. He points for example to modern commercial culture’s abuse of nature “wo man bedenkenlos die wenigen Produkte ausbeutet, die für den Augenblick einen finanziellen Vorteil bringen, und dabei oft alles übrige mißachtet und zerstört.”³⁸⁰ Thus, Lévi-Strauss’s goal is to describe a more positive way of life and, while his ideal is one that may be considered primitive to the Western world, he argues it is a lifestyle which is a desirable alternative to the downward spiral currently occurring (in the 1960s).

In Lévi-Strauss’s description, *bricolage* refers to the primitive type of construction which is typified by the manner in which people from native tribes will put physical objects together; namely, remnants from former creations which have fallen into disuse. The gathering of such objects implies making the best out of the limited objects available. While Lévi-Strauss is interested in this technique for anthropological reasons, Sebald’s reformulation of the method reveals how he sees a potential in *bricolage* to effectively comment on modern society in an artistic manner. In “Eine kleine Traverse”, Sebald describes the technique as:

Das Werk des Bastlers, das sich aus Abfällen und Bruchstücken, aus “den fossilen Zeugen der Geschichte eines Individuums oder einer Gesellschaft” zusammensetzt, lebt

³⁷⁶ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 144.

³⁷⁷ Kluge believed negative modes of thinking could be reformed through literature. David Kaufmann’s article discusses Sebald’s attempts to make Kluge and Benjamin more fatalistic than they actually are. Kaufmann writes that in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, “Sebald is claiming that in spite of themselves, Kluge’s own works admit the inevitability of disaster.” Kaufmann argues that the way in which Sebald employs Benjamin’s Angel of History in connection with Kluge is somewhat unjust since Kluge (and Benjamin) believed in a redemption not considered possible by Sebald. Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace” 110.

³⁷⁸ Once an individual has already been interpellated within the Ideological State Apparatus, thereby losing their individuality as they become subjects of the state, it is naturally difficult to liberate oneself and recognize how one has been conditioned by society. Since thoughts and language are inherently connected, one sees a reflection of the ideals of capitalist culture within the mainstream language. The terminology used here is derived from Louis Althusser’s essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” First published as *La Pensée* (1970), the online version is taken from *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press. 1971. Trans. Ben Brewster. 18 Oct. 2013. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

³⁷⁹ For an in-depth study of *bricolage* and how the method is used by Sebald and members of the Frankfurt School see for example: Seitz, Stephan. *Geschichte als bricolage – W. G. Sebald und die Poetik des Bastlens*. Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2011. J. J. Long also demonstrates how, ever since Sebald’s interview with Sigrid Löffler from 1997 in which Sebald stated that *bricolage* is central to his poetics, many critics including for example Claudia Öhlschläger, Ben Hutchinson and Bettina Mosbach have focused on this connection. Long, J. J. “In the contact zone: W. G. Sebald and the ethnographic imagination.” *Journal of European Studies* 41, no. 3/4 (2011): 413-430. 415-416.

³⁸⁰ Lévi-Strauss, *Das wilde Denken* 13.

dagegen *in der Zeit*, für sie und für den Augenblick, in dem es gemacht wird; es ist ein operativer Gegenstand, der, einem nur heuristischen Zweck zugeordnet, nie nächste Zerstörung schon in sich trägt.³⁸¹

Using *bricolage* in the creation of literary works brings fragmented objects (*Bruchstücken*) together, typically from something which has already been discarded (*Abfall*). Rather than collecting actual discarded objects, the literary *bricoleur* accumulates fragmented words and ideas from the past and conjoins them to present them for a moment in the present in a novel way. They still, however, simultaneously memorialize the time from which they originated as “fossilized witnesses of the past”. Within this presentation is the implication that the artwork and the fragments of the past contained therein will soon be again broken apart, perhaps to take on new meanings if recombined, or if not literally broken apart, then to take on new meanings based on interpretations from varying socio-historical contexts.

For Sebald, inspired by Alexander Kluge in his considerations of *bricolage*, this process involves bending the stereotypical genre conventions by either adding something to a finished work of art or by creating an entire artwork out of various remnants from the past: these remnants can be factual or fictional, photographs or paintings, poems or aphorisms. Alexander Kluge’s *Schlachtbeschreibung* is a prime example of a text composed in the *bricolage* manner. When it was released, it caused an uproar within critical literary circles as no one knew what to make of the unusual combinations of styles and the mixing of reality and fiction – much like the critics of Sebald’s novels would point out nearly thirty years later due to his unconventional incorporation of photographs, restaurant or hotel receipts, newspaper clippings, etc. As Wolfgang Reichmann writes on Kluge’s work, the text was described as a “‘literarische Collage’, ‘dokumentarische Prosamontage’, ‘historischen Roman’, ‘Stalingrad-Roman’ oder etwa auch ... als ‘Vielfältigkeitsroman.’”³⁸² Whether the form of *bricolage* involved collecting random objects from the past or combining seemingly random linguistic phrases, this method stood in radical opposition to the regimented language of the mainstream.

Writing on Sebald’s use of Lévi-Strauss’s ideas as a clarification for Herbeck’s style, Uwe Schütte emphasizes the random, collage-like nature of Herbeck’s linguistics:

Herbecks “bastlerischer” Umgang mit der Sprache ähnelt verblüffend der mythopoetischen Konstruktionsarbeit sogenannter primitiver Völker, die in einem analogen Prozess zufällig akkumulierte Materialien und Fragmente, *odds and ends*, zu etwas überraschend Neuem zusammenfügen.³⁸³

While Sebald applies the term *bricolage* to the way Herbeck employs language to create his poems, it is apparent that he intentionally chose this term also due to its anthropological origins and the fact that this is a manner of creation which would be considered “primitive” and therefore is inherently opposed, in a positive way, to a technologically advanced society. Herbeck’s poetry is a combination of unconventional terms based on either certain themes or

³⁸¹ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 138-39. The quote within this quote is taken from Lévi-Strauss, *Das wilde Denken*. This quote also resonates with Sebald’s apocalyptic ideas on the disintegration (implosion or explosion) of all we create. As a comparison, see the line from *The Rings of Saturn* which Roberta Silman refers to in her review and which is also quoted in Chapter Two of this study: “Combustion is the hidden principle behind every artifact we create.” Silman, Roberta. “In the Company of Ghosts.” *The New York Times*. 26 July 1998. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/07/26/reviews/980726.26silmant.html>.

³⁸² Reichmann, Wolfgang. “Baustelle Stalingrad. Alexander Kluges *Schlachtbeschreibung*.” *Zeithistorische Forschungen / Studies in Contemporary History* 6, no.3 (2009). Web. 17 Oct. 2013. <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Reichmann-3-2009>

³⁸³ Schütte, W. G. Sebald 227.

sounds which, originating from a state of psychosis, typically clash with what the reader would expect and thereby provoke reflection and perhaps a different or even more profound mode of understanding.

While Sebald states Herbeck's writing embodies the *bricolage* style, he does not provide an in-depth analysis to support this claim. In an effort to fill in this missing element, what shall be demonstrated next is how the sentence "a + b leuchten im Klee"³⁸⁴ from Herbeck's poem "Die Sprache" provides a clear example of how Lévi-Strauss's noted technique can appear in poetic form. In the quote mentioned earlier in this chapter, Sebald connected Herbeck's poetry with the goals of the Frankfurt School by claiming Herbeck's schizophrenic language incorporates physiognomy within his poetry.³⁸⁵ Since Sebald sees Herbeck's tendency towards physiognomic expression as a hopeful alternative to the linguistics promoted by mass culture, it also ties in with the alternative nature of *bricolage* art and therefore will be examined in the "a + b leuchten im Klee" phrase. Finally, this line reveals a commentary on organics which shall serve as the transition for the discussion on the mechanization of nature examined later in this chapter and in Chapter Five.

In terms of analysis, what Sebald does state regarding the sentence "a + b leuchten im Klee" is that it enables Herbeck, in his psychosis, to break out of typical constructs of time by putting together heterogeneous elements.³⁸⁶ While Sebald concludes his commentary here, in terms of *bricolage*, this line is an ideal example. Various worlds collide within this phrase: "a / b" (linguistics, the alphabet), "+" (mathematics), "leuchten" (one thinks of electricity and envisions the letters of the alphabet as light bulbs burning in the earth), and "im Klee" (biology). This linguistic combination which depicts various fields of knowledge does not differ greatly from the literary combinations seen in Sebald and Kluge. While they may provide a collage comprised of examples from various forms of media, Herbeck crosses linguistic barriers, combining letters and mathematical symbols, to provide new meaning via the unexpected combinations. One can argue that this technique demonstrates Herbeck's more organic and less structured approach to language. It is based on emotion and natural instinct and, as Sebald notes, when language is broken apart and placed in a new context this provides "der Ansatz zu einer neuen Verbindung zwischen Gefühl, Wort und bezeichnetem Gegenstand."³⁸⁷

The visual and contrasting nature of the images in this line – portraying illuminated letters amidst fields of clovers and flowers – reveals how far language has become abstracted from its origins. Amidst the many words used to designate abstract systems for which there is no body, such as bureaucratic, legal or political terminology; one tends to overlook actual physical bodies. In the example here, the flowers and the clovers are threatened – they could easily be overwhelmed by the brightness of the letters. Instead of a symbiosis between natural objects and their linguistic representations, within this image is an inherent warning: that the signified (flowers) can potentially be overshadowed by the signifier (the letters which can spell out the word "flower"). In such abstraction, the value of the natural object becomes diminished. This point is further demonstrated in the physiognomic tendency that appears in Herbeck's poetry.

³⁸⁴ Sebald quotes this sentence in "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 140.

³⁸⁵ "die kreative Tendenz zur Symbolisierung und Physiognomisierung, von der die Sprache der Schizophrenen geprägt ist, bestimmt den Ort unserer Hoffnung." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 140.

³⁸⁶ "Der Impuls zur probierenden Zusammensetzung heterogener Elemente nach der Formel 'a + b leuchten im Klee' ist das Vehikel des in beständiger Fluktuation sich befindenden Weltbilds der Psychose, das in seiner räumlichen Wahrnehmung und in seinem Gefühl für Chronizität durchbrochen wirkt." Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 140.

³⁸⁷ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 133.

Gisela Steinlechner examines several examples of how Herbeck frequently embodies language in his poetry. Regarding physiognomy, she looks at Herbeck's poem called "Die Zigarette"³⁸⁸ which reads: "[Die Zigarette] ist ein Monopol und muß / geraucht werden. Auf Dassie / in Flammen aufgeht." She claims that one sees here the physiognomy of language in the phrase "Auf Dassie". She argues the sounds themselves as well as the capitalization bring the language to life and almost literally demonstrate the flames. This further makes it "sichtbar, hörbar und spürbar als Monopol in der Sprache."³⁸⁹ In the poem "Die Sprache", physiognomy functions in a similar manner. "Die Sprache" reads in its entirety:

a + b leuchten im Klee.
Blumen am Rande des Feldes.
die Sprache.-
die Sprache ist dem Tier verfallen.
und mutet im *a* des Lautes.
das *c* zischt nur so umher und
ist auch kurz dann sein / Gewehr."³⁹⁰

In terms of physiognomy, the sentence "das *c* zischt nur so umher" best demonstrates how Herbeck embodies his language. The reader already has the image of the letters of the alphabet, a and b, in the form of neon lights blazing within a field and then, when the discussion turns to language, we have the letter "c" hissing. The association of the "c" becoming a snake, therefore revealing the potentially precarious nature of language, is seen in the conclusion "ist auch kurz dann sein / Gewehr". Here, one sees a multiple unity, the border between the signifier "c" and signified "snake" has collapsed which results in the c-shaped snake; and the border between animals and objects has also disintegrated with the c-snake becoming a weapon (Gewehr). Embodying language in this way imbues it with an understated power: in its border crossing, language has the ability to transcend itself, to become a weapon and to stand in opposition to mainstream conventional language.

In "Die Sprache" one sees a collapse of the borders between linguistics and the vegetal and animal kingdoms. Following the image of the blazing letters of the alphabet in the dark fields of clover, one discovers that these letters are actually flowers: "Blumen am Rande des Feldes. / die Sprache.-" The line is given a definitive ending with the insertion of the period, and yet the hyphen continues this thought to associate language not only with the organic but also the animal world. Herbeck's poem implies that while language is natural, it is denied to animals: "die Sprache ist dem Tier verfallen. / und mutet im *a* des Lautes." Yet, the hyphen thereby forces an association and encourages one to expect that some form of language should be extended to or recognized within the animal realm. "Verfallen" is also an interesting word choice here, which can be translated as "forfeited", "decayed" or "expired". Each of these terms intimates language is not to be completely disassociated from the animal world; but rather, while language "die Sprache" has lapsed in the animal realm, there is still a communication at work, even if it has been muted. Elias Canetti perhaps summarized this idea best: "Jede Sprache hat ihr eigenes Schweigen."³⁹¹ As the closeness of Herbeck to the animal world will be examined later in the next chapter, it is first useful to explore the societal critique which can be located

³⁸⁸ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 84. This poem will be returned to later in this chapter as well in terms of its critique of capitalist society.

³⁸⁹ Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 34.

³⁹⁰ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 65.

³⁹¹ Canetti, Elias. *Aufzeichnungen 1942-1948*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1965. 37.

within Herbeck's language as his feelings of isolation from society likely contributed to his alignment of himself with the animal, rather than the human, realm.

Locating A Critique of Consumer Culture in Herbeck's Poetry

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno illustrate how the general population has been so inundated with a promotion of the necessity to possess objects of consumer culture that many people have become incapable of seeing anything beyond the superficial façade of the fetishized commodity. They write:

If public life has reached a state in which thought is being turned inescapably into a commodity and language into celebration of the commodity, the attempt to trace the sources of this degradation must refuse obedience to the current linguistic and intellectual demands....³⁹²

This obsession over the commodity is reproduced in mainstream language which makes it increasingly difficult to remain objective and have a critical perspective. Within Herbeck's poetry, one can thematically locate a societal critique which is reminiscent of the ideas put forth by the Frankfurt School. An effort to locate such a critique betrays the fact that Herbeck's poetry, despite its difference, can nonetheless be interpreted as a reflection of overarching societal movements. In his poems, it is possible to identify phrases which seem to respond to societal manifestations of his time; such as the effects of all-encompassing commercialization and the standardization and homogenization of the individual who is encouraged to fit into the mold drafted by society and promoted by mass culture. Inspired by Sebald's attempt to read a societal commentary or even societal critique in Herbeck's poetry, this section shall focus on a close reading of three poems by Herbeck. I shall look at the poem "Gesichter" ("Faces") to demonstrate the loss of individuality within a consumerist world. This will be followed by an analysis of the poem "Der Erfolg" ("The Success") which depicts artists who trade creativity for profitability. Finally, I will conclude with an example of how traditional values are forfeited for the sake of consumer products as revealed in Herbeck's theses on the individual in society: "DER EINZELNE UND DIE GESELLSCHAFT / 10 Thesen".

Herbeck's poem "Gesichter" perhaps best demonstrates the façade erected by capitalist society. It is unfortunately not annotated, but is marked in Sebald's personal copy of *Alexanders poetische Texte*.³⁹³ I interpret this poem as a representation of the loss of individuality within a consumerist world. The poem reads:

Gesichter gibt es überall
auf dem Markt, in den
vorderen Reihen im Kino.
auch im Zirkus. Gesichter gibt
es beim Maskenball vor allem.

From the beginning, the perspective seems to derive from someone on the periphery of society. Witnessed from this individual's standpoint are first the "Gesichter überall" which conjures up

³⁹² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xv. "Wenn die Öffentlichkeit einen Zustand erreicht hat, in dem unentrinnbar der Gedanke zur Ware und die Sprache zu deren Anpreisung wird, so muß der Versuch, solcher Depravation auf die Spur zu kommen, den geltenden sprachlichen und gedanklichen Anforderungen Gefolgschaft versagen..." Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 1-2.

³⁹³ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 156. This text is located in W. G. Sebald's personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

images of a group: a mass gathering or a community. A locative is then added to the group of faces: at the market. This location signifies the first step of the community towards degeneration as a parallel can be drawn between the faces and the products at the market. A swarm of faces pass by in their efforts to procure the goods which are endlessly traded and sold. The interchange of faces and of products can be seen as the circulatory system which enables consumerist culture to thrive. The faces which become blurred at the market are further removed within the cinema. There is an erasure of identity since everyone who is not located in the front rows (*in den vorderen Reihen im Kino*) is consequently sitting completely in the dark and is therefore faceless. The period which comes after “Kino” neglects to provide a definitive break since the following fragmented sentence begins with the non-capitalized word “auch”. Thus, the faces which were present at the market (in order to procure goods) and at the movies (to consume mass culture) are now associated with the circus (auch im Zirkus).

The circus is a venue solely meant to exhibit extraordinary individuals and their abilities, and as such it is a performance of difference. What is potentially problematic is, if the circus demonstrates a true difference (such as the “freak shows” which exhibited people with biological anomalies) rather than a celebration of an extraordinary performance (such as a trapeze act), then it reveals mass society’s exploitation of the exoticized, and simultaneously outcast, Other. Since Herbeck is the outsider perspective narrating this poem, one can see how it provides a commentary on the harmful tendency of the mass to ostracize those who are truly individuals or are different, people like himself. Quoting Deleuze and Guattari, Sebald mentions Herbeck’s difference in relation to his position as a “deterritorialized” individual. His isolation in society stems from a lack of conventional grounding (family or employment). This instability is literalized by Deleuze and Guattari via the figures of the eternal bachelor and the trapeze artist:

Der Junggeselle “ist *der* Deterritorialisierete schlechthin, ... Er hat nur soviel Boden, als seine FüÙe brauchen, nur soviel Halt, als seine zwei Hãnde bedecken, also um soviel weniger als der Trapezkünstler im Varietè, für den sie unten noch ein Fangnetz aufgehãngt haben.”³⁹⁴

In *Vertigo*, Sebald also notes Herbeck’s identification with circus performers and he emphasizes his acceptance of this Otherness when, at the end of the outing, Herbeck is directly and respectfully associated with the circus. The narrator reflects on how Herbeck tips his hat in a sign of farewell and: “This gesture, like the manner in which he had greeted me that morning, put me in mind of someone who had travelled with a circus for many years.”³⁹⁵ An awareness of Sebald’s interest in physicality allows the reader to recognize how this gesture, while subtle, can intimate a protest against the mainstream. In his copy of Günter Bose’s book, *Circus*, Sebald highlighted the following sentence: “Das Können der Artisten war Verausgabung, Verschwendung, ihre Kunst nicht das Resultat von Abstraktion und Selbstzwang, die vielmehr charakteristisch für die bürgerlich-adelige Lebensweise sind.”³⁹⁶ Underneath this quote in his personal copy, Sebald wrote “Ökonomie der Bewegung”, thus demonstrating his awareness of

³⁹⁴ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 147.

³⁹⁵ Sebald, *Vertigo* 49. Herbeck’s connection to the circus shall be returned to in Chapter Six in combination with the historical figure Kaspar Hauser and Werner Herzog’s film *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974).

³⁹⁶ Bose, Günter and Erich Brinkmann. *Circus. Geschichte und Ästhetik einer niederen Kunst*. Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1978. 15. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

the societal critique inherent within the physical movements and gestures of the artists.³⁹⁷ The sheer excess exhibited in the physicality of artists stands in stark contrast to the sparse, mechanical efficiency of the movements valued by those from the “bürgerlich-adelige Lebensweise”. The exaggerated gestures also reveal an individuality which is gradually erased in capitalist society with the promotion of the mass and mediocrity.

The final image of the “Gesichter ... beim Maskenball vor allem” is the horrific culmination of the gradual loss of individuality expressed throughout the poem. There are no genuine faces remaining, they have all become superficial and plasticized. The public has willingly put on these masks, thereby participating in and perpetuating the performance encouraged by venues of trade, culture and entertainment.

In a similar vein, Sebald argues in “Eine kleine Traverse” that in Herbeck’s poetry, one sees an expression of how the commercial nature of society often also encompasses its artists. He looks at Herbeck’s poem “Der Erfolg” which in its entirety reads:

Der Erfolg blib nicht aus. Es werden die
Künstler wie Semmeln gebacken. Preis
6gr. Alexander. Bäcker. ENDE.-.-.”³⁹⁸

Regarding this poem, Sebald claims: “Herbecks Mißtrauen gegenüber dem Kunstschwindel artikuliert sich exemplarisch in dem Satz ‘Es werden die / Künstler wie Semmeln gebacken. Preis / 6gr.’”³⁹⁹ Much like the eradication of individuality in “Gesichter”, one sees here the erasure of that element which defines an artist: creativity. In the line quoted by Sebald, he sees an allusion to those artists which have become part of the societal machine, rendering their works pure consumer products. Therefore, creativity is secondary to profitability. The artists portrayed in a cookie-cutter fashion in this poem point to the standardization of art: that there are trends and styles the artist must adopt in order to be successful within society. Linguistically, Herbeck’s misspelling of the word “blieb” as “blib” can be viewed as a critique of this type of success since it gives the impression that Herbeck is making light of striving for success since, in the end, all that is required to be successful is conformity. The word “blib” is reminiscent of a phonetic spelling which typically indicates a dialect; as such, it becomes distanced from High German and linguistically clashes with the lofty connotations of “success”, thereby knocking it off of its pedestal. This spelling implies that the success or financial gain acquired when an artist has sold himself out is nothing but an invalid or irrelevant success. In Herbeck’s “Der Erfolg”, Sebald undoubtedly heard echoes of Horkheimer and Adorno’s claims that the literary author is limited in freedom and often incapable of writing in a form or with content that goes against the mainstream ideals. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they write: “The process to which a literary text is subjected, if not in the automatic foresight of its producer then through the battery of readers, publishers, adapters, and ghost writers inside and outside the editorial office, outdoes any censor in its thoroughness.”⁴⁰⁰

Sebald notes that Herbeck’s recognition of the “Kunstschwindel” in poetry allows him to ironically assume the role of “artist”. When Herbeck received visitors who were curious about his poetry, he would often put on his own mask to adopt the role he believed society expected

³⁹⁷ Quotations attributable to W.G. Sebald, as collected in *Circus. Geschichte und Ästhetik einer niederen Kunst* (Klaus Wagenbach). Copyright © 1978 by W.G. Sebald. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

³⁹⁸ Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 129; Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 136.

³⁹⁹ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 136

⁴⁰⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xv.

him to fulfill. As Sebald writes: “Obschon Herbeck die trügerliche Tendenz der Kunst wiederholt apostrophiert, ist er selbst ironischerweise bereit, etwa gegenüber Besuchern, die sich für seine Sachen interessieren, die Haltung eines Künstlers einzunehmen.”⁴⁰¹ With “schauspielerische Leichtigkeit,” Herbeck carries his book of poetry with him and will flip through it while explaining how much of a time investment it is to compose poetry (though in reality Herbeck wrote quite quickly and always completed only one draft of each of his poems).⁴⁰² Herbeck’s mimicry of the artistic persona is interpreted by Sebald as a humorous comment on the “Unechtheit der künstlerischen Existenz und des Kunstwerks.”⁴⁰³ Because of Herbeck’s situation and his illness, the seemingly light-hearted presentation of himself in the role of poet is simultaneously imbued with mournfulness. Herbeck was painfully aware of his situation and, while his poetry was popular beyond the institution and he could assume the artist persona, living the life of an artist (or any profession) in the outside world was impossible and could only be experienced in his imagination.

In terms of both the type of societal critique and the whimsical expression thereof, Sebald draws a comparison between Herbeck and Charlie Chaplin, who is also referenced by Theodor Adorno in “The Culture Industry” essay from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.⁴⁰⁴ Important for Sebald is that both artists maintain a lightness which would lead one to (almost) believe they are unaware of the severity of their situations. Sebald sees an irony and humor in both Herbeck and Chaplin which points out the more absurd and hypocritical tendencies of society. Sebald writes:

Hinter dem Künstler Alexander, der nicht viel anders als Chaplin in der berühmten
Warenhausszene am Rand eines Abgrunds demonstriert, wie leicht doch das
Rollschuhfahren ist, wirbt eigentlich der mit sehr viel schwereren Dingen umgehende
Langzeitpatient Ernst Herbeck um unsere Aufmerksamkeit.⁴⁰⁵

In the film Sebald references here, *Modern Times* (1936), Chaplin skates in circles uninhibited, seemingly unaware that he may fall at any moment into the void behind him. The scene exhibits not only the direct danger posed to Chaplin’s character, but it also deals historically with a mass of individuals tottering on the brink of societal and economic collapse during the early 1930s. The film as a whole depicts the “predicaments in the aftermath of America’s Great Depression, when mass unemployment coincided with the massive rise of industrial automation.”⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, while Sebald often sees how Herbeck’s poetry responds to World War II and its aftermath, here the focus is on Herbeck’s personal, and of course very real as opposed to Chaplin’s staged and metaphorical presentation of danger, perilous situation of struggling on the brink of mental collapse.

Several similarities between Herbeck and Chaplin justify Sebald’s alignment of the two artists. As has been demonstrated, Sebald interpreted Herbeck’s ironic assumption of the author-persona as a critique of the institutionalized art world. The persona, however, also reminds one of Herbeck’s isolation, and thus this adaptation can be seen as a defense mechanism. Chaplin would also take on various personas as a means of escape from his own fears derived from constantly performing a mental balancing act: he frequently worried that he might lose his

⁴⁰¹ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 136.

⁴⁰² Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 137.

⁴⁰³ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 137.

⁴⁰⁴ See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 109, 119, 197.

⁴⁰⁵ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 137.

⁴⁰⁶ Robinson, David. “Filming *Modern Times*.” *Charlie Chaplin: Official Website*. (2002). Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.charliechaplin.com/en/biography/articles/6-modern-times>

sanity.⁴⁰⁷ While Chaplin struggled throughout his life with severe depression and mood disorder, he was never professionally treated for his condition. There were however situations in which Chaplin needed to be removed from the public, spending days in a room with his friends who ensured that his suicidal tendencies would not be brought to fruition. In such cases, and generally when Chaplin would reveal his instability (his insomnia, melancholy brooding or extreme unpredictability), his colleagues and associates would dismiss his behavior as “vagaries of eccentric genius.”⁴⁰⁸ Chaplin used art as a way to express his feelings and gain control over situations he couldn’t otherwise deal with. “By purposely acting out his emotions, he could control them instead of letting them control him.”⁴⁰⁹ In the end, Chaplin’s comedic performances served as a means to preserve his mental stability. Later in life, he directly stated that: “Humor ... heightens our sense of survival and preserves our sanity. Because of humor we are less overwhelmed by the vicissitudes of life.”⁴¹⁰ Thus, for Chaplin and to a greater degree for Herbeck, the adaptation of fictional personas erects a barrier against an inner turmoil which is partially incurred by the pressures and expectations of society. While such strategies may work temporarily, for anyone observing from a distance, as Sebald does, the real tragedy is recognized: that the assumed lightheartedness and playfulness of such figures is a slight reprieve, and therefore stands in even starker contrast to a devastating reality.

A final example worth noting regarding anti-consumerist commentaries on capitalist society which can be identified in Herbeck’s poetry is “DER EINZELNE UND DIE GESELLSCHAFT / 10 *Thesen*”. Gisela Steinlechner sees this poem as evidence that Herbeck witnessed the danger that individuals within a consumer-oriented society could become enslaved to the commodity and lose an appreciation for traditional values.⁴¹¹ Steinlechner looks closely at Herbeck’s fifth *These* which reads: “Der Einzelne hat schon ein Auto und gründet eine Familie, eine Gesellschaft. Er verdient und kauft sich bessere Sorten Zigaretten.”⁴¹² She claims it is here that the reader observes Herbeck’s understanding of consumerist priorities. What was traditionally valued, the most basic human connection found within the family unit, is here portrayed as simply another commodity. It is a societal necessity and yet it is secondary to the possession of a car. Once the car has been acquired, one is then officially accepted in capitalist society and can procure the other desired objects: a family and quality cigarettes. Herbeck, confined to a life in the institution, was therefore denied any hope of acquiring that which he most desired: his own family. Within this line, one sees the absurdity of individuals who take the luxury of a familial bond (or for Herbeck any form of human contact) for granted. With a heavy dose of melancholy and black humor, consumer culture is depicted as populated by

⁴⁰⁷ Looking into Chaplin’s family background, one sees that he was not immune to the direct effects of mental illness – his father abandoned the family when he was a year old and his mother was hospitalized several times before she “succumbed to periodic episodes of the insanity that later became a permanent condition” Kuriyama, Constance Brown. “Chaplin’s Impure Comedy: The Art of Survival.” *Film Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 26-38. 27. These childhood events contributed to Chaplin’s chronic depression, preoccupation with suicide, and, when his grandmother also suffered a mental breakdown, Chaplin “feared that he too would become insane, and that his children would inherit the tendency” (Kuriyama, “Chaplin’s Impure Comedy” 27).

⁴⁰⁸ Kuriyama, “Chaplin’s Impure Comedy” 28.

⁴⁰⁹ Kuriyama, “Chaplin’s Impure Comedy” 28.

⁴¹⁰ Kuriyama, “Chaplin’s Impure Comedy” 29.

⁴¹¹ It is possible that Steinlechner was influenced by Sebald’s use of Frankfurt School rhetoric in his analysis of Herbeck’s poetics in his “Eine kleine Traverse” article in *BU*. In her book, she quotes Sebald on pages 38-39, specifically referencing the passages on *Bastelei* and the inevitable destruction present in the creation of each new invention. Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 38-39.

⁴¹² Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 75. Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 105.

individuals who have been trained to see everything in life as an object. The goal of this life then becomes nothing more than acquiring a series of possessions: a car, a family and cigarettes.

In this line, I also see what is perhaps the greatest demonstration of Herbeck's black humor: the use of cigarettes as society's reward for conformity. That the individual "earns and buys himself better cigarettes" shows how deeply inscribed the individual is within consumerist culture. All earnings go towards possessing objects which inherently force the individual to want to consume more. It can even be argued that mentioning of the *better brands* of cigarettes already implies the individual is blind to society's coercion, since as long as the individual focuses on procuring *better* cigarettes, they remain blind to the damage incurred by *all* cigarettes. Perhaps it is this dimension of the societal critique embodied within the image of the cigarette that drove Sebald to include Herbeck's cigarettes within his novel.⁴¹³

In *Vertigo*, there are two poems by Herbeck, one is the poem Herbeck writes for the narrator upon request and the second "Die Zigarette" (from 1968) is added by Sebald. The poem appears as part of the plot. The narrator and Herbeck have journeyed down Mount Greifenstein and have stopped in a cafe for a drink. The narrator then offers Herbeck a cigarette and as he smokes the narrator recalls the poem: "[Die Zigarette] ist ein Monopol und muß / geraucht werden. Auf Dasse / in Flammen aufgeht."⁴¹⁴ Here, one sees the dependence upon the consumer object which "must be smoked". This idea mirrors the statement made by Horkheimer and Adorno that the individual becomes reliant upon the apparatus and thus they become slaves to modern conveniences and commodities and subsequently don't question the potential negative ramifications.⁴¹⁵ The mentioning of the cigarette also points to the body's close tie to consumer culture. The addiction to cigarettes demonstrates on a small scale the initial loss of autonomy as the individual becomes reliant upon a consumerist product for satisfaction. Thus, people are the physical embodiment of consumer culture's success. It is this bodily proximity which shall be explored next in an additional alignment of Herbeck, Kafka and Chaplin.

Of Machines and Men

One topic dealt with in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which Sebald repeatedly tackled in his own writings is the inherent and ironic underlying power struggle between man and machine. While man may have created machine, one nonetheless sees the regression of humanity along with the progression of technology. Thus, a successful technological development is often a failure for mankind. Horkheimer and Adorno write: "the development of the machine has become that of the machinery of control, so that technical and social tendencies, always intertwined, converge in the total encompassing of human beings."⁴¹⁶ In terms of industrialization, one sees in this quote the concern over the loss of human autonomy as man degenerates under the increasing influence of the machine. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the skills and knowledge of mankind become differentiated by the division of labor as industrialization increases. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* therefore illustrates primarily an

⁴¹³ On a basic level, Sebald's inclusion of Herbeck's poem on cigarettes was likely also prompted simply by the fact that, in reality, he and Herbeck were both smokers.

⁴¹⁴ Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 55.

⁴¹⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xvii; *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 4.

⁴¹⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 28. "Wo die Entwicklung der Maschine in die der Herrschaftsmaschinerie schon umgeschlagen ist, so daß technische und gesellschaftliche Tendenz, von je verflochten, in der totalen Erfassung der Menschen konvergieren, vertreten die Zurückgebliebenen nicht bloß die Unwahrheit." *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 42.

intellectual change in man: that the individual begins to think like a machine in an abstract and objective manner. For Horkheimer and Adorno, this mindset is what led to the overwhelming dehumanization which culminated in mechanized mass killings during the Second World War. In his academic essays, Sebald acknowledges other artists who have also illustrated this precarious connection between man and machine. To demonstrate how the individual has not only changed mentally since the rise of industrialization but also physically, Sebald constellates Ernst Herbeck, Charlie Chaplin and Franz Kafka. Each provides an extreme and literal demonstration of how the “technical and social tendencies, always intertwined” become physically entangled with one another.⁴¹⁷

The horrific scenario of man becoming inevitably entwined with machine is taken up by Sebald in his study of Kafka’s literature in “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen – Zu Kafkas Evolutionsgeschichten” (1986).⁴¹⁸ He explores Kafka’s portrayal of the evolutionary development which brings about the metamorphosis from animal to man⁴¹⁹ and from man to machine. He demonstrates how, even in the initial stages of industrialization, Kafka had a premonition of this transition. Using the example of Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” (“In der Strafkolonie”), Sebald argues that Kafka feared “daß der Übergang vom einem Aggregatzustand zum anderen, ... vom Menschen zur Maschine durchaus fließend ist.”⁴²⁰ “In the Penal Colony” is Kafka’s literary representation of how a human can become indistinguishable from the apparatus he creates when, in the concluding scene, the tortured body of the officer⁴²¹ literally dissolves into the machine (*der Apparat*).

Sebald also expresses this idea in his essay on Canetti, “Gedanken zu Elias Canetti” in which he quotes Canetti’s claim that “das Nebeneinander von Maschine und Organismus in Leonardo ist die unheimlichste Tatsache der Geistesgeschichte.”⁴²² Sebald then follows this quote with further references to Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” claiming that this combination of man and machine is reminiscent of both torture and of the machine’s inevitable destruction of humanity: “dass die Maschinen überhaupt von den Bedürfnissen des Strafvollzugs und der Kriegsführung ins Leben gerufen worden seien, muss sie jenen Erfindungen zuschlagen, die, nach Kafkas Diktum, ‘schon im Absturz’ gemacht wurden.”⁴²³ Beginning with Horkheimer and

⁴¹⁷ See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27; *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 42.

⁴¹⁸ Sebald, W. G. “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen – Zu Kafkas Evolutionsgeschichten.” *Literatur und Kritik* 21 (July-August 1986): 194-201. 205-06. According to a notation next to the citation of this work, the origins of this text go back to January 1983 (See Sheppard, Richard. “Primary Bibliography” *Saturn’s Moon’s: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 446-96. 466).

⁴¹⁹ This topic will be discussed more closely later in Chapter Five.

⁴²⁰ Sebald, “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen” 197.

⁴²¹ The officer is never given a name beyond this title, thus intimating the individual’s anonymous and replaceable role within the apparatus of society.

⁴²² Sebald, W. G. “Gedanken zu Elias Canetti.” *Literatur und Kritik* 8, no. 65 (June 1972): 280-85. The version of “Gedanken zu Elias Canetti” which was published in *Literatur und Kritik* varies slightly from the draft of this article located in Sebald’s collected papers at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. In the published article, the first three and a half pages have been deleted. The above quote is taken from the first page of the draft. It was originally titled “Marginalien zum Werk Elias Canettis”. Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1972, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁴²³ This quote is also from the deleted portion of the draft for “Gedanken zu Elias Canetti.” Sebald, “Marginalien zum Werk Elias Canettis” 2. Writings by W.G. Sebald. Copyright © ca. 1972, 2014 by The Estate of W.G. Sebald. Courtesy of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. The phrase here “schon im Absturz” is reminiscent of Sebald’s description of *bricolage* which was provided earlier in this chapter. Sebald claimed that the fragmented pieces which are combined live for that

Adorno's premise that what we create will ultimately bring about our demise, Sebald adds a hint of irony and black humor in his interpretation of Kafka. Not only did Kafka see that certain objects we create will contribute to our destruction, but he also already called for man to immediately eliminate such inventions. We call to life the machines which ultimately punish us either by enabling an erasure of human identity by making man a small part of the machine or by driving us to wage war amongst ourselves. It is in this sadistic desire for self-destruction that one witnesses the regression of man.

The increasing entwinement of man and machine can also be thematically recognized in Herbeck's previously mentioned poem "DER EINZELLENE UND DIE GESELLSCHAFT". Looking at the sentence, "Der Einzelle hat schon ein Auto und gründet eine Familie, eine Gesellschaft. Er verdient und kauft sich bessere Sorten Zigaretten,"⁴²⁴ Gisela Steinlechner points to how this poem expresses the danger facing modern man: that he may become entangled within the spinning gears of the consumer machine. She writes:

Nachdem das erste Ziel – ein Auto – erreicht ist, kann getrost eine Familie gegründet werden und nun geht alles seinen "rechten" Gang: der "Einzelle" ist restlos in den ökonomischen Kreislauf integriert, die Konsummaschine läuft und wirft als Gewinn "bessere Sorten Zigaretten" ab."⁴²⁵

In "der 'Einzelle' ist restlos in den ökonomischen Kreislauf integriert", she sees an allusion to this binding of physical body and machine. Steinlechner notes Herbeck's unusual spelling of the word "Einzelle", rather than "Einzelne" ("the individual"), and claims it entails a more organic, biological dimension since "Einzelle" conjures up images of single-celled organisms (Einzeller). While Steinlechner further states that this organism becomes an integral part of the "economic circulatory system", I see an inherent contradiction in this idea since the "Einzelle" as "Einzeller" is always a complete being in itself, thus I view "Einzelle" as an expression of rebellion and of the ambiguity of our position in society. Inherent in Herbeck's poem is a tension: the individual is being controlled by the consumerist system and yet this individual, as a unified being, is autonomous and thus could potentially refuse integration into such a system. I recognize a similar argument in the statement on cigarettes: they cause physical addiction and are described as a monopoly. On the one hand, they have to be smoked (inhaling as physically absorbing consumer culture); on the other hand, they need to go up in flames (destruction of the monopoly). This implies the individual body within the capitalist system is not powerless: it too is a system which has the potential to eventually bring about the downfall of the monopoly.

In her analysis of his equation of the possessions of the car, family and cigarettes; Steinlechner claims that Herbeck's description is "modelliert auf sprachlicher Ebene eine Form der Wirklichkeitserfahrung, in der das Individuum sich als ein unselbstständiger, fremdbestimmter Teil eines überdimensionalen gesellschaftlichen Räderwerks erlebt."⁴²⁶ Considering this diminution of the individual, Steinlechner, perhaps inspired by Sebald's constellation, points out that this description prompts one to think of the hero in Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times* who is literally run through the gears of the (capitalist) machine. The little Tramp hurls himself into the machine he is working on only to be immediately

particular moment (representing the current moment as well as the historical moment from which they originally derived) and yet what is created "ist ein operativer Gegenstand, der, einem nur heuristischen Zweck zugeordnet, nie nächste Zerstörung schon in sich trägt" (Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 139).

⁴²⁴ Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 75.

⁴²⁵ Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 75.

⁴²⁶ Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 75.

regurgitated in order to resume his position on the assembly line. While she only makes this comparison as a type of aside offered in parenthesis, there are similarities worth noting here. Like Herbeck's poem, the scene with the Tramp is witnessed by the viewer with melancholic consideration of the loss of the individual amidst the power of the machine and yet also with black humor. While the portrayal of someone as a single-celled organism is reductive, it is also hyperbolic, thus encouraging the reader to demand change upon recognition of their stance as creator and therefore controller of the machine. Similarly, the reduction of the body in *Modern Times* to the size of one of the gears as part of the machine also prompts the viewer to question the direction of society, to ask if it is truly desirable to have machines which have the ability to make the individual so miniscule (machines can run without the guiding hand of man) that man eventually becomes obsolete.

The ideas that Sebald discovered in Horkheimer and Adorno on the subjugation of the individual to the machine and which he integrated in his essays on Kafka and Herbeck are incorporated in his own fiction in similar ways. In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald says of Descartes: "he teaches that one should disregard the flesh, which is beyond our comprehension, and attend to the machine within, to what can fully be understood, be made wholly useful for work and, in the event of any fault, either repaired or discarded."⁴²⁷ This quote expresses an idea which is not only antithetical to everything that Sebald believed in, but it is also an adequate summation of a general point of view feared by members of the Frankfurt School. Descartes's idea that one's body can be neglected in preference of maintaining the inner-machine aligns with the arguments of the Frankfurt School. Along with technological progression comes an inherent devaluing of nature (human and animal) and that which separates us from the machine, namely our bodies, is secondary to the successful functioning of the mechanized societal body.

Sebald combines Descartes's devaluing of the body with the claims on technological (anti)progression posed by the Frankfurt School most clearly in *The Emigrants*. In the chapter on Max Ferber, Sebald relates the story of a man who has literally become one with technological production: "the British Medical Association's archives contained the description of an extreme case of silver poisoning: in the late 1930s there was a photographic lab assistant in Manchester whose body had absorbed so much silver ... that he had become a kind of photographic plate...the man's face and hands turned blue in strong light, or, as one might say, developed."⁴²⁸ This quote is imbued with black humor: the term "developed" is a play on *Fortschritt*, the teleological progression which was supposed to have occurred since the Enlightenment, but has instead brought about a degenerative mutation of man. Thus, while Horkheimer and Adorno state it most directly, Sebald recognizes that man becomes increasingly like the machine he created. As hinted in the above example of the blue man, Sebald is also interested in how this regression is expressed in a more extreme fashion. Thus, Sebald is drawn to depictions of this de-evolutionary process in a literal manner in the writings of Kafka and Herbeck in which man not only becomes machine but also animal, both in a negative and positive sense. While becoming animal may sound purely negative, Sebald discovers in Herbeck a positive side to embracing one's animal nature.

⁴²⁷ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 13.

⁴²⁸ Sebald, *The Emigrants* 164-64.

Chapter Five

Behaving Beastly: Reading Sebald and Herbeck through an Anthropological and Ecopolitical Lens

I open this chapter with an explanation of how Sebald recognizes Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas on "advancement" and "regression" from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* expressed in a literal sense in Kafka. Inspired by the forward-thinking, if not downright prophetic, way Kafka embodies these concepts in his characters, Sebald recreates them in his own novels. Sebald's interest in regression in Kafka is not only guided by the ideas posed by the Frankfurt School thinkers, but also by Pierre Bertaux's book *Mutation der Menschheit* (1964) in which two forms of regressive mutation are described: man's delineation to an amphibian or to an animal state.⁴²⁹ According to Bertaux, those who adapt to their increasingly industrialized society, amphibians, participate in the "progress" and eventually become indistinguishable from machines. The others, animals with a poetic temperament, are doomed to observe humanity's downfall as rather hopeless bystanders. I will show how Sebald views the mechanization of society which results in the degeneration to an amphibian state as depicted in Kafka's works to be the opposite of the positive animal regression in which he and Herbeck take part.

In *Vertigo*, Sebald and Herbeck can be viewed as parallels for Bertaux's animal figures which helplessly watch and mourn mankind's inevitable downfall. They exist within an ambivalent situation: they are not pure victims since they unwittingly contribute to their own collapse. Bertaux's highly under-researched and unjustly neglected text in terms of Sebald scholarship must be engaged with in this chapter on a small scale due to the nature of this study; however, I plan to return to the Bertaux-Sebald-Herbeck constellation for further inquiry for a more in-depth analysis. An array of sociopolitical concerns is revealed when one considers the ecological implications inherent in Sebald and Herbeck's writings, and these concerns are energized via an incorporation of Bertaux's theories. I argue that when Sebald, inspired by Bertaux, employs an animal in the Herbeck scene, he not only puts a new spin on Bertaux's theories by showing how animals can be used as metonymical replacements for those victims ensconced in society's downward spiral, but he also makes an ecopolitical statement which is relevant to perspectives held in the twenty-first century.

Utilizing once more "All'estero" from *Vertigo*, this chapter shall continue the discussion of Sebald's views on the suffering of animal nature and the environment caused by capitalist objectives. The opinions regarding the environment which Sebald held in the 1970s and maintained throughout his life reflect several ideas currently popular in the field of ecopolitics, especially those expressed by Jane Bennett in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.⁴³⁰ I will follow the narrator and Ernst Herbeck as they walk down the cliff at midday and encounter a "mad" dog locked behind a fence and subsequently find themselves horrified by the sight. The confrontation with the animal may seem rather arbitrary and obscure, but it in fact reveals important, historically inspired ideas. I argue it demonstrates Sebald's incorporation of themes which were especially inspired by his study of Elias Canetti: the ramifications of

⁴²⁹ This text was originally published as *La mutation humaine* in 1964. Bertaux, Pierre. *Mutation der Menschheit. Zukunft und Lebensinn*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1979.

⁴³⁰ Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

capitalist overconsumption and also the opinion that we are in symbiotic relationships with our oppressors. Sebald's critique underlying this scene is that, since World War II, Germans have repressed both of the roles in which they were engaged during the war: that of oppressor and victim.

Genetic Regression and Pierre Bertaux

Although the term nature does not appear in the following Horkheimer and Adorno quote, the fact that Sebald was interested in including it within a discussion of the dialectic of the Enlightenment is demonstrated via his personal notes. Horkheimer and Adorno write:

If public life has reached a state in which thought is being turned inescapably into a commodity and language into celebration of the commodity, the attempt to trace the sources of this degradation must refuse obedience to the current linguistic and intellectual demands....⁴³¹

Underneath the phrase "thought is being turned into a commodity" (*Gedanke zur Ware*) Sebald has hand written the words "or nature" (*oder die Natur*).⁴³² Thus, by the time Sebald began reading this text (in the 1960s), he already held the expectation that a study of the treatment of nature as a commodity should be included within the work. Therefore, what will be examined in this chapter is not only Sebald and Herbeck's shared opinions on the mechanization of animal nature, but also the ramifications of the mechanization of human nature. In terms of idea formation on the process of degeneration, Sebald's views are inspired by the socio-anthropological writings of the French Germanist, Pierre Bertaux. His ideas are reminiscent of Horkheimer and Adorno, and yet he focuses more deeply on the teleological destruction of the environment and the mutation of human nature which occurs as a result of the process of mechanization and industrialization.⁴³³

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno already hint that the regressive tendency of man may become so extreme that mankind could delineate genetically. They claim that the culmination of this mechanization of human nature is that humanity is "thereby forced back to more primitive anthropological stages, since, with the technical facilitation of existence, the continuance of domination demands the fixation of instincts by

⁴³¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xv. "Wenn die Öffentlichkeit einen Zustand erreicht hat, in dem unentrinnbar der Gedanke zur Ware und die Sprache zu deren Anpreisung wird, so muß der Versuch, solcher Depravation auf die Spur zu kommen, den geltenden sprachlichen und gedanklichen Anforderungen Gefolgschaft versagen...." (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 1-2).

⁴³² Quotations attributable to W.G. Sebald, as collected in *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (S. Fischer). Copyright © 1969 by W.G. Sebald. Reprinted with permission by The Wylie Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

⁴³³ Like the theories of Horkheimer and Adorno, Bertaux's are direct derivatives of the sociopolitical movements of the time in which they originated. His works generated a great deal of interest within intellectual communities from multidisciplinary fields, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Bertaux worked for over fifty years on an interpretation of Hölderlin's madness (actually the lack thereof) as a reaction to the political undercurrents in his society: "Immer mit Hölderlin beschäftigt, ging [Bertaux] den politischen Hintergründen des Hölderlin-Schicksals nach, den Auswirkungen der französischen Revolution." Thus, Bertaux reflects ideas inherent in the antipsychiatry movement – it isn't Hölderlin who is schizophrenic (his madness was a Tarnmanöver), but rather the world – and also those posed by Navratil in his alignment of Hölderlin's poems and those created by schizophrenics to show the blurred lines separating genius and madness. The quotes in this footnote are taken from Weisenfeld, Ernst. "Im Namen Hölderlins. Zum Tode von Pierre Bertaux: Geheimdienstchef und Germanist." *Die Zeit* 35 (22 Aug. 1986): 36. In this article, he focuses on Bertaux's *Friedrich Hölderlin* (Suhkamp 1978) and also the impact of *Mutation der Menschheit*.

greater repression.”⁴³⁴ Additionally, Sebald highlighted the following passage: “Adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress, to be its own antithesis. The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression.”⁴³⁵ Sebald was deeply interested in this idea of humankind’s mental and also genetic regression into an earlier anthropological state; and he uses Kafka as the primary example of an author who has recreated this degenerate state in literature. Sebald likewise occasionally expresses this (anti-)development quite literally in his own novels and recognizes this tendency in Herbeck’s works as well.

Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Pierre Bertaux doubts the reality of an enlightened Western society and finds humanity to be more likely on a path towards self destruction. In Bertaux’s book *Mutation der Menschheit*, which can be found in Sebald’s personal library in a heavily annotated form,⁴³⁶ he even provides a percentage to indicate man’s chances of survival. He claims humanity only has a success rate of between 30 and 80% after one factors in the fact that, while we have reason, we may not be reasonable enough *not* to destroy ourselves. Bertaux states that humans have been recklessly and increasingly using up all the earth’s valuable, irreplaceable resources and he is convinced that living in this manner will eventually result in some form of genetic change.⁴³⁷

Sebald’s article on Kafka, “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen – Zu Kafkas Evolutionsgeschichten” (1986), relies heavily on Bertaux’s theories to argue for an acknowledgment of the modernity and current relevance (meaning the early 1980s when this essay was composed) of Kafka’s works. While *Mutation der Menschheit* is not cited directly by Sebald, he does mention the exact phrase “Mutation der Menschheit”.⁴³⁸ In this article, Sebald demonstrates how the societal regression resulting from mechanization which was blatant in the mid-twentieth century was already recognized by Kafka in the early 1900s. Kafka’s literary portrayal of the genetic regression of mankind provides a nightmarish image of the fears expressed much later by Horkheimer, Adorno and Bertaux. Sebald sees Bertaux’s description of inevitable genetic change or mutation in the many examples of metamorphosis in Kafka’s literature. Based on Bertaux’s claim that industrialization and mechanization will culminate not only in a moral but also a genetic change for humanity, Sebald analyzes the shape-shifting figures in Kafka’s works. One sees both the transition from animal to man – Sebald uses the example of Rotpeter from “A Report to an Academy” (“Ein Bericht für eine Akademie”) – and from man to machine – with the example of “In the Penal Colony” in which one sees how the human can become indistinguishable from the apparatus.

⁴³⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 28. “Die Menschheit, deren Geschicklichkeit und Kenntnis mit der Arbeitsteilung sich differenziert, wird zugleich auf anthropologisch primitivere Stufen zurückgezwungen, denn die Dauer der Herrschaft bedingt bei technischer Erleichterung des Daseins die Fixierung der Instinkte durch stärkere Unterdrückung” (*Dialektik der Aufklärung* 42).

⁴³⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 28. “Demgegenüber involviert Anpassung an die Macht des Fortschritts den Fortschritt der Macht, jedes Mal aufs neue jene Rückbildungen, die nicht den mißlungenen sondern gerade den gelungenen Fortschritt seines eigenen Gegenteils überführen. Der Fluch des unaufhaltsamen Fortschritts ist die unaufhaltsame Regression.” *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 42. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁴³⁶ This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁴³⁷ Bertaux, *Mutation der Menschheit* 15.

⁴³⁸ I would argue that this counts as a direct citation, since Sebald frequently alludes to books or quotes authors in such essays without providing a reference in quotation marks or adding footnotes. Sebald, “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen” 195.

For Bertaux, the genetic mutation of man is prompted by sociopolitical events, such as increasing industrialization, rather than natural ecological or biological developments. In his analysis of Kafka's "A Report to an Academy", Sebald demonstrates how the metamorphosis therein is triggered by man's intrusion into the natural environment. Sebald considers the example of Rotpeter, the ape who is captured by members of Carl Hagenbeck's company during a hunting expedition and taken to Europe. During the transport aboard the ship, Rotpeter already discovers the only way to gain an ounce of freedom is by becoming man: smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol and eventually giving a report to the Academy on his development. In "Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen", Sebald describes how, in order for Rotpeter to be accepted in the world of man, he has to first eliminate all the memories, values and traditions from his former life; thereby destroying the most crucial aspects of his identity. His forced progression, from animal to man, is actually a regression since it requires the loss of the self. The political commentary is also clear: this story reveals the Frankfurt School's paradoxical portrayal of progression as regression.

What also interested Sebald about Kafka's tale is that it shows the violence and hubris of man towards animals (and other men in camouflaged form). The Hagenbeck company which captures Rotpeter in this story is based on the business of the same name and was clearly a capitalist enterprise with a strong sense of entitlement.⁴³⁹ Hagenbeck's venture to introduce the primitive world to civilized Western society included capturing not only animals from the newly colonized areas but also people. Often entire portions of villages were displaced and brought to Europe to be exhibited within the confines of the zoo.⁴⁴⁰ The natives who participated in these ethnographic showcases (beginning in 1874) were instructed to perform daily chores, dances and traditional rituals so that Westerners could view their way of life in an uninhibited manner. Thus, the colonizer didn't differentiate between man and animal – both were lower creatures which could be exploited by progressive, civilized men.⁴⁴¹ The attempts by Kafka's Rotpeter to become civilized by (ironically) adopting the typical vices such as drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, were also based on reality. Native Americans who often had a good command of English would frequently engage in escape attempts from the zoo in order to take part in society's nightly entertainment (drinking alcohol and smoking): "Hagenbeck meinte, dass die Indianer die ja schon damals meist englisch sprachen, schwer in Ordnung zu halten waren ... [und] dass sie häufig nachts nach der Stadt liefen, sich gern betranken etc."⁴⁴² Rotpeter serves as an exemplary metaphor for the actual cases where individuals felt the only means of gaining freedom within an oppressive society was to forfeit the connection to their own culture and identity and to try to mimic the conqueror (even in their vices).⁴⁴³

⁴³⁹ For further information on the Kafka text and the critique therein of the countless ruptures caused by Western colonial imperialism see the Chapter "Identity and the Individual, or Past and Present: Franz Kafka's 'Report to an Academy' in a Psychoanalytic and Sociohistorical Context" in Walter H. Sokel's *The Myth of Power and the Self: Essays on Franz Kafka*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2002. 268-91.

⁴⁴⁰ People were brought to Europe from several colonized territories. Between 1885 and 1914 Germany held territories in parts of Africa, China and islands of the Pacific Ocean.

⁴⁴¹ "Der Mensch ist betrachtet wie das Tier auch ein Produkt der Natur der Umwelt." Sokolowsky, Alexander. *Carl Hagenbeck und sein Werk*. Leipzig: Verlag E. Haberland, 1928. 157.

⁴⁴² Thode-Arora, Hilke. *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeckschen Völkerschauen*. New York: Campus Verlag, 1989. 64.

⁴⁴³ In Chapter Six, I discuss Werner Herzog's film *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* in which he depicts such an escape attempt. The city of Nuremberg finds itself unsure of what to make of the foundling Kaspar, thus they hand him over to the circus to become a sideshow attraction. Following Kaspar's performance, he, along with an Indian and several other anomalies for Western society, try to flee and are rapidly captured and returned to the circus.

Sebald considered this exploitation of “primitive” individuals and their attempts to not only adapt to their surroundings, but to also conform and accept the new societal conventions, in terms of his own 1980s Western capitalist society. He claims:

Sollten in der Konsequenz der fortschreitenden Zerstörung unserer Lebensgrundlagen nur diejenigen überleben können, denen es gelingt die psychische und physische Umwandlung in eine transhumane des Daseins durchzustehen, so wäre das gewissermaßen die Apotheose der amoralischen Dynamik der Naturgeschichte.⁴⁴⁴

This dilemma of adaptation and, of course assimilation, is expressed throughout the body of Sebald’s writings. Herbeck was well aware of the fact that, due to his illness, assimilation was not a viable option. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, this understanding on Herbeck’s part is lyrically depicted in his poems which show his painful recognition of his outsider position via his identification with hunted animals.

Modes of Regression: The Living Dead and Becoming Amphibian

Pierre Bertaux proposes that the regressive trend in Western society which shall eventually manifest itself genetically in mankind will vary based on two possible forms of adaptation: apathetic acceptance or poetic observation and reflection.⁴⁴⁵ The apathetic individuals who unquestioningly accept society’s downward spiral are naturally viewed negatively: they are the bureaucrats and business employees for example who allow the state apparatus to become increasingly responsible for the downfall of man. The apparatus gains in power with the diminished strength of the individual, and the people who remain stagnant or immobile and who accept this change are in the majority: “die geschäftigen and berechnenden ... [bilden] heute die bei weitem überwiegende und auch ausschlaggebende Mehrheit.”⁴⁴⁶ Again, Sebald considers the progressive nature of Kafka’s writings as he witnesses Kafka’s literary representation of these bureaucrats whose apathetic acceptance of their regression has resulted in either their succumbing to a catatonic state resembling the living-dead or their transformation into amphibian-like creatures.

In his article on the death motif in Kafka’s *The Castle*, Sebald points out how the figures which blindly follow the orders of the state have regressed physically. While some characters show that they are bringing about their own demise by manifesting signs of death in life, others physically resemble amphibians and demonstrate signs of their own de-evolution to pre-human states. As an example of the typical walking-dead employee of the state Sebald points to Kafka’s characters such as the bloated Klamm or Bürgel. Bürgel “reminds one readily of a mummy distorted by a shrinking process” and, for the amphibian type of regression, Sebald describes Kafka’s bloated Brunelda from *America* and Leni in *The Castle* with her webbed fingers as a “token of origins in some prehistoric swamp.”⁴⁴⁷

Although this article on Kafka was composed in 1972, Sebald retained his interest in such

What ensues is Kaspar’s gradual training and his efforts, like Rotpeter’s, to assimilate linguistically, mentally and culturally within civilized society in order to survive. I compare Kaspar’s struggles to assimilate to the ironic, tongue in cheek manner in which Sebald depicts Herbeck’s assimilation within the cultural community in his inclusion of Herbeck’s willful assumption of the role of a famous poet.

⁴⁴⁴ Sebald, “Tiere, Menschen, Maschinen” 196.

⁴⁴⁵ The passage describing these forms of regression is highlighted in Sebald’s copy of *Mutation der Menschheit*. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁴⁴⁶ Bertaux, *Mutation der Menschheit* 11.

⁴⁴⁷ Sebald, “The Undiscover’d Country” 26, 29.

figures and includes similar creatures in his novels years later. One such example of Sebald's homage to Kafka's representation of degenerative beings who are slaves to the state apparatus can be found in *Vertigo*. The narrator decides to journey to his hometown of W. which he hasn't visited since his childhood. The figures that appear as the narrator approaches his final destination mirror Kafka's grotesque, degenerate characters. The narrator describes Innsbruck for example as:

Now and then some vehicle would crawl slowly along the gleaming black roads, the last of an amphibian species close to extinction, retreating now into deeper waters. The ticket hall was also deserted, apart from a small chap with a goiter wearing a green loden cape.⁴⁴⁸

What varies here from Kafka's description is the fact that this is a town (as Sebald portrays it) post-destruction. The Second World War has already occurred and the downward spiral of life within German cities has increased rapidly in the ensuing forty years. Regardless of whether or not the town was directly impacted in a physical sense, the awareness and participation of many individuals in the tragic events of World War II and the attempts to repress this involvement directly contributes to this regressive state. In Sebald's quote, one sees the post-apocalyptic remnants of Kafka's early twentieth-century descriptions. Man and machine are identical: they have both undergone the regressive process and have become amphibian-like creatures creeping towards destruction via de-evolution. The human depicted here could easily be Klamm from *The Castle*, a bloated frog-like figure standing alone in a stagnant environment still carrying out his bureaucratic job despite its obvious irrelevance. Incidentally, the car as a dying amphibian beast which is now heading back into the depths of the earth from whence it originally stole its supply of oil is also reminiscent of Bertaux. In *Mutation der Menschheit*, he directly uses the example of how automobiles are driving us towards our genetic regression and that people, in an effort to support the demands of the automobile industry, are rapidly using up the earth's supply of oil; thus, without this resource, we will have to adapt to another resource in an endless process which will increase the rate of our genetic transformation.⁴⁴⁹

An awareness of Sebald's interest in these degenerate bureaucratic figures in Kafka helps to explain Sebald's recognition of similar characters in Herbeck's poetry. In Sebald's "The Little Hare" essay, he feels the need to point out that, while some combinations between humans and animals are not "very disturbing", the animal-human constellations "of unknown species not listed in zoological encyclopedias" are uncanny in that they reveal our common nature. Sebald writes that these portrayals make "us suspect that the animals are not so very different from each other, or we ultimately as different from them as we would like to think." As an example, Sebald points to Herbeck's half cat and half lamb creature which is also seen in "the synagogue mentioned by Kafka."⁴⁵⁰ This implies of course that Sebald's goal was to read the animal-animal or animal-human combinations in Herbeck's works in a way similar to his interpretation of their appearances in Kafka. While there are different species at various levels of evolutionary development, the point behind the portrayal of each character is to reveal tendencies of modern man. This can be a comment on our de-evolution in terms of our degeneration under the power

⁴⁴⁸ Sebald, *Vertigo* 172. "Ab und zu bewegte sich langsam irgendein Fahrzeug über die schwarz glänzenden Straßen. Letzte Exemplare einer im Aussterben begriffenen amphibischen Art, die nun zurückzogen in die Tiefe des Wassers. Auch die Schalterhalle war leer bis auf einen kleinen kropfigen Menschen in einem Wetterfleck." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 188.

⁴⁴⁹ Bertaux, *Mutation der Menschheit* 12.

⁴⁵⁰ All of the quotes in this paragraph are from Sebald, "The Little Hare" in CS 128.

of the mechanized state-system, or it can refer to man's degeneration as a result of the abuse and exploitation of one another and the environmental world.

In "Eine kleine Traverse", Sebald analyzes Herbeck's poem "Blau" which begins by listing various colors and then switches to a list of nouns: "Der Patentender / Das Sockerl, Das Schiff."⁴⁵¹ Despite the fact that there is no clear appearance of either bureaucrats or animals in this poem, Sebald is interested in the inherent animal nature of the *Patentender* of which he writes: "... und die mysteriös winzige Figur des Patentenders, der halb an einen Hirsch, halb an einen Beamten erinnert..."⁴⁵² Knowing that Sebald aligned Herbeck's depictions of animals with Kafka's makes it possible to see the connections underlying this explanation. There is the one who draws patents, but since Sebald sees him as a "tiny" (*winzig*) figure, one can assume he is not the person responsible for the inventions requiring a patent but rather a middle man of sorts. This diminutive is underscored by the following term "Socklerl". Here one envisions, due to the audible resonance between Herbeck's "Socklerl" and the word "der Sockel", a rather absurd seat or stool upon which the patenter must precariously balance while conducting his work. This office figure is then combined with the animalistic *...ender*. "Acht Ender" for example refers to eight point deer antlers. Thus, this half-man, half-deer figure balanced upon a small piece of wood also causes the reader to think of a rather absurd and grotesque trophy: a head of a bureaucrat adorned with deer-antlers.⁴⁵³

Considering the themes which Sebald consistently returns to in his writing, one can assume he would have recognized the inherent image of the trophy in Herbeck's term. Sebald was fascinated by the concept of the *Wunderkammer* (Cabinets of Curiosities) in which ethnographic specimens, taxidermic animals and technological devices would be put on display to encourage learning through visual interaction.⁴⁵⁴ While a trophy is decidedly different in that education is often the least of its concerns as it points instead to humanity's exploitation of the earth's meeker creatures, trophies still resonate with the optic nature of the *Wunderkammer*: both involve timeless objects to be observed by the victorious (still living) individual. While preservation is partially a motivating factor for creating animal trophies, the transformation of

⁴⁵¹ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

⁴⁵² Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

⁴⁵³ Incidentally, two filmmakers known as the Brothers Quay (Stephen and Timothy Quay) are blatantly indebted to the imagery found in Kafka's tales and they tend to integrate such man-animal figures in their works. In their cinematic rendition of Robert Walser's *Jakob von Gunten* from 1909 (their film is called *Institute Benjamenta, or This Dream People Call Human Life*, 1996), Herbeck's *Patentender* seems to have been uncannily brought to life. There are several shots depicting a man's transformation into a deer, images Sebald undoubtedly would have found appealing.

⁴⁵⁴ J. J. Long incorporates the theories of Foucault to discuss Sebald's interest in the cabinets of curiosity and how he found this pre-modern form of representing nature still to be relevant in his own time. On the one hand, this type of viewing of objects preserved under glass reveals a scopic mastery of the world – as in Foucault's panopticon there is an element of hubris on the part of the observer. And yet, for Sebald there is more to this type of gaze than the unidirectional projection of power. Long writes: "The visual mastery that the viewer exercises over the objects on display is paralleled by further workings of power/knowledge that operate through spectacle on the observer himself." This quote reveals the viewer is "both the object and the subject of knowledge." Long, *W.G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* 39. Here, surveillance of exhibited objects is multi-directional, which corresponds to the way Sebald viewed the world. For Sebald, there are very few observable objects which do not, in one form or another, observe back. One thinks of how photographs seemed to call out to Sebald requesting he tell their stories or, as shall be explained at the end of this chapter, how there is a reciprocal gaze and unspoken communication between man and animal. Whether or not the message corresponded via this gaze is understood is, however, debatable since: "Immer wenn man ein Tier genau betrachtet, hat man das Gefühl, ein Mensch, der drin sitzt, macht sich über einen lustig." Canetti, *Aufzeichnungen 1942-1948* 21.

formerly live beings into a frozen, borderline state is an uncanny process. What would have intrigued and also appalled Sebald regarding trophies is both their unabashed celebration of the victor who hunted, conquered and killed the creature in order to make the trophy and the petrified condition of the animal. Trophies are defeated beings which are eternally between life and death, and this undead state again resonates with Kafka.

The transition from “Der Patentender / Das Sockerl” to “Das Schiff” in Herbeck’s poem should indicate that there is hope that the *Patentender* may flee from his situation, and yet this freedom is limited in Sebald’s interpretation. Sebald claims that while Herbeck’s language takes a positive turn at this point in the poem, “die damit wiederbelebte Sprache”, it nevertheless “redet von der Polyvoztät einer unerfüllten Sehnsucht, auf deren Wellen der Dichter ... eine Zeitlang getrost herumfährt.”⁴⁵⁵ Sebald imbues Herbeck’s carefree metaphor with his own wistful and melancholic associations. While the ship may offer comfort (*trost*), the repose is brief (*eine Zeitlang*). To understand the mournful connotations Sebald brings into play here, one must keep in mind his endless fascination with Franz Kafka’s figure, the Hunter Gracchus. The following summary of Kafka’s “Gracchus” appears in *Vertigo* and is taken here from David Kaufmann’s article on melancholy and trauma in Sebald’s works. Sebald writes:

[Gracchus] went in pursuit of a chamois—is this not one of the strangest items of misinformation in all the tales that have ever been told?—he went in pursuit of a chamois and fell to his death from the face of a mountain; and that because of a wrong turn of the tiller, ... the barque which was to have ferried him to the shore beyond failed to make the crossing, so that he, Gracchus, has been voyaging the seas of the world ever since. ... The question of who is to blame for this undoubtedly great misfortune remains unresolved, as indeed does the matter of what his guilt, the cause of his misfortune consists in.⁴⁵⁶

In Kaufmann’s interpretation, he looks at Sebald’s aside (“is this not one of the strangest items of misinformation in all the tales that have ever been told?”) and argues the “misinformation” stems from the fact that Gracchus was not chasing a chamois, but his own unfulfilled desire.

Kaufmann states that in *Vertigo*: “Sebald makes it clear that Gracchus’s wanderings in a twilight state between life and death are the expression of Kafka’s repressed and hence unfulfilled homosexuality.”⁴⁵⁷ Kaufmann concludes this thought with the claim: “Motifs from ‘The Hunter Gracchus’ keep popping up throughout *Vertigo*, and suggest that Sebald’s Dr. K is the shadow cast by Dr. S’s own unfulfilled desires.”⁴⁵⁸ In the remainder of the article, Kaufmann links this unfulfilled desire with feelings of guilt, the need for penance and the (unconscious) trauma Sebald suffered as a result of the Allied bombing of German cities.

Similar to the way in which Kaufmann links Sebald with Kafka, Sebald also would have linked Herbeck and Gracchus based on what these figures represent: the undead state (Herbeck simultaneously exists inside and outside of society), the unfulfilled desire (Sebald frequently mentions sexuality in terms of its nonexistence, meaning his status as an eternal bachelor) and also the untraceable misfortune (Herbeck’s schizophrenia). In terms of Herbeck’s poem “Blau”, one sees in the *Patentender* a resonance with Kafka’s tale most directly in the two key figures: the human (Gracchus/patenter) and the animal (chamois/ender). The discussion shall continue with a closer look at the man-animal relationship introduced here. While Gracchus is linked with the chamois, Herbeck associates himself with rabbits and Kafka and Sebald identify themselves

⁴⁵⁵ Sebald, “Eine kleine Traverse” in *BU* 146.

⁴⁵⁶ Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace” 165.

⁴⁵⁷ Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace” 99.

⁴⁵⁸ Kaufmann, “Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace” 99.

with the canine realm.

W. G. Sebald and Ernst Herbeck Become Animal

While the negative development of mankind was evidenced earlier in this chapter to be a regression into an *amphibian*-like state, there is a hopeful alternative: becoming *animal*. As Pierre Bertaux claims in his book *Mutation der Menschheit*, this option entails taking on the perspective of a poet: “die Dichtertemperature, ob sie nun dichten oder nicht, [sind] die Überreste der alten Rassen des Paläolithikums.”⁴⁵⁹ In claiming that poets are aligned with the race from the Paleolithic Age, Bertaux illustrates a positive connection since it was during this time that people began to produce works of art and demonstrate beliefs in spirituality. While people with the “poet’s temperament” are a positive alternative to the truly degenerate beings, those businessmen and accountants recognizable in Franz Kafka and Sebald’s works as amphibian creatures; the poets are decidedly in the minority and do not possess the power required to bring the actions of the consumptive others to a halt. Bertaux believes this drive to consume the earth’s resources is what has solidified our rapid course towards destruction. As Bertaux states:

Während die Erdbevölkerung und ihre Konsumansprüche wachsen, gehen die von der Natur angesammelten Rohstoffe ihrer Erschöpfung entgegen. Am Schnittpunkt der beiden Kurven wird etwas geschehen. Ein Ereignis steht bevor, das entweder die Züge einer Mutation oder diejenigen einer Katastrophe tragen wir....⁴⁶⁰

In the chapter “All’estero” from *Vertigo*, one sees a profession of Sebald and Herbeck’s poetic temperaments, they are in alliance with the environmental world and this is demonstrated via their closeness to those innocent creatures which are worthy of our empathy – animals. As such, Sebald and Herbeck stand in opposition to the civilized, consumer-oriented world of the majority. An illustration of Sebald and Herbeck’s intimacy with the natural world is revealed in “All’estero” when the narrator and Herbeck are confronted with a “mad dog”. The way they identify with the creature serves as a signifier of their poetic temperaments. Sebald addresses this poet-canine association in his essay on Elias Canetti: “Canetti hat, in einer im November 1936 gehaltenen Rede zu Brochs 50. Geburtstag, das Wesen des wirklichen Dichters dem eines Hundes verglichen.”⁴⁶¹ A close reading of the mad dog scene shall reveal that Sebald and Herbeck’s identification with meeker creatures enables their understanding of their ambiguous position in the world. This position is universal and yet the majority of people in society, and especially in post-World War II German society according to Sebald, are blind to this state; namely, their simultaneous position as victim and perpetrator.

“Wie ein Hund”: Adopting the Canine Perspective

The sympathy the narrator and Herbeck express when confronted with the mad dog behind the gate is a derivative of Sebald’s long-standing identification with canines. That Sebald wishes to be able to adopt a point of view that Herbeck has already acquired, essentially one from the animal’s perspective, is revealed in his own explanation of how he approaches research. As previously mentioned, Sebald saw he and Herbeck both employed the *bricolage* method of

⁴⁵⁹ Bertaux, *Mutation der Menschheit* 11.

⁴⁶⁰ Bertaux, *Mutation der Menschheit* 12.

⁴⁶¹ Sebald, “Gedanken zu Elias Canetti” 282.

creating works of art as outlined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Das wilde Denken* (1962). In this book, Lévi-Strauss illustrates how the primitive mode of collecting information was conducted in an animalistic manner, namely it resembled the dog's way of tracking "Er definiert das Verb 'bricoler' als das Vollführen einer 'nicht vorgezeichneten' Bewegung, ähnlich der eines suchenden 'Hundes, der Umwege macht.'" ⁴⁶² On several occasions, Sebald admitted that when seeking out information for his books, he was inspired by these canine procedures. He claims that while he conducted his doctoral research, his anti-systematic method mirrored the way a dog runs through a field following the advice of his nose, "he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplottable matter. And he invariably finds what he's looking for. I think that, as I've always had dogs, I've learned from them how to do this." ⁴⁶³ This quote is a reiteration of a sentiment expressed by Canetti which Sebald quoted in his "Gedanken zu Elias Canetti" essay. This sentence focuses on how the frenzied and uncontrollable drive of the poet to find information mirrors a dog frantically searching for the treasures he has already vaguely sensed with his keen nose:

ja, in alles steckt er seine feuchte Nase ... er ist unersättlich ... was ihn [von anderen Wesen] unterscheidet, ist die unheimlich Beharrlichkeit in seinem Laster, dieses von Laufen unterbrochene innige und ausführliche geniessen; so wie er nie genug bekommt, bekommt er es auch nicht rasch genug; ja, es ist, als hätte er für das Laster seiner Schnauze eigens Laufen gelernt. ⁴⁶⁴

In another interview Sebald returns to this topic and concludes with the statement that he is essentially a brother to canines. In this perceived brotherhood, Sebald extends his allusion to Canetti to encompass Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ernst Herbeck as well. In his essay "The Little Hare", Sebald points out how Herbeck is, in a sense, the twin brother of rabbits. Sebald employs Lévi-Strauss's recounting of the Native American belief in his interpretation of Herbeck's understanding of his alliance with rabbits:

... die Hasenscharte in den amerikanischen Indianermythen [gilt] als der Ansatz zu einer nicht vollendeten Zwillingsgeburt. Es ist diese Zweiheit in einem, die den Hasen mit seinem gespaltenem Gesicht zu einer allerhöchsten Gottheit macht, zu einem Vermittler zwischen Himmel und Erde. ⁴⁶⁵

Sebald was likely drawn to this depiction of the double persona (Herbeck-Rabbit) due not only to the association between the human and animal world, but also to the way this link illustrates Herbeck as a liminal figure. He is, while at a higher state between heaven and earth, also like the dog, the messenger, the one in possession of valuable information. Returning to Sebald's attempt to also align himself with the animal world in a similar way. He states:

... soll ein Fund sein, also genau wie ein Hund sucht, hin und her, rauf und runter, manchmal langsam und manchmal schnell. Das hat jeder von uns schon gesehen, wie die Hunde das machen beim Feldlaufen, und wenn ich sie betrachte, habe ich das Gefühl, dass sie meine Brüder sind. ⁴⁶⁶

What at first seems a rather humorous description of academic pursuit not only entails Sebald's

⁴⁶² Mosbach, "Schauer der ungewohnten Berührung" 84.

⁴⁶³ Cuomo, "A Conversation with W. G. Sebald." 94. See also Cuomo, Joe. "The Meaning of Coincidence – An Interview with W. G. Sebald." *The New Yorker* (3 Sept. 2001).

⁴⁶⁴ Sebald, "Gedanken zu Elias Canetti" 282.

⁴⁶⁵ Sebald, "Des Häschens Kind" in *CS* 177.

⁴⁶⁶ Rondas, Jean-Pierre. "'So wie ein Hund, der den Löffel vergisst': Ein Gespräch mit W. G. Sebald über Austerlitz." *Literatur im Krebsgang. Totenbeschwörung und memoria in der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1989*. Ed. Arne De Winde and Anke Gilleir. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 351- 63. 357.

genuine respect for the animal world, but also an anarchistic stab at the Humanities and a general critique of the hypocrisy of academia and certain educational systems. Although his professional career revolved around his participation in academia, Sebald always maintained a critical stance. During his early years at the university, he first recognized how much information, particularly concerning Germany's actions during World War II, was suppressed. Aside from the inaccessibility of information which Sebald believed should have been available to everyone, he also found it impossible to force himself to conform to the formalities and expectations of academia, meaning the conventions of writing articles in a certain way for publication, or the avoidance in his field of German Studies to take a critical perspective on canonical authors, for example.

Within the above statements underscoring Sebald's desire to associate himself with the canine realm, one sees Sebald's nod to Kafka's tale "Investigations of a Dog" (*Forschungen eines Hundes*) in which the dog is, like Sebald in his academic circles and Herbeck in daily life, seeking answers for those aspects of life which seem inexplicable. For Sebald, this inexplicable event would be World War II or our persistent drive to destroy ourselves. For Herbeck, it refers to his attempts to understand origins, the specific example above points to his recognition of himself as part rabbit due to his metaphorical understanding of the biological process of birth in which he aligns the human sexual act with that of rabbits.⁴⁶⁷ In Kafka, the dog finds himself segregated from his social circle, from those who decide not to question the ways of the world (or those who try to answer all the world's mysteries with insufficient scientific or empirical evidence). Similarly, Sebald undergoes a self-exile, leaving the homeland which he increasingly realized was full of individuals who were not seeking answers for recent historical events and who were also, even worse, desperately trying to distance themselves from any memory of the war. The irony in the human-animal alliance is of course that, even if one is able, like the dog, to procure valuable information which offers humanity a profound insight and understanding, the ensuing attempts to reveal this information to the world will likely be misunderstood or ignored altogether due to the hubris of man and his belief that the animal kingdom has nothing new to teach him.

From the Symbiotic Relationship to the Consumption of the Self

Establishing Sebald's desire to align himself with the animal realm is necessary to decode the narrator and Herbeck's emotional responses when they are confronted with the mad dog in "All'estero". Knowing of Sebald's effort to see the world through canine eyes also helps to clarify his opinions on ecology and environmentalism, many of which were undoubtedly inspired by his engagement with Herbeck's poetry and thought. Sebald's opinions and Herbeck's outlook on the environment resonate with the ideas expressed in Jane Bennett's book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010). Due in part to the nature of his illness, Herbeck's poetry reveals that in his observation of the world there is a decided lack of differentiation between the animal, vegetable and human realms. Thus, he inherently possesses a quality for which Jane

⁴⁶⁷ In Sebald's article "Des Häschens Kind" in *CS*, he includes a poem by Herbeck which discusses the wonder of the magician who can produce rabbits, handkerchiefs and eggs by simply reaching into his top hat. Sebald sees the tame rabbit that comes out of the hat at the end of the poem in a manner similar to Lévi-Strauss; that this animal is meant to be a mythological double for the author: "Der wundbarerweise aus dem Zylinderhut hervorgeholte Hase ist ohne jeden Zweifel das Totemtier, in dem der Schreiber sich wiedererkennt." Sebald, "Des Häschens Kind" in *CS* 175.

Bennett argues we should all strive. She claims that a recognition of the sentience of the world around us is crucial and to achieve this we must observe it as a child would: as animate.⁴⁶⁸ Additionally, as a “naïve” artist, Herbeck sees the interconnectedness of everything on earth. This point of view is also encouraged by Bennett, that “deep down everything is connected and irreducible to a simple substrate.”⁴⁶⁹ She argues we need to adopt Theodor Adorno’s “clownish traits” which includes a willingness to appear naïve or foolish.⁴⁷⁰ This is a difficult step, as it involves a rejection of conformity to established intellectual standards. To recognize the sentience of objects, one must be willing to think outside the box – to become clownish. Because of Herbeck’s peripheral position within society, he is able to look at the world with an objective or naïve eye and this perspective contributes to his ability to identify and communicate with animals and objects which would normally be overlooked.

What is revealed in Sebald’s and Herbeck’s interaction with the animal kingdom is that their outlook on the world resembles the state of mind which Jane Bennett refers to as “ecological sensibility”. She states that in order to have this ecological sensibility, we need to bring an end to our fantasies of uniqueness in the eyes of God and our mastery over nature as it is impossible for us to determine where subjectivity begins and ends. As such, Bennett calls for a recognition of the *vitality* of (nonhuman) bodies, meaning the capacity of things, such as edibles or commodities, to both effect the will of humans and to also act as forces with propensities of their own.⁴⁷¹ She concludes this idea with a statement on why she wants to advocate the vitality of matter: “Because my hunch is that the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption.”⁴⁷² The terminology used in this final quote is particularly relevant for an analysis of “All’estero”, as this scene provides a demonstration of Sebald’s tendency to create literal examples of the “feeding of human hubris” and “consumption”.

The mad dog scene, which is only one paragraph (fourteen sentences) long, begins with the narrator and Herbeck heading towards a village on foot after visiting the medieval fortress, Castle Greifenstein, at the top of the cliff. The narrator comments:

Downcast we strode on in the autumn sunshine, side by side ... Of the people who lived [in Kritzendorf] not a sign was to be seen. They were all having lunch, clattering the cutlery and plates. A dog leapt at a green-painted iron gate, quite beside itself, as if it had taken leave of its senses.⁴⁷³

The narrator and Herbeck are equally horrified by the vision of the confined black Newfoundland with its “natural gentleness broken by ill-treatment, long confinement or even the crystal clarity of the autumn day.” As the pair try to move on, they find themselves hypnotized by the dog’s gaze: “again and again the animal ran up and hurled itself at the gate, only occasionally pausing to eye us where we stood as if transfixed.” The narrator continues: “As we walked on I could feel the chill of terror in my limbs. Ernst turned to look back once more at the black dog.” The narrator considers that maybe he should have let the animal out of the gate as “it probably would have ambled along beside us, like a good beast, while its evil spirit might have stalked among the people of Kritzendorf in search of another host, and indeed might have

⁴⁶⁸ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* vii.

⁴⁶⁹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* xi.

⁴⁷⁰ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* xiii.

⁴⁷¹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* viii.

⁴⁷² Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* ix.

⁴⁷³ All of the quotes in this paragraph are from Sebald, *Vertigo* 42-43.

entered them all simultaneously, so not one of them would have been able to life a spoon or fork again.”

While it may seem like a subtle detail, the fact that the mad dog scene begins and ends with sounds of the town eating alludes to issues of consumption which Sebald contemplated and returned to throughout this entire career as a writer. This scene reveals Sebald’s promotion of his anti-consumerist perspective and, since the primary goal of consumerism is possession and consumption, what the reader sees here is Sebald’s literal portrayal of the negative ramifications of the type of over-consumption which renders one blind to considerations of the object/animal being consumed. To understand how Sebald first came upon such considerations and also how these reveal him to be a type of ecopolitical thinker, one must analyze this brief passage in the context of both the social movements to which Sebald bore witness beginning in the 1960s and also Sebald’s reading of Elias Canetti.

Considering the sociological situation of Sebald’s post-war generation, this era witnessed a dramatic rise in the consumption of meat due to both advances in refrigeration and to a steadily improving economy.⁴⁷⁴ This development resulted in the formation of activist groups and widespread discussions on animal rights and vegetarianism.⁴⁷⁵ While Sebald rarely represents his opinions on this movement directly in his works, there are subtle references to his vegetarian tendencies⁴⁷⁶ and his abhorrence for institutions which encourage the mechanization of the farming industry. For example, in *The Rings of Saturn* he writes: “No longer able to decide on a place to eat, I bought a carton of chips at McDonald’s, where I felt like a criminal wanted worldwide as I stood at the brightly lit counter, and ate them as I walked back to my hotel.”⁴⁷⁷ Thirty pages prior, Sebald had set the tone of this scene with his description of the depletion of herring. The fish which was once so plentiful that it “[afforded] the terrible sight of Nature suffocating under her own surfeit” had quickly become a vanishing breed.⁴⁷⁸ He concludes his observation on herring with the comment, “But the truth is that we do not know what the herring feels,”⁴⁷⁹ again putting one in mind of Bennett’s statement on the controversial nature of “the philosophical project of naming where subjectivity begins and ends...”⁴⁸⁰ The hubris of mankind which propels both the desire to hunt and the need to mechanize nature results in the exploitation of the animal kingdom, and it is this fact which haunts the white spaces between the lines in the mad dog scene in *Vertigo*.

The opening of this scene illustrates a physical alliance between the narrator (Sebald) and Herbeck, they walked “side by side”, which intimates an intellectual bond solidifying their mental correspondence with one another and yet sets them apart from the general population of the town. What also is apparent once the two are confronted by the dog is that Sebald suggests a comparison should be drawn between Herbeck and the Newfoundland. That Sebald wished to

⁴⁷⁴ Such as Germany’s Economic Miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*) of the 1950s.

⁴⁷⁵ The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was founded in 1980 and there were various popular publications such as the *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971), *Animal Liberation* (1975) and the magazine *Vegetarian Times* in the late 1970s.

⁴⁷⁶ Thus far, Uwe Schütte is the only Sebald scholar I have noticed to have commented on Sebald’s vegetarianism. In his chapter on *Austerlitz*, Schütte discusses Sebald’s negative attitude towards the industrial production of meat: “Dass ein Vegetarier wie Sebald ausgerechnet die emblematische Fastfood-Kette zum Ort der Handlung macht, ist ein offenkundiges Signal, dass er etwas markieren will.” (Schütte, *W. G. Sebald* 200.

⁴⁷⁷ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 81.

⁴⁷⁸ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 55.

⁴⁷⁹ Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* 57.

⁴⁸⁰ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* ix.

identify with such an animal was already illustrated in the plethora of examples illustrating his own close connection to the canine world. This particular dog has apparently “taken leave of its senses” a madness which resulted from “ill-treatment”, “long confinement” or the “crystal clarity of the day.” For each aspect, a resonance with Herbeck had been illustrated in Sebald’s brief biography of Herbeck provided at the beginning of “All’estero”.

Sebald referred to the ill treatment Herbeck experienced due to his father’s “incisive thinking” and also his long confinement of “thirty-four years” within the mental institution. The “crystal clarity” is arguably the ideal of lucidity which was brought to the foreground during the Age of Enlightenment. Ironically, at this time the attempts to understand the mentally ill Other led to a confinement of these voices, a phenomenon which Michel Foucault discusses throughout his book *Madness and Civilization*, a work he refers to as an “archaeology of silence.”⁴⁸¹ This “crystal clarity” could additionally be an allusion to an apocalyptic scenario. The townspeople sit comfortably in their homes, oblivious to what is occurring in the outside world; namely, evidence of the natural history of destruction revealed by the dying sun. Perhaps part of the dog’s madness stems from his awareness of the inevitable death of all things. Although he is commenting generally about a tendency he sees in Sebald, I believe Ritchie Robertson’s quote is applicable in this scenario: “Sebald frames the death of the individual and the death of humanity within a wider picture of entropic decline. Since, as the second law of thermodynamics tells us, heat loss is invariable, the universe is running inexorably down towards annihilation.”⁴⁸² Even the breed of dog, Newfoundland, points ironically to enlightenment and discovery since historically the “discovery” of new territories by “civilized” Westerners inevitably resulted in the confinement of the natives of the area. Their “wild nature” and “otherness”, which is evidenced in their different traditions, values and beliefs, was subsumed under the façade of their integration into the conqueror’s system of belief. This is of course partially the tragedy of the non-conformist dog, Herbeck and Sebald. Unlike Kafka’s Rotpeter, who is able to abandon his animal nature, those who are unable or unwilling to do so are outcast: “For Kafka shows that in order to enter civilization, one has to put one’s animality behind one and reject any thought of escaping from one’s situation. Only the docile, submissive animal can be trained.”⁴⁸³ Finally, the connection between Herbeck and the canine is underscored when the narrator mentions that, if he were to let the animal out, he probably would have calmly ambled along beside him, like Herbeck (walking “side by side”), like “a good beast.” What is drawn in this parallel is a reversal: the true madness exists on the outside, and not in those who/which have been confined. This idea also underlies the message implied in the townspeople’s clattering of silverware; namely, this scene points to the madness of mainstream society’s blindness to their hubris and consumptive tendencies.

As mentioned, Sebald’s allusion to Kafka’s “Investigations of a Dog” refers to his identification with the dog in his quest for understanding, but also inherent in this reference is the dog’s/Sebald’s desire for metaphysical knowledge. In the tale, the dog looks not only to the earth for sustenance, but also notes that food comes from the sky as well. The dog’s performance of incantations and dances to lure food from above implies that one needs both physical and spiritual sustenance. Based on the mad dog scene, one can deduce that what Sebald is critiquing with the “clattering cutlery” are the people in the town of Kitzendorf who are

⁴⁸¹ “Ich habe nicht versucht, die Geschichte dieser Sprache zu schreiben, vielmehr die Archäologie dieses Schweigens.” Foucault, *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft* 8.

⁴⁸² Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 318.

⁴⁸³ Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 317.

decidedly without spiritual sustenance. They hovel in their homes (under their roofs no one will have their eyes, like the dog's, towards heaven) and the only sound to be heard are the noises emanating from their midday meal. The goal of moving beyond sole sustenance of the physical body to incorporate the spiritual body as well was a recurring topic in Elias Canetti's works. He reveals his ideal to be a profound sympathy for all other beings: "Der tiefste Sinn der Askese ist, dass sie das Erbarmen erhält. Der Essende hat immer weniger Erbarmen und schliesslich keines."⁴⁸⁴ Sebald devotes the last section of his essay on Canetti to an analysis of those otherworldly beings which come close to achieving this purely spiritual sustenance but are ultimately held back by their ties to this world: their corporeality. The characters he provides as examples thereof are Kafka's Odradek,⁴⁸⁵ which is a small anthropomorphized star-shaped spool of thread; Walter Benjamin's Angel of History,⁴⁸⁶ which is frozen above humanity and is unable to intervene as it watches man's natural drive to destroy himself; an indistinguishable figure by Canetti who is cloaked in brown fabric and seems to be uttering an undefinable prayer; and finally those angels in Novalis who achieved the ultimate spirituality as they have "keine Eingeweide."⁴⁸⁷ This became a concern of Canetti's after he had seen a section of a human's stomach which had been the recently dissected. In this contemplation of the piece of flesh in front of him, he wrote:

Seit ich einen menschlichen Magen gesehen habe, neun Zehntel eines menschlichen Magens, wie er keine zwei Stunden zuvor herausgeschnitten worden war, weiß ich noch weniger, wozu man isst. Er sah genauso aus wie die Fleischstücke, die die Menschen sich in ihren Küchen abbraten, sogar die Größe war die eines gewöhnlichen Schnitzels. Wozu kommt dieses Gleiche zum Gleichen? Wozu der Umweg?⁴⁸⁸

The final questions posed by Canetti are rewritten in Sebald's article: "Warum muss unaufhörlich Fleisch durch die Eingeweide eines anderes Fleisches gehen? Warum muss besonders dies die Bedingung unseres Lebens sein?"⁴⁸⁹ Because of Ernst Herbeck's presence in the mad dog scene, one can assume that the people in the town eating in the background are not only there to intimate a critique of the consumptive tendencies of consumerist culture, but also as an indicator of what this ultimately points to: that one is eating oneself. Perhaps this is why Herbeck neglects to eat the food he is presented with in *Vertigo*. As evidenced in Sebald's work on Herbeck, he connected Herbeck's outlook on food to this imminent threat when one engaged in the process of eating.⁴⁹⁰

Before turning to Sebald's article on Herbeck which culminates in a cannibalistic scene, it is useful to look at an example of his poetry which demonstrates Herbeck's awareness of the symbiotic relationship between the hunter and the hunted, the eater and the eaten. In Canetti's works, he examines our natural environment to formulate his theories concerning psychology

⁴⁸⁴ Canetti, *Aufzeichnungen 1942-1948* 172.

⁴⁸⁵ Jane Bennett also discusses Kafka's Odradek figure from his story "The Cares of a Family Man" ("Die Sorge des Hausvaters") in Chapter Four of *Vibrant Matter*.

⁴⁸⁶ This is based on Benjamin's description of Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. 253-264.

⁴⁸⁷ Sebald, "Gedanken zu Elias Canetti" 284.

⁴⁸⁸ Canetti, *Aufzeichnungen 1942-1948* 171.

⁴⁸⁹ Sebald, "Gedanken zu Elias Canetti" 284.

⁴⁹⁰ In "All'estero" there are two references made regarding Ernst Herbeck and food. In the first, the narrator recounts Herbeck's reluctance to eat even the pastry in front of him, "For minutes on end he left his fork sticking upright in his pastry," and in the second "Ernst declined to eat anything" at the café. Sebald, *Vertigo* 41-42, 47.

and the dynamics of power relations. His ideas on mythology, mania and melancholy are of particular importance in relation to Sebald's work on Herbeck. In *Masse und Macht*, Canetti refers to mythological tales in which the hunted (be it an animal or even an individual) manages to transform just before being captured by the hunter. This is a continual process until the roles reverse and the hunted captures the hunter.⁴⁹¹ Sebald acknowledged Herbeck's adherence to the ancient rules governing the totemic imagination: Herbeck frequently answered questions regarding his origin and identity by means of identification with that animal, the hare.⁴⁹² This identification as well as the hunter-hunted role reversal explained by Canetti appears in several of Herbeck's poems, perhaps most exemplary is the poem "Das Eichkätzchen".

Gisela Steinlechner notices in this poem the collapse occurring between hunter and hunted and also between animal and man.⁴⁹³ In terms of role reversal, she looks at the plot of the poem in which a hunter and a fox are seeking out their mutual prey, the *Eichkätzchen* (squirrel). She explains how, despite the seeming powerlessness of the squirrel, one recognizes in Herbeck's linguistics that there is a role reversal between hunter and hunted. The verbs associated with the hunter (*der Förster*) are "schrack" and "fror" while the fox "sah hin und wieder" as if he were gazing about in fear rather than confidently pursuing his prey. Steinlechner sees Herbeck's identification with the squirrel in the varying pronouns. The poem begins with a first-person narrator: "Im Wald und auf der Heide / da fand ich meine Freude". Once the animal begins to recognize that he is being hunted, this identification is distanced by way of the pronoun "it": "Der Förster schrack zusammen, / als es auf dem Baume war, das Eichkätzchen". Thus, one sees an attempt at flight from danger by way of a distancing indicated by a pronoun – the animal switches from an "I" to become an "it". The way Herbeck writes from the animal's perspective in his poetry indicates he also used this way of becoming animal as a defense mechanism when he felt confronted by thoughts of his illness or his own entrapment within the institution. At the end of the poem, a complete reversal and triumph for the squirrel occurs as it manages to escape when the hunter, who has also diminished in stance from the *Förster* to the pronoun *er*, shoots at him and yet "Er traf es nicht".

In terms of psychology, Canetti recognizes the mania of the hunter who is in a frenzy of desire to capture his prey and the melancholy of the hunted. This melancholy is first felt upon the concluding phase of transformation in which the hunted realizes endlessly transforming is in vain since the inevitable fate of the hunted as prey has already been sealed. The hunted cannot repress feelings of guilt at this point as, despite the permanence of the position as hunted, during periods of transformation the hunted became the hunter. Canetti concludes his thoughts by reflecting on what occurs during the final stage of this pursuit: consumption. Looking beyond the perspective of the hunter who has captured, killed and can now cook and consume his prey, Canetti declares that whether one feels the guilt of the hunter or the melancholy of the prey, in the end this individual will lack a desire to eat because they will have the feeling "dass er selber gegessen wird". Canetti claims: "Zwingt man ihn zu essen, so erinnert man ihn daran: sein Mund richtet sich gegen ihn, es ist, als hielte man ihm einen Spiegel vor. Es sieht darin einen Mund, und er sieht dass gegessen wird. Aber das, was gegessen wird, ist er selber."⁴⁹⁴

In a conversation with Piet de Moor, Sebald demonstrates his ongoing concern for these issues regarding power relations and melancholy as discussed by Canetti. Sebald says:

⁴⁹¹ Canetti, Elias. *Masse und Macht*. Hamburg: Claassen Verlag, 1960. 397.

⁴⁹² Sebald, "The Little Hare" in CS 131.

⁴⁹³ See Steinlechner, *Über die Ver-rückung der Sprache* 25-28.

⁴⁹⁴ Canetti, *Masse und Macht* 397-98.

From a rational point of view I do not see why another being that wanders this planet should have less right to exist than ourselves. It is the relationships of power that decide who gets locked up and who gets eaten, and who does the eating and the locking up. We stand right at the top, the supreme parasites.⁴⁹⁵

With “we” as supreme parasites, Sebald is referring to the majority, to those people who hold bureaucratic jobs and rely on others for their survival. This term is another allusion to Sebald’s understanding of the vampiric figures which appear in Franz Kafka’s stories, especially those from *The Castle*: “the vampiric lasciviousness with which the functionaries of the Castle are wont to demand virginal sacrifice and public prostitution appears in its true light only if seen in the context of their parasitic condition.”⁴⁹⁶ The parasitic condition describes the hubris of individuals who are in a de-evolutionary state: they depend upon those who are not as far progressed in their de-evolution for habitual assistance. This is an exploitive relationship, ironically members of society who have degenerated the most still hold power over those less degenerate beings (who do not follow the rules of the state blindly). In the “All’estero” scenario, it is of course the people sitting in their homes who are the parasites, consuming what the earth has to offer; while the natural world, represented by the caged animal, is gradually dying out due to ill treatment and neglect.

Keeping all these ideas in mind, I shall conclude with a return to Herbeck’s understanding of the relationship between the hunter and the hunted as a means of clarifying the melancholy nature of the mad dog scene. Sebald ends his essay “The Little Hare” with a description of one of Herbeck’s childhood experiences. He retells the story of how Herbeck’s mother received, in German Herbeck says “sie bekam”, a rabbit. This linguistically aligns the mother’s procurement of the rabbit with the event of Herbeck’s birth, at which time his mother “bekam ein Kind”. The rabbit is eventually slaughtered by the father in the presence of the mother and prepared for their meal (*Hasenbraten*). Herbeck participates in the act of consumption and exclaims afterwards that the meal tasted too good “schmeckte mir zu gut.” Sebald interprets this scene:

... daß er solchermaßen an dem gemeinsamen Familienverbrechen beteiligt war, nicht nur als Opfer, sondern auch als Täter, indem er nämlich mithalf bei der Verspeisung seines Ebenbilds und Namensvetters, das ist das wahre Maß seiner Verstrickung in die finsternen Machenschaften unseres gemeinschaftlichen Lebens.⁴⁹⁷

The resonance with Canetti’s ruminations on why we continually eat ourselves is clear. Herbeck, in the act of consuming his namesake, has entered the liminal position of both perpetrator and victim.⁴⁹⁸ That Sebald described this passage as “eine Leidensgeschichte von exemplarischem Format” demonstrates his own concerns regarding the ambiguous position in

⁴⁹⁵ de Moor, Piet. “(I) Echoes from the Past: A Conversation with Piet de Moor.” *Saturn’s Moon’s: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 350-55. 351.

⁴⁹⁶ Sebald, “The Law of Ignominy” 43.

⁴⁹⁷ Sebald, “Des Häschens Kind” in *CS* 178.

⁴⁹⁸ It is likely that Sebald is also alluding to these ideas in the scene from *The Emigrants* when the narrator relates how “That case, demonstrating the mysterious metamorphosis of the cockchafer, inspired Fritz and me in the late spring to an intensive study of the whole nature of cockchafers, including anatomical examination and culminating in the cooking and eating of a cockchafer stew.” Sebald, *The Emigrants* 31. Within this sentence one sees a reference to Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*; followed by Elias Canetti with the medical examination reminiscent of his experience with the dissected stomach that prompted his musings on spiritual rather than physical sustenance; concluded by the “culmination” of the individual so fascinated by a creature that he ingests it, much like Herbeck with the hare which tasted too good.

which Germany found itself during and immediately following World War II. On the one hand, certain Germans were enactors of one of the greatest crimes of history; on the other hand, as Sebald addresses in his essay *On the Natural History of Destruction*, many Germans also had been placed in the role of victim. While the majority of German citizens existed in a state of amnesia following the Second World War, equally ignoring both their crimes as well as their suffering, Herbeck serves as an exemplary figure of mourning as he is fully aware of this ambiguous position. When Sebald wrote this passage on Herbeck, he likely had these ideas from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in mind:

Each sacrifice is a restoration of the past, and is given the lie by the historical reality in which it is performed. The venerable belief in sacrifice is probably itself a behavior pattern drilled into the subjugated, by which they reenact against themselves the wrong done to them in order to be able to bear it. Sacrifice as representative restoration does not reinstate immediate communication, which had been merely interrupted, as present-day mythologies claim; rather, the institution of sacrifice is itself the mark of an historical catastrophe, an act of violence done equally to human beings and to nature.⁴⁹⁹

Herbeck, like many of his generation and the generations before, is inducted within communal rituals which are endlessly and thoughtlessly perpetuated by the generations of our fathers. In eating his namesake, Herbeck has engaged in an act of violence against his twin brother, this Other which is a reflection the self. The appearance of the mad dog, Sebald's brother,⁵⁰⁰ accompanied by the sounds of clattering silverware signifies Sebald's empathetic identification with the melancholic Herbeck who, like Sebald, is painfully aware of our inescapable, liminal position as perpetrator and victim. The people in their homes remain blissfully ignorant in their consumptive state, unaware that in this exploitation of themselves and their Others, they are paving the way for inevitable historical catastrophes.

⁴⁹⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 41.

⁵⁰⁰ "...ich habe das Gefühl, dass [die Hunde] meine Brüder sind." Rondas, "'So wie ein Hund, der den Löffel vergisst'" 357.

Chapter Six

A Cinematic Shift: Visual Representations of Otherness

Throughout this study, I have pointed to several instances of intertextuality which appear in W. G. Sebald's works. On the one hand, this chapter continues in a similar vein; on the other hand, it is an excursus offering an exchange of focus between the world of the written and the visual text. I shall examine the under-researched correlation and resonance between Sebald and the filmmaker Werner Herzog. Within the secondary literature, scholars have pointed out the fact that Sebald incorporates the foundling Kaspar Hauser's dream as it is depicted by Herzog in his film, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*,⁵⁰¹ in several of his novels.⁵⁰² That Sebald would have viewed Herzog's works immediately upon their release is undeniable. In regards to his interest in the intersection of psychology and art, one art form which Sebald persistently related to pathology was film, and few filmmakers thematize madness as frequently and artfully as Herzog. Perhaps the most neglected aspect of Sebald's oeuvre by researchers is his own effort to create films. At varying points, Sebald had hoped to bring several biographical screenplays into cinematic fruition including works on Carl Sternheim, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Robert Schumann.⁵⁰³ In each of these unrealized cases, what Sebald had hoped to achieve was a visual portrayal of the pathology of these artists. Thus, instead of reexamining how Sebald interprets Herzog's dream-sequence, I will focus on the dreamer, the outsider. Inspired by the potential of what Sebald wished to explore in filmic depictions of pathology, I will use comparative themes expressed in Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* and Sebald's *Vertigo* to uncover the difference between a visual versus a textual portrayal of peripheral figures. Keeping the relevance of pathology for Sebald and Herzog in mind, I will expand the current discussion by offering an explanation of how the sociopolitical context of Germany in the mid-1970s and early 1980s served as the impetus for their inclusion of outsider artists as protagonists in their works. The first section of this chapter provides background information regarding the particular cultural movements experienced by Sebald and Herzog and to which they were responding. This helps to establish an understanding of how the historical currents of the time frame in which their works were produced inspired them to incorporate individuals who had been diagnosed with a mental illness in order to make similar societal commentaries.

Thus far, I have demonstrated how Sebald was inspired by the critique of Western capitalist society which he viewed as inherent in the poems by Ernst Herbeck and also how he recreated Herbeck's schizophrenic language in his own works. I have mentioned various

⁵⁰¹ Herzog, Werner, dir. *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser (Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle)*. Perf. Bruno S. 1974. Starz / Anchor Bay, 2002. Film.

⁵⁰² In his dream, Kaspar Hauser sees a series of tents indicating various campsites followed by a group of nomads traveling through a desert landscape with a blind man as their guide. As illustrated in the secondary literature, this scene resonates with Sebald's interest in transient figures, in ideas of homelessness and in the ambiguity of the border separating fact from fiction. The inclusion of references to this scene also alludes to Sebald's affinity for intermedial works, eclectic combinations of words and images. See for instance Mark McCulloh's discussion of how Herzog's film is used in Sebald's novel *The Emigrants* (1992). McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald* 29-32. See also the *Hochschulschrift* which returns its focus on several occasions to this dream: Klimke, Christoph A. *W. G. Sebald und der Film*. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, et al: Peter Lang, 2010.

⁵⁰³ Sebald's screenplay on the life of Ludwig Wittgenstein was recently published. Sebald, W. G. "Leben Ws: Skizze einer möglichen Szenenreihe für einen nichtrealisierten Film." *Saturn's Moon's: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*. Eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt. Oxford: Legenda, 2011. 324-333.

moments in which Sebald revealed his fascination with Herbeck's incorporation of physiognomy within his language. This quality of Herbeck's lyricism is an extension or reflection of the physical mannerisms which are also specifically illustrated by the narrator of *Vertigo*. This emphasis on Herbeck's theatrical and performative nature shall partially serve as the springboard for a comparative analysis with the performance by another outsider artist; namely, Bruno S. in Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. I will explore the similar way in which Herbeck and Bruno S. physically demonstrate their otherness in a Bakhtinian carnivalesque manner which results in a glorification of difference. But first, I shall examine how Herzog and Sebald use the outsider status of their protagonists to critique certain qualities of the mainstream. For example, Bruno and Herbeck are capable of recognizing the apathy which Sebald and Herzog viewed as running rampant throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This demonstration of apathy reveals Sebald and Herzog's grounding in the ideas posed by the members of the Frankfurt School on how the culture industry was contributing to the docility and unreflective nature of the general population. In the hope of prompting critical reflection within the audience, Herzog and Sebald employ outsiders to artistically expose this phenomenon. They depict the threat of mind control and the ability of the culture industry to induce a hypnotic trance which enables the public's blind acceptance of the ideological viewpoints promoted by the state. I will also show how Herzog and Sebald reveal their knowledge of the type of persecution, segregation and exploitation to which the mentally ill have traditionally been subjugated. They comment on this history of established and perpetually reinforced otherness by contextually placing Bruno S. as Kaspar and Herbeck at sites where such exploitation occurs. The sideshow and the theatrical stage were designated areas to illustrate a clear delineation between the observer (someone from the norm) and the observed (the Other). Here, these sites are used by Herzog and Sebald to reverse the traditional perspective in order to show true madness and otherness lies, not within the performers, but rather within the audience. Finally, Bruno and Herbeck's awareness of the mode in which they, as outsiders, have been traditionally viewed shall serve as a point of transition into an analysis of how they playfully assume their positions as objects of observation and thereby expose those aspects of the societal system which promote a derogatory view of otherness: they enact a protest by reversing this anthropological gaze.

1960-1970 Antipsychiatry and the Booming Interest in Abnormality

It was not long before a certain level of unrest arose out of the prosperity and stability which had been established in the United States and in Western Europe following the Second World War. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was an upsurge of activism and protest movements within the counterculture which demanded a reevaluation of the standards of society, particularly concerning civil liberties and issues of equality. Amidst this backdrop, the public began to turn its gaze towards its institutions and to question the foundations upon which these were based. As such, the psychiatric institute came under close scrutiny by both the general public as well as medical professionals. By the mid-1970s, this "particular criticism and activism became known as the antipsychiatry movement. The leading voices of antipsychiatry were often psychiatrists, psychotherapists, and social scientists who themselves had become disillusioned with the conventional values and methods of mental health care."⁵⁰⁴

One key impetus for such debates was the work "The Myth of Mental Illness" (1960) by

⁵⁰⁴ Eghigian, Greg, ed. *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009. 346.

trained psychoanalyst Thomas Szasz. Szasz argues the term “illness” should be removed from this concept since it relates to physical defects and is therefore inappropriate here as mental illness is not always caused by a defect in the brain. Rather, it is often a problem of the mind derived from man’s struggle to come to terms with challenging personal, social and ethical conflicts.⁵⁰⁵ Thus, Szasz’s statement raises questions regarding what exactly it was about individuals which earned them a diagnosis of mentally ill. If problems of the mind can be a reflection of difficulties in one’s life based on social interactions, then anyone who experiences hardship could be mentally ill. How did a psychiatrist evaluate a person to make a diagnosis and how were individuals treated by the mainstream or behind the walls of the institution once diagnosed? Was isolating someone from the environment which potentially caused their illness an appropriate form of treatment? Szasz’s concern regarding the system of mental health care is reflected not only in the ensuing discussions by scholars from the social sciences and the psychiatric community, but also by the public at large. The issues addressed in such discussions are reflected in the artistic productions of the time. While this movement resulted in an increased interest in literary representations of mental illness – such as Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963), Flora Rheta Schreiber’s *Sybil* (1973) and Ken Kesey’s *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962) – the general public suddenly not only wanted to hear the voices, but also to see the faces of madness. The public desired a presentation of or confrontation with those individuals which Michel Foucault claimed had been silenced since the eighteenth century by the cultural and intellectual structures of society which were engaged in a “complex field of power relations.”⁵⁰⁶ This is evidenced in the frequent adaptations of each of the above mentioned novels for both film and television;⁵⁰⁷ *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975) even won the top five Oscars the year of its release.

This trend was apparent in Germany as well: the public had become interested in literary and visual works created by the mentally ill as well as in (semi-)fictionalized accounts of madness which had been adapted for the screen, television or theater. Mental institutions opened their doors to reveal the collected artistic works by the patients therein. Within the German speaking countries of Europe, the primary locations were the Hans Prinzhorn collection in Heidelberg, in Switzerland one could view the works by the Waldau artist Adolf Wölfli whose talent was discovered by Walter Morgenthaler, and in Maria Gugging outside of Vienna one could visit Leo Navratil’s institution. As discussed in the introduction of this study, throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, the psychiatric institute in Maria Gugging became a popular destination for writers such as Gerhard Roth, Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker (and W. G. Sebald in 1980) as they could meet with the schizophrenic artists featured in Leo Navratil’s books *Schizophrenie und Kunst* (1965), *Schizophrenie und Sprache* (1966) and *Alexanders poetische Texte* (1977). One individual who was not exactly welcome in Navratil’s institution was Heinar Kipphardt. In 1975, the television station ZDF broadcast Kipphardt’s *Leben des schizophrenen Dichters Alexander M.* which was released as a novel a year later (*März*, 1976), as a radio broadcast the following year and as a popular theatrical drama, *März – ein Künstlerleben*, that was first performed in 1980. Kipphardt had used Ernst Herbeck as the model for his

⁵⁰⁵ Szasz, Thomas. “The Myth of Mental Illness.” *The American Psychologist* 15, no. 2 (Feb. 1960): 113-118.

⁵⁰⁶ See the arguments posed in Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1964) which was originally published as *Folie et Dérison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (1961) and Mayes, Rick and Allan V. Horwitz. “DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 249-67. 252.

⁵⁰⁷ *The Bell Jar* was adapted for the screen in 1979, a biographical drama about Sylvia Plath appeared in 2003 (*Sylvia*) and *Sybil* was released as a television mini-series in 1976.

protagonist, Alexander März, and Navratil not only found fault with Herbeck's representation, but also accused Kipphardt of plagiarism.⁵⁰⁸ Although in a method contrary to Kipphardt, Navratil also partook in the public's desire for visual representations of mental illness in film. Several documentaries were set at Navratil's institution in Maria Gugging; the earliest being in 1965 and the most recent from 2008, and while many of these films are difficult to procure, the film *Kopfleuchten* (1998) generated a good deal of commercial interest.

The previous chapter ended with a discussion of the symbiotic relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. A similar relationship is illustrated by Thomas Szasz, although his terminology makes this statement more applicable to the visual context of this chapter. That madness could be *viewed* on screen, in the theater or live at Navratil's institution underscored its connection to questions of perspective and the relationship between the observer and observed.

Thomas Szasz argued:

the notion of mental illness is used to codify relatively more private, sociopsychological happenings of which the observer (diagnostician) forms a part. In other words, the psychiatrist does not stand *apart* from what he observes but is, in Harry Stack Sullivan's apt words, a "participant observer". This means that he is *committed* to some picture of what he considers reality – and to what he thinks society considers reality – and he observes and judges the patient's behavior in the light of these considerations.⁵⁰⁹

This issue posed by Thomas Szasz had been brought to life on the screen as a form of entertaining and yet engaging social commentary. The audience not only viewed staged interactions between a mentally ill patient and their psychiatrist, they were also placed in the role of psychiatrist. Suddenly the public was involved in this societal issue in a new way. In observing the Other, they were confronted with their responsibility regarding how madness was perceived, judged and determined.

The widespread movements of the 1960s and 1970s which made mental illness a household topic of discussion also meant madness was recognizable everywhere. Questions arose regarding agency – who could identify and segregate the normal from the abnormal? The lines separating the "crazy" individuals from sane ones had seemed to blur completely, especially in the art world. As Walter Vogt demonstrates in his essay "The Schizophrenia of Art" (1977), madness had somehow become the norm, nearly every popular writer could, in one way or another, be labeled "crazy": "Whoever *writes*, is crazy. Samuel Beckett is crazy. Eugène Ionesco is crazy. Allen Ginsberg is crazy. Gregory Corso is crazy..."⁵¹⁰ He continues this list with twenty-six additional names to underscore his argument that, by the late 1970s, insanity and normality were determined by the general population rather than solely by psychiatric diagnoses. A key determining factor of mental illness was societal acceptance and stereotypical or perpetuated viewpoints of the norm.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁸ Sebald likely ingratiated himself quickly with Navratil since, in his essay on Herbeck, Sebald takes a stab at Kipphardt: "Es soll darum hier versucht werden, die Texte Alexanders auch in ihrer Ungereimtheit als die Äußerungen eines eigentlich normalen Menschen zu verstehen, was einen bewußten Abstand impliziert zu der immer noch vorherrschenden Haltung, die am Exzentrischen sich ergötzt auf Kosten dessen, der daran leidet." This comment is actually the second attack on Kipphardt, Sebald had already critiqued him in his essay on Peter Handke. Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 132 and "Unterm Spiegel des Wassers" in *BU* 116.

⁵⁰⁹ Szasz, "The Myth of Mental Illness" 116.

⁵¹⁰ "Wer *schreibt*, ist verrückt. Samuel Beckett ist verrückt. Eugène Ionesco ist verrückt. Allen Ginsberg ist verrückt. Gregory Corso ist verrückt..." Vogt, Walter. "Die Schizophrenie der Kunst. Eine Rede." Ed. Winfried Kudszus. *Literatur und Schizophrenie*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1977. 164-75. 165-66.

⁵¹¹ This idea continues to this day and has always, to varying degrees, been present. A similar comment was made

Although the lines between madness and sanity had begun to be questioned, individuals who were professionally diagnosed with a mental illness continued to be stigmatized. To a vast degree it is still, as it has always been, up to the public to judge normal behavior and to socialize individuals accordingly; and those who are incapable of participating in this process of integration tend to be outcast. With the interest in abnormality which developed in the 1960s and 1970s, however, many were driven to examine this form of socialization from the reverse perspective: to use the eyes of abnormality to examine and to question the norm by asking just what type of society is it the community is being socialized into? Thus within art, a type of role-reversal began to emerge and artists who were dissatisfied with the social standards that had solidified since the 1950s chose to turn their focus towards the voices and perspectives of “abnormal” individuals as a means to undermine and critique the norm. While the commercial films previously mentioned featured actors in the role of madness, thereby offering a more distanced or allegorical portrayal thereof, other artists looked directly to clinical madness to demonstrate the questionable sanity of the norm. The filmmaker Werner Herzog turned to the street musician, Bruno S., who “spent 23 years in various institutions and prisons and for some time was thought to have suffered from schizophrenia,”⁵¹² and made him the star of *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) and *Stroszek* (1977). W. G. Sebald travelled to Vienna in 1980 to meet with the schizophrenic writer, Ernst Herbeck, and made him the protagonist of the second chapter of his novel *Vertigo* (1990).

Both the author W. G. Sebald and the *auteur* Werner Herzog look to societal outsiders to examine what had become the standards of normality in Western Germany following the Second World War from a critical perspective. In their empathetic identification with individuals who have been clinically labeled mentally ill, they perform political and social acts of protest. The particular use of mentally ill “others” as protagonists within their works demonstrates Sebald’s (who was born in May of 1944) and Herzog’s (born in September of 1942) vehement opposition to the National Socialist stance of their parental generation. One of the groups deemed to have a “life unworthy of life” (*lebensunwertes Leben*) by the Nazis and the first to fall victim to the “euthanasia program” was the mentally ill. Much like the anti-Semitic propaganda which had circulated throughout Germany for many years prior to the onset of World War II, so too had the general public been warned against the potential threat (both for the economy and general morale) the mentally ill posed for the maintenance of the healthy German body. One magazine devoted solely to this cause was *Neues Volk* (New People) and within the cinema there was, for example, the short film *The Inheritance* (*Die Erbe*, 1935) which was shown in theaters between full-length pictures in order to gain support for the law on sterilization, “Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases” (July 1933), and the pro-euthanasia film *I Accuse* (*Ich klage an*, 1941). By 1941, when the extermination process shifted its focus to European Jewry and other groups, around 70,000 mentally impaired Germans and Austrians had already been

in the early nineteenth century by the British psychiatric reformer, Samuel Tuke (1784–1857). He argued that the mentally ill could pass in mainstream society if they had been trained to behave properly, as they were essentially only answerable for the part of themselves which was visible: “the city of reasonable men only welcomes him to the extent that he conforms to that anonymous type.” This idea underscores the superficial nature of communities which base their stability on a mirage. As long as the outer façade appears to be in order, the problems lurking underneath can simply be ignored. While Tuke may have made this statement over two-hundred years ago, it resonates with modern discussions on conformity and outsiders. Foucault, Michel. *History of Madness*. Ed. Jean Khalifa. Trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalifa. New York: Routledge, 2006. 487.

⁵¹² Bergan, Ronald. “Bruno Schleinsteins Obituary.” *The Guardian*. 22 Aug. 2010.
<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/aug/22/bruno-schleinsteins-obituary>

killed. While this historical fact is not dealt with directly by Herzog or Sebald, it is nonetheless a perpetual shadow looming in the background. As two artists fully conscious of the socially established “otherness” of their protagonists within their works, they incorporate both scenes which reflect on the modes in which this Other has been historically observed, as well as scenes which demonstrate their own open-minded and accepting, at times even idealizing, approach to the mentally ill Other.

Inspiration from the Untamed Kaspar Hauser

On 26 May 1828, Kaspar Hauser appeared on the streets of Nuremberg. He was a sixteen year old youth who had just been released by his “caretaker” who claimed to have found him as a baby on his doorstep. Since that time, he had tended to the child by offering him food, but had never let Kaspar out of the house and had neither taught him to speak (other than the sentence “I want to be a cavalryman, as my father was”) nor write (other than the words *Kaspar Hauser*). Kaspar’s first exposure to the outside world is quickly limited: unsure of what to do with this foundling, the community placed him in a holding cell where he became entertainment for the townsfolk. Whoever wished to witness Kaspar in his natural state was welcome to gaze upon him through the bars.⁵¹³ Following this temporary placement, Kaspar was handed over to be cared for by the teacher, Georg Friedrich Daumer, who educated him in such a way that he became capable of self-reflection and could give voice to his experiences. Partially due to the rapid progress Kaspar made in terms of his education, rumors regarding his origins began to spread whereby many questioned his authenticity⁵¹⁴ (he was also relatively unscarred for an individual kept in a dungeon his entire life). At one point, Kaspar was found bleeding from his forehead and he claimed to have been attacked by a hooded man. This caused many to suspect that he was a secret descendent of the House of Baden (the child of the Grand Duke Karl and Stéphanie Beauharnais). In 1833, Hauser was again “attacked” and this time he failed to survive his stab wound. To this day, the truth regarding his heritage, origins and even whether or not his wounds were self-inflicted remains a mystery.

Werner Herzog’s cinematic rendition of this historical anomaly, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, was first released in November 1974. In 1975, W. G. Sebald published an essay analyzing Peter Handke’s theatrical drama, *Kaspar* (1967), which focuses primarily on the growing pains suffered by Kaspar as part of his indoctrination into Western culture via language acquisition.⁵¹⁵ Sebald was deeply interested in the historical Kaspar Hauser figure,⁵¹⁶ and the fact that Sebald doesn’t reference Herzog’s film in this Handke essay indicates that he had likely already composed this a few years prior to its initial publication. Nonetheless, the issues Sebald addresses in his Handke article are also those which are brought to life by Herzog on the screen:

⁵¹³ “Jedermann wurde zu ihm gelassen, der ihn zu besehen Lust hatte.” Vensky, Helmuth. “Kaspar Hauser. Die umstrittene Geschichte eines Findelkindes.” *Die Zeit*. 29 April 2012. Web. 18 Feb. 2014.
<http://www.zeit.de/wissen/geschichte/2012-04/kaspar-hauser>

⁵¹⁴ That the authenticity of Hauser’s story was debatable was likely also a reason for Sebald and Herzog’s fascination with this figure. Both artists would be lauded and critiqued over the years for their ambiguous incorporation of factual information and fiction.

⁵¹⁵ “Strangeness, Integration and Crisis: On Peter Handke’s Play *Kaspar*” was published in German in the Austrian journal *Literatur und Kritik* and on pages 53-64 of the English edition of *Campo Santo*.

⁵¹⁶ The following title can be found in Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach: Mehle, Ferdinand. *Der Kriminalfall Kaspar Hauser*. 2nd ed. Kehl, Strasbourg, Basel: Morstadt Verlag, 1995.

Kaspar's unconventional use of language, his difficulties with assimilation and his status as an outsider – a difference which simultaneously made him alluring to the public. These are all qualities which Sebald recognized in Herbeck as well and it is likely that, by the late 1960s, Sebald had already begun associating Herbeck with Kaspar Hauser.⁵¹⁷ While the allusions to Kaspar Hauser are more subtly illustrated in *Vertigo*, I argue that Sebald also had Werner Herzog's Kaspar Hauser in mind when he composed the pages devoted to Herbeck for the chapter "All'estero".

Communal Responsibility: Identifying the Other

Since just previously in this chapter I addressed the fact that the general public carries a great deal of responsibility in determining which individuals are viewed as abnormal, it is worth looking briefly at the manner in which this phenomenon is manifest in film. I will focus on the scene immediately following Kaspar Hauser's arrival in Nuremberg to demonstrate how Herzog establishes the perceived abnormality of Kaspar in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* by way of *mise en scène*. I will also briefly describe how this presentation of Kaspar contrasts with another figure in this scene in order to show how this opposing character visually embodies the community's recognition of status. This scene also sets the stage for the film's equation of Kaspar, who is viewed as primitive and uncivilized by the community, with the animal realm, a topic discussed at length already in this study in the Herbeckian context.

In the opening of the film, the viewer witnesses Kaspar Hauser in his cell. What is visually implied in this sequence is that Kaspar does not differentiate himself from the objects around him. As Kaja Silverman writes: "Kaspar Hauser ... does not bring an organized vision to bear on the objects in his environment; indeed, he does not perceive them as distinct from himself."⁵¹⁸ In terms of action, I recognize this symbiosis between Kaspar and his environment evidenced in the shot in which the audience sees how Kaspar wraps a bandage around his toy horse and then bundles himself up within his own blankets in a parallel gesture. Kaspar thereby demonstrates his assumption that the cold air he feels is equally felt by his wooden horse. Visually, there is a close-up on the few objects in his cell: the jug from which he drinks and the remnants of a slice of bread which has been balanced amongst the hay on a round piece of wood. I believe the fact that the hay and the bread are intertwined again implies this lack of differentiation between Kaspar and his surroundings: he ingests both his source of food as well as the earth, the hay on which his bread is placed. Thus, in this sequence focusing solely on Kaspar's world, the camera work implies that we are witnessing Kaspar's environment much as he does. I see a switch in perspective, however, once Kaspar leaves his cell; in the scene shortly thereafter, the camera work suggests the audience is now encouraged to view Kaspar through the eyes of the townsfolk of Nuremberg.

After being briefly taught to stand and walk, Kaspar is abandoned by his caretaker. He is discovered thereafter in the center of town, standing like a statue with the letter explaining his

⁵¹⁷ In examining Sebald's interest in marginal literature, Ritchie Robertson has pointed to the connection Sebald made between Ernst Herbeck and Handke's depiction of Kaspar Hauser: "For Sebald, Herbeck's poetry ... illustrate[s] a specifically Austrian interest in the origins and implications of language use that is famously explored in Handke's play *Kaspar* (1968)." Robertson, "W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature" 316.

⁵¹⁸ Silverman, Kaja. "Kaspar Hauser's 'Terrible Fall' into Narrative." *New German Critique* No. 24/25 Special Double Issue on New German Cinema. (Autumn 1981 – Winter 1982.): 73-93. 73.

situation in hand.⁵¹⁹ It is decided that, since no one in the community wants to welcome him in their homes, he is to be placed in a stable. The cut next offers the audience a close-up of Kaspar sleeping in the hay. The viewer sees Kaspar's peaceful face in the center of the frame and his upper-body extending to the right. Another face becomes involved in this close-up, that of a horse which gradually moves its head towards the center of the screen from the left. Thus, Kaspar's face inevitably vanishes and is replaced by that of the horse. The resulting image is a, while humorous, infallible unification of man and animal⁵²⁰ – one thinks of Herbeck's man-animal creature the *Patentender*. What seems like a peaceful unity of man and nature is immediately undermined and the image is imbued with a negative connotation via a cut that provides the transition to a medium shot which pans across the individuals in the community who have come to gaze disapprovingly at this sleeping anomaly.

The camera pans steadily from a woman to two men and must tilt up to include a third man within the image. This man stands in the foreground and is framed by the other two men who seem to be a head shorter. Whereas the three people in the background are obviously farmers, this man appears to be an official as he is dressed in formal attire: a dark suit and top hat. He is also positioned a few feet closer to the camera which, in addition to the resulting low angle shot, indicates his lofty status within the community. Because of the movement in the ascending tilt of the camera, the audience is given the impression of a man of imposing stature. It *appears* this way, and yet this is an illusion created by Herzog. This seeming height is enough, however, to visually represent to the audience the discrepancy which will be maintained between the officials, who are placed on pedestals by the community as the representations of the apex of civilization; and Kaspar, who is earthly and primitive.

This image is followed by a long shot which pans from right to left in order to follow a man in military uniform as he walks towards the stall in which Kaspar is sleeping. Kaspar is separated by a few planks of wood from the other animals and also from those members of the community observing him. The man in the top hat is standing at the foot of Kaspar's stall, as if it were a bed, and is joined by the approaching military man. This staging, with the planks serving as a barrier, thus already intimates the public's perception of Hauser's less-than-human nature. What the viewer now also sees is that the man in the top hat is significantly shorter than both the officer and the farmers standing behind him. The difference in height comes across as extreme since, in the first shot of this man in the top hat, Herzog intentionally made him larger than life. I view this as a subtle, and yet crucial, indicator by Herzog of the way in which the community perceives and acknowledges positions of power on the one hand and insignificance on the other.

I argue that Herzog created the illusion of height for the introductory appearance of the official in the top hat, a scribe who is played by the actor Clemens Scheitz,⁵²¹ to serve as a visual reflection of the way in which he is viewed by the community. Evidencing Herzog's sensitivity to such types of representation of stature, one can think of his film, *Even Dwarves Started Small* (*Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen*, 1970). As the name implies, the cast is comprised entirely of midgets, and yet Herzog refuses to allow the camera to display them as such. The low

⁵¹⁹ That Kaspar is presented in this scene as a statue, posed and motionless, already implies that the people of Nuremberg will see him as such: a plasticized object, a façade upon which they can write whatever history they deem appropriate.

⁵²⁰ While likely the result of a highly fortuitous stroke of luck, as the horse moves its head back to the left to once again reveal Kaspar's face, the horse licks its lips thereby providing the illusion that it is actually licking Kaspar's face. This subtle gesture alludes to Kaspar's, like Herbeck's, closeness to the animal kingdom.

⁵²¹ Scheitz has roles in several of Herzog's other films but gained the most acclaim following the release of *Stroszek* (1976).

angles throughout the film make it seem as though they are all average-sized individuals and it is rather the mechanical world around them which is disproportionately oversized. When one of the stars of this film appears in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, it is as part of a sideshow act where his job entails sitting, dressed as a king, on an oversized throne to emphasize his smallness. Here, there are visual clues intimating he should be associated with the scribe. The “Little King” (played by Helmut Döring) is of miniscule stature and nearly vanishes amidst his throne. As the circus director approaches his chair, he takes off his top hat and places it on the left edge of the throne. This creates an emphasis on the empty space between the top of the Little King’s head and the bottom of the hat. The circus director comments: “as the kings have diminished in size (*sind immer kleiner geworden*), so too have their kingdoms.” The scribe, unlike the king although also of small stature, has the ability to fill in this gap, to reach and wear the top hat, the real crown indicating acceptance by the community.

The townsfolk of Nuremberg are blind to the scribe’s smaller stature due to his position and his ability to assimilate: he is not only a member of this community, but he is in charge of chronicling their history. His job is to dutifully record everything occurring in the town: in the scene in the stable, he writes each word the military man reads from Kaspar’s letter. Throughout the film as he writes history, the reporters must pause and repeat their explanations as the scribe parrots their words in order to guarantee the accuracy of his account. Therefore, he does not engage in the community in a critical manner by offering his own opinions and ideas, and yet (or perhaps therefore) he is immediately accepted by the people. He is a mirror, a record playing back the history being constructed. As the writer of history, this profession places him above the community. He has overcome his small stature in his ability to record the events determining how everyone in town shall go down in history. Sebald notes the power inherent in such a position: “In den Aufzeichnungen Canettis wird wiederholt beklagt, daß Geschichte vom Standpunkt der Stärkeren geschrieben werde und daß die Historiker mit der Macht sich assoziierten.”⁵²²

Scheitz is given the last word in the film. In a long shot, he stands centrally in the frame and summons his carriage which rolls on-screen from the left. Between Scheitz and the camera, the carriage comes to a halt just in front of him in a way which makes his stature fully apparent for the first time. The scribe is now framed, as Kaspar was in the scene in the stable by the wooden planks, by the wood of the carriage which extends across his knees and thus makes him seem even smaller, and the brown leather of the reins, which appear balanced on his top hat. This image undermines the power of the scribe and points to the arbitrary nature of one’s fate, the roles of the scribe and the outsider could have been easily interchanged if only Kaspar had assimilated, as argued throughout Peter Handke’s *Kaspar*, the rules of linguistics. Exclaiming he will be walking home today, the camera pans to the right to follow as the carriage exits with the scribe following behind. As Scheitz walks down the middle of the street, becoming gradually smaller and revealing a slight limp to his gait, he exclaims to himself with pleasure that he has achieved a wonderful, exact protocol of his experience in the mortuary. The doctors were able, via an analysis of Kaspar’s brain, and an overwhelming desire to scientifically qualify for a difference, to locate the anomaly and the reason for his otherness. The irony of this scene is of course that the importance of the scribe is further undermined by the viewer’s knowledge that the problem is not Kaspar’s brain, but rather his treatment by the community. Furthermore, the scribe small stature which is revealed in this final shot points out that the power given to the writers of history is unjust, as recorded history is inaccurate (the mystery of Kaspar Hauser

⁵²² Sebald, “Summa Scientiae” in *BU* 93.

remains such) and often subjective. That the viewer is confident throughout the film in the appropriateness of the alignment of their sympathies with Kaspar and not the scribe illustrates how these cinematic elements convey a reality and humanity which contrasts and overshadows the “facts” of the scribe’s written word.⁵²³

Kaspar Hauser and Ernst Herbeck Reveal a Hypnotized Population

Many artists who wished to illustrate the cultural problems in Western Germany in the mid-1960s and 70s looked to Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). This work traces the gradual declination of society from the Age of Enlightenment to the collapse of reason during World War II which was viewed as the culmination of how “rational efficiency had been applied to inhuman ends.”⁵²⁴ Their study ends with an illustration of the increasing docility of individuals as encouraged by the capitalist culture industry. While both Werner Herzog and W. G. Sebald turn to outsider figures to artistically adapt many of the core ideas expressed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, what shall be illustrated in the following section is how they use Kaspar Hauser and Ernst Herbeck to attack the passivity and general lack of critical engagement demonstrated by middle-class, mainstream German society in the 1970s and 1980s.

One key impetus guiding Herzog and Sebald’s desire to turn to societal outsiders in order to critique the overwhelming apathy of mainstream society is their generally unhistorical position.⁵²⁵ Being unburdened by historical tradition, the Kaspar figure is especially a threat and a hope, as a *tabula rasa*, he has a quality which makes others envy him but which also alienates him. In Peter Handke’s play, Kaspar Hauser is forced to abandon his former understanding of the world by the disembodied voices of his “educators” who demand conformity to their language and thereby also their cultural system. As Sebald writes on Handke, Kaspar’s educators (*Einsager*) “envy him the blankness of the life he represents, his ability – to quote Nietzsche again – to be ‘totally unhistorical.’”⁵²⁶ In Sebald’s claim that the educators, namely those few in positions of power, are jealous of Kaspar’s lack of historical awareness, Sebald is pointing out that these educators are providing an admission of their goal to erase history. Because the educators believe it is dangerous for the general population to be confronted by their past, they are actively engaged in experimenting with various methods to erase, or at least repress, any desire in the population to understand what occurred in the immediate past (World War II) and to come to terms with this event. In Handke, this conspiracy to eradicate historical

⁵²³ In recent interviews, Herzog has repeatedly provided a convincing example to argue for the validity of the way he makes documentaries which, while based on fact, must incorporate an element of fiction or narration. Herzog points out that if one flips through the phone book in New York, one is presented with an abundance of facts, and yet the public is indifferent to this information – it is the *history* behind these names that makes them interesting and brings them to life.

⁵²⁴ Robertson, “W. G. Sebald as a Critic of Austrian Literature” 308.

⁵²⁵ I say generally here since, while Herbeck was not directly involved in the politics of his time, Sebald comments on the inability of all individuals to remain completely immune to sociopolitical and historical events. Thus, in Herbeck’s poetry one sees his reflection upon certain occurrences such as the Second World War. In the cult drama by Miron Zownir, which was described in an understated manner for its premiere in Berlin as “der bizarre Spielfilm”, Bruno S. appears as the homeless “Bruno” who is haunted by the impending apocalypse. While the film is highly stylized, staged and scripted, at least one scene which demonstrates Bruno’s considerations of Germany’s horrific past appears to feature his authentic ruminations. Bruno points out a building in Berlin where the Nazi doctors performed experiments in encephalography and concludes his explanation with “but today the room looks peaceful.” Bruno S. (perf.). *Phantomanie*. Dir. Miron Zownir. Divine Appointments, 2009. Film.

⁵²⁶ Sebald, “Strangeness, Integration, and Crisis” in *CS* 55.

understanding is manifest as the educator's attempt at mind control via authoritative linguistic training. Indoctrinating Kaspar into the language of the community is a thin veil concealing Peter Handke's critique that the general population has already been indoctrinated by the culture industry into a state of unquestioning, apathetic acceptance.

Herzog and Sebald also argue that what is more dangerous for society than an "unhistorical" state as embodied by Kaspar Hauser are those people who are aware of their past, and yet have managed repress their communal history under the distracting cloud produced by capitalist consumer culture. Herzog and Sebald look to outsiders of the community to critique cultural productions which are created to maintain numbness and to dull any desire for self-reflexivity in the minds of the public. That these outsiders (Kaspar and Herbeck) react with horror to the type of mind control and indoctrination they see occurring all around them should prompt the viewer / reader into a critical examination of the socio-historical situation of their community. Brad Prager argues in his essay on Peter Handke's *Kaspar* and Herzog's films that they are fighting against the increasing passiveness of the individuals within Western society who have ceased to examine the foundations upon which their daily lives are based. Discussing Herzog's film *Heart of Glass* (1976), Prager states that the way Western audiences of the 1970s ingested what was fed to them by the consumerist-media machine demonstrates the fact that society has been hypnotized by the authority under which they live. Herzog addresses the hypnotized state of mainstream society in his film *Heart of Glass* in his extreme long takes and slow pans: "the slowly moving reflection is to show us our already hypnotized state and thus to resist the logic that turns spectator into somnambulist consumer."⁵²⁷

The same warning is not only valid, but is also expressed in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* which incidentally offers a literal scene of hypnosis. As Kaspar sits alone in his cell shortly after being discovered by the people of Nuremberg, his space is suddenly invaded by a group of young individuals, one of whom is carrying a chicken. This "Bavarian Chicken Hypnotizer"⁵²⁸ is played by Herbert Achternbusch, an eccentric painter, filmmaker and writer (of such works as the aforementioned *Heart of Glass* on which Herzog's film is based). W. G. Sebald was also profoundly interested in Achternbusch and devoted two academic essays to him.⁵²⁹ For Sebald, he embodied the ideal "primitive" artist and, like Sebald and Herzog, Achternbusch was drawn to everything which was the antithesis of the capitalist, technologically advanced Western society including the mentally ill, animals and nature. As the Sebald scholar Uwe Schütte writes: "Als eine Art literarischer Schamane betreibt Achternbusch eine empathische Identifikation mit all dem, was durch den Zivilisations- und Modernisierungsprozeß in eine Außenseiterposition gedrängt wird: den Verrückten, den Tieren, der Natur."⁵³⁰

In *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, Achternbusch lays the chicken on the floor on its back and watches as the immobile, hypnotized creature remains frozen. Kaspar is horrified by the sight and, accompanied by the overwhelming laughter coming from the chicken hypnotizers; he desperately tries to flee the room through the impossibly small window. There seems to be no escape from this hypnosis. In an interview, Herzog expresses his opinion on chickens: "The enormity of their flat brain, the enormity of their stupidity is just overwhelming ... By the way,

⁵²⁷ Prager, Brad. "Offending the Public: Handke, Herzog, Hypnosis." *Telos* 159 (Summer 2012): 93–104. 103.

⁵²⁸ This is the title with which Achternbusch is endowed on the Internet Movie Database. *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071691/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm

⁵²⁹ See for example: Sebald, W. G. "The Art of Transformations: Herbert Achternbusch's Theatrical Mission." *A Radical Stage: Theatre and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s*. Ed. W. G. Sebald. New York, Berg, 1988.

⁵³⁰ Schütte, "Der Hüter der Metaphysik" 4. This quote is taken from the online publication of this essay at: http://eprints.aston.ac.uk/5717/1/Sebald_Grazer_Literatur.pdf

it's very easy to hypnotize a chicken ... and in one or two films I've actually shown that."⁵³¹ One can therefore read the scene mentioned above as emblematic of what Herzog sees as 1970s Western capitalist culture. The dumbing down of society is poignantly expressed here: Peter Handke's original educators have been replaced by the mindless, carefree youth who have not only unreflectively absorbed the lessons of their own educators, but are expressing their desire to indoctrinate others into a similar state of mindlessness. The protest exhibited by Kaspar comes across to them as absurd and incomprehensible. The warning inherent in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* extends to all the viewers: be more like Kaspar and fear the ease with which we can be hypnotized.

This zombification of the community is attacked throughout Sebald's novels as well. The scene devoted to Herbeck in *Vertigo* also reveals Sebald's concerns regarding the general lack of mental engagement in his society.⁵³² As demonstrated in Chapter Five of this study, Sebald analyzes Franz Kafka's characters which are in states of slow decay, and sees how their physical immobility reflects their lack of mental engagement and the progressive deterioration of society. Similar figures appear in Sebald's own works and are reminiscent of both Kafka's decay and Herzog's hypnosis. In *Vertigo*, the narrator and Ernst Herbeck enter a café and find themselves surrounded by silent, stone-like figures that appear to be rapidly heading towards a state normally reserved for the undead. The room comes across as a cave after being in the direct sunlight and they exclaim:

... only gradually and partially did our sight return and other people became apparent in the gloom, some of them bent low over their plates, others sitting curiously upright or leaning back, but all of them without exception on their own, a silent gathering, the shadow of the waitress threading among them, as if she were the bearer of a secret message between the several guests and the corpulent landlord.⁵³³

That these figures metaphorically represent the passivity encouraged by Western Capitalism is made clear by the word "corpulent". The general public becomes increasingly lethargic and immobile as they consistently ingest the copious amounts of food, which I argue can be read here as symbolic of the information supplied by the media, they are handed down by their already corpulent leader.⁵³⁴ They do not engage in discussions at this silent gathering, meaning no one partakes in critical thinking, but they seem to have a shared secret knowledge about them, presumably the inherited knowledge of their "educators". This knowledge is passed on by the waitress who threads through the consumers. That she is a shadowy figure represents the ghostly nature of the knowledge she is spreading. This circulation within the café seals the customers' fate within the processes of degeneration. Much like Plato's "Allegory of the Cave", those that sit within the darkness of the cave spread echoes of knowledge, yet this information is fragmented and outdated. Thus, unlike the narrator and Herbeck who have been exposed to and nearly blinded by the "light" which so thoroughly contrasts with the overwhelming darkness (ignorance) within the café, the customers remain content and apathetic. Whereas Kaspar attempts to flee from the scene of hypnosis, the narrator and Herbeck huddle together at their

⁵³¹ Chicken hypnotism occurs in more than "in one or two films", there are such scenes not only in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, but also in *Auch Zwerge haben klein angefangen* and *Stroszek*. Bunford, Siri. "Werner Herzog. On Chickens." Web. 20 Feb. 2014. <http://vimeo.com/9880377>

⁵³² Although written in 1990, this scene occurs as a flashback in which the narrator and Herbeck meet to go on an outing in October 1980.

⁵³³ Sebald, *Vertigo* 47.

⁵³⁴ For a thorough explanation of how the ingestion of food relates to Sebald and Herbeck's anti-capitalist stance see the final section of Chapter Five.

table. An intimation of protest against acceptance of the indoctrination of the status quo, especially on Herbeck's part, is revealed in the narrator's commentary that, contrary to the "corpulent" bodies within the café, "Ernst declined to eat anything."⁵³⁵ The narrator and Herbeck appear as hopeful outsiders amidst a sea of passive contentment and conformity: they are not willing to engage in the blind acceptance of inherited knowledge. The narrator and Herbeck are not part of the communal secret everyone else in the bar seems to share. In these cases the outsider position, from which one is capable of gazing back at the majority and challenging it, is the preferable one.

The Sideshow Act and the Theatrical Stage as Sites for Critical Reflection

Another phenomenon addressed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is the problematic existence of capitalist enterprises which were blatantly exploitive. Sebald and Herzog were well aware of this tendency and incorporate critiques thereof in their works. Therefore, I will initially provide a brief outline indicating the historic role of the mentally ill in such enterprises. I will then turn to how Herzog and Sebald make an effort to remind the public that the phenomenon of such exploitation hasn't entirely ceased to exist: the display of abnormality as a means to reassure the mainstream of their own healthy, normal state persists. What shall be explored here is the correlation, in terms of societal commentary, between Herzog's attack of the capitalist enterprise of the sideshow act and Sebald incorporation of theatrical performances by Herbeck. These performances occur at sites where role reversal and the Bakhtinian carnivalesque come into play.

In terms of visual culture, the spectacle of madness has existed at least since the sixteenth century when the first visits by people outside of the medical profession began touring the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London, aka "Bedlam".⁵³⁶ Viewing "madmen" within the confines of the institution reached its pinnacle of popularity however in the nineteenth century when, as Foucault states, in 1815 "das Hospital von Bedlam stellte jeden Sonntag Irre für einen Penny aus. Das jährliche Einkommen dieser Ausstellung betrug etwa 400 Pfund, was die erstaunlich hohe Zahl von 96.000 Besuchern jährlich bedeutet."⁵³⁷ At this time, there was a clear association between idleness and unreason: those who didn't or couldn't work were viewed as inhuman, beastly. This idea is also expressed in Herzog's film: just after Hauser has been discovered and is tended to by the state, meaning placed in a holding cell, a discussion between the police and several officials turns to how Kaspar can financially contribute to his own upkeep. Their gaze shifts to those members of the public who have come to the jail with hopes of peering through the bars to witness the anomaly, Kaspar. This prompts the decision to deliver Kaspar to the circus where his otherness can be made profitable. In both Foucault's description of Bedlam and Herzog's cinematic rendition of Kaspar's story, witnessing "madness" behind the walls of the institution was encouraged as a way to maintain the status quo by providing the public with a reaffirmation of their own good standing, thanks to their steadfast bourgeois work ethic, and to simultaneously serve as a warning to maintain this good behavior as a lapse thereof could result in a stay within the mental institution, hospital, prison or similar residence for outsiders of the

⁵³⁵ Sebald, *Vertigo* 47.

⁵³⁶ In 1522, Sir Thomas More recounts incidents from his visit to "Bedlam" in his chapter on death from *The Four Last Things*. More analyses the laughter, which results from pain rather than pleasure, coming from the "madmen" in this institution.

⁵³⁷ Foucault, *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft* 138.

community.

There were, however, instances in which the mentally ill were able to reclaim an element of control regarding the way in which they were being watched. Accepting the fact that they were going to be put on display regardless, some chose to make this “natural” performance into a theatrical one in which they could fulfill the role of either actor or viewer of their own show. Foucault includes a response to this phenomenon by a former director, Coulmier, of the mental institution at Charenton. Coulmier states: “Die Irren, die diesen Theatervorführungen beiwohnten, waren Objekt der Aufmerksamkeit und Neugier eines oberflächlichen, verantwortungslosen und oft boshafte[n] Publikums.”⁵³⁸ Highlighted in this quote is the fact that the mentally ill were objects of “attention” and “curiosity” for the public which was “irresponsible” and therefore could be “superficially” engaged in the spectacle, these words already intimate the role the mentally ill would next fulfill as a sideshow attraction. These terms also relate to the historical tradition of viewing the Other in a theatrical setting; namely, that German speaking tradition of placing a country-bumpkin figure on the stage to perform clownish antics. Two characters typify this figure, there is Hanswurst and Kasperle of the *Kasperltheater*, in both cases, while these figures carried out their clownish act, there was always a deeper question lurking under the surface of their gestures. Much like the Shakespearean fool, one tended to ask if they were in possession of some sort of secret, a deeper truth regarding society that everyone else was somehow blind to, and worse, were they parodying this blindness on the stage?

The stage “performance” by at least one member of the sideshow act in Herzog’s circus scene, the aforementioned “Little King”, intimates in his facial expression that he is in fact in possession of a deeper truth. The role of the Little King is to remain statuesque and silent, in order not to undermine by speaking in his own voice, the fictional narrative which has been constructed by the carnival director and is related as he walks in circles around his human displays. As the circus director narrates the story of how the kings have diminished in size over the years, the camera remains steadily focused on the Little King on his throne. Primarily, the King’s expression is difficult to read and, in this sense, he is a great mystery. Is he contemplating life, his situation or nothing at all? At one point, however, the King rolls his eyes towards the ceiling, not in a gesture of annoyance, but rather in an effort to look somewhere, anywhere, other than at the audience gawking at him if he were to turn his head forward. He then shifts his gaze towards the floor, to the poodles, also in costume, at the foot of his throne (the viewer only sees a hint of the tops of their suits and fur as the camera remains in a close-up shot of the King on the throne). Again, this shifting of the King’s gaze underscores the previous glance towards the ceiling and also the fact that he never once turns his head forward to the audience but instead keeps his head positioned toward the right, away from the people in front of him and the circus director to his left. Kaspar likewise keeps his gaze averted toward the ceiling, avoiding eye-contact with the audience. Unlike the King who appears to have been with this circus for many years and intentionally keeps his head angled away from the audience in a manner which comes across as escapist, Kaspar embodies the *Kasperltheater* figure described above.

In Sebald’s article on Handke’s *Kaspar*, he reverses the traditional lighthearted viewing of the *Kasperltheater* to exclaim that the clownish behavior of Kaspar Hauser loses its comedic element and turns simply into humiliation. Brad Prager also looks at this point and quotes Sebald’s view that Kaspar has “assimilated enough clownish behavior for us to be almost

⁵³⁸ Foucault, *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft* 139.

embarrassed by his correct reactions ... What looks like progress is nothing more than the gradual humiliation of a trained creature.”⁵³⁹ In Herzog’s film, Kaspar is this trained creature for whom the audience in the theater, as opposed to the audience at the carnival, feels embarrassment and shame. Kaspar’s averted gaze seems to be a struggle, he blinks rapidly and occasionally his eyes shift to the side, as if they are fighting to remain, as obviously instructed, turned away from the mass of people standing before him. His eyes represent one aspect of his struggle to contain his physical nature: at one point, Kaspar’s hand, which is permanently raised to display his letter, twitches briefly but violently and thereby reveals his effort to behave like the trained bear and contain and repress his natural movements.

Sebald’s sympathy with the Kaspar figure was anomalous in comparison to the way this Other was viewed in such performances by the general public from the sixteenth century and into the nineteenth century. The audiences of these earlier times could enjoy this curious display of difference from a safe distance in which they felt comfortably reassured of their own reason, as one sees in the smiling faces of the public at Herzog’s carnival as they stare at the posed Kaspar. Foucault underscores how important it was for the general public to be able to view madness (or the illusion of madness and abnormality as the observed individual is denied the chance to offer their own opinions and views) in a secure and entertaining way that would confirm their steadfast reason in opposition to such mad outbursts. In a reference incorporating the infamous Marquis de Sade, who organized several theatrical performances with his fellow inmates during his internment as a patient in a mental institution, Foucault claims: “Der Wahnsinn wird zum reinen Schauspiel in einer Welt, über die de Sade seine Herrschaft ausdehnt und die dem guten Gewissen von einer ihrer selbst sicheren Vernunft als Unterhaltung angeboten wird.”⁵⁴⁰ In a way, this established tradition of the driving necessity to observe the abnormal individual as a way to solidify definitions of normality is what serves as the impetus for the carnivalesque depictions of madness.

By the mid-1800s, there were a few incongruous portrayals of mentally ill individuals which challenged the inhumane manner in which these people were viewed by the public. In Georg Büchner’s drama *Woyzeck* (1836), he depicts the fate of this eponymous historical hero who agrees to undergo a series of nutritional experiments offered to him by a military doctor in order to earn enough money to support the woman he loves and their illegitimate child. While the earnings are stable, these experiments result in a mental illness which culminates in a frenzied outburst of jealous aggression which causes Woyzeck to murder the mother of his child. What one sees in the doctor’s desperate attempt to label and identify an illness in Woyzeck is that his desire to study an aberration causes him to create one.⁵⁴¹ What indicates Woyzeck’s increasing madness and degeneration is that he cannot control his natural drives. The example to demonstrate this is that Woyzeck urinates “like a dog” on the wall, thus definitively proving to the doctor that he has departed from civilized reason. Woyzeck is expected to use his will, his mind, to control his bodily functions. The spectacle of man’s (Woyzeck’s) descent to beast is offset by a carnival scene in which a beast (here a horse) is put on display to exhibit his striving ascension to mankind. The horse, which has learned how to count, is described by the caller as having “viehdummes Individuum” and “in decoding the ‘vi’ from ‘Individuum’ as ‘Vieh’ (beast)

⁵³⁹ Prager, “Offending the Public” 98.

⁵⁴⁰ Foucault, *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft* 139.

⁵⁴¹ For more on this topic see Pethes, Nicolas. “‘Viehdummes Individuum’, ‘unsterblichste Experimente’. Elements for a Cultural History of Human Experimentation in Georg Büchner’s Dramatic Case Study *Woyzeck*.” *Monatshefte* 98, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 68-82.

Büchner blurs the difference between humans and animals that traditionally helped to define humans. The distinction is even turned upside down: Whereas Woyzeck is subordinated to an amoeba, the horse is declared a member of academic society.”⁵⁴² This performance-within-a-performance demonstrates the carnival horse becoming human within the theatrical play while Woyzeck becomes animal-like in the regression signified by the primacy of his bodily drives over his mentality (his will).

This plot structure is recreated in both Herzog’s cinematic version of Büchner’s work (1979) and in his *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) and within these adaptations Herzog also adds a capitalist critique. Although set around 1830, Herzog’s film portrays the fall of Kaspar via gradual induction into various capitalist enterprises, the initial impetus being his participation in the sideshow act at the carnival. Kaspar’s willingness to engage in this enterprise is explained by the caller: he has agreed to be on display every afternoon as a way to relieve the financial burden from the state for his care; and yet it is apparent that any profit to be had by Kaspar’s performance is reinvested by the ringmaster so that the public may be further entertained by the exploitative undertakings of the carnival. When Herzog’s Hauser is taken in by the carnival, the opening act features a bear who turns somersaults and behaves “as if on his own accord, dutifully and benign.” This is followed by an Indian playing the flute⁵⁴³ and then Kaspar, the foundling, “the greatest mystery”, who stands within a roped off area in the same pose as when he was first discovered (the rope incidentally extends comically low around his hips at what appears to be a distance of less than six centimeters, thus making it look more like a faulty belt than a barrier. This points to the flimsiness of the border separating normal from abnormal; it is as though we can all exchange our abnormal belt for our normal one at a moment’s notice). In this scene, one sees the exploitive manner in which Kaspar is used as a spectacle, and yet this is the first step in the transformation of Kaspar from a wild creature into an everyday citizen. He will be further trained to be, like the bear, obedient and benign.

W. G. Sebald describes this process in his analysis of Peter Handke’s *Kaspar* as “Sprechfolterung”⁵⁴⁴ soll das Stück nicht nur heißen, weil aus Kaspar eingeredet wird, bis er, sozusagen, um den gesunden Tierverstand kommt.”⁵⁴⁵ In each version of the Kaspar story, the irony is of course that the true loss is the diminishing of one’s spontaneity, liveliness and “healthy animal nature” in order to, based on Sebald’s wording, acquire unhealthy human intelligence (*den ungesunden Menschenverstand*) and to be an average *Mitbürger*. Another phrase Sebald employs in his essay on Handke’s *Kaspar* is that he appears, through his civilizing process to be an “animal gone mad”.⁵⁴⁶ Being animal means recognizing the absurd nature of “civilized” man with his uncalled for hubris and arbitrary regulations on linguistics and belief systems to which he must conform to be accepted.

To bring this discussion of Woyzeck’s and Kaspar Hauser’s appearance at the circus back to Ernst Herbeck, it is to be noted that when Sebald associates Herbeck with the circus, he likely not only has Büchner, Handke, and Herzog’s opinions in mind, but also those political ideas of Alexander Kluge. I see three occasions in which Sebald alludes to Herbeck’s connection to the circus in *Vertigo*. In each case, these references are inspired by Herbeck’s hyperbolic gestures

⁵⁴² Pethes “Vieh dummes Individuum” 75.

⁵⁴³ For more on the carnival and zoo performances of people from native tribes, see Chapter Four in which Carl Hagenbeck’s *Völkerschauen* are discussed.

⁵⁴⁴ Handke terms refers to the violent process Kaspar is forced to endure as part of his admittance into language.

⁵⁴⁵ Sebald, “Fremdheit, Integration und Krise” in *CS* 63.

⁵⁴⁶ Sebald, “Strangeness, Integration, and Crisis” in *CS* 58.

which appear to demonstrate his awareness of the daily performance with which he is engaged. When the narrator first encounters Herbeck, he claims: “When I arrived ... he was already standing waiting at the top of the steps ... I waved to him from the other side of the street, whereupon he raised his arm in welcome and, keeping it outstretched, came down the steps.”⁵⁴⁷ While not a direct comment on the circus, I believe this scene nonetheless is inspired by a comedic performance Sebald noticed in Herbeck’s poetry: namely his parodies of Hitler. In Chapter One, I demonstrated how in Sebald’s unpublished novel, “Josef”, he recreated Herbeck’s comedic portrayal of this historic figure on at least two occasions. More importantly for the current discussion is Sebald’s belief that Herbeck demonstrates an awareness of a symbiotic relationship to Hitler. In Chapter Four, I showed how Herbeck’s combination of his name with Hitler’s, “ERNYst HITL’ER”, demonstrated what Sebald viewed to be Herbeck’s revelation of the crucial role the individual plays within the grand scope of history. Regardless of our position within a society, we are inevitably intertwined with the historical events occurring around us. Sebald returns to this idea in the recounting of the tragic event where Herbeck eats a hare, the animal he viewed to be his brother due to an identification prompted by his harelip, which results in his placement in the ambiguous position of perpetrator and victim. Sebald saw this instance as emblematic of the fate of all Germans who had acknowledged neither their culpability for the events of World War II (as perpetrators) nor their own suffering (as victims).

When Herbeck assumes the role of Hitler, here indicated by the continually raised arm intimating a salute as he walks down the stairs, he is engaging in a Bakhtinian, carnivalesque performance. In this way, Herbeck’s tragic victim-perpetrator performance is not unlike Charlie Chaplin’s parody of Hitler in *The Great Dictator*. In *Rabelais and his World* (1965), Bakhtin discusses folk festivities of the carnival type: “a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture.”⁵⁴⁸ Although here Bakhtin is referring to the clownish performance which mimicked the serious nature of civil or social ceremonies such as feasts or initiations of knights; this atmosphere extended during the carnival season to allow everyone to play the role of the clown. Thus, the carnival was a safe area where the clowns, typically the voice of madness, could provide the voice of reason in this upside-down environment via their parodies which critiqued normally untouchable power relations. Much like Bakhtin’s own text which uses this analysis of folk culture in the Middle Ages to camouflage its “subversively satiric attack upon many specific aspects of official Stalinist repression,”⁵⁴⁹ so too can Herbeck critique his society, the foundation of which Sebald and Herzog also recognized was problematically still supported by former members of the National Socialist Party. In his hyperbolic gesture of greeting, Herbeck becomes the embodiment of that artistic aspect Bakhtin mentions in connection with the carnivalesque: the spectacle. Though Bakhtin furthers this thought with “but the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play.”⁵⁵⁰ Herbeck is the embodiment of ambivalence and liminality, as in the carnival where there is no distinction between the actors

⁵⁴⁷ Sebald, *Vertigo* 39.

⁵⁴⁸ Bakhtin, Mikhail. “Folk Humour and Carnival Laughter.” *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. Ed. Pam Morris. London: Edward Arnold, 2003. 194-206. 196.

⁵⁴⁹ Bakhtin, “Folk Humour and Carnival Laughter” 194.

⁵⁵⁰ Bakhtin, “Folk Humour and Carnival Laughter” 197-98.

and the audience, Herbeck is simultaneously in and out of society, sane and insane, uneducated and acclaimed author, and with this gesture he is art (the totalitarian Hitler) and life (the timid schizophrenic Herbeck).

There are two additional instances in which Herbeck is associated with the carnival and performance. In *Vertigo*, as the narrator and Herbeck walk by a primary school where the children inside are singing, the narrator claims: “Ernst stood still, turned to me as though we were both actors on a stage, and in a theatrical manner uttered a statement...”⁵⁵¹ And in the final example of Herbeck’s carnivalesque aura, the narrator states upon his departure:

Ernst, standing on tiptoe and bowing slightly, took his hat from his head and with it, as he turned away, executed a sweeping motion which ended with him putting the hat back on; a performance which seemed to be, at the same time, both childishly easy and an astonishing feat of artistry. This gesture, like the manner in which he had greeted me that morning, put me in mind of someone who had travelled with the circus for many years.

Again, this gesture is reminiscent of the comedic grace of figures such as Charlie Chaplin. Even in Chaplin’s *The Circus* (1928) one sees “accidents” simultaneously performed with childish innocence and astonishing artistry. The bodily displays and performances reveal what Walter Benjamin determined to be a wonder in which certain physical achievements stand for a phenomenon of inner subjectivity or introspection.⁵⁵² I believe that, in his iteration of Herbeck’s physical feats, Sebald has Benjamin’s idea in mind and has included this scene to demonstrate how the innate creative process at work within Herbeck manifests itself through his corporeal gestures. These descriptions not only align Herbeck with the typical associations related to the circus such as the blending of art and life, the body presented as extraordinary spectacle and role-playing versus reality; but they also point in a political direction.

By the time Herzog and Sebald integrated references to the circus within their own works, Alexander Kluge had already released his film *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos* (1968). What this film enacts are the themes which would underlie both *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* and the Herbeck scene in *Vertigo*. In Kluge’s film, the protagonist Leni Peickert is motivated, following an accident at the circus in which her father fails to catch his partner during a trapeze act, to completely reform the circus. Her plan calls for a revolution, a reorganization of the traditional system in which animals were to become humans and vice versa. Leni wants to show the beasts in all their natural glory. That Leni should choose the circus as the arena in which to display authenticity is an idea posed by Ernst Bloch: “the circus is the only honest, down-to-earth honest performance. A wall cannot be built anywhere in front of spectators who sit in a circle and surround performers. Nevertheless, there is an estrangement.”⁵⁵³ The critics were quick to point out that the circus serves as an allegory for both art and the political situation of the late 1960s, especially the student movements of 1968. As evidenced in the opening montage which incorporates clips featuring Hitler’s attendance of “Tag der Deutschen Kunst” (“Day of German Art”, 1939), one sees the call to decimate those aspects of the institutionalized art world which continued to mirror the way art had been controlled during the Nazi regime. This opening scene also is a call to revolution for filmmakers. The message is that cinema needs

⁵⁵¹ Sebald *Vertigo* 44.

⁵⁵² Bose, *Circus*. 7. This quote is highlighted in Sebald’s personal copy of this text. This text is located in W. G. Sebald’s personal library housed at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach (DLA).

⁵⁵³ Bloch, Ernst. “Better Castles in the Sky at the County Fair and Circus, in Fairy Tales and Colportage.” *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*. Trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988. 179.

to move beyond their father's generation of films (*Papas Kino*) which turned men, not into beasts like the cinema, but into something worse: automata, lifeless characters which appeared in escapist films that either blindly spouted the ideology of the state or lacked any steadfast opinions.⁵⁵⁴ This was a call for authenticity, for a blurring of the border between life and art and a demand for not only freedom for art, but also a redefinition of what is considered aesthetically pleasing. These themes are grappled with and portrayed literally by Herzog and Sebald.

In *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, Kaspar is nearly brought to tears after listening to a (expressionistic) version of the song "Agnus Dei" (Lamb of God) played on the piano by Florian, who has been blind ever since his family perished in an accident and "who plays piano the entire day, albeit a bit differently from what is considered proper nowadays".⁵⁵⁵ Artistic production which is born of one's emotion rather than by formal training is the key here, and this lack of training is underscored in Daumer mentioning of the artist's disability. Similarly, in Sebald's *Vertigo*, the outsider is accompanied by the intellectual narrator (Sebald's alter ego) who is appreciative of authentic modes of creativity and has therefore sought out the naïve, untrained artist. In the middle of "All'estero" when the narrator and Herbeck pass by a school they overhear the children singing inside and the narrator thinks "the most appealing sounds [were] coming from those who could not hit the right notes." Herbeck gives voice to the narrator's thoughts in a direct quote: "That is a very fine sound, borne upon the air, and uplifts one's heart."⁵⁵⁶ This scene and Herzog's piano interlude, further allude to the fact that beginning in the mid-1960s, the general population (although not quite the majority) began to demonstrate an increasing interest in underground or Outsider Art.

There was suddenly more of an appreciation for emotional, genuine and personal artistic expression than for art which strictly adhered to a particular genre. The fact that Sebald ends Herbeck's sentence with the period followed by the dash is also an acknowledgment of Herbeck's contribution to this free artistic movement. Herbeck frequently connected thoughts in his poetry that had been concluded by a period with the insertion of a dash thereafter.⁵⁵⁷ In her "Introduction" to Bakhtin, Pam Morris explains how the forms of comedy and parody which appeared in novels were extended in the Middle Ages into popular culture via carnivals and feasts in the figures of clowns or fools. Based on its foundation in the novel, the comedy enacted by the clown which grew out of this tradition developed from a "dialogic literary consciousness", thereby placing the emphasis on language and linguistics. She claims that in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin explains how "these popular forms possess a liberating force: 'they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse.'"⁵⁵⁸ Therefore, in Sebald's playful adaptation of Herbeck's semantic style, he is both paying homage to this writer and freeing himself from his

⁵⁵⁴ "Denn wie Leni Peickert wollten die Jungfilmer einst Papas Kino, in dem Menschen Männchen machten, radikal reformieren und den Deutschen naturgetreu auf die Leinwand werfen." Rumler, Fritz. "Ratlose Artisten in der Pulvermühle. Fritz Rumler über Alexander Kluges neuen Film." 09.09.1968. *Der Spiegel* 37 (1968): 162.

⁵⁵⁵ My translation is given above. In German Daumer states "er spielt den ganzen Tag Klavier, wenn noch ein bisschen anders als das heute schicklich ist." "Florian" is played by Florian Fricke, the founder and pianist in the progressive rock band, Popol Vuh, which performed the music for the majority of Herzog's film.

⁵⁵⁶ Sebald, *Vertigo* 44.

⁵⁵⁷ For example, in Herbeck's poem "Die Zeitung" there are five lines which run thusly: "für tich zu vac se vie – CH. / Das Blatt das den Nenner hat / muß 3-sein wie das liebe GRAB. - / die Zeit ist aus die blöde See / das Feuer her, den Kaffee." Navratil, *Alexanders poetische Texte* 81.

⁵⁵⁸ Morris, Pam. Introduction. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. Ed. Morris. London: Edward Arnold, 2003. 1-24. 20.

own linguistic constraints. The recreation of this linguistic anomaly is Sebald's willful alignment of himself with Herbeck and the clown/Kaspar figure; it is his demonstration of his support of a rebellious stance against institutionalized language. The unusual semantics make the reader think of Herbeck and Kaspar's illustration of the arbitrary nature of the language which we frequently take for granted. Such statements make the reader take pause, examine the playful construction and appreciate its difference. As Daumer intimates after Florian finishes his tune on the piano, there are many adjectives that can be applied to the word art, "proper" need not be one of them.

By establishing connections between their protagonists and the circus, Herzog and Sebald set the stage for the anthropological reversal of the gaze. Their experience with the circus or stage means that Kaspar and Herbeck are aware of their position as objects of observation. They are also aware of the liminality of this position, that they inhabit an ambiguous area somewhere between heaven and earth. Sebald quotes Claude Lévi-Strauss to substantiate an argument for the otherworldliness of Herbeck: "die Hasenscharte [gilt] ... als der Ansatz zu einer nicht vollendeten Zwillingengeburt. Es ist diese Zweiheit in einem, die den Hasen mit seinem gespaltenen Gesicht zu einer allerhöchsten Gottheit macht, zu einem Vermittler zwischen Himmel und Erde."⁵⁵⁹ Kaspar resembles Picasso's clowns: "Picasso's clowns and harlequins are reminders. They are passageways into another form of knowledge and a different way of doing things. With the earthly being they share merely their presence; they are the messengers of gods and animals."⁵⁶⁰ Kaspar's alignment with animals was made clearest in his appearance as a sideshow act: he is the soon-to-be trained bear. Once he has been educated by Daumer, however, his position changes. Having been exposed to the public as an oddity best displayed in a menagerie, he is accustomed to the derogatory, scrutinizing and curious gaze of the public. Herbeck's situation is different. The anthropological gaze directed toward him is a sympathetic one, Sebald's / the narrator's, and yet Herbeck also demonstrates his awareness of his position as the object of the gaze and engages in a conscious reversal thereof. It is this reversal of the, what I see as anthropological, gaze which shall be turned to next.

Politicized Language, Authoritarian Education and the Reversal of the Anthropological Gaze

During the 1960s and 1970s, a variety of cultural productions which focused on representations of authoritarian modes of education gained in popularity. Works focusing on Germany's nonconformist youth culture illustrated in their portrayal of the educational conflict perhaps the clearest expression of how the younger generation felt their needs were being repressed by an oppressive, dominant group. This generation subsequently sought out alternative guidance as they recognized the persistence of fascism in their own authoritative father-figures.⁵⁶¹ What was brought to the forefront in such works were issues of control and indoctrination which resulted from the perceived connection between 1960s capitalism and the

⁵⁵⁹ Sebald, "Des Häschens Kind" 177.

⁵⁶⁰ My translation. "Picassos Clowns und Harlequine, seine Gaukler sind Eingedenken. Es sind Passagen in anderes Wissen und anderes Tun. Mit dem Irdischen teilen sie nur ihre Anwesenheit, sie sind Boten der Götter und mit den Tieren verbündet. Auf der Schwelle der Initiation einer anderen Ordnung." Bose, *Circus* 146.

⁵⁶¹ For a study on the cinematic and musical representations of this generational conflict of the late 1960s, see for example: Layne, Priscilla. "Waiting for My Band: Music, Legacy and Identity in Peter Zadek's *Ich bin ein Elefant, Madame.*" *Rebellion and Revolution: Defiance in German Language, History and Art*. Eds. Melissa Etzler and Priscilla Layne. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010. 204-23.

Nazi era since many former members of the National Socialist Party were able to maintain their positions within the government. Peter Handke and Werner Herzog's retellings of the linguistic, and thereby cultural, indoctrination of the rebellious foundling, Kaspar Hauser, are partially informed and inspired by this movement. Thus, one issue to be focused on in this section is how Kaspar protests against the authoritarian educational system. One method of revolt which is not only utilized by Kaspar Hauser, but also by Ernst Herbeck, is of course language.

In Sebald's article on Handke's *Kaspar*, he connects these issues of language and power by alluding to how true madness is to be found in the oppressive educational system within Western capitalist culture:⁵⁶² "Kaspar's *éducation sentimentale* is also his case history, and from it we finally gain insight into the pathological connection which inevitably exists between the possession of property and education."⁵⁶³ Sebald implies that an inherent threat is always present when one attempts to assimilate an individual into a new culture via language. In the case of Handke's Kaspar, the goal of the educators is to eradicate Kaspar's former sense of identity and understanding of the world so that he may be possessed as property of the state. In their renditions of the Kaspar story, Handke and Herzog both recognize that the linguistic mishaps or nuances in Kaspar's expressions, which he never completely corrects, are a positive preservation of uniqueness, difference and an anti-conformist stance. Similarly, Sebald sees Ernst Herbeck's writing as a beacon of light amidst the oppressive, politically charged language which extended into mainstream art and daily life. Sebald refers to Herbeck's ability to create literary combinations of words which, lacking the typical hierarchical organization of primary and secondary words or the academic dryness of *konkrete Poesie*, exist independent of the world of regulated art: "Das Prinzip der Kombination, ... funktioniert [hier] anders als das vom Regime einer Idee verlangte der Nachordnung oder Überordnung, das man sonst in der Literatur antrifft."⁵⁶⁴ In the difference inherent within the language of the outsiders Kaspar and Herbeck, they have the ability to break through the conventions erected by the institutionalization and politicization of language and to shed light on the authoritarian nature of the educational system and also the structure of language itself.

What shall be examined first is one particular scene from Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* in which a professor of logic attempts to assess the level of Hauser's knowledge and the progress he made under Daumer's care. It is clear that the professor represents the inflexible system which does not allow for variation or difference. The manner in which the scene is filmed encourages the viewer to sympathize with Kaspar since, what Herzog is arguing, is that what society considers to be a spectacle of madness, Kaspar, is by far more sane than the point of view and performance of reason conducted and carried out by the professor of logic. From the start of the conversation between the professor and Kaspar, it is apparent the task of testing Kaspar's knowledge is less of a priority for the professor than is expounding his own wealth of knowledge.

In a medium shot, Kaspar, the professor and Daumer's housekeeper are sitting at a table with Kaspar on the left, the professor on the right and the housekeeper as the mediator between the two. In a performance of the social conventions indicating social standing, the professor only

⁵⁶² Sebald returns to this theme of the oppressive educator throughout his novels. In her article on touch in Sebald's novels, Stephanie Bird points to a scene in *Austerlitz* (2001) in which "pain is administered by those in apparently nurturing positions. Penrith-Smith, the good-natured headmaster, is at the pinnacle of a tyrannical hierarchy which decrees that he must thrash the boys." Bird, "Er gab mir, was äußerst ungewöhnlich war, zum Abschied die Hand" 361.

⁵⁶³ Sebald, "Strangeness, Integration, and Crisis" in *CS* 58.

⁵⁶⁴ Sebald, "Eine kleine Traverse" in *BU* 145.

deigns to address Kaspar after he has been properly introduced by the housekeeper and has received Kaspar's agreement to answer his question. The professor proceeds to ask a version of the "liar" or "Epimenides paradox". He explains that Kaspar stands at a crossroads and is confronted by an individual. He wants to deduce if this person came from the right, the town of honest men, or from the left, the town of liars. In order to represent the physical presence of these towns, the professor slides the two teacups to opposing ends of the table. Thus, while this challenge posed to Kaspar is one of logic, what the audience is visually confronted with is a contradiction and a thorough undermining of logic with towns being replaced by teacups. Kaspar is only allowed to ask one question in order to determine whence the person came. The housekeeper interjects, stating such a question is obviously above his capabilities, as it is also above her own. Revealing his smug, self-satisfied persona, without a five second pause to allow Kaspar to consider, the professor exclaims that it is truly a conundrum and since Kaspar doesn't have the answer, he shall give it to him.

The professor, blatantly pleased with his own ability to have memorized this question and answer from his logics course, conducts a two minute explanation revealing how the correct answer can only be discovered by posing a question which entails a double negative. When Kaspar interjects with "yes, I *do* know another question", the professor vehemently rejects this possibility as, according to the laws of logic with which he has been imbued, there is only one viable question, his. Kaspar nonetheless exclaims: "I would ask this person if he is a tree frog, if he says 'yes' then I know he is from the city of liars." The professor, with obvious disgust, replies, "No, I can't accept that, that has nothing to do with logic". While the audience hears the professor's voice vehemently exclaiming his denial of Kaspar's answer, the camera is focused solely on Kaspar and the housekeeper sitting next to him, thereby encouraging the audience to sympathize with Kaspar's reaction. Kaspar turns his back slightly from the professor and stares at the ceiling for a moment as if to subdue the white noise spewing forth from the professor in order to confirm for himself the validity of his answer, although the viewer has already also been encouraged to take his side and to thereby embrace madness over logic. In this way, what Kaspar's authoritarian educators claim to be his madness is, ironically based on the professor's own example, revealed to actually be an unconventional but preferable form of reason. Kaspar has essentially followed the pattern of "logic" outlined by the professor exactly – if the professor can replace towns with teacups, why can't Kaspar's replacement of men with tree frogs work in the same way? Following a short pause, Kaspar closes his eyes and places his hand to his forehead in a sign of resignation. The professor just doesn't get it, but the viewer does.

The absurdity of this scene provides a commentary on the persistent problems of education and knowledge acquisition. The historical dialogue recreated in this film between Kaspar and the professor (1830) occurs roughly a generation after Immanuel Kant (1784) outlined the original goals of the Enlightenment in his treatise: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."⁵⁶⁵ The one-sidedness of the professor with his memorized question and answer not only demonstrates his immaturity but seems illogical next to the spontaneous and active thought process conducted by Kaspar. In this reversal, Kaspar is the one who thinks and demonstrates logic while the professor considers neither the question nor

⁵⁶⁵ "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen." Kant, Immanuel. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Dezember-Heft 1784. 481-94. Web. 20 Feb. 2014. <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/philosophie/texte/kant/aufklaer.htm>

answer (and has likely never really *thought* about either, only memorized them). Kaspar takes the question seriously and, after careful consideration, puts forth a question which, while humorous, equally balances the ridiculous nature of the task itself since it is not a test of logic but rather an inquiry into whether or not Kaspar has successfully conformed to the inflexible laws of learning. Learning for the professor remains what Kant opposed: a false understanding which is predicated upon memorization and the blind absorption of information provided by the guidance of another.

Herzog's intention is of course for the viewer to witness this interaction and to contemplate how it comments on the current state of affairs (1974). What can be deduced by such introspection is that this scene shows, as argued by the members of the Frankfurt School, that we have not yet emerged from our self-incurred immaturity and this is evidenced in the persistence of the authoritative, unidirectional method of instrumentalized learning which attempts to stifle efforts at critical thinking. While this position derives from Kantian ideas, it is firmly grounded within the cultural discourse which arose in West Germany during the late 1960s and early 1970s which resonates with the foundational ideas of antipsychiatry as posed by Thomas Szasz: "psychiatry was an authoritarian extension of the state used for controlling nonconformists. Psychiatric labels were arbitrary designations that, instead of serving the needs of patients, served professional needs and the needs of dominant groups."⁵⁶⁶ Thus, when the professor of logic refuses to accept the reason inherent in Kaspar's argument he contributes to this authoritarian attempt to control nonconformists and to ban critical thinking in order to maintain a constricting status quo.

In this scene, I see not only a promotion of the necessity for critical thinking, but also a reversal of the anthropological gaze. In the ironic manner in which Kaspar overtakes and then reverses the gaze, the idiosyncrasy of the enlightened perspective is revealed, brought under scrutiny and made into an "Other". Looking at the professor scene along with a scene from Sebald's *Vertigo* demonstrates that, despite the fact that Herzog's anthropological reversal is expressed in 1974 and Sebald's in 1990, this continues to be a phenomenon discussed in the twenty-first century. To provide an example of the universal relevance of this topic, as well as the clearest example of the type of anthropological reversal with which these texts are engaged, a comparison shall be illustrated between these works and the performances by another outsider, Bill Shannon aka Crutch Master (2014).⁵⁶⁷ In using a modern example of an anthropological gaze captured via film and claiming that there is a similar dynamic at work in Herzog and Sebald, I am presuming that these artists were all aware of the traditions associated with ethnographic filmmaking, that there is always a controversy involved when one assumes the position of speaking for the other. Jack Ruby writes that:

... while most documentaries are Vertovian, that is, the filmmakers / "authors" present us with their vision, some documentarians have aspired to replicate the subject's view of the world. Their intention duplicates the traditional goal of ethnography – "to grasp a native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world."⁵⁶⁸

As both Herzog and Sebald view their works as existing somewhere between fact and fiction, documentary and drama; their filmmaking also demonstrates an integration of both of these

⁵⁶⁶ Mayes and Horwitz, "DSM-III and the Revolution" 252.

⁵⁶⁷ I borrow the phrase "anthropological reversal" from Petra Kuppers discussion of the street artist Bill Shannon. Kuppers, Petra. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on the Edge*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

⁵⁶⁸ Ruby, Jack. "Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside - An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma." *Visual Anthropology Review* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 50-67. 51.

common approaches to documentaries.

Bill Shannon was born with a degenerative hip condition which limited him to a life on crutches. Prompted by the necessities of survival as well as by aesthetic and artistic drives, Shannon has used this deficiency to become an internationally renowned artist. A documentary film called *Crutch* is currently being produced about Shannon, whom the filmmakers describe as a “break dancer and skate punk, who wields his crutches as tools of expression and weapons of provocation.”⁵⁶⁹ While he is mostly known for the way he weaves through streets, dancing on his crutches, an opposing performance by Shannon involves clownish antics: stumbling or falling over various obstructions in order to observe the reactions of the people around him. Shannon qualifies these stunts as invitations rather than interventions. He welcomes the reactions of the public as a way to conduct an anthropological reversal of the normative gaze. As Shannon explains: “People who look at me go ‘Oh! That’s so sad!’ so part of the invitation is to invite the projected narrative of ... assumed sadness, or assumed sort of failure or awkwardness and invite it in so that I’m not the subject to it but the host to those.”⁵⁷⁰ Petra Kuppers argues that what Shannon achieves in these performances is that he “enables scenes of disclosure of subconscious social scripts.”⁵⁷¹ In Shannon’s elicited responses one can compare the present-day reactions of the public with those historically recorded by the media. His expectations are the stereotypical responses of pity, sadness, etc., which he personally experienced but which also have been traditionally reproduced in magazines or films. In these reactions, the societal assumptions regarding disability are exposed, tested and challenged by Shannon. There is a similar dynamic at work in both Herzog’s film as well as in the scene devoted to Ernst Herbeck in Sebald’s *Vertigo*.

While Sebald’s and Herzog’s works deliver their personal artistic visions, viewpoints and sentiments, both are careful to include scenes which demonstrate an alliance: that the point of view they wish to express is supported by the Other assisting in the deliverance of said message. In claiming that Bruno S. and Ernst Herbeck perform a reversal of the anthropological gaze, I argue that they, albeit under the direction of Herzog and Sebald, demonstrate a conscious awareness of, and an attempt to overcome, the derogatory mode in which the mentally ill other has been traditionally observed.

When confronted by the professor, the viewer sees a performance by Kaspar which is reminiscent of Bill Shannon’s actions. Kaspar sits patiently at the table, aware that he is the object of the professor’s derogatory gaze, and yet Kaspar manages to maintain the upper hand in this scenario. He “invites” the gaze, the philosophical interrogation and is fully conscious of his position as a case study for the professor to determine if it is possible to write the laws of logic onto a blank slate. In his careful consideration of the liar paradox, Kaspar begins to reverse the gaze. That the professor doesn’t expect an answer from Kaspar is apparent in his eagerness to provide the solution which he has learned by heart. Kaspar turns the table by approaching the interview with earnestness and by thinking critically about the offered question. That Kaspar has managed to *think* and not simply wait for knowledge to be handed down for memorization leaves the professor dumbfounded. That Kaspar’s answer is not only logical, but simultaneously playful and absurd, is a further undermining of the professor’s position which had already been thrown into question via his own combination of fact (the rules of logic) and fiction (the

⁵⁶⁹ Cunningham, Sachi and Chandler Evans. *Crutch*. In production. Web. 16 Feb. 2014.
<http://www.crutchdoc.com/>

⁵⁷⁰ Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance* 63.

⁵⁷¹ Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance* 64.

teacups). The answer provided by Kaspar is in a way quite Herbeckian. It opposes the professor's solution which offers the mathematical, highly systematic and regimented "double negative". Kaspar's answer conjures up in the audience an anthropomorphic image which successfully eradicates the hubris of man by reminding us of our ties to nature via the alignment with an amphibian to create the humanoid tree frog. Looking to subjectivity, nature and organics as a mode of understanding the world is essentially another reversal. Organics are malleable, they offer valiance and can adapt to a changing world. The professor's logic is, while reasonable, a stifling system of knowledge seeped in the tradition which led to the rationalization, industrialization and mechanization that culminated in the horrific crimes committed during World War II. Kaspar's logical answer reveals this conversation with the professor to be a performance: he has invited in the gaze of the professor to gain the audience's sympathy for a naive or innocent mode of thinking.

In *Vertigo*, the reversal of the gaze occurs as more a revelation of Ernst Herbeck's awareness of the role society expects him to play and his reflection thereon. While the narrator and Herbeck are sitting in the dark café waiting for their eyes to adjust to this setting, the narrator begins a lengthy monologue on nature in East Anglia. He describes the times of the year in which the land is flooded and one can cross the fields in boats and then the opposite occurs and the landscape appears as a barren wasteland. Herbeck's reaction is:

... all of this Ernst listened to with the patient lack of interest of a man who has long been familiar with every detail he is being told. I then asked if he would write something in my notebook, and this he did without the slightest hesitation with the ballpoint which he took from his jacket pocket, resting his left hand on the open page.⁵⁷²

In terms of a reversal of the gaze, Sebald, as the narrator, becomes a version of the professor from the "Epimenides paradox" scene, although Sebald's narrator lacks the arrogance of the professor. Nonetheless, Sebald's depiction of Herbeck demonstrates his desire to make Herbeck's awareness of the fact that he is being put to the test clear: the narrator has read his poetry and wants to evaluate the writing abilities of this author for himself. Like Kaspar, who patiently waits for the housekeeper to make the introduction before he engages in a conversation with the professor; Herbeck gazes into nothingness while Sebald's narrator rambles on about his local scenery. Both are obviously waiting for the moment in which the major motivating factor behind this get-together would be addressed: the offer to write a poem. As in Herzog's film, the scene comes across as comical, the professor and the narrator warily approach the topic they are there to address while Kaspar and Herbeck, like Bill Shannon, invite this introspection.

A comparison between Sebald's account of his encounter with Herbeck and another writer's description reveals how Sebald empowers, and in a way, idealizes Herbeck. Gerhard Roth recollects his experience of meeting Herbeck as:

Ich ließ ihm Zeit und fragte ihn dann, ob er jetzt ein Gedicht schreiben könne, mit dem Titel "Alexander". "Nein." Ich hielt ihm das Notizbuch hin und redete ihm zu, es zu versuchen, und er schrieb ... ein zweites und drittes Gedicht ... schrieb er folgsam. Er dachte immer ein wenig nach, ließ sich Zeit....⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Sebald, *Vertigo* 48. "... all das hörte Ernst sich an mit dem geduldigen Desinteresse eines Menschen, dem das, was ihm mitgeteilt wird, die längste Zeit schon bis in die Einzelheiten bekannt ist. Ich bat ihn dann noch, mir irgend etwas in mein Notizbuch zu schreiben, was er auch, die linke Hand auf das ausgeschlagene Blatt gelegt, mit dem Druckkugelschreiber aus seiner Jackentasche ohne das geringste Zögern besorgte." Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. 56.

⁵⁷³ Roth, Gerhard. "langsam scheiden. Ein Besuch bei Alexander." *Alexanders poetische Texte*. Ed. Leo Navratil. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977. 194-95.

The reluctance on Herbeck's part as well as the consideration contrasts Sebald's portrayal. Sebald depicts Herbeck as a consummate author, he is confident in his role and he wants to play it, thus all of the narrator's small talk seems to be filler before he is given the chance to express himself. Like Kaspar's performance with the professor, in Herbeck's scenario the upper hand is gained not only via an invitation of observation but also in the performance itself. Kaspar provides an answer which, in its simplicity and accuracy, undermines the professor's rules and expectations of logic. The poem Herbeck writes on England when prompted by the narrator's request likewise demonstrates his sense of humor and acuity. In the first line, he writes "England ist bekanntlich / eine Insel für sich" ("England, as is well known, is an island unto itself").⁵⁷⁴ The phrase "as is well known" (*bekanntlich*) seems to be a direct response to the narrator's lengthy description of the English countryside. This phrase reiterates the narrator's claim that Herbeck listened with an expression that revealed he was long *familiar* (*bekannt*) with everything he was being told. In German, expressing familiarity with something is "mit etwas *bekanntlich* sein". Whether Herbeck actually intimated in his facial expression that he was already familiar with the characteristics of the English countryside or if this was Sebald's invention as part of his own elaboration on the term *bekanntlich* included in Herbeck's poem, the connection reveals that in either case, Herbeck is depicted as fully aware, playful and confident in his assumption of his role as poet which he has been given by Navratil. Herbeck again, as in the example of his poem on masks,⁵⁷⁵ points out a generally unnoticed societal manifestation: each individual has a role they assume and attempt to play on the world stage. Thus, in inviting the gaze and highlighting thereby aspects of society to which the mainstream has become blind (Kaspar's poking fun at the rules of logic and Herbeck's display of the masks we all subconsciously wear), these outsiders are able to reveal their own perspicacity while commenting on the idiosyncrasies of our daily lives which are typically unacknowledged.

⁵⁷⁴ Sebald, *Vertigo* 48-49.

⁵⁷⁵ See the analysis of the poem "Gesichter" in Chapter Four of this study.

Conclusion

Part of the goal of this study has been to reveal the perennial nature of Sebald's ideas and interest in psychopathology and Outsider Art. As has been demonstrated, many of the issues which were important to him beginning in the mid-1960s and were clearly derivatives of particular cultural and historical movements, were frequently returned to and thematized in his novels over thirty years later. While Sebald was one of many individuals who began to investigate Outsider Art in the 1960s and 1970s to the point that it enjoyed a brief streak of popularity, it gradually faded back into the periphery from whence it came over the ensuing years. Since Sebald's curiosity regarding this type of art never waned, I believe he would be pleased today to see that certain works continue to bridge the gap dividing psychiatry from literature and that several creative pieces by outsider artists are once more not only gaining recognition but also appreciation.

In fact, there are currently several museum exhibitions devoted exclusively to outsider artists. For example, *Phaidon*, which is responsible for the publication of the book *Raw Creation: Outsider Art and Beyond* by John Maizels with an introduction by Roger Cardinal;⁵⁷⁶ has an online article focusing on the Brazilian outsider artist, Arthur Bispo do Rosário, who is known for his creative recycling of everyday objects such as wood and rubbish; "he now has a significant space dedicated to his sculptures and creations at São Paulo's Bienal." Much like Herbeck's poetry, within these works, the viewer can identify critical social commentaries: "One [work] refers to the Second World War. Another satires Brazilian politics."⁵⁷⁷ Another article on the *Phaidon* website which is ironically called, "Outsiders are in", begins with a clarification regarding the appropriate nature of this title and then provides a list of up-and-coming Outsider Artists: "As outsider art showcase, *The Museum of Everything*, sets up shop in London's luxury fashion cathedral Selfridges, positioning itself firmly at the centre of consumer culture, we thought it would be a good moment to take a look at some other outsider artists who've caught our eye."⁵⁷⁸ In this description of *The Museum of Everything* showcase, one sees several aspects which would have caught Sebald's attention and which also serve as a reminder that the societal issues which drew him to Outsider Art originally are consistent with this interest today. Not only is there the encouragement to familiarize oneself with the new developments in the world of Outsider Art, but the exhibition has been placed in Selfridges, a consumer palace. As stated throughout this work, Sebald admired the aspects of Herbeck's poetry which expressed themes that he could interpret as critiques of consumer capitalist culture; and, in this exhibition, one recognizes similar critiques not only in the artworks themselves but also by way of the location.

The foundational opinions and arguments presented by Navratil beginning in the mid-1960s and by Sebald in the early 1980s are worth returning to now as the renewed interest in Outsider Art stems from societal events that, in many ways, reflect the occurrences to which these two were originally responding. One of Navratil's goals which remains relevant to this day

⁵⁷⁶ Maizels, John. *Raw Creation: Outsider Art and Beyond*. London: Phaidon, 2000.

⁵⁷⁷ "Why is Arthur Bispo do Rosário so revered right now?" *Phaidon*. Web. 10 April 2014.

<http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2012/november/09/why-is-arthur-bispo-do-rosario-so-revered-right-now/>

⁵⁷⁸ "Outsiders are in." *Phaidon*. Web. 10 April 2014.

<http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2011/september/26/outsidere-are-in/>

was his desire to unite various fields of study. He hoped primarily to attract intellectuals from the Humanities to give voice to their understanding of the relationship between creativity and madness. Navratil was perhaps ahead of his time. In our current, increasingly global world, one sees, for example in the restructuring of the (particularly American and European) educational systems, the fact that the type of knowledge which is most valued tends to be interdisciplinary. Regarding specifically the continuation of Navratil's goal to unite psychiatry and the liberal arts, perhaps the most direct reflection can be found in the publication of H. Kraft's *Grenzgänger zwischen Kunst und Psychiatrie* which has been expanded and reworked over three editions between in 1986 and 2005.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, the theories posed by Claude Lévi-Strauss regarding the way the natives from primitive tribes create artistic works via *bricolage* and the parallels Sebald draws between this method and those of the Outsider Artists are equally pertinent today. Inspired by Lévi-Strauss, Sebald argued there is something to be learned about the basic conditions of creativity in naïve or primitive individuals. This is evidenced today via a comparison of the products of Outsider Art on a global and multigenerational scale. Because Outsider Art is created with an institutionally untrained eye, the commonalities between works which transcend spatial and temporal boundaries are all the more significant and even uncanny. In their similarities, they support an argument for the existence of an original genius (or madness): one thinks of the overwhelming incorporation of anthropomorphic creatures, of Teresa Ottalo (France / mid-twentieth century) and Adolf Wölfli's (Switzerland / early twentieth century) shared horror vacui, and of the fact that Teresa Ottalo and Arthur Bispo do Rosário (Brazil / late twentieth century) both choose to compose letters with a needle and thread rather than with pen and paper.

There have also been several recent popular publications and films which have attempted to unite the fields of psychiatry and literature. The work, *Irre*, by the bestselling author Manfred Lütz, is a factual account narrated in a literary manner. The purpose of the book is to demonstrate the universality and timelessness of considerations of madness.⁵⁸⁰ In this book, he points to society's misconceptions concerning what or who may be labeled "insane". Lütz argues that, as a psychiatrist, he is confronted everyday by individuals who have been deemed mentally ill by himself, other psychiatrists or by the general public. Employing adjectives which illustrate the vulnerable, emotional, and most importantly, decidedly humane nature of these people; he describes them as "rührende Demenzkranke, dünnhäutige Süchtige, hochsensible Schizophrene, erschütternd Depressive und mitreißende Maniker" (xiii). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Lütz sees how the news reports daily on people who have committed murder, war crimes, acts of terrorism or robbery; and yet they are ironically considered to somehow be sane: "Solche Figuren gelten sogar als völlig normal" (xiii). Lütz claims that psychiatrists are forced to treat the wrong individuals, since those who really need psychiatric help are inexplicably considered normal by society. Another popular, contemporary book is Christof Kessler's *Wahn: Stories* in which this author, a neurologist, relates several unique cases also in literary manner. Even from the title, the author's desire to combine psychiatry and literary fantasy is apparent. On his method of narration, Kessler claims: "Also, nicht eins zu eins. Ich habe mir viele Fälle ausgedacht, aber einige waren wirklich reale Patienten, deren Biografie ich natürlich verändert habe."⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ Kraft, H. *Grenzgänger zwischen Kunst und Psychiatrie*. Cologne: Ärzte-Verlag, 2005.

⁵⁸⁰ Lütz, Manfred. *Irre. Wir behandeln die Falschen. Unser Problem sind die Normalen*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010.

⁵⁸¹ Kessler, Christof. *Wahn: Stories*. Cologne: Eichborn Verlag by Bastei Lübbe, 2013.

In terms of recent representations of madness in film, one thinks of Hans Weingartner's *Das weisse Rauschen* (2002) which offers a stylized portrayal of the protagonist's struggle with paranoid schizophrenia; Tom Tykwer's *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* (2000), a fairy tale narrative which is set behind the walls of a mental institution; or Christian Petzold's *Yella* (2007) in which the protagonist gradually collapses under the weight of a psychological breakdown incurred by a sense of foreboding. In terms of non-fictional accounts of outsiders, Werner Herzog's *The Land of Silence and Darkness (Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit, 1971)*⁵⁸² follows the experiences of a woman, Fini Straubinger, who became deaf and blind during adolescence. Resonating with the Kaspar Hauser story, the film focuses on various methods of non-conventional communication, new modes of perceiving the everyday objects around us and the way in which divergent outlooks and experiences can be expressed via a filmic, visual narrative. Additionally, *Kopfleuchten*, which was partially filmed at the institute where Leo Navratil worked in Maria Gugging, attempts cinematically to recreate visual and aural experiences of psychosis.⁵⁸³ Another documentary film worth mentioning in the context of peripheral figures and madness is *The Gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse, 2000)* by Agnès Varda.⁵⁸⁴ Here, madness is a manifestation of an action conducted by institutionalized society; namely, the excessive disposal of surplus food and other items which are still edible and useful, but are discarded due to state regulations (potatoes which are too large to be sold or packaged food which has exceeded the expiration date). The director focuses on the outsiders, the gleaners, who sweep through the fields or urban disposal areas collecting remnants to feed their families or, in *bricolage* manner, to gather items to construct practical household appliances. In one scene, Varda, while tracing the current status of gleaners in vineyards, engages in a discussion with the winemaker and psychoanalyst, Jean Laplanche. He offers what is perhaps the best summation of a key goal of the film in his explanation of his anti-Ego psychoanalytical theory. Laplanche "tried to integrate into man's psyche the Other above the Ego" and this is therefore "a philosophy which shows how man first originates in the Other."

Partially inspired by Navratil, Sebald's articles on Herbeck demonstrate not only his fusion of literature and psychology, but also social commentaries. In his analysis of Herbeck's lyrics, Sebald was consistently careful to point out how, within the language of his poetry, a response to and at the same time a rebellion against the socio-political situation during and immediately following World War II could be located. One clear contemporary example demonstrating the relevance of Sebald's goal of turning to art to better understand the structure of society and how art and politics collide is an art exhibition currently housed at the Neue Galerie in New York entitled "Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937" (March 13 - June 30, 2014). The exhibition aligns images of "degenerate art" with photographs from concentration camps. Holland Cotter describes the photomurals which confront the visitor as they enter the exhibition: on one wall one sees an image from the late 1930s in Germany where a degenerate art exhibition has just opened and "the line of visitors waiting to get in stretches down the street." On the opposite wall of the museum in New York is an image from 1944 which "shows Carpatho-Ukrainian Jews newly arrived at the railroad station at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They are densely crowded together along the length of a platform that runs far into the distance and out of sight." Cotter states: "The message is clear: The event in

⁵⁸² Herzog, Werner. *The Land of Silence and Darkness (Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit)*. 1971. Shout! Factory, 2014. Film.

⁵⁸³ Bergmann, Thomas and Mischka Popp, dirs. *Kopfleuchten*. 1998. Pegasos Film, 2008. Film.

⁵⁸⁴ Varda, Agnes, dir. *The Gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse)*. Ciné Tamaris, 2000. Film.

the first picture led or contributed to that in the second.”⁵⁸⁵ The exhibition highlights a fact which Sebald was well aware of: the liberal arts (and here also the example is of art produced by “outsiders”) are profoundly entwined with the socio-political situation in which they are created. In the exhibition in New York, the viewer is made painfully aware of how artworks, degenerate ones in particular, meaning those like Herbeck’s, can be used as a means of propaganda to sway public opinion to such an extent that mass extermination becomes possible.

When I began this study, I expected my focus to remain primarily on W. G. Sebald’s language, in which I had hoped to find reflections of Ernst Herbeck’s style. I quickly found Sebald’s brief inquiries into Herbeck’s poems to be infectious. Every time Sebald posed a general claim, I felt driven to home in on Herbeck’s writing not only in order to explore more deeply what Sebald had alluded to, but because I also was fascinated by this Other voice, an Otherness which inevitably became increasingly less foreign and to which I could relate. Reading through Herbeck’s poetry, I found, as I had expected, a rumination on his outsider status, but I was surprised to find within his considerations profound expressions, intentional or not, reflecting on a much grander scale, albeit in this poet’s humble and modest voice. I discovered musings on our transient nature, on the expanding societal ills due to mechanization and overconsumption, and on our relationship to the environmental world. It is still the case that there is no definitive line separating sane from insane, normal from abnormal. Since even the etiology of schizophrenia has yet to be determined, very little can be said about the disease with certainty, and yet a stigma persists. While Navratil’s books urged society to adopt a humane and empathetic approach to mental illness by blurring the lines between outsiders and canonical writers, these works also encouraged Sebald to take notice of not only the linguistic qualities, but also to reflect on society’s efforts to suppress such voices and to question what this ultimately reveals about those considered to be sane. As Sebald underlines in his personal copy of Michel Foucault’s *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft*: “Aus der Tiefe der Unvernunft heraus kann man sich Fragen über die Vernunft stellen....” (Foucault 355).

⁵⁸⁵ All of the quotes are taken from Cotter, “First, They Came for the Art”. See also Farago, Jason. “Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Germany, 1937 review – What Hitler Dismissed as ‘filth’”. *The Guardian*. 13 Mar. 2014. Web. 10 April 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/13/degenerate-art-attack-modern-art-nazi-germany-review-neue-galerie>

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