

At the Greenhouse II
PORTRAIT OF W. G. SEBALD BY CHRISTIAN SCHOLZ, 1997

Searching for Sebald

PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER W. G. SEBALD

edited by Lise Patt
with Christel Dillbohner

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Searching for Sebald: Photography after W. G. Sebald

Edited by Lise Patt with Christel Dillbohner

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For A. G.
who pointed us in the right direction

Introduction

Searching for Sebald: What I Know for Sure

LISE PATT



W. G. SEBALD

TACITA DEAN

ARC/MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

We see in the increasing complexity of our mental constructs a means for greater understanding, even while intuitively we know that we shall never be able to fathom the imponderables that govern our course through life.

—W. G. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*

SIGNS

In 1998 W. G. Sebald's fourth artist book project, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* (1995), was translated into English as *The Rings of Saturn*. In this, the third of his 'prose fictions' and the second to be translated into English, Sebald leads his readers through the forgotten histories of the massive bombing campaigns of World War II, the natural history of the herring, the stories of Jorge Luis Borges, the battle of Sole Bay, the concentration camp at Jasenovac, the extermination camp of Bergen Belsen, the relationship between the sugar trade and art, the tragic life of Edward Fitzgerald—translator of Omar Khayyam's *Rubiyat*—the Irish civil war, the memoirs of the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, and even Dutch elm disease, a labyrinthine story delivered through a series of opaque tales aided by a pool of even murkier images.

Arriving first across the 'German Ocean' and soon after that the pond, Sebald's project was quickly embraced by a wide range of post-medium artists who were laying the groundwork for a fictive genre in art. Adopting processes mediated by the foot, captured by the lens, and fueled by the archive, these visual practitioners had eschewed mediums bounded to traditional materials, adopting instead concepts that reached beyond the realms of art—particularly memory, trauma, and loss—the same leitmotifs of Sebald's troubled *Nachgeborenen* (born-after "the war") conscious.

From the studios Sebald was quickly ushered into that other messy laboratory of modern culture—the Internet—where his name surfaced in blogs devoted to visual theory and photography. By 2001, especially after the publication of his last book, *Austerlitz*, his name and stories had inspired the writing of landmark exhibition catalogues and, soon after, sparked critiques in visual art's premier journals. When in late 2006 the Tate Modern presented a show titled *Rings of Saturn*, by a group of artists who had taken the late author's tone and method as an inspiration, there was no doubt the art world had taken notice of Sebald.

Sebald's apprenticeship was remarkably short, especially in light of what he accomplished—bridging the usual divide between artists and their critics. Only fifteen years after starting his visual experiment and against the formidable odds that weigh upon any artist who works with a minor art form and is trained in the asylum, Sebald came to serve in art's pantheon, not as a proper name, for that had already been claimed by another discipline, but as an adjective that both suggested a new medium and launched a fresh critical palliative. Next to Freudian, Kuhnian, Foucauldian, and Deleuzian, there would now be another—*Sebaldian*.

The man who was adopted by art as an adjective in the late 1990s, was born into war-torn Europe on 18 May 1944 with the proper name, Winfried Georg Maximilian Sebald. W. G. (as he preferred his names to be written), or Max (as he preferred to be called), was one of four children and the only son of Rosa and Georg Sebald. During his early life much of Europe was embroiled or recovering from a world war enacted under the Holocaust's smoky skies, but growing up on the northern edge of the Alps in the Bavarian town of Wertach im Allgäu, young Max seems to have been fairly oblivious to the 'dreadful course of events,'¹ even though the horrors of war did influence his life in one small but profound way. Because his father was a soldier in the German army at the time of Sebald's birth and subsequently a prisoner of war, much of young Max's childhood was spent with his maternal grandfather, Josef Egelhofer. This guardianship continued even after Georg Sebald's return to Wertach in 1947 as he was forced to take up a post in a nearby town and visited home only on the weekends.

There was little in the way of fine art in Sebald's early childhood home, except for local folk traditions that included mural making and Bavarian glass painting.² His early exposure to "un-authored" art forms may have contributed to Sebald's later taste for provincial art and also to his persistent naïveté about art and ownership.³ More significantly, he undoubtedly developed his early visual language in the company of his grandfather, a person he linked to his 'carefree and innocent youth,' but also to insurmountable loss. Sebald was twelve when Egelhofer died, saddling the young author with a sadness from which he never fully recovered. This death also may have influenced Sebald's later art practices, coming as it did at the critical juncture between childhood and adulthood when the artist in every child is often silenced by the critic in every adult.⁴

Sebald's education was not in art but in German literature, first at Freiburg University in Germany, then at University of Fribourg in Switzerland. During this time he learned traditional drawing techniques and the basics of black and white photography, including the processes of the darkroom.⁵ In 1966, at the age of twenty-one, Sebald moved to

1. W. G. Sebald, *After Nature*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Random House, 2002), 89.

2. The author reproduces parts of Maler Hengge's murals (207–208, 209) and a sculpture of St. George (242) in his first prose fiction, *Schwindel. Gefühle*. (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1990). Georg Sebald came from a family of glassmakers in the Bavarian forest.

3. On more than one occasion Sebald had to remove images from his texts because he had not pursued copyright permissions. For instance, the painter Frank Auerbach expressed displeasure with Sebald's unauthorized reproduction of his artworks in *Die Ausgewanderten*. Sebald assumed he had a right to publish them, 'because the information on his manner of work is from a published source.' Maya Jaggi, 'Recovered Memories,' *The Guardian*, 22 September 2001: <www.guardian.co.uk/saturday_review/story/0,3605,55861,00.html>.

4. That juncture is vividly represented in two drawings Sebald reproduces in the opening pages of *Schwindel. Gefühle*, 8; (see fig. viii, p. 28). The first image seems to be a drawing by a young child, a portrait in a bold frontal pose with uninhibited and remarkably naturalistic foreshortening. The second drawing, also a portrait, displays the tentative line of an adolescent already listening to his inner critic. Writing is used to clarify the image, a heavy stain of ink seems to cover some inadequacy. If the assumption to be made is those who silence or tame the critic go on to become artists, then Sebald often seems to be stuck at the juncture between those two voices, an ambivalence that frequently surfaces in his visual work.

5. The description of an early drawing lesson given by one of the four "emigrants" in Sebald's second prose fiction—'how an image could be broken down into numerous tiny pieces—small crosses, squares or dots,' presents as a personal memory. W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1997), 31; 'In school I was in the dark room all the time...' in Jaggi, 'Recovered Memories.'

England, where he assumed a teaching post first in Manchester and then, in 1970, at the University of East Anglia (UEA), where he eventually completed a Ph.D. and became a full professor. By 1975 he had settled into a rather predictable scholar's life, publishing works on Sternheim, Döblin, and the German theater, along with two collections of essays on Austrian writers. In 1989 he became the first director of UEA's British Centre for Literary Translation.

Sebald's academic demands left little time for any studio or darkroom play, although—inspired by trips during summer teaching gaps to the Niederösterreichisches Psychiatric Hospital at Klosterneuburg in Gugging, just outside of Vienna—he was clearly already doing the work all artists do in the mind. At the Gugging facility, he became acquainted with the work of Dr. Leo Navratil, who, following the earlier landmark research of Hans Prinzhorn, studied and encouraged the creative expression of his psychotic patients.⁶ At Gugging Sebald was offered a profound and distinctly unacademic glimpse into a creative process that defied traditional boundaries. Although Navratil's patients might be classified as either painters (mark-makers) or writers, a designation often created by those who wish to market their work, in truth their creative output showed little allegiance to the established traditions of writing or drawing since their drawings often turned into words and then back into drawings.⁷

As a novice poet, Sebald was particularly drawn to outsider poetry—the immediacy of its production but also the way its writers indiscriminately formed metonymic couplings and metaphoric associations that more culture-bound art insidiously keeps cordoned off in distinct genres.⁸ He was captivated by the writing processes of Ernst Herbeck (1920–1991), sometimes known as Alexander, a Gugging patient who had received considerable fame when his poems were published in Navratil's *Schizophrenie und Sprache* in 1966.⁹ Because Herbeck was a high-functioning psychotic, Sebald was able to study the mechanisms of writing at the literary margins he so favored. He was fascinated by the way Herbeck approached 'true insights via false paths' by (re)combining language fragments that were 'within his reach'—a process the author found analogous to the mythopoetic constructions the theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss had located in the *pensée sauvage*.¹⁰ In 1981 Sebald published a lengthy article on the Gugging poet that some scholars have

6. Art historian Hans Prinzhorn studied the art of the mentally ill at his clinic in Heidelberg at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1922 he published *Bildneri der Geisteskranken* (Heidelberg: Springer, 1922), and almost immediately the book was embraced by a group of early modernist artists, including Paul Klee and Max Ernst, who used Prinzhorn's utopian ideas and the book's illustrations as source material to help redraw their own boundaries between art and society. Jean Dubuffet was so taken with the book that he dedicated most of his life to heralding *art brut*, the term he gave to the work of the mentally ill, prisoners and children. In 1972, Prinzhorn's book was translated into English as *The Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag), launching another wave of interest in the art of the mentally ill.

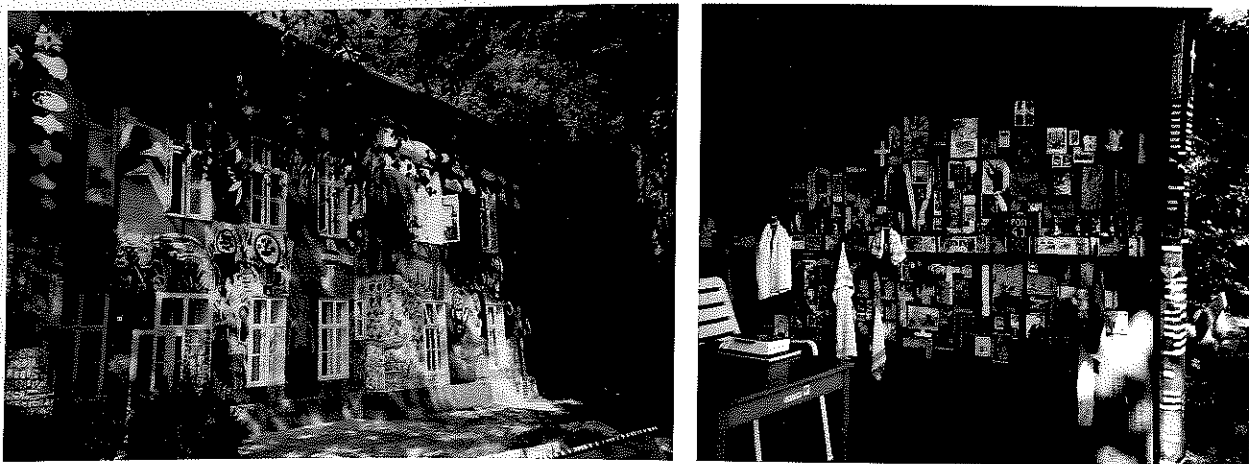
7. Just as, for instance, the "scribblings" of Gottfried Keller do in W. G. Sebald's *Logis in einem Landhaus: Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), 124–125.

8. Like the jargon that is circulated in academically defined fields, the use of these associations, whether visual or textual, not only validates the artist's claim to her or his chosen field, but when absent can be used to identify perceived interlopers.

9. Leo Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Sprache: Zur Psychologie der Dichtung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1966).

10. W. G. Sebald, 'Eine kleine Traverse: Das poetische Werk Ernst Herbecks,' *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks: Zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1994), 151–164. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962).

Cf. Essay
Antoinette LaFarge



FIGS. II–III Künstlerhaus c. 1999
Gugging, Vienna

considered one of his most important literary essays.¹¹ As it would turn out, the subject of that essay was a significant figure in Sebald's life for other reasons as well.

There is reason to believe that Herbeck was also a pivotal figure in Sebald's growth as a visual artist. Some of this influence was simply the byproduct of the poet's residency in the Künstlerhaus at the Gugging psychiatric hospital. Opened by Leo Navratil in 1981, the "artists house" is a special residence where select patients live independently and focus their energies on artistic activities. During his visits with Herbeck, Sebald would have been exposed to the fervent, raw creative energy that exudes from every crevice of the structure¹² (fig. ii–iii, p. 20). But it was the schizophrenic poet's method that seems to have exerted the greatest influence on Sebald's imagistic language. By the late 1970s, and ahead of the vanguard, Sebald was absorbing Herbeck's bricolaged "outsider" vision into his budding visual forms. It would soon become apparent that Sebald, the critic, had not just mined the schizophrenic's works to build a model of literary writing in its "raw" form but that Sebald, the novice visual artist, had found in the pieced-together poems both sources and tools for his first visual project.¹³

NACH DER NATUR: EIN ELEMENTARGEDICHT (1988)

In 1988 Sebald published *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht*, an autobiographical poem 'ventriloquized' through three voices: the medieval painter Mattias Grünewald; the German naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller, who accompanied Vitus Bering on his explorations

11. Uwe Schütte, in his moving obituary of Sebald, asserts that the essay on Herbeck was, perhaps, his most important publication, illustrating his belief that 'the margins and the marginalized were where what matters about society can best be perceived.' 'Obituary: W. G. Sebald (1944–2001),' *Austrian Studies* 11.1 (September 2003): 248.

12. The Künstlerhaus complex includes an impressive library and a state of the art exhibition space attended by a full-time curator who helps market the artists' work. Around the perimeter of the house, outdoor studios allow easy (visual) access to the inner workings of the resident artists (fig. iii). Sebald visited Gugging beginning in the 1970s.

13. The term 'outsider art' was coined by Roger Cardinal in 1972. Cardinal's rubric included not only the art of the insane but also, following Dubuffet, other 'outsiders' as well. The journal dedicated to outsider art, *Raw Vision*, published its first issue in 1989. In the United States, outsider art is also sometimes known as primitive, naïve, or folk art.

of the strait that carries Bering's name; and the narrator himself, through memories of his beginnings and an imagined ending.¹⁴ In this elemental poem Sebald builds his visual art credentials through the "stories" of these individuals with whom he shares his initials. This "coincidence" grants these three "historical" figures special license to foretell Sebald's unfolding creative life through its opaque resemblances to their own.¹⁵

Sebald does not include images in this extended 'elemental poem,' but they are ever present in the carefully placed lines, from the ekphrastic descriptions of St. George standing 'above the world by a hand's breath' on Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece, to Brueghel's *Icarus* with his 'white legs disappearing into the green water' to the 'banners and flags, lances and pikes and batons' of Altdorfer's famous painted battle.¹⁶ And although we cannot yet "see" the hand of the artist, Sebald acquaints us with the artist's tools, particularly the museum postcard, battered at the edges from constant study.

14. *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht*. Photographien von Thomas Becker (Nördlingen: Greno, 1988). For more on the "ventriloquized voice," especially in Sebald's work, see Lisa Diedrich's discussion in this volume, 264.

From the start, Sebald's prose elicits strong and immediate references to roughly contemporaneous visual art projects, associations I hope to elucidate in the pages that follow. Sebald's ventriloquized voice in *Nach der Natur* echoes an early work by David Wojnarowicz. In the print reproduced below from *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* (1979–1980), Wojnarowicz, a writer, poet, activist, and self-trained artist, enlisted an 'anonymous man' to don a mask of the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud. He then photographically recorded his visits as an "outsider" to contemporary New York sites. Created from the visual residue of what Wojnarowicz called 'the pre-invented world,' the power of *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* is, like Sebald's *Nach der Natur*, dependent on the viewer's access to insider knowledge. In addition to the mask of Rimbaud, which utilizes a famous 1871 photograph of the poet by Etienne Carjat, meaning is accrued for the viewer who recognizes the graffiti on the wall as the English translation of a famous piece by Joseph Beuys, which featured this indictment in a blood red scrawl, or that the recipient of Beuys's attack, Marcel Duchamp, set the stage for Wojnarowicz's project of altered identity, with his persona of Rose Sélavey.



FIG. IV David Wojnarowicz,
Arthur Rimbaud in New York,
1978–79.

15. Even "coincidence," the guiding force behind most of Sebald's research and interests in the years to come, shows up in this first prose venture. In addition to sharing Sebald's initials in altered order, Georg Wilhelm Steller was born in the same town where Sebald's mother first learned she was pregnant with the writer. *After Nature*, 86. 'Opaque resemblances' is the term Walter Benjamin used to describe 'the fundamental otherness in which self and other haunt each other in their infinite repeatability.' See Markus Zisselsberger in this volume, 285.

16. Sebald, *After Nature*: above the world..., 5; white legs..., 106; banners and flags..., 114.



FIG. V Thomas Becker, from the cycle *Nach der Natur*. Netherlands, April 15, 1986.

We sense also the color wheel, whose complex relationships of complements and seconds Sebald uses to “wash” the prose in subtle tones of green and red.¹⁷ And we brush up against the sable paintbrush heavy with watery ink from which flows pools of gray magma—black and white photos in their embryonic state. From worlds bordered by receding forests to vistas viewed with the crane’s eye, Sebald recites the perspectival lessons of the Renaissance—the endless horizons of the south, and the dizzying heights of the north (to which he felt more aligned), at times, even, a perspective ‘mirrored in the field-surgeon’s monocle,’¹⁸ which is Herbeck’s ‘reverse perspective’ where all the world is ‘contained in a tiny circular circle.’¹⁹

Nach der Natur has held a tentative position in Sebald’s visual oeuvre. Those who advocate for its inclusion do so because of Thomas Becker’s extraordinary photographs of *Urnatur* that straddled the poem in its first printing (not repeated in later printings or translations).²⁰ Yet the book is an important benchmark and an aid to understanding Sebald’s later, more visual projects for reasons other than its endpapers. The numerous borrowings, cobbings, and the Herbeck-tinged (dis)associative processes that, as we shall see, so define

17. In the type of semantic and semiotic condensation Sebald will become so famous for, the green he ‘borrows’ from Grünewald to paint his poem, is located in both the medieval artist’s artworks and his name.

18. Sebald, *After Nature*, 77.

19. Sebald, *Campo Santo*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2005), 126.

20. The publisher’s catalogue said of Becker’s photographs: ‘[they] suggest thoughts of the deepest melancholy—that the world would be better without human beings in it and would be in order only as a world without meaning.’ Quoted in Robin Kinross, *Unjustified Texts: perspectives on typography* (London: Hyphen Press, 2002), 192. In a recent phone interview with Christel Dillbohner (18 February 2007), Becker said that it was the publisher’s decision to bring together his images and Sebald’s prose. A meeting between Becker and Sebald was scheduled but later canceled.

Sebald’s later practice are all visible here in a nascent form. Likewise, as is evident when one encounters this project as most in the English-speaking world did (in the reverse order of its chronology), *Nach der Natur* provides a stunning overture to Sebald’s later works and sets the prescient tone that eerily marks the author’s entire project.²¹ Further study might reveal that even though (and, in its simplicity, because) the author had not yet adapted these methods to the visual realm, *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht* is the shibboleth of Sebald’s method.

SCHWINDEL. GEFÜHLE. (1990)

Sebald’s first ‘prose fiction,’ *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, was published in 1990 as part of the Andere Bibliothek series.²² In this less “ventriloquized” and more “prosthetic” (auto)biography, Sebald stitches together a collection of words and images into four literary sketches through which he builds a rudimentary artistic family tree. Branches of literary giants are grafted to Sebald’s sapling literary form either through direct textual or photographic references (Franz Kafka, H. M. B. Stendhal, Vladimir Nabokov) or through textual and visual practices that mime revered literary methods (Thomas Bernhard).²³ In their shadows, Sebald also attaches tentative links to visual artists—not only Ernst Herbeck of Gugging fame, but also the obscure writer/artist Konrad Bayer, whom Sebald once credited with sparking his prose style.

Unlike the debatable inclusion of *Nach der Natur* in Sebald’s visual oeuvre, most agree *Schwindel. Gefühle.* is the first of Sebald’s literary projects to integrate visual material into its text. The book includes a staggering seventy-five reproductions displaying a vast array of image types, including ticket stubs, children’s drawings, pages from a day planner, newspaper articles, pages from the author’s passport, and even stills from a movie.²⁴ The

21. Part of the prescience may be due to the fact that Sebald was apparently already working on both *Schwindel. Gefühle.* and *Die Ausgewanderten* while he was working on *Nach der Natur*. In 1988 he published excerpts that would later become chapters in those two books. An extract from *Schwindel. Gefühle.* was published as ‘Berge oder das ...’, *Manuskripte* 28 (99): 71–8 and an excerpt from *Die Ausgewanderten* was published as ‘Verzehret das letzte selbst die Erinnerung nicht!’ *Manuskripte* 28 (100): 150–8, as noted in Richard Sheppard, ‘Dexter-sinister: Some observations on decrypting the mors code in the work of W. G. Sebald,’ *Journal of European Studies* 35.4 (2005): 452. See Jo Catling, ‘Gratwanderungen bis an den Rand der Natur: W. G. Sebald’s Landscapes of Memory’ in *The Anatomist of Melancholy: Essays in Memory of W. G. Sebald*, ed. Rüdiger Görner (Munich: IUDICIUM Verlag, 2003) for some of the links between *Nach der Natur* and later Sebald texts.

22. Die Andere Bibliothek was launched in 1985 by Franz Greno, a printer and publisher, and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a writer and editor. Greno was a devotee of letterpress and Monotype composition, even in the late 1980s, when it was rapidly becoming extinct. Under the Andere Bibliothek banner, a new title was issued every month in limited edition. Some of the books were sold by subscription, but others were available through bookstores. *Schwindel. Gefühle.* was number 63 in the series and was printed in an edition of 999. Unless otherwise specified, the analysis that follows is based on this first edition. For a history of the Andere Bibliothek see Kinross, *Unjustified Texts*, 190–199. It should be noted that the title, like Sebald’s name, has two periods, one after each word, although most reviewers and critics drop the second one. I am thankful to Anna Ayeroff for alerting me to this subtlety.

23. As Mark Anderson points out, Kafka and Stendhal appear in essay-like accounts, Nabokov is introduced in a photograph, and Bernhard haunts the pages in Sebald’s use of periscopic writing. ‘Introduction,’ *The Germanic Review* 79.3 (Summer 2004): 155–161.

24. This count is taken from the original Andere Bibliothek edition of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* I have treated the deliberate break in an image on pp. 22–23 as two separate pictures (fig. 115, pp. 482–483). Likewise considered to be images are all examples of lettering that undergo typographical and/or layout deviations (centered in the text box), such as ORGANIZZAZIONE LUDWIG on p. 93. These typographical/layout variations are discussed below, pp. 41–43.

pictures seem to come from what was lying around—the stacks of papers, and insignificant leavings of daily living that accumulate on a desk, in the night table drawer beside the bed, or in even a pocket after a long day of travel. Fewer than a third of the images are photographs,²⁵ and only a handful seem to be by the artist's own hand.

At first glance, the pictures appear to be thrown into the long passages of text that make up the majority of the book, producing what many have called a pieced-together scrapbook or patchwork collage.²⁶ But on closer inspection (especially after the reader notices there are paraphrases from well known authors embedded in Sebald's own text), it becomes apparent that the images are not inserted into a uniform text field but rather that various image patches—often reproduced to emphasize the *realia* nature of the object being represented (postcards, a passport [see fig. xix] a flyer²⁷)—sit next to an equal variety of text patches, much like the disparate parts of a concrete poem. In actuality, there are more than seventy-five images in the book, since so many of the text patches function as ghost images—pictures that are not reproduced but are nevertheless made present in our mind through countless crisp descriptions.²⁸ Just as a recurring sentence in *Schwindel. Gefühle.* concerning 'a corpse beneath a cloth on a bier'²⁹ reminds the reader that a *re-presentation* can be made to serve a *presentation* through the tradition of literary quotation, the text passages of "absent images" are made visible through textual descriptions that offer up a world that has been cordoned off in a photograph or a slide.³⁰

Sebald often referred to himself as a *bricoleur*,³¹ an apt description for the process he employs to wed text and image in this book. But the term can also be used to characterize his image selection process. In *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, whether in text or grey patches, it does seem as if Sebald has used what is at hand and at times even *only* what is at hand. This self-imposed economy—making do with a "good enough" image—can result

25. In modern printing practice, visual material is generally photographed on its way to inclusion in a book. As readers, we visually "erase" this process unless directed not to do so by other directives in the book. Thus, we read a lithograph by Van Gogh as a (reproduced) print, not a photographic reproduction with Van Gogh's print as its subject matter. For a nuanced discussion of the procedure and the reader's response to the illustrated book, see Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843–1875* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 1998). In the analysis that follows, I discern between reproductions that assert or maintain their photographic presence and those that honor the 'erasure' of modern printing (in which case content, not production, defines the image's 'type'). This delineation is often not easy to make. In *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, Sebald seems to be deliberately toying with the illustrated book's intervening photographic process. Especially in the original Andere Bibliothek version, many of the 'to-scale' photographs assert their indexical presence through the picture's dimensions—bleeding images sized as if they were actual postcards or snapshots.

26. Elcott calls this first book 'a friendly cut-and-paste photo montage.' Noam Elcott, 'Tattered Snapshots and Cast-away Tongues; an essay at layout and translation with W. G. Sebald,' *The Germanic Review* 79.3 (Summer 2004): 216.

27. As Silke Horstkotte points out, Sebald does not quote, he paraphrases. By changing one or two key words he opens up the quote to 'invention and recontextualization.' 'Pictorial and Verbal Discourse in W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*,' *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* (2005): <www.uiowa.edu/~ijcs/mediation/horstkotte.htm>.

28. For further discussion of Sebald's use of ekphrasis, see John Sears' essay in this compilation, 204–224.

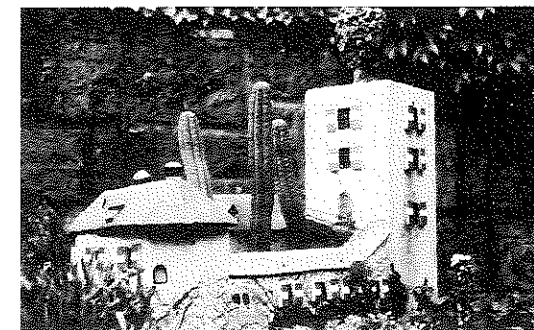
29. Ruth Franklin, 'Rings of Smoke,' *The New Republic* (online), 19 September 2002, <www.tnr.com>.

30. Cynthia Ozick, 'The Posthumous Sublime,' *Quarrel & Quandry* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 28.

31. This term, borrowed from Lévi-Strauss, was first used by Sebald in his article on Herbeck to describe the schizophrenic poet's processes. Sebald, 'Eine kleine Traverse,' 39. Soon after he used the term to describe his own working method, 'If you grow up not with toys bought in the shop but things that are found around the farmyard, you do a sort of bricolage....' Arthur Lubow, 'Symposium on W. G. Sebald,' *Three Penny Review* (Spring 2002): <www.threepennyreview.com>.

in playful inventiveness. In the opening pages, he gives us a tightly cropped image of, we assume, the medieval castle referred to in the surrounding text (fig. vi). At second glance, however, we realize it is in fact a cactus planter in the form of a castle, linked perhaps to Sebald's "mental occupations" or even to a trickle-down effect that ends at the foot of the castle's mountain with the 'people of Greifenstein' who have made

stein hinauf, 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

small souvenirs out of history's large events. But the economy doesn't stop there. In the text surrounding the image we are introduced to Sebald's Gugging friend, Ernest Herbeck, who appears as both subject and inspiration to Sebald's bricolaged prose. His close proximity to the photograph suggests another job for the image of the cactus planter—that it may be a representation left purposely "naïve" as an homage to the techniques of Sebald's outsider friend.

More often, though, the images in *Schwindel. Gefühle.* seem naïve in the less gracious meaning of that word and appear as the heavy-handed experimentation of an emerging insider. Even though Sebald clearly reveres and may even pay tribute to the Gugging tradition, it would be a mistake to label him an outsider artist, largely because he does not create spontaneously on the spot. We notice this in the forms of his visual elements—in edges that have been cropped and "bled," in the deliberate tripling that governs the placement of the images in the text, and in the creation of rough-hewn photographic vignettes made by a dull scissors and a shaky hand. Sebald eschews the book's demand for invisible reproduction, choosing to emphasize instead the 'false life' of his artist-made images. Even when considering content, the pool of scattered images that Sebald has "at hand" clearly comes from a seasoned scholar's "insider" library—books by Stendhal, books on Kafka,³² or from the index cards and paper scraps deposited in the experienced researcher's pocket. Even though Sebald had little formal art training, he was a

32. See Zisselsberger in this volume, for a convincing account of the sources for Sebald's 'Kafka images,' 288–293.

FIG. VI *Schwindel. Gefühle.*,
Andere Bibliothek, 49.

sophisticated (if often inexact) scholar,³³ and in the field of art, an autodidact, who followed his nose, as he said more than once, like a dog, “hither and thither” in a field.³⁴

Sebald famously acknowledged that his nose had led him to one source in particular. *The Head of Vitus Bering*, a small novella written by the second-wave surrealist poet Konrad Bayer,³⁵ introduced him to ‘the German naturalist Steller,’ who shares Sebald’s initials and whose life Sebald went on to write about in his elemental poem, *Nach der Natur*.³⁶ In *Schwindel. Gefühle*. Sebald continues to borrow from Bayer’s text, albeit more in form than content—‘the lifting of sentences from newspapers; grade school primers, and technical manuals.’³⁷ With its numerous hauntings and accounts of unfulfilled desire, not to mention images of disembodied hands (or cast sculptures of disembodied hands) and automatic-like drawings, and even a title that implicates a “mad love,” the reader might conclude that Sebald followed his nose to the French Surrealists, particularly André Breton’s *Nadja*, which also includes images and text centered on unrequited love, madness, and unattached hands.³⁸ But whereas the image of the cactus planter/medieval castle embeds itself in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. in a number of ways, the references to Breton, particularly

Cf. Essay
Anneleen Masschelein

33. And sometimes, expertly exact. In the course of realizing this book, a line editor took exception to an essayist’s reference to Sebald’s birth ‘under the sign of Saturn,’ not knowing the reference came from Sebald himself. She noted that save for one short hour, the dark planet exerted no influence on those born in Germany on 18 May 1944. Sebald seems to acknowledge this ‘one short hour’ when he writes in *After Nature*: ‘the cold planet Saturn ruled this hour’s constellation,’ 88.

34. Sebald told interviewer Joe Cuomo, ‘If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplotable way.’ Joe Cuomo, ‘The Meaning of Coincidence,’ *The New Yorker* online, 2001: <www.newyorker.com> (accessed on 14 December 2005). ‘Hither and thither’ was one of Sebald’s favorite expressions.

35. Konrad Bayer, *The Head of Vitus Bering*, trans. Walter Biller (London: Atlas Press, 1994).

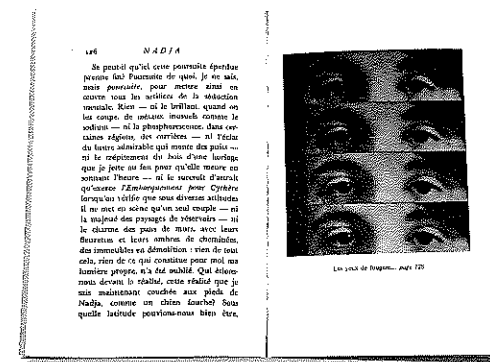
36. Sebald was coy about his influences, often deflecting questions about his surrealist link by crediting Bayer’s *Head of Vitus Bering* for his discovery of Steller. But the Steller reference is probably a bit of a red herring. Sebald’s interest must have been nurtured in texts other than Bayer’s since there is barely a mention of the naturalist in *Head of Vitus Bering* and certainly not a middle or first name from which to form an alliance between Sebald and the historical figure. Steller is mentioned only three times in Bayer’s text. The first in the main body under the heading time: ‘...1728 wasn’t the right time for bering, so he got 13 years older and traveled once again with a certain steller who consequently discovered steller’s seaweed...’ Bering, *Head*, 31; and his name is mentioned twice in the index at the back: ‘on a second great scientific expedition he discovered with the german naturalist steller the coast of Alaska and the alëutian island,’ *ibid.*, 43, and ‘the [Bering] was survived by many of his companions, among them the doctor and naturalist, steller,’ 49.

37. Rosmarie Waldrop and Harriett Watts, eds. & trans., *The Vienna Group: Six Major Austrian Poets* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1985), 76. Sebald’s attraction to obscure historical figures is echoed in Bayer’s account of Vitus: ‘the fact that this figure is historically authenticated raises this account from the level of fables, folktales and fabrication. I have chosen bering and the scanty reports of him because they leave enough open, because they are unclear and contradictory, because they can be faked (or rectified) without losing the historical backdrop, which still has sufficient weight to prevent the whole from disappearing into the sky-blue cloud-cuckoo-land of dry-cleaned aesthetics.’ Bayer, *Head*, 7.

38. André Breton’s influence seems most persistent in the opening pages of *Schwindel. Gefühle*, which is centered on Marie Henri Beyle (Stendhal). Sebald titles the book’s first essay ‘Beyle oder das Merkwürdige Faktum der Liebe’ (‘Beyle, or Love is a Madness Most Discreet’) bringing to mind Breton’s second novel, *L’Amor fou* (Mad Love). In *Nadja* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), Breton reproduces a drawing of a glove with the caption ‘Also a woman’s glove’ (57), thereby ambiguously linking the image to a couple of lines in the text; it can stand in for a ‘sky-blue glove’ or ‘a bronze one she happened to possess,’ (56). In *Schwindel. Gefühle*. Sebald gives us an image of a hand that could be an actual hand or a plaster replica of the hand (26). Automatic drawings, spontaneous drawing done without conscious self-censorship, were a staple of the Surrealists and many of Beyle’s scribbles imitate that form. English translations of *Schwindel. Gefühle*. are from W. G. Sebald, *Vertigo*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1999).

the visual ones, vary too greatly from their surrealist source to merit the label appropriation, and are, paradoxically, too similar and lacking in nuance to qualify them as visual quotations. Unlike the textual lines Sebald borrows from his literary family, these “visual passages” are not absorbed by the surrounding text but work instead to announce their trespass.³⁹ In no other one of Sebald’s texts will the link to identifiable (visual and textual) sources be as direct as it is in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. and, at the same time, will the confirmation and unraveling of those sources be so maddening. We are often left to wonder if Sebald’s technique extended to his accumulation of sources. The visual references—to Breton, to Stendhal, to other famous literary figures—may be the unintentional byproduct of yet another aspect of Sebald’s bricolage method—rummaging and shuffling in books with little regard to their author or index. Although there is a persistent sense that, like Breton, Sebald is setting up *hasard objectif*—moments of chance encounters—ultimately, the hodge-podge of formal and conceptual visual references, along with the author’s persistent invocation of green,⁴⁰ result in an idiosyncratic and seemingly

The strong links to Breton’s work has been noted by both artists and historians not only in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. but in almost all of Sebald’s books. As Anneleen Masschelein outlines in this volume, *Nadja* has a ghostly presence even in Sebald’s last book. *Austerlitz* begins with four tightly cropped views of different pairs of eyes—two sets belonging to animals, and two to humans (printed on the same page in the German and British editions (see fig. 76, p. 395). In Breton’s revised version of *Nadja*, four images of the same pair of eyes (fig vii, pictured here) are vertically stacked to create one image. Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 127. This “stuttered” arrangement creates a strong visual reference to Sebald’s images and, not insignificantly, to film, the forms of which help structure *Austerlitz*.



39. The hand that is visually reproduced in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. can be considered a type of “visual sampling” of the hand that haunts (but is not reproduced in) *Nadja*, especially in the way the link the hand makes between Sebald and Breton is predicated on both immediate recognition (that the disembodied hand is important to both stories) and/or the ease with which both books can be visually summarized through the same small “vision bite” (like a soundbite). In late-20th-century music forms, sampling is achieved by taking the most important part of a song, usually the break, and embedding it in a new piece. In some cases the music artist feigns ignorance about the sample’s source. To carry the music metaphor one step further, this “ignorance” might be applied to Sebald. There is reason to believe that Sebald “found” images in books in much the same way he found postcards and old photographs in thrift shops. For a discussion of music sampling see Paul d. Miller (aka DJ Spooky), *Rhythm Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004). Apparently others have seen a possible link between Sebald’s prose and rap music forms. See Brandon Stosuy, ‘After Sebald: Shepherding with the Notorious W.G.,’ *The Village Voice*, 17 May 2005: 59–61.

40. Even though Stendhal scholars might recognize the green as a feature of Stendhal’s writing, here again the borrowed element stands out instead of blending in. *Schwindel. Gefühle*. was translated into English as *Vertigo* in 1999, a title that alludes to Alfred Hitchcock’s movie of the same name (1958), much of which was shot with a green tint.

auto-biographical book. Sebald appeared to later recognize these rough edges when he complained that in this first book of prose fiction he ‘revealed too much.’⁴¹

Even with its many detours, *Schwindel. Gefühle.* is an audacious beginning. Sebald may have felt he revealed too much of his hand, but in the sense that all is laid out on the table, the book builds an archive of his later practices. He is trying out, or at least interviewing, the various elements of visual language—technique, materials, colors, styles. And even here, in the simple act of building a case for Sebald’s novice status, a case that travels from image to text to the gaps between the two, we sense the great webs of Sebald’s method—how component parts can appear as nothing but single threads until you fall into their woven center. When we look at the cactus planter as a single photograph, we might be reminded that photography has a tradition of tight cropping that

siebzehn Jahre alt, sah das Ende seiner ihm auf
das tiefste verhaßten



Kindheit und Jugend

gekommen und stand mit einiger Begeisterung
im Begriff, seine Laufbahn im Dienste des Hee-

allows for the ambiguity that makes it a willing partner in illusion. Or we may chuckle at Sebald’s sense of humor, or feel for a second we are inside Herbeck’s poetic mind. But when we look at the cactus planter *in relation* to the oval vignettes, the crops, and the bleeds that punctuate the book and always move the eye from the center, from where convention teaches us content will lie, to the edges of the image—to the place of cuttings and seepage, and cultural “frames”; or when we notice some of the images seem to exert a magnetic pull on the surrounding text, luring sentences from their proper (left-justified) margin to a centered space right above or below them, demanding the words pull double duty as text and caption, even if, in so doing, the words are often robbed of any authoritative captioning function—then we can’t help but wonder if Sebald, the professor, the amateur photographer, the frequent London tube rider, is nudging us to “mind the gap.”⁴²

41. Sebald, as quoted in Zisselsberger in his following essay, 300–301n64.

42. Sebald couldn’t resist referring to the double entendre that presents itself to any rider of London’s Underground—a warning painted on the platform and recited by the PA system: ‘Mind the Gap.’ *Vertigo*, 259.

How can we maintain a straight face and call Sebald a minor hitter when on only the second page of his first book he pulls a seemingly straightforward title out of the surrounding text ‘Kindheit und Jugend’ (‘childhood and adolescence’), thereby giving us the “code” we immediately want for two images floating on the page? But is this “title” a reference to the age of the figures in the two drawings, the left one looking as if it is a younger face than that to the right of it, or is the “caption” telling us to read the drawings as those executed by Stendhal, whose story is being recounted in the text, when he was first a youth and then a teenager? Perhaps the orphaned words are alerting us that these portraits are drawn from memory by an older Stendhal. Or perhaps Stendhal has nothing at all to do with this “borrowed” banner, its sole job being to signal that these drawings represent the type a child or adolescent might produce, icons of ‘childhood’ and ‘adolescence.’⁴³ All these potentialities are clouded by the very real possibility that this sentence fragment is no title at all, just wayward text “drawing out” a long sentence.

Whether we first enter this book as a viewer, flipping through the pages, or as a reader, jumping in through the first page of the text (and *Schwindel. Gefühle.* makes us want to do both at the same time), we sense Sebald’s gentle admonition—“images do not stand alone, but always in relationship to something else”—whether it is the edge of the image, or the edge of the page the picture is on, or other images on the page, or other visual material in the book, or even other images we have encountered in a time so laden with images, and all these considerations even before we add to the mix the most difficult relationship of all: that which brings pictures and words together. Each of these potential associations is marked by a series of missed encounters. In Sebald’s book, as in all relationships, we are always going back to another place, another person, or another time, to strengthen the links that bind the things, the places, the people, of our current relationships. *Schwindel. Gefühle.* comes with a subtle warning, sometimes lost in its sloppy exuberance. Any researcher of Sebald’s origins and sources, beginnings and endings who builds arguments based on designations of the artist’s “maturity” will find themselves in an impossible maze with paths that double back on the self...the difficulty of pigeonholing Sebald who, eleven years after giving us the verdant *Schwindel. Gefühle.* would whisper from the grave:⁴⁴

They say
that Napoleon
was colour-blind
& blood for him
as green as
grass

43. The English translation of this “caption” is from Sebald, *Vertigo*, 4. It should be noted that these are the only images in *Vertigo* that maintain a remnant of the ‘captioning effect,’ although in the translation the images are considerably larger and are stacked one on top of the other, with the three words running in the space between the drawings.

44. W. G. Sebald (poems) and Jan Peter Tripp (lithographs), *Unrecounted*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: New Directions, 2004), 61. In the original German the poem reads: Daß Napoleon/farbenblind war/& Blut, für ihn/so grün. *Unerzählt 33 Texte und 33 Radierung* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003), 49.

Cf. Project
Chris Rochelle

Cf. Essay
Markus Zisselsberger

FIG. VIII *Schwindel. Gefühle.*,
Andere Bibliothek, 8.

In 1992 Sebald released his second major visual project, *Die Ausgewanderten: Vier lange Erzählungen*,⁴⁵ a compilation of four stories centered on four men linked to each other by the Holocaust, an act of emigration, and the inability to conquer an insurmountable loss linked to either or both of these events.⁴⁶ If *Schwindel. Gefühle.* was but a patchwork of scattered image types—drawings, scribbles, brochures, and borrowed textbook illustrations—in this second book of prose fiction Sebald is quickly building the grammar of his visual *langue* in the gray tones of photography, the *Bildmaterial* (visual material) of his imagistic vocabulary from this project on. There are seventy-nine images in his second prose fiction, and in an inverse of the first book, over three quarters of them can be deemed “photographic.”⁴⁷ The pictures that Sebald more deliberately places (instead of slipping into) the pages, images that seem to generate, direct and manage the text all at once,⁴⁸ are the workhorses of photography: the personal or private family snapshot, the local and historically insignificant group shot of club members or classmates, and sometimes simply photographic rhyparography, still-lives of everyday objects with the sinister or uncanny undertones the medium of photography seems to so readily capture. As Stefanie Harris has noted in her perceptive analysis of *Die Ausgewanderten*, these images are not employed for their pictorial value but ‘for their referential character—in other words, the photographs verify something in the world.’⁴⁹ And the way they verify the world is through three distinct and historically rich genres: people (portraits), places (architecture), and things (still-lives).

The images that depict inanimate objects are often given to us in close-up views, a potent and, by the end of the 20th century, established way for a photograph(er) to link physical matter to a number of psychic processes. Sebald famously wrote ‘things...know more about us than we know about them: they carry the experiences they have had with us inside them and are—in fact—the book of our history opened before us.’⁵⁰ So often it seems as if the objects in *Die Ausgewanderten*—dolls sitting in empty spaces (fig. 132, p. 533), kitchen housewares with knobs and handles that comically mimic a housewife’s

Cf. Essay
Florence Feiereisen
& Daniel Pope

45. *Die Ausgewanderten: Vier lange Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 1992) printed in an edition of 999 was number 93 in the Andere Bibliothek series. Unless otherwise noted, this analysis is drawn from this first edition.

46. Only three of the four characters, Dr. Henry Selwyn, Paul Bereyter, and Ambros Adelworth, take their life within the course of the narrative, although Max Aurach’s (Max Ferber in the English translations) ‘destiny’ to ‘serve under the chimney’ can be read as a suicide being enacted (instead of recorded) by the text. The layers of dust that continuously cover and accrue on Aurach’s body through the course of the narrative present us with a cremation that we are forced to witness in slow-motion.

47. This count treats the strip of contact sheet-like photographs on p. 71 of *Die Ausgewanderten* (Andere Bibliothek) as a single image object.

48. Pace Falconer, who feels the photos ‘appear almost to have slipped between the pages on their own,’ the premeditated layout is supported by the surrounding text. In numerous passages the narrator points to the photograph (‘in this photograph’), especially in the third story on Ambros Adelwarth. Delia Falconer, ‘The Eloquence of Fragments,’ *Eureka Street* (December 2001): <www.eurekastreet.com>.

49. Stefanie Harris, ‘The Return of the Dead: Memory and Photography in W. G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*,’ *The German Quarterly* 74.4 (Fall 2001): 379.

50. W. G. Sebald, ‘As Day and Night, Chalk and Cheese: On the Pictures of Jan Peter Tripp,’ in Sebald and Tripp, *Unrecounted*, 86.

exasperated gesture (fig. 127, p. 528)—not only eerily “pose” like people but at times even appear to gaze back at us.

Conversely, the group of photographs that capture places are generally anchored by an architectural structure captured in extreme long shot so that random people or objects are either washed out or obscured and thus rendered inconsequential to the overall message (fig. 129, p. 530). But even here, the inanimate structures seem to know we are there. With their preponderance of windows, some half open, some with curtains blowing out of their frames (fig. 133, p. 536), and others firmly shuttered up, the photos capture not only architecture but also the lives and struggles of the individuals who peek out of these structures’ holes and gaps.

Finally, portraits are generally group shots with figures *posed* in Byzantine arrangements—rows of faces attached to rows of bodies, bound together so tightly that the edge of the photograph not only delimits the physical object but also imprisons the figures within its tight borders. Especially in this last category, Sebald seems to be troubling the “frames” of photography and by extension, their cultural history—how we construct the world and our history through images captured in a camera. Photographs, like social structures, have their own unique dimensions and forms. A type of photograph (the snapshot) and its relationship to a photographic genre (a group shot) not only influences how we see the content inside its formally visible but often socially hidden frame, but also limits the questions we can ask of this photograph to those the institutional frame has assigned it.⁵¹

With its strong adherence to three representational types, the visual material selected for inclusion in *Die Ausgewanderten* appears to be culled from Sebald’s image archive based on strict content and formal criteria. No longer the casual leavings of a week’s or month’s research and travel, the seemingly orchestrated resemblances between the various pictures have prompted many critics to assign the label of ‘collector’ to Sebald’s accumulation practices. Although this conclusion is understandable, especially when considering the photographic reproductions in this second book, the label might give the wrong impression of Sebald’s method. He is not like the collector of porcelain dolls who, after delineating the parameters of his collecting practices (a consideration of material, content, manufacture, or all three), goes to the flea market looking for dolls that meet those criteria. The famous boxes of images the late author kept squirreled away from friends and family, from which he would pull pictures and *realia*—always shuffling them and often losing them only to find them years later—had no labels beyond *Bildmaterial*. Sebald was drawn to images for reasons he was not always able to immediately articulate, not for how they re-present the declared parameters of a collection but for how they might ‘whisper’ their meaning (their membership in a *possible* collection) once they are positioned next to other elements in his archive. So even though Sebald seems to don

51. For a discussion of institutional frames, see John Tagg, ‘The Violence of Meaning,’ *Crossings* 3 (1999): 187–212. We received a fast lesson about the power and transience of institutional frames in the making of this book. Ute Klophaus’s photograph of Joseph Beuys’s *Snowfall* (fig. 83, p. 419), was intentionally degraded by the photographer so that a black shadow invades and obscures the left vertical edge. Until recently this “artifact” would have been read as the trace of an (intentional) artistic practice in the darkroom (i.e. exposing the photographic paper to light before it was fixed). Within current ‘institutional frames,’ the image can be (mis)read as an image that was improperly scanned.

Cf. Project
Skúta

Cf. Essay
Christina Kraenzle

(OPPOSITE, LEFT TO RIGHT
FROM TOP)

FIG. ix *Die Ausgewanderten*,
Andere Bibliothek, 108.

FIG. x *Die Ausgewanderten*,
Andere Bibliothek, 147.

FIG. xi *Die Ausgewanderten*,
Andere Bibliothek, 104.

FIG. xii *Die Ausgewanderten*,
Andere Bibliothek, 19.

the collector's hat (or more provocatively, the curator's hat⁵²) when creating *Die Ausgewanderten*, as readers we notice the types but we also sense something else—the power of the archive he has pulled his temporary “collections” from. The photographs that form specific genres in the book (group photos, architectural façades, domestic *realia*), remain tied to this larger source. So even though the illustrations are selected as synecdoches of a defined type, they can never fully escape the latency of the archive from which they have come. For instance, three photographs in *Die Ausgewanderten* (figs. ix–xi) belong to a temporary collection we can call ‘family portraits,’ some posed, others informal, but all bound by a long photographic tradition. The polka dots, though, that show up in the dress of a smiling female in every one of those photographs, polka dots that visually echo the stone façade of an ‘hermitage’ built to emulate an architectural ruin (fig. xii), are a part of the archive the collection can never accommodate. The women belong to the collection, but the polka dots are part-object remainders of a life lived by the women who wear them that we, as readers, might attach to broad categories of chance or fate or a metaphysics that links a group of people and their architecture to ruin. But ultimately they are attached to a meaning we can never fully grasp or understand.⁵³

Likewise, although we can clearly identify photographic “genres” in this book, this assessment often occurs in spite of their representative samples. So often, the selected pictures read as a litany of what makes an amateur photograph: poor lighting, bad composition, over development, a dirty lens. The compositions are sometimes humorous, like a steeple that seems to come out of a child's head, and often maddening, such as a supposed photograph of the narrator delivered in complete shadow.⁵⁴ Many of the snapshots, some quite old and worn, carry the scars of not only poor technical skill but of the passage of time itself, as if both the photographs and the people, the places, or the things they captured have been entwined before, or have lived past the moment of their first union. The smoke from an extinguished candle (or the trace of a smoky sky over a homeland) mars the upper corner of a photograph that shows the candles before they have been blown out (and a painting of a homeland before there were smoky skies; see fig. xi). Likewise, the hair of an uncle that, as we learn from the surrounding text, is shorn off during his imprisonment at Dachau has somehow come to reside in the photographic print taken after that dehumanizing event (fig. xiii). Even though Sebald has just begun to fully embrace photography (and not just photographs), he is already challenging us to reassess the privilege we automatically give photographs based on degrees of their indexicality. For as poor as many of the images are in representing categories of people, places, or things, they are prime examples of the secret but startlingly visible fourth category of photographic representation in *Die Ausgewanderten*—*Das Unheimliche*, the uncanny.⁵⁵

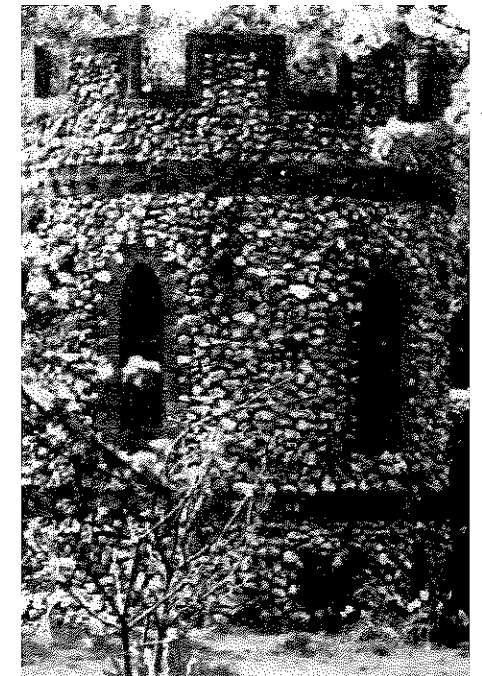
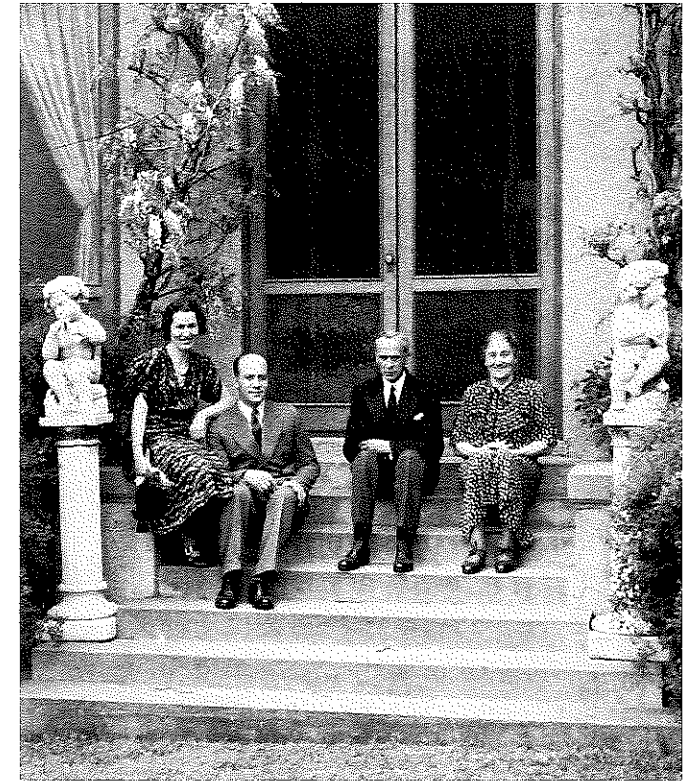
Cf. Essay
Christopher Gregory-Guider

52. In her essay for this volume, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes draws provocative correlations between Sebald and Tacita Dean's art practices that foreground curatorial strategies, 427.

53. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

54. Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten*, steeple: 59; shadowy figure: 130.

55. Sigmund Freud links the uncanny with a return of the repressed, something that was once ‘known’ but has been forgotten. There are two causes of the uncanny. The first is linked to physical reality; something (such as a child's belief in animism) that was thought to have been disproven (and thus was repressed) returns. The second cause is linked to psychical reality and the return of repressed infantile complexes. This uncanniness is linked to dismembered limbs, a severed hand, a smiling face attached to a rolling head. The uncanny images in *Die Ausgewanderten* are often



The photograph's slippery limit between thing and object is also seen in the book's recurrent bleeding images—pictures that stretch from the gutter to the edge of the page (fig. 129, p. 530), from the gutter to the edge of the text box, from the gutter to a point beyond the text box but not quite to the edge of the page (fig. 132, p. 533)—which cumulatively seem to defy the boundaries of not only the narrative but of the book form as well. Although *Die Ausgewanderten* is bound as a standard codex, as we constantly flip through the book in search of some inherent logic behind the photographic forms, or add up the image bleeds by visually linking the disparate puddles of gray that seem to continue from one page to the next, our viewing experience mimics one produced by



unfolding a gatefold, or a non-western accordion style book. Other times, lone images bleed from the top of a page to the book form's always invisible center. If Sebald's first book was marked by the irregular edge of a passport or the circular line of a vignette cropping that created a kind of *tromp l'oeil* dimensionality to the images of *realia*, some of the objects in *Die Ausgewanderten* are absorbed by the very pages they lie on. In one of the most beautiful examples of this visual consumption, a reproduction of an open journal mirrors Sebald's open book that displays the image in a two-page spread. The aligning gutters and echoing ribbons create a powerful visual *mise-en-abyme*, a gesture of self-referentiality that shows Sebald has begun to acknowledge not only the viewer, but also the codex form (and the secret spaces) he has chosen for his project (fig. xiv).

The 'pose,' the 'uncanny,' the 'fetish,' and the 'self-referential text' are concepts that immediately bring to mind some of the masterworks of photographic theory and praxis. Reading and thumbing through *Die Ausgewanderten*, we sense that Sebald is adding to the family tree he began to build in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. We experience not only

linked to both types of the uncanny, thus their psychic strength. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" [*Das Unheimliche*, 1919]. From *Standard Edition*, Vol. XVII, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 217–256.

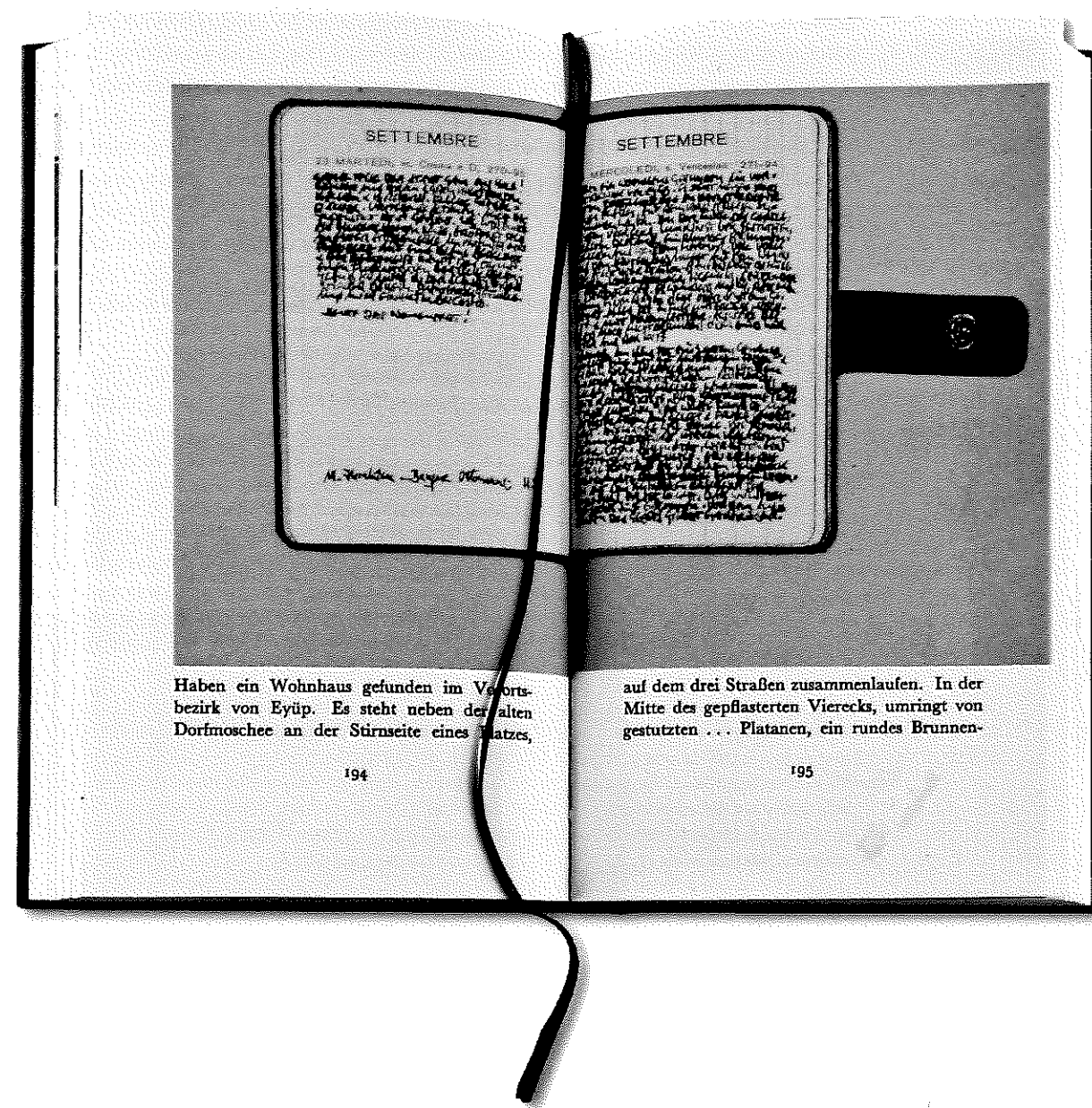


FIG. XIII *Die Ausgewanderten*, Andere Bibliothek, 278.

FIG. XIV (OPPOSITE) *Die Ausgewanderten*, Andere Bibliothek, 194–195.

the ghostly presence of Sigmund Freud, who often likened the functions of the unconscious to photography, but also Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, John Berger, and most adamantly, Roland Barthes and his musings on photography in *Camera Lucida*.⁵⁶ Sebald announces, sometimes a little too insistently, that he is doing his homework not only in the field, where he acquires and sometimes even shoots his own photographs, but also in the library, where he is acquainting himself with the visual critics and theorists who wrote the promissory notes he seems intent on honoring.

In the realm of praxis, though, it is hard to determine the extent to which Sebald was aware of the late 20th century art book form, or any late 20th century art, including photography.⁵⁷ Given Sebald's background in literature, there is no reason we shouldn't consider his prose a continuation of an image/text tradition that began in medieval monasteries and, after passing through multiple periods and manifestations of 'extra illustration,' arrived silently into our own age.⁵⁸ Likewise, with Sebald's interest in "traditional" cultural studies (as opposed to more recent academic forms), we can readily draw a link, as Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes does in this volume, back to Aby Warburg (see fig. 90, p. 429). In temperament and marginal practices Warburg brings to mind the historical figures Sebald was most attracted to, instead of any of the artists of roughly contemporaneous origins, whose style and content could be included in a chapter about Sebald's visually enhanced books. Yet, as hinted here, from the outset of his prose project, Sebald's codices have invited art historical refrains. In look, his first two texts bring to mind Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's 1973 collaged journal, *Rom, Blicke (Rome, Views)*, and Joseph Beuys' rough-hewn photo-process prints, some of which were also tethered to text. Likewise, *Die Ausgewanderten* resonates with specific artist book projects such as Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), and *Suite Venitienne* (1979) by Sophie Calle.⁵⁹ Even so, there is good reason to believe all these art historical links are nothing but 'false paths' resulting from a shared background (Brinkmann), a shared material (Boltanski, Ruscha), a shared premise (Calle, Wojnarowicz), or even, as the remarkably persistent modernist tale goes, a shared post-war Zeitgeist that in a number of divergent disciplines imagined a new world in remarkably similar forms (Beuys).

56. Walter Benjamin reverberates through Sebald's visual project, most notably his thoughts on auratic art and its relationship to photography from his 'A Small History of Photography,' Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) and 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,' *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 155–200. Sebald often referenced Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), as he does in the interview printed in this volume, and evidently read Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977) more than once, as evidenced from its heavy underlining in multiple colors. Sheppard, 'Dexter-sinister,' 444.

57. For a history of the artist book form, see Johanna Drucker, *A Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1994). Sebald's project naturally fits into a number of her divisions, most comfortably in her section on the 'self-referential book.'

58. For a discussion of the way Sebald's work with images borrows from 'extra-illustration' traditions, see Carol Bere, 'The Book of Memory: W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* and *Austerlitz*,' *Literary Review* 46.1 (Fall 2002): 189.

59. In *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), Ruscha photographed both sides of the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood from a moving car. These purposely degraded and 'de-skilled' photographs were bound accordion-style into a seven-meter-long book. Sebald's "gate-fold" is linked more to the reader's experience. Yet both Sebald and Ruscha use photographs arranged in a cumulative monotonous tone to evoke other 'jobs' for the photograph—as a captured still within a moving film (or a still from the flipping pages of a book). In *Suite Venitienne*, Sophie Calle follows a man she met in a casual encounter through the labyrinthine streets of Venice, Italy. Calle uses the standard tools of

Most critics agree that Sebald was able to bring a fresh perspective to the masterworks of art that dot his books, some reproduced and others made visible only in our minds through his rich descriptions. His accounts reveal an intimacy with pictures that comes from someone who relies on the eye rather than sanctioned histories of art, of someone who studies images, not history lessons.⁶⁰ Although the lack of distinction he draws between high and minor art seems in line with a practitioner's indiscriminate search for sources and inspiration, other visual thinkers before him, most notably Michel Foucault, have developed a visual bravado without having participated in sanctioned studio practices. Given the Renaissance paintings that Sebald presents us through ekphrastic prose in *Nach der Natur*, and the reproductions of fine art that punctuate his first two prose fictions,⁶¹ we are left with a general impression that Sebald's taste in the plastic arts was extensive yet antiquated and sometimes even provincial. From what we know about his background in literature and his proclivities for the past in all disciplines, it is likely that contemporary trends had nothing to do with Sebald's switch to photography in *Die Ausgewanderten*. Rather, it was a decision that came from an advantage he saw in using this particular type of *Bildmaterial* and its uncanny ability, as he once said, for a 'group photograph of a large Jewish family, all wearing Bavarian costume' to tell you 'more about the history of German-Jewish aspiration than a whole monograph would do.'⁶²

conceptual art—black and white photographs and texts—but to different ends. Whereas conceptual artists used these techniques to record perceptions of language, time, and space as objectively as possible, for Calle they function as a means to register a range of subjective and psychological responses. Her use of diaristic entries, snapshots, confessions, and dream narratives often evokes the anticipation and desire of *Schwindel. Gefühle*. Sebald's use of a book inside a book in *Die Ausgewanderten* also brings to mind a Calle project of more recent origin, *Double Game* (2000). In the form of a 'double play,' the book takes back ten pages of a novel by Paul Auster that referenced the French artist. Like Sebald, Calle uses a book inside a book (she literally inserts pages from Auster's novel in her bound project) to build layers of intrigue and meaning through and with the codex form.

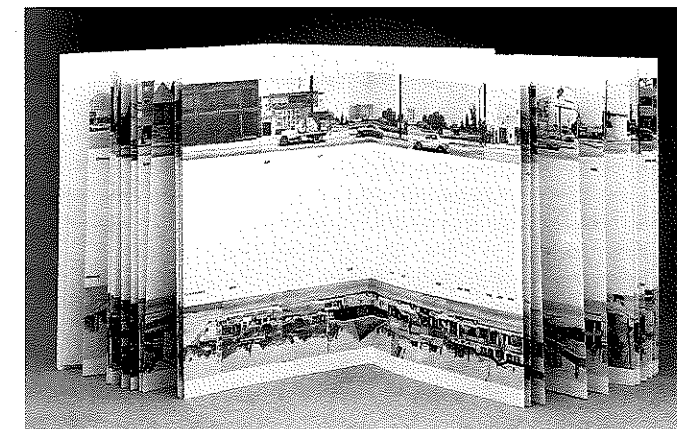


FIG. XV Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966.

60. Maria Zinfert points out that in *Vertigo* alone there are over fifty different terms for the word 'picture.' 'What is the use of a book without pictures?: On the use W. G. Sebald makes of picture[s].' *Conférences en ligne du Centre Canadien d'études allemandes et européennes*, vol. 1, no. 3 (December 2004): <www.cceae.umontreal.ca/IMG/pdf/CEL_0103.pdf>.

61. For a discussion of Sebald's use of fine art in his prose fictions, see Anne Fuchs, 'W. G. Sebald's Painters: The Function of Fine Art in his Prose Works,' *Modern Language Review* 101 (2006): 167–183.

62. Sebald, as quoted in his interview with Maya Jaggi, 'The Last Word,' *The Guardian* (21 December 2001).

Debates of intent aside, Sebald's second book, positioned in an early 1990s Western art world, was hardly notable. Purposely amateurish, 'de-skilled' photographs had become a visible part of art's vernacular.⁶³ In culture-based art, the photographic work of Christian Boltanski (fig. 63, p. 313) and the mainly photographic *Atlas* of Gerhard Richter were *de rigueur* in exhibitions and critical writing, especially in late 20th-century art circles that had turned their interest to the recording and working-through of trauma.⁶⁴ Likewise, a 1991 review of an artist working as a 'bricoleur of images, names, stories, materials, and concepts...[with a method] linked to Peter Handke and Alexander Kluge' (a description we might associate with Sebald today) was used to describe the author's fellow countryman Anselm Kiefer.⁶⁵ At that moment in art, it was Kiefer (along with Gerhard Richter) who seemed to be breaking new ground, even in photography (for him a secondary material) which he utilized in service of his 'bricolaged' paintings.⁶⁶ When *Die Ausgewanderten* was released in 1992, photography had moved beyond its own (modernist) borders but had yet to break from the strictures of the mediums it had drifted to. Much of the art world was still enamored with an architectural scale in painting and with an art "authored" by the artist. But in that same year, in other exhibition halls and other writing spaces, installations invited viewers to create their own visions and sometimes to "write" their own stories.⁶⁷ In these practices another path was being laid for Sebald. As we shall see, it was a path created not *after* but *before* his first two texts.

Cf. Essay
Deborah Cullen

63. For an elaboration on "de-skilled" photography practices in art, see p. 90, below.

64. As early as 1962, Gerhard Richter began collecting visual source material for his art production in much the same fashion as Sebald did, with one significant exception. Unlike Sebald, who kept his material loose so that it could constantly be reshuffled, Richter attached his material first to books (scrapbooks that he took with him when he fled East Germany) and then to paper "sheets" (which perpetuate the reference to a book spread). Both frameworks tie the material to a specific time and place. With its variety of photographic-type materials—family snapshots, drawings, architectural plans—and other ephemera from the private sphere, and newspaper and magazine clippings from a more public domain, the link between Sebald's 'shoeboxes' and Richter's books appears to extend beyond simple resemblance. As Jerry Zaslove suggests in his article on Sebald's photographic images, further discussion of their similarities and differences would enrich critiques of both artists' work, 'W. G. Sebald and Exilic Memory—His Photographic Images and the Cosmogony of Exile and Restitution,' *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Crossroads* 3.1 (April 2006): 205–238. Since excerpts of Richter's *Atlas* were exhibited in the 1980s and 1990s in Europe and the United States, there is a chance that Sebald knew of the project, especially given its obvious visual link to his own work. Recently, a large portion of Richter's *Atlas* has been published as *Gerhard Richter: Atlas*, ed. Helmut Friedel (New York: D.A.P. and Köln: Walther König, 2007). For a critical look at Richter's *Atlas* and the elements that distinguish it from other artist "accumulation" projects from the 1960s on, see Benjamin Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive,' *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 117–145.

65. Andreas Huyssen, 'Kiefer in Berlin,' *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 92.

66. The other obvious link between Anselm Kiefer and Sebald is their persistent attraction to Saturn. Besides their mutual interest in melancholy (associated with the "least lit planet"), both the artist and the author employ "Saturnian lead" in their work. Kiefer's use of the volatile material in his numerous paintings and photographs is legendary. In Sebald's work, lead's presence is more nuanced but no less insidious. Besides numerous references in Sebald's prose ('leaden grays'), it is equally present in traces of the seeming 'blunt pencil' that degrades his photographs. While lead in this guise is more perceptual than actual (the degradation is often done by a xerox machine, not an eraser, and pencils themselves are no longer created with lead), its presence underscores that culture's metaphors are often one step behind its technologies.

67. For instance, artists like Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Beginning in 1987, Gonzalez-Torres began to produce 'dateline' pieces in which he juxtaposed (in non chronological order) historical dates and names of social and cultural figures and events of vastly varying "importance." For instance, the list might include: waterbeds 1971, the Vietnam War 1975, Jackie 1968, and Munich 1972, arranged in an order that elides the significance or chronology of those "events"

(1994)

Two years after the appearance of *Die Ausgewanderten*, Sebald released two "new" works of prose fiction—books that rarely show up in even the most extensive bibliographies of his work, an oversight we hope to amend with this project. In 1994 Sebald's first two books, *Schwindel. Gefühle.* and *Die Ausgewanderten*,⁶⁸ were reprinted under Sebald's own direction by one of Germany's largest publishing houses, Fischer Verlag, in trade editions that were substantially smaller in size than the Andere Bibliothek first editions (fig. xvii).⁶⁹ Although the textual parts of the projects remained largely unchanged,⁷⁰ the images underwent "translation," most dramatically in *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, where the picture

("Untitled", 1988). The datelines took many forms including datelines created with a minimal arrangement of white text on sheets of black paper and dateline "portraits" which assembled a more personalized list of temporal and historical non-sequiturs that were then stenciled onto walls of private or public architectural spaces. Some of the datelines were framed behind glass so that the viewer's "reflection" manifestly inserts itself into the scrambled historical record. In "Untitled", 1987 (fig. xvi, below), the list begins with the entry, 'Bitburg Cemetery 1985,' followed by 'Walkman 1979,' 'Cape Town 1985,' etc. With their juxtaposition of major events and insignificant historical and cultural 'minutiae,' these pieces anticipate Sebald's project—especially in the way they acknowledge the viewer's 'point of reference' in any historical record. See Robert Storr, 'When This You See Remember Me,' *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, ed. Julie Ault (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), 30–31.



FIG. XVI Felix Gonzales-Torres, "Untitled", 1987. Framed photostat 8 1/4 x 10 1/4 in. Edition of 1, 1 A.P., 2 additional A.P. © The Felix Gonzales-Torres Foundation. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

68. Beginning with *Die Ausgewanderten*, Michael Brandon Jones is credited with the 'photographic work' in Sebald's books, an acknowledgment that carries over to the Fischer editions. A few scholars have taken this credit to mean Brandon Jones "authored" the photographs. See, for instance, Sibylle Omlin, 'Imagination durch Bilder: Fotografien und Andere Bildmaterialien in *Die Ringe des Saturn* von W. G. Sebald,' *Variation* 12 (2004): 189–206. Our belief is that Brandon Jones merely prepared the images for publication, under Sebald's close supervision. An image from Sebald's archive at Marbach appears to include a detailed note in the author's own hand which outlines instructions about some of the images in *Austerlitz* (see fig. xlii, p. 83). Brandon Jones is not consistently credited in later English translations.

69. The Fischer version displayed in fig. xvii, p. 40 is a later reprint (2001) with identical book dimensions to the original (1994) Fischer publication.

70. Sheppard points out that Sebald was constantly revising 'small inaccuracies' in his books, but except for the careful Sebald scholar or the specialist in one of the many fields Sebald dips into, these changes are imperceptible, even to the most ardent reader. 'Dexter-sinister,' 419–462.



FIG. xvii Comparison of *Die Ausgewanderten*, Fischer version (left) and *Die Ausgewanderten*, Andere Bibliothek version (right).

dimensions, croppings, and image bleeds were substantially altered. In some instances, even the “pull” the images had on surrounding sentences were reformed (See *Intermezzo—Vertigo*, pp. 44–45). The ‘double titling’⁷¹ of the original book—centered text above or below the images that serve as headings or captions—was lost when the images were moved from their center of the page position to a top or bottom location. Many of the picture blocks were drastically reduced in size, resulting in the loss of their *realia* objectness, and making them sometimes (more) difficult to read.⁷² Overall, the book was “cleaned-up”; the irregular spaces between the text blocks and the image blocks were brought back in line with more traditional standards. Errant spacing between sentences was corrected, tight junctures between words and images were loosened up. In the end, the Fischer’s version of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* is offered to the reader as a more standard “illustrated” text.⁷³

71. This is Elinor Shaffer’s term for centered text that ‘serves as titles or headings (above) or as captions (below).’ ‘W. G. Sebald’s Photographic Narrative,’ in Görner, *The Anatomist of Melancholy*, 59.

72. Since many of Sebald’s images are ‘image-texts,’ to borrow W. J. T. Mitchell’s term, the difficulty in “reading” is sometimes textual and visual. *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 89.

There are some aspects of the images that elude the Fischer housecleaning. The irregular cuts of the vignettes are still present, which, oddly, more insistently reveal the artist’s hand.

73. Noam Elcott is one of few scholars who has tackled the issue of Sebald’s changing layouts. See his ‘Tattered Snapshots,’ 203–23. See also Arthur Williams, ‘W. G. Sebald: A Holistic Approach to Borders, Texts and Perspectives,’ in *German-Language Literature Today: International and Popular?* ed. Arthur Williams, et. al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), 49–67. For a discussion of layout in editions and translations of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* and *Die Ausgewanderten*, see Carsten Strathausen in this volume, 485.

In contrast, the changes made to *Die Ausgewanderten* are so minimal they might escape casual notice. One of the revisions was the flip of an image, a seemingly simple gesture that reverberates through the pictures that surround it.⁷⁴ There is a subtle but profound difference in suggested meaning for a figure that (in unison, or not, with other figures visually represented in the same spread) looks inside (towards the narrative in the book) or outside the page (towards the world outside the book). Other small changes in *Die Ausgewanderten* come in revised crops. The first is a picture of a mountain range, presumably in Switzerland, which in the original had been cropped to the dimension of the text block above and below it (see fig. 124, p. 524). In the Fischer version, this reproduction is allowed a full bleed from the gutter to the outer edge of the page.⁷⁵ The other modification is linked to an image of Ambros Adelwarth’s journal, which in the original was reproduced inside an implied frame as a journal cut short by a horizontal crop (fig. 31, p. 214). In the Fischer version, the bottom edge of the photograph has been reformed so that the ribbon that emerges from the journal now defines the bottom of the image block. This simple gesture erases the trace of the crop and the image of the book now seems to have produced the image *in* the book (fig. 52, p. 267).⁷⁶

The changes to Sebald’s second prose fiction are minimal but still significant for no other reason than that they tacitly re-assert the agency of those images that underwent no apparent change. The author alerts us to elements of his visual material that could have otherwise been overlooked or, worse, could have been blamed on bad design and printing practices. For instance, the gray boxes that we might attribute to the letterpress and monotype process of the first printings are largely preserved in the Fischer versions, thereby asserting their semiotic presence.⁷⁷ More importantly, these Fischer versions, presumably revised in close proximity to one another, offer evidence that Sebald’s thinking about the relationship of images to text was not always linked to individual narratives or book titles. Through the ‘lingual abyss of translation,’⁷⁸ the Fischer publications are linked by ‘modes of signification’—by how Sebald puts elements in his books, not by what these images or text communicate or represent.⁷⁹ The Fischer publications firmly establish once and for all that layout (as charted on the next page), is the privileged “third space” of Sebald’s project.

Cf. Project
Daniel Lash

74. For a more detailed discussion of this image and subsequent reversals, see Strathausen in this volume, 485–488.

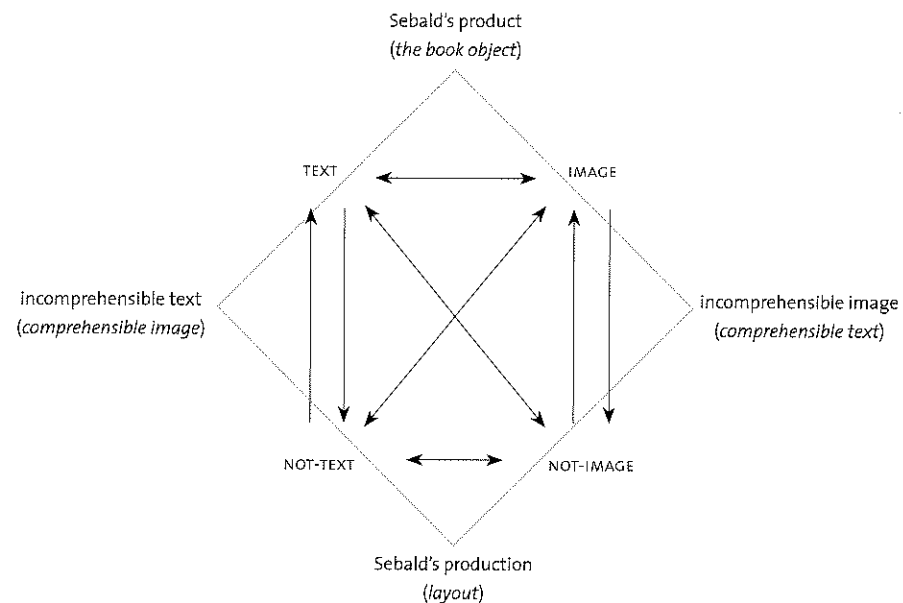
75. See page 25 in both versions of *Die Ausgewanderten*. Above this reproduction, the last word of the sentence that immediately precedes the image block has been stranded on its own last line. Since the word is ‘Eis’ (‘ice’), it offers a unique example of a word that doubles as a “heading” without being pulled to the center of the text block. While this is merely speculative, this unusual “title” may also show us a playful artist in control of his layout; a designer would not have had allowed the word to be “orphaned” on its own line.

76. Although the image reproduced in our book is taken from the English version of *The Emigrants*, it is identical to the image in the Fischer version of *Die Ausgewanderten*.

77. For instance, the gray box surrounding the twig-like salt form on p. 344 (see fig. 92, p. 432). Likewise, the traces of Greno’s printing process become apparent through the later revisions. Many of the images from the Andere Bibliothek books display an inky “outlining,” an artifact of print plates that is lost in the gray boxes of the Fischer versions. See, for instance, fig. 124, p. 524 and fig. 133, p. 536.

78. Elcott, ‘Tattered Snapshots,’ 204.

79. As Daniel Lash asserts in this volume, this mode of signification ‘is what the translator must uncover in the original before re-presenting it in a new work,’ 441.



In this chart (fig. xviii), the traditional opposition between image and text is opened up to accommodate the parts of Sebald's project that disrupt typical image/text relationships in an illustrated book.⁸⁰ The expanded binary creates positions for the cloudy notes in Sebald's stories that we are expected to read, the out of focus images we are intended to view as visual evidence, and the textual lines that have been altered to suggest we also view them as images. These complications in reading are confounded even more by the conflicting textual directives that surround them. An opposition occurs between what we see and what we are asked to see (or asked not to see). For example, in *Schwindel. Gefühle*, we come across two words that have been pulled from the text

80. This expansion draws from two related but significantly different expanded forms. The first is the neutralization exercise developed by A. J. Greimas. The second is the Klein Group which can be used to expand a binary created by opposing terms without changing the nature of the original binary. Art historian and theorist Rosalind Krauss has adopted the Klein Group for her provocative critiques. It has proven to be a powerful tool for unpacking some of the most critically impenetrable forms of contemporary art. See her, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field,' *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 277–290.

I use the term "third space" to indicate that the binary I refer to here is largely a spatial (and visual) one dependent on the agreed upon cultural "spaces" for texts and images and more importantly, the mixture of the two. The third space is to be differentiated from the 'third term,' implied here in my expanded binary but, due to lack of space, not fully explored. As many of the contributors to this volume elucidate, an analysis of the third term is centered on the meaning of (and the slippage of meaning between) text and images as sign systems. Apropos to this study, though, the Klein Group expansion has been questioned for analyses of photography, one of the most critically and theoretically impenetrable mediums in art today. See, for instance, George Baker, 'Photography's Expanded Field,' in *October* 114 (Fall 2005): 120–140.

and centered on their own line.⁸¹ This is nothing new in Sebald's odd world. We have learned that we are intended to read these sentence fragments in more than one way.

ORGANAZIONE LUDWIG

But then Sebald typographically alters the font, enlarging it in the process, and we wonder if we are meant to view these words as an object—a sign over a door, a title on a pamphlet—even though, beyond the typographical changes, they lack the usual signs that accompany a Sebald image (a gray background, for instance). In the process of working through this small reading disruption we might stop and look at the words more closely, noticing that they reside closer to (or further away from, depending on the edition) the lines of text above and below them.⁸² Eventually we pick up the narrative below these two word-objects, but not without holding in reserve the gap, a place of excess that now slightly shifts the tone of the verse. Conversely, there is text that is presented as if we are meant to read it: reproductions of full pages of journals such as those of Ambros Adelwarth (see fig. 54, p. 269). The narrative invites us to read the pages, yet the illegible script tells us they can only be viewed as *realia*. In this case, we might stay with the visual material even longer. This desire to read that to which we are denied access becomes a powerful lure. (Often when reading Sebald's first two prose fictions, the magnifying glass seems a reasonable reader's tool.) These pieces of text that are meant to be viewed (but that still tempt us to read them) and piece of images that are meant to be read (even though they signal us to view them) constantly challenge us to look past Sebald's image-text *product* (the book). They direct our attention to the liminal joints of Sebald's image-text *production*.

This 'third space,' the privileged space of layout, is the part of Sebald's books that is *neither text nor image*, the element that is made *manifest* through (and with) *both text and image*.⁸³ *Layout* is the site of the codex that reveals Sebald's hand, not the hand on the pen or the hand holding the camera or sorting through images, but the place where eye and hand meet, where the image and text are "handled." As we will quickly see, it is the site of the *manipulator*, the *retoucher*, the *trickster at play*⁸⁴ constantly refashioning his image-tinged books into new objects,⁸⁵ the site that ties Sebald, finally, to the work of the artist.

81. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*, 93.

82. In the revised Fischer version, Sebald introduced a line of centered text above the two words that further confounds the divisions between text and image.

83. Elcott perceptively points out that Sebald leaves visible joints between the multiple elements of his project and that 'these materialist seams are the hidden subject of the patchwork texts of W. G. Sebald.' 'Tattered Snapshots,' 203.

84. With play linked not only to games but also to the condition of having "wiggle-room." Given the solemnity of Sebald's topics, the trickster may seem out of place in any assessment of the author or his work. Yet most that knew the author speak of his trickster side, a side that he (perhaps unwittingly but persistently) evoked when constructing his visual rubrics. As Richard Sheppard warns, 'excessively earnest commentators on Max's use of visual imagery should not assume that all the pictures in his work are of equal significance: some are almost certainly there as a joke, to mislead and puzzle the determined reductionist,' 'Dexter-sinister,' 428, 441.

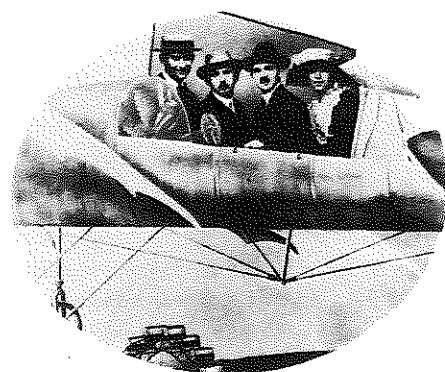
85. It is our position that beginning with the Fischer versions of *Schwindel. Gefühle* and *Die Ausgewanderten*, each book should be treated as a unique project; thus, our extended bibliography that lists important variations of each title.

Cf. Essay
Carsten Strathausen

FIG. xviii Image-Text
Binary Expansion.

In the original publication of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* (Andere Bibliothek, 1990), Sebald often reproduces his *Bildmaterial* (figs. xix and xx) at scale (for instance, the passport in fig. xix). Many of the irregular vignettes are positioned between text boxes with seeming little regard for consistent spacing (fig. xx). In the Fischer Verlag version of the same title, the image/text relationships are standardized (fig. xxii) and scale is often lost when the images are converted into more traditional illustrations (fig. xxi).

photographieren lassen als Insassen eines Aero-
plans, der sich über das Riesenrad und über die
Spitzen der Votivkirche erhoben hat, ist Dr. K.
zu seiner eigenen Verwunderung der einzige,
der in dieser Höhe

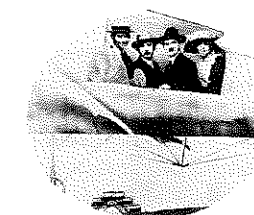


noch eine Art Lächeln zustande bringt.

Am 14. September fährt Dr. K. nach Triest. Gut zwölf Stunden verbringt er auf der Südbahn allein im Winkel eines Coupés. Eine Lähmung breitet sich in ihm aus. Die Landschaftsbilder reihen sich draußen nahtlos aneinander, überstrahlt vom Similiglantz eines ganz und gar unwahrscheinlichen Herbstlichts. Obwohl er sich fast überhaupt nicht vom Fleck rührt, ist Dr. K. am Abend um zehn nach neun unbegreiflicher-

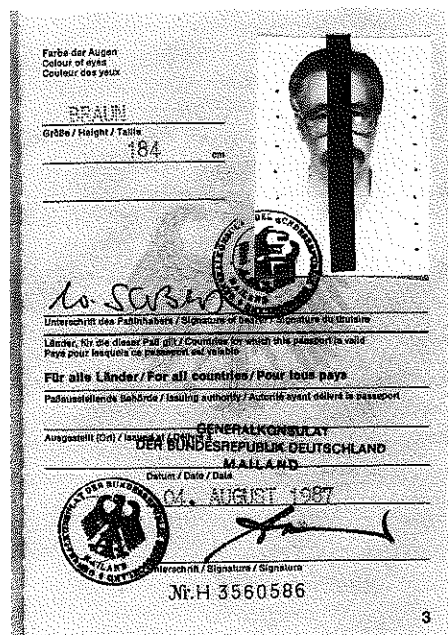
sehr lange dauerte, bis, nach mehreren Telefonge-
sprächen mit Amtsstellen in Deutschland und in
London, endlich meine Identität sichergestellt war
und ein kleiner, ja zwergwüchsiger Konsulatsbeam-
ter sich auf eine Art Barhocker hinter eine enorme
Schreibmaschine setzte und begann, die Angaben,
die ich zu meiner Person gemacht hatte, in punktier-
ten Buchstaben in einen neuen Paß zu übertragen.

Dr. K. zu seiner eigenen Verwunderung der einzige,
der in dieser Höhe



noch eine Art Lächeln zustande bringt.

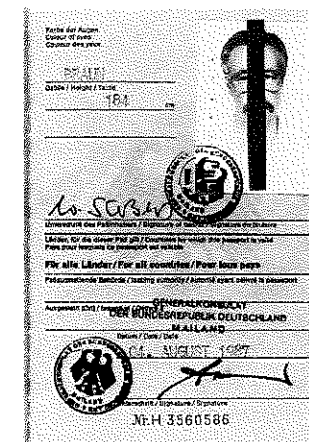
Am 14. September fährt Dr. K. nach Triest. Gut zwölf Stunden verbringt er auf der Südbahn allein im Winkel eines Coupés. Eine Lähmung breitet sich in ihm aus. Die Landschaftsbilder reihen sich draußen nahtlos aneinander, überstrahlt vom Similiglantz eines ganz und gar unwahrscheinlichen Herbstlichts. Obwohl er sich fast überhaupt nicht vom Fleck rührt, ist Dr. K. am Abend um zehn nach neun unbegreiflicher Weise wirklich in Triest. Die Stadt liegt schon im Dunkel. Dr. K. läßt sich sogleich in ein Hotel am Hafen fahren. Wie er in der Pferdedroschke sitzt, vor sich den breiten Rücken des Kutschers, macht er auf sich selbst einen sehr geheimnisvollen Eindruck. Die Leute, kommt ihm vor, bleiben auf der Straße stehen und blicken ihm nach, als wollten sie sagen, da ist er ja endlich.



Aus dem Konsulatsgebäude heraustretend mit dem neu ausgefertigten Ausweis meiner Freizügigkeit in der Tasche, faßte ich den Entschluß, vor der Weiterreise ein paar Stunden lang in den Straßen von Mailand herumzugehen, obgleich ich mir natürlich hätte denken können,

135

xix



Aus dem Konsulatsgebäude heraustretend mit dem neu ausgefertigten Ausweis meiner Freizügigkeit in

129

xxi

166

xx

160

xxii

In 1995 Sebald released *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, the last of his books to be published under the Andere Bibliothek banner. *Die Ringe* is a record of the artist's travels by foot, in dreams, and from memory, through England's East Anglia, the once thriving but now withering east coast the exiled author called home for over three decades.⁸⁶ Sebald's third book signals a profound shift in his practices, with a decidedly more confident hand creating mature visual work. At first glance, with its seventy-five pictures, the book seems a natural follow-up to the two previous prose fictions.⁸⁷ The repetitive seascapes that open the story offer a new category to the image types of Sebald's last publication. There are the familiar image bleeds, the centered texts, the photographs of *realia*, and the pictures seemingly absorbed by the larger book. After the photo-heavy *Die Ausgewanderten*, there is a recommitment to the variety of image types that marked *Schwindel. Gefühle*. Once the text is brought into play, though, we sense a number of new concerns.

As much as the ghostly remnants of the European Grand Tour often underwrite and propel the narratives of the first two books, in this seemingly more modern, Foucauldian tinged, travelogue,⁸⁸ the journeyer's route is, paradoxically, drawn by a more ancient ritualized travel itinerary—the medieval pilgrimage. Sebald constantly seems to be on a quest for a relic modern man is no longer able to recognize. He recognizes that he is not always able to depend on history to deliver adequate research material. The found photographs typical of his first books are augmented by photographs of found places, some captured by Sebald's camera, but others brought into existence by more secretive measures. Although Sebald often takes camera in hand to collect (not only to record) the material of his vision quest, we are left with the persistent feeling that the photographs have been purposely overdeveloped to hide some clue to the author's secret purpose or more simply that the images are merely discards of Sebald's photographic process. No longer do we see the playful good-enough images that marked the first books, but a selection process orchestrated by the 'not-enough' image created through a purposeful withholding, or directed by a latency the author can no longer control.⁸⁹ The most powerful pictures are, in fact, "absent images," so vividly described we begin to think we've seen them before, if not in this book, then in earlier

86. *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 1995), number 130 in the Andere Bibliothek, was also one of the last books in the series to be set in letterpress. Publishing rights were quickly sold to Fischer Verlag, resulting in a trade edition that, once again, is remarkably similar to the original version.

87. In determining this count, I treated the two page spread of Roger Casement's open diary as one image (166–167), and the two pages from the pattern book at Strangers Hall as two images (352–353). Although they are printed side by side, they appear to be non-consecutive pages.

88. Sebald's detailed account of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* at the beginning of *Die Ringe* brings to mind Michel Foucault's tour-de-force reading of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* at the beginning of his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Natural Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973) and seems to set the tone for Sebald's "archaeological" approach to a region's history, including his address through documents to the region's "infamous" people. I allude here to Foucault's early approach to history, which he called 'archaeological,' and to one of his famous essays titled, 'Lives of Infamous Men,' *Michel Foucault: Power*, trans. Robert Hurley and others, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 157–175.

89. A "withholding" that is strangely accentuated by Sebald's decision to format the text in a more traditional form. In *Die Ausgewanderten*, all shifts to English are left in Roman text, which visibly disguises the joints of the prose. In *Die Ringe*, all dialogue and text in a language other than German is set in italics.

Cf. Essay
Adrian Daub

ones.⁹⁰ *Die Ringe* seems to disclose "a truth" that, like so many of Sebald's lessons, reverberates back through time. The images Sebald worked from to create a specific prose were not always the images he set in the book. In *Die Ringe*, the dislocation between these two sets of images—those he worked from and those he gave us—sends us on a path of reconciliation. We try to link the visual patches with absent images from past projects or even other novels and cultural narratives.⁹¹

Some of the photographs take the 'not-enough' concept even further, occupying a strange middle ground between *realia* and representation. If, as readers of this seeming travelogue, we are asked to accept the gray patches as documents, if we are intended to give them evidentiary status, either as photographs of sites visited or photographic reproductions of *realia* collected along the way, then the request proves difficult to honor since we are often left wondering what it is exactly we are looking at. Whether the surrounding text suggests we might be looking at a photograph of a diamond mine (fig. xxiv), a Chinese princess (fig. xxiii), a miniature bridge (see fig. 7, p. 136) or a meeting of men,

Cf. Essay
John Sears

FIG. xxiii *Die Ringe des Saturn*,
Andere Bibliothek, 188.



these images teeter close to the null point of indexicality. Etched lines in one part of an image can suggest a gravure process, but then only one or two centimeters away, these same lines dissolve into the black liquid pools we associate with photography. With light bouncing off a sweaty brow and the subtle shadow of a nose escaping the photographic film's obsessive hunt for gray, an image seems to have originated in the camera's capture

Cf. Project
Anne Flannery

90. As Shaffer puts it, 'the absence of one of these densely weighted objects [photographs] is at least as powerful as its presence,' 'Photographic Narratives,' 62. Many have noted that the search for a Sebald image has often ended in a document that has no relationship to Sebald. See the ICI Research Team in this volume, 492–509.

91. Sebald was fairly secretive about his working process. We don't know how many of his images were created "for" the books, but in *Die Ringe* it is safe to assume that some of the images were found (created) through various devices once the project was underway.

until the reader's eye moves to the upper parts of the picture and notices the characteristic cross-hatching of a drawn surface. The persistence by which Sebald engages us in this game of photographic hide and seek hints at consequences greater than finding an answer to a visual conundrum. Instead of seeing a predictable, easy (and maybe even desired) *effect of reality* that would have us step into the photograph's center, we are constantly reminded of the varied *effects of photography*—cropping, overexposure, under-



exposure, and here more than the first two books, darkroom repair and duplication (and duplicity)—that can result in an altered photographic print. If we can agree there is such a thing as a fictive photograph, wherein the fictive is marked less by the cut of the fabric, than by the way it unravels at the edges, then we find that fictive picture in *Die Ringe*. Read individually, these images investigate the very essence of the camera-made photograph. But when read as a group, the persistent visual call to question the photograph's *effect of the real* has us also considering photography's link to another 'Real,' that realm that points to the artifice of all reality.⁹² As Sebald so succinctly asserts in the closing sentences of his story about Paul Bereyter in *The Emigrants*, any time we are forced to renegotiate our contract with the photograph's indexicality—its agreed upon ability to represent the world—we risk brushing up to the disorienting “*affect of the Real*,” that psychic realm that refuses to be tamed by meaning.⁹³

92. I am referring here to the place of psychic residue in Lacan's tripartite scheme of the psyche that, in addition to the Real, also includes the Symbolic and the Imaginary realms. I have capitalized the names of these realms (a tradition Lacan did not follow) to help differentiate these terms from their usual meaning in lay language. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988).

93. In this passage he describes the disorientation he felt once he realized an image of his old teacher had captured something of that teacher's fate years before he met his end. “The disquiet I experienced because of that momentary failure to see what was meant—I now sometimes feel that at that moment I beheld an image of death...,” *Emigrants*, 63. For Sebald's reader, the material presence of these images hampers our ability to decide if they were made by a world writing its own existence, thereby linking us ‘as individual souls and psyches to an ineffable and infinite world,’ as Christina Kraenzle quotes D. W. Meinig in her essay for this volume, 142. Or are they, instead, the creative markings (the drawing/xerox) of an individual (‘the other,’ Sebald) who, according to Lacan, holds the power to undo our Symbolic order?

The artist's hand has been present from the start of his visual project but has never been paraded out with such presence as it is in *Die Ringe*. The “miming” hand in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. (Herbeck and Sebald's grandfather) is often only a(n index) finger in *Die Ausgewanderten*,⁹⁴ and a dexterous combination of the two in Sebald's 1994 versions. By *Die Ringe*, the hand is fully revealed through the manipulation of material, the trace of which the artist leaves in for all to see in a process of *poiesis* rather than *mimesis*.⁹⁵ We can be sure that Sebald is finally doing work in the studio—which for him was the copy room at the University of East Anglia. There he persistently employs (second, perhaps, to the hand-held camera he now carries with him wherever he goes⁹⁶) an imaging device that through a process that harkens back to the origins of photography, exhibits the same generational loss as the history Sebald is so drawn to.⁹⁷ Sebald employs the dust and light of the xerox machine, the latest, and probably last vestige of photography's early experiments in ‘light burning,’⁹⁸ to degrade, deplete, and scumble (but paradoxically never to disguise or disappear the indiscretions of) presumably crisp(er) photographs down to blocks of indiscriminate “leaden grays.”⁹⁹ As many distinguished critics have observed, Sebald's first two books were replete with ‘visual icons’¹⁰⁰ of images overlaid with meaning,

94. As already noted, Sebald often points our attention to his visual material through the directive, ‘this picture,’ especially in the third story about Ambros Adelwarth. Interestingly, the English word ‘fiction’ is from *figere*, which means ‘to point.’

95. Silke Horstkotte, ‘Pictorial and Verbal Discourse.’

96. Tim Adams, ‘The Eyes Have It,’ *The Guardian*, 19 September 2004.

97. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce called his process ‘heliography,’ or sun drawing (circa 1826), alluding to early photographic processes that utilized the light of the sun to burn an image into various materials (later replaced by a chemical ‘liquid light’). The xeroxed image (in both look and mediating processing) also brings to mind Paul Klee's oil transfer drawings from the 1920s. Klee was an artist Sebald evidently studied, as he refers to him in his essay on Herbeck. For a history of the xerox machine and its relationship to other modernist “copies,” see Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1996).

98. Or will the camera end up becoming obsolete? Many artists who use photographs in their work have, in growing numbers over the last two years, abandoned the digital camera for the immediacy and accuracy of the scanner bed. Since scanning holds stronger links to the xerox machine than to the camera, photographic history may need to be modified yet once again in order for it to keep pace with praxis. As Carol Armstrong notes in a slightly different context, “de-skilling” practices are being replaced with ‘re-skilling’ actions, in the way these studio practices embrace ‘photogenic drawing’ trajectories from the early days of photography. ‘Cameraless: From Natural Illustrations and Nature Prints to Manual and Photogenic Drawings and Other Botanographs,’ *Ocean Flowers: Impressions from Nature*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (New York: The Drawing Center and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 87–165.

99. See, for example, fig. 96, p. 444 and fig. 7, p. 136. The ICI Research Team in this volume chronicles the xerox origin of a picture from *The Rings of Saturn* (fig. 5, p. 135), 492–509. Sebald acknowledged that he manipulated his images, although without directly implicating the device he used (the xerox machine): ‘I write up to these pictures and I write out of them also, so they really are part of the text and not illustrations and hence, if they were produced in a much better form, which would be technically very easy to do nowadays, then they would ruin the text. They must not stand out; they must be of the same leaden grain as the rest.’ David Sornig, ‘Picturing the Story: Image and Narrative in Brian Castro and W. G. Sebald,’ *TEXT* 8.1 (April 2004): 155. A reason for this degradation is suggested by Petra Rau, who calls the resulting ‘unclear,’ ‘out of focus,’ ‘indecipherable’ images ‘the iconography of the real.’ ‘Beyond Punctum and Studium: Trauma and Photography in Rachel Seiffert's *The Dark Room*,’ *Journal of European Studies* 36.3 (2006): 299.

100. It is not just the recognizable sites and faces of a ‘yodeling team from home’ that first draw our attention, but the part objects, the shadows, the colors, and sounds that (under cover) direct our vision. As James Atlas points out, Sebald ‘understands the insidious power of visual icons—the Brownshirt years.’ ‘W. G. Sebald: A Profile,’ *Paris Review* 41 (1999): 290.

Cf. Project
ICI Research Team

FIG. xxiv *Die Ringe des Saturn*,
Andere Bibliothek, 117.

but in *Die Ringe* the icons have often been reduced to mere piles of dust. They are images stripped of all but the most minimally discernable content.

The images in *Die Ringe* pose strong questions but provide us with the weakest of answers; they drive us to constantly look for another image we think will tell us more than the last. We page back to other sections, trying to find photographs we vaguely remember passing on our way into the book's center. We mentally reorder a series of pictures linked by a common text as if they have been printed out of order, hoping that in righting them we will finally grasp their elusive meaning, which seems to be scratched into the surface of so many of these images, but always in the incomprehensible secret language of the fetish. This process of feed-forward and feed-back, folding and unfolding, produces a conversation between the book's heterogeneous parts, an *(auto)poiesis* peculiar to the bound codex form that produces an endless pool of possible readings. This is the hallmark of the Sebaldian method from this point on. And because the images are so redundant—seascapes with a maddening similarity, pictures degraded to the same gray tone—we find ourselves looking for other markers to differentiate them: a position on a page, the degree or type of bleed, or their appearance after another image we *can* always seem to find, a mental (re)ordering that makes us aware of the pronounced rhythm to the book, a dirge that both drives and interrupts the book's flow.

The degradation that defies our ability to enter the picture's center does not leave us completely empty-handed. Much as the xerox machine has an uncanny ability to bring past indiscretions to the surface, many of the images in *Die Ringe* display the artifacts of time, of reproduction, of invasions and repairs, of assaults to the surface that, uncannily, the photograph and the human body share.¹⁰¹ *Die Ringe* is ostensibly a journey through the region of East Anglia called the Saints, a simple geographical fact that Sebald, perhaps even with tongue in cheek, exploited in his original subtitle 'an English pilgrimage.' But the theme of the pilgrimage—a phantasmized encounter with a body maimed and ripped apart in religious zeal, a body in bits and pieces that is the saintly relic—also penetrates the book at the level of form. As we try to make sense of the patches of gray lying on the page, we visually bump up against the creases, dimples, dirt, dust, and scars...the inescapable 'traumatic'¹⁰² trail of the photographic, and particularly the xerographic process that formally mirrors the 'on-and-on of the world'¹⁰³ pictured in the altered images. These marks that are both *in* and *on* the photographs are often directly linked to a host of traumatic symptoms that continuously emerge as Sebald walks through East Anglia.¹⁰⁴ And so we are left to wonder if these pitted and pockmarked photographs are so devoid

101. With time, the sheen of a young photograph assumes a dull yellow pallor, often with lines and creases or even age spots from imperfect reproductive processes.

102. Hal Foster, *Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 136. Foster borrows this neologism from Lacan to discuss the work of Andy Warhol and reads the 'slipping and streaking' artifacts of the silkscreen process as wound-like holes or 'pops,' which makes them 'visual equivalents of our missed encounters with the real,' *ibid.*, 134. 'Through these pokes or pops we seem almost to touch the real,' *ibid.*, 136.

103. James Elkins, 'Critical Response: What Do We Want Photography to Be? A Response to Michael Fried,' *Critical Inquiry* 31.4 (Summer 2005): 945. This is Elkins' term for the part of vernacular photography ("Those nearly unseeable pieces and forms, shapes and parts...[an] unending supply of usually dull and sometimes uninterpretable stuff," *ibid.* [emphasis Elkins]) that doesn't fit into the 'agendas of vernacular photography.'

104. In his attempt to capture found places, Sebald begins to work not through but with the camera, letting his body orchestrate the shots. So often in *Die Ringe*, a description of changing sentence precedes the placement of a photograph in the text, making it seem as if the image-taking was a palliative to calm Sebald's persistent *disease*.

of content, so off-space from the descriptions that surround them, because they are not intended as images of the world out there but are meant to be records of an imag(in)ed world acting *on* a body.¹⁰⁵

The Sebald of *Die Ringe* is not the same "writer" of the first two image/text ventures. He is not the student of Gugging, the borrower from Breton, the admirer of Barthes, who dabbled and played with visual marginalia on his way to creating "a new literary form." In his third prose fiction, Sebald has become a visual practitioner who enlists not only the textual and visual raw materials of his earlier book projects but also the burnt and scratched remnants of trauma's evacuated sign systems. With them he rewrites Barthes's (traumatic) *punctum* in a post-traumatic idiom. Sebald seems less interested in photos that are able to wound us than in those in which past wounds have left their traumatic mark. Barthes's prick eventually heals over, but the scar, like a tattoo, is an assault the body refuses to keep secret. Scars, whether on the skin of a body or the "skin" of the photographic object, invite 'interpretation.' In *Die Ringe* they offer us the opportunity to 'name' not the prick that 'elides the scrutiny of the observer,' but that once imperceptible wound now made visible through its scars, through its 'effects.'¹⁰⁶

THE EMIGRANTS (1996)

In 1996 Sebald's second prose fiction, *Die Ausgewanderten*, was translated into English and published by Harvill Press as *The Emigrants*. In this first of Sebald's books to reach an English audience, the "generational loss" produced by the xerox machine in the pictures of *Die Ringe* is given additional meaning, often with ill-conceived effects. Many scholars have noted the loss of language subtleties in the translation. The interplay between German and English that marked the original is almost entirely lost when all sentences are translated to English. But the assault to the images and to the multiple visual dialects that Sebald has carefully built over the last ten years is even more egregious. The physicality of the photographic *realia*, the agency of the vertical crop, and the diegesis of the image bleed—all are gone. Some of the reproductions have been blown up in size to exaggerated versions of the originals. Faces emerge out of shadows. Text becomes more readable. Other reproductions are relegated to insets.¹⁰⁷ Slightly larger than marginalia, they cut into the text at the vertical margins. A couple of images have been switched (see *Intermezzo—The Emigrants*, pp. 180–181), and another few have been cropped to obscure seemingly relevant information. For example, the photograph of Ambros Adelwarth in 'Arab costume' taken while he was in Jerusalem is now cropped to remove the studio's address, the 'reductive redundancy'¹⁰⁸

105. Like Sebald's (Kafkaesque) 'chronicler' of history in *The Rings of Saturn*, who 'recalling, what he witnessed, inscribes his experiences in the act of self-mutilation, onto his own body.' *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998), 257.

106. Stefanie Harris, 'Return of the Dead,' 384.

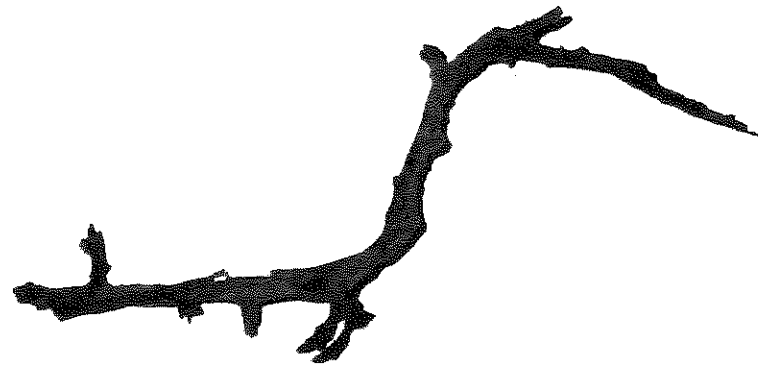
107. Inset images were used very sparingly in the Andere Bibliothek version of *Schwindel. Gefühle*. (e.g., p. 101).

108. This is the term coined by Sergio Chejfec for Sebald's tendency to insert images that have been adequately described in the text. This "referential emphasis" destabilizes 'the veridical links that we suppose tie writing to reality.' 'Literature: Brief Notes on Stories with Images,' *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 11.3 (2002): 298. By deleting the reference at the bottom of the photograph we must wonder if Sebald was trying to control the 'new and self-contained story produced by this excess.' *Ibid.*

Cf. Project
Matthew Marco

Cf. Project (gatefold)
Christel Dillbohner

printed at the bottom of the photograph (figs. xxvii–xxviii, p. 54).¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the visual interplay between image and word—the captioning effect of centered text above and below select pictures, which in its absence we can now see anchored the images to the book form (and not just the narrative)—has been so completely obliterated that the only true caption in the book, which identified Gustave Courbet's *Oak of*



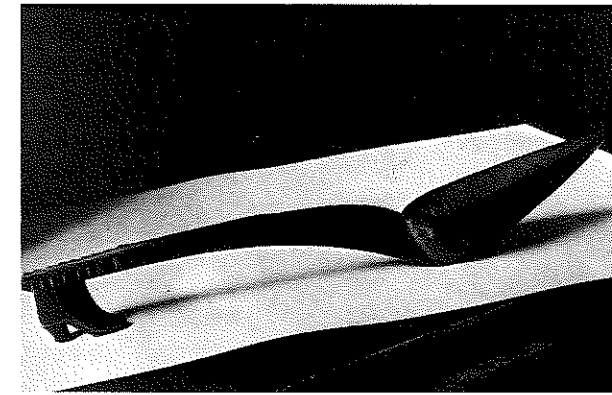
Vercingetorix (see fig. 46, p. 238), has been swallowed up by the English sentence. Ironically, the book that introduced the English-speaking world to Sebald looks like a standard text with illustrations.

One significant change comes to some of the images in the Harvill translation that, instead of limiting effects, seems to suggest new sources and analyses. The gray box that surrounded many of the objects in both the Andere Bibliothek and Fischer editions has been completely removed so that pictures invade instead of merely butting up to the surrounding text. The petrified salt form that the narrator of *The Emigrants* suggests is represented in a nearby image, is not only larger and more visible in the English version, but once released from its gray box is also now sharply defined by its quirky edges (fig. xxv). The viewer is able to readily make out two 'legs' at the base of the twig-like form, which seem to end in a pair of women's slippers. For a reader familiar with 20th century art, the seemingly burnt form ending in a pair of shoes may draw a connection to an image in André Breton's second novel, *L'Amour fou*. As his articulate critique of Jan Peter Tripp's paintings reveals, Sebald was well acquainted with the requirements of quotation in visual art. In that essay he discusses a Tripp painting that features a visual quotation from an earlier work—a canvas of a photo-realistically rendered pair of shoes that lands on a wall in a more recent painted work. In that newer piece, Sebald correctly identifies additional Tripp quotes from another source, Jan van Eyck's

109. Other image crops are less noticeable but no less significant. For instance, a photograph of an 'emigrant' family sitting around a dinner table in the Bronx (fig. xi, p. 33) has been cropped to obscure the steeple of a church that is depicted in a painting hanging on a background wall (fig. 22, p. 174). The same steeple was captured in an image displayed in an earlier section of *The Emigrants*. Thus, the (subliminal) link between the two photographs is lost to the reader of the English translation.

110. Quotation in visual art has a long history, and with the introduction of acts deemed appropriation and sampling, it has undergone rapid redefinition in the last twenty years. Generally, a quotation in art, like that in literature, borrows more than the actual quoted sequence; it also alludes to the underlying syntax of the initial thought. Although

Arnolfini Portrait. Tripp borrows both icons and iconography from the 15th-century masterpiece: an identical sandal, and a generic dog—which the artist updates with a 20th-century face.¹¹⁰ Given Sebald's expertise and the likely exposure he had to André Breton, it is feasible that the *objet trouvé* that Breton found in a Paris flea market (fig. xxvi), later photographed and dubbed by Man Ray as the 'Cinderella ashtray,' (as described in



L'Amour fou) has been given renewed life (or at least, renewed meaning) in Sebald's crystallized salt form.

Whether purposely placed there by the artist or manufactured in the (or this) reader's mind by the rough edges and gaps of ambiguous forms, the English versions of *Die Ausgewanderten* reveal that additional visual quotations and allusions may hide in Sebald's books, although often in a mirrored or inverted form.¹¹¹

Sebald does call the initial gesture, whereby Tripp inserts his first painting into the second work, a quotation, it is really a form of self-appropriation, for it is the second painting that gives (a new) context to Tripp's first painting. It is his "borrowings" from Jan van Eyck's *Portrait* (that Sebald rightfully identifies in his essay as both a shoe and a symbol of the dog) that more clearly perform "quotation." Thus, it is unimportant (and actually more effective) that Tripp places a different dog in his modern painting, for he is using the quotation to link the iconography and cultural significance of "dogness" in both van Eyck's times (15th century) and our own. This nuance does not escape Sebald when he writes in the final two sentences of his critique: 'His [the dog's] eye is attentively fixed on us; the right (wild) one has a little less light, strikes us as averted and alien. And yet we sense that it is the overshadowed eye that sees through us.' Sebald, "As Day and Night," 95.

111. The whimsical 'object in desire,' as Lacan termed it (that which 'takes the place of what by its very nature remains concealed from the subject'), found in Breton's book takes on a more traumatic form in Sebald's re-vision. Feet represented through their indexical surrogate and representational synecdoche—shoes—are often the visual statistics, the remaining human part object, by which we are asked to measure the insurmountable loss of the Holocaust. For instance, large piles of dusty shoes are displayed in both the museum at Auschwitz and the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. In the latter case, the unenclosed shoes invite an additional sensorial link to the Holocaust through their burnt rubber smell. For the shoes synecdochical function in representing the Holocaust, see my "That Which Stimulates and Numbs Us: The Museum in the Time of Trauma," (Ph.D. dissertation, CUNY Graduate Center, 2003), 168, 207–208.

The twig-like form is linked to Surrealism and specifically the surrealism of Sebald's own texts in the way the object haunts *The Emigrants* after first appearing in *Schwindel. Gefühle*. In that first book, a similar object, also from a salt mine (this time at the Hallein Salt Mines in Salzburg), is described but not reproduced (25–26). For a discussion of Lacan's 'object in desire' as opposed to an 'object of desire,' see Jacques Lacan, 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet.' In *Literature and Psychoanalysis: the Question of Reading Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 11–52.

Cf. Essay
Lisa Diedrich

FIG. xxvi Man Ray, 'De la hauteur d'un petit soulier faisant corps avec elle...' ('From the height of a little slipper joining bodily with it'). [Published in André Breton, *L'Amour fou*, 1934.]

Ambros über Paris und Venedig nach Konstantinopel und Jerusalem. Über diese Reise kann ich dir freilich keinen Aufschluß geben, sagte die Tante Fini, weil der Adelwarth-Onkel auf diesbezügliche Fragen nie eingegangen ist. Es gibt jedoch ein Fotoporträt in arabischer Kostümierung von ihm aus der Jerusalemer Zeit.



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The Emigrants

had to fetch more money, said Aunt Fini; and then on the third evening, when he broke the bank again, Cosmo won so much that Ambros was busy till dawn counting the money and packing it into a steamer trunk. After spending the summer in Deauville, Cosmo and Ambros travelled via Paris and Venice to Constantinople and Jerusalem. I cannot tell you anything of what happened on that journey, said Aunt Fini, because Uncle Adelwarth would never answer questions about it. But there is a photo of him in Arab



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THE RINGS OF SATURN (1998)

In 1998 *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* was translated and released, again by Harvill Press, as *The Rings of Saturn*. Besides the immediately apparent loss of the subtitle, this book suffers from the same homogenization of the images, the loss of bleeds, and the centering of the text over the images that plagued *The Emigrants*.¹¹² Paradoxically, in this English language version, the changes make for an overall stronger visual statement.¹¹³ With fewer variations to contend with—the bleeds and the crops that can momentarily divert attention—the skin-like quality of the photographs is accentuated. We readily notice the rich, uniform, black field that shows up in more than one image, a field that is the telltale sign of xerox manipulation. The placement of the now similarly-sized images on a single page, or in a particular part of the book, or among other pages with images on them, emphasizes and even enhances the marked rhythm of the book.

112. We are left to wonder if Sebald's decision to omit the subtitle was linked to a desire to downplay any religious overtones that may be inferred from 'An English Pilgrimage.' This possibility may also explain the omission of the (ironically, English) epigraph by John Milton (with its allusions to epic spiritual struggles) that opened the German original: 'Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably.' Kinross discusses some of the differences between the layout of the original *Andere Bibliothek* version of *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* and the later (1996) English edition by Harvill Press. Even though he discusses the pictures and their placement in the middle of the pages in the original (not replicated in the translation where they are placed at top and bottom of the page), he doesn't discuss the loss of the strange image bleeds in the English version. Kinross, *Unjustified Texts*, 190–198.

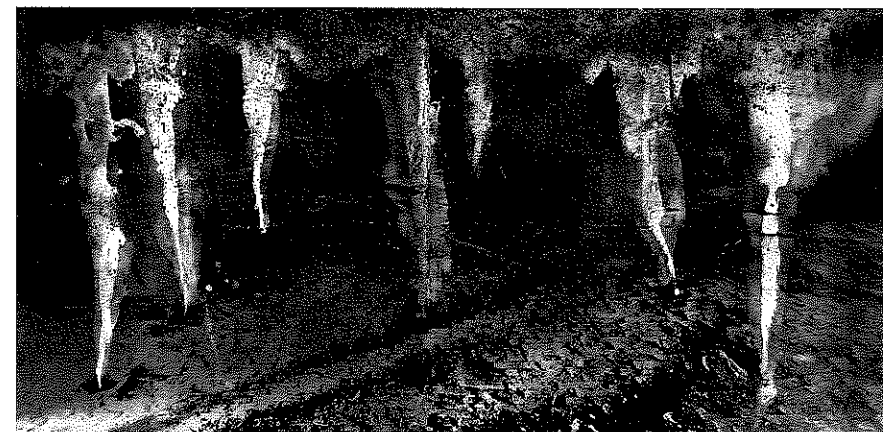
113. James Chandler claims that most of the translations were substantially reworked by Sebald, 'About Loss: W. G. Sebald's Romantic Art of Memory,' *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.1 (2003): 235–60, as cited in Frances Restuccia, 'Sebald's Punctum: Awakening to the Holocaust Trauma in *Austerlitz*,' *European Journal of English Studies* 9.3 (Dec. 2005), 320n5.

More critically to this study, *The Rings of Saturn* set off a flurry of activity among artists in Europe, the Americas, and various other outposts. By 1998 it would seem that Sebald had caught up with the art world, or rather, the art world had caught up with Sebald. To those in the literary world, this slowly paced, labyrinthine tale may seem an odd choice to carry the burden of greatness into another discipline, especially since it features images of such diminished iconic status. Undoubtedly, some of the success of *The Rings* can be attributed to coincidence, as the book appeared at a decisive moment in a discipline undergoing rapid redefinition, a time when art practice and theory was being invigorated (or reinvigorated) by a (yet another) "photographic turn."¹¹⁴ The German painters that had dominated western art in the late 1980s had, by the mid-1990s, begun to engage photography (instead of just using photographs as a tool in the construction of their work). Even Gerhard Richter's extended dialogue with photography became more nuanced as he introduced more color in his black and white palette.¹¹⁵ And Anselm Kiefer extended the 'pictorial' role photographs played in his practice (in the creation of his large-scale paintings and handmade books) when he became interested in photography's link to film.¹¹⁶ Perhaps most tellingly,

114. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to align Sebald's practices within art historical discourses about 'the photographic turn' that propelled conceptual art in the late 1960s (a 'turn' that continues to influence both art practice and art theory to this day), clearly many elements of Sebald's accumulation and construction techniques refer back to that period. The fact that these techniques were used by an untrained visual practitioner seems less interesting (at least to this writer) than the questions posed by their presence (or trace of their engagement) in his books; questions about cross-pollination between disciplines and the acquisition of technique outside the academy or the culturally-sanctioned atelier. For a brief discussion of 'the photographic turn,' in modern art, see Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, et al., *Art Since 1900: modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 591–592.

115. By the 1990s, Richter had received recognition for two distinct, and seemingly opposed, painting trajectories—one that was largely monochromatic (black and white) and derived (or at least engaged) with photography, and the other that appeared to be abstract paintings executed in bold exchanges of saturated color. Clearly, I am referring here to the former group of paintings. The extent to which Richter's two bodies of work are related (or not related) has been taken up by a number of critics, most notably Benjamin Buchloh and Robert Storr.

116. *Die Himmelspaläste (The Heavenly Palaces)* from the 1990s (fig. xxix, below), offers a good example of Kiefer's investigation of 'changing vantage points, cuts, close-ups, and other techniques calculated to bring the viewer into the flow of events.' Kiefer's "cinematic" photographs of the 1990s extended 'the physical and narrative qualities consistent in all of his work—with the photographic medium at its heart.' Gary Garrels, *Photography in Contemporary German Art: 1960 to the Present* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1992), 56.



by 1998, when the English version of Sebald's third prose fiction was released and quickly began to circulate among artists, curators and critics,¹¹⁷ we can readily discuss Sebald's project with language borrowed from the art theory and practice of that time.

We can, for example, talk about the visual practitioner's switch from found photographs to photographs of found places, or we can talk of Sebald's 'de-skilled' photographs and even his 'post-photography' practices (in addition to our ongoing discussion of Sebald as a late twentieth century artist working with a self-referential art book form).¹¹⁸ By the end of the 1990s, Sebald seemed to be formally in tune with artists like Vik Muniz, who had begun to interrogate photography beyond its indexical level.¹¹⁹ Even conceptually, Sebald seems in step with completely new genres, like the "whole-world" fictive art project of David Wilson's Museum of Jurassic Technology. Passages in *The Rings* immediately bring to mind one of Wilson's many museum pamphlets (published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Information) with degraded images and wordy text. Whether writing about 'Deprong Mori bats of the Tripiscum Plateau' (Wilson) or the history of the herring (Sebald), the artist-writers/writer-artists are linked by the way they insert 'deliberate factual errors' into their narratives 'with a completely straight face.'¹²⁰

But clearly the art world's embrace of Sebald came not only from the author's ability to affirm new photographic practices or even his affinity with a new "fictive genre."¹²¹ His address in *The Rings* to the devastation wrought by a mid-century historical event that had "disappeared" so many artists and intellectuals seemed to offer a way to work through a recent decade of loss in the art world,¹²² with methods that used all that seemed

117. In critical writing, the theoretical journal *October* has addressed art created in response to Sebald's books. In addition, *Bookforum* (a supplement to the art journal *Artforum*) a quarterly that features books of interest to artists and art historians, has focused on Sebald's books since the late 1990s.

118. Geoffrey Batchen uses the term, 'post-photography,' to describe photographic studio practices that belong to 'an era after, even if not yet quite beyond photography.' *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1997), 216.

119. Muniz fashions objects out of dust, chocolate, cotton, and other mundane detritus that he then photographs. The resulting object initially looks like a photograph or a photographic reproduction of a photograph, until the viewer is cued in to the artwork's duplicity by some slight irregularity in the presumed photographic material.

120. Sheppard, 'Dexter-sinister,' 428. The link is made stronger by Wilson's and Sebald's mutual love of natural science. The passage in the *Rings* that gives historical names to seemingly scientific processes is reminiscent of the language utilized by The Museum of Jurassic Technology. See Lise Patt, 'Horns, Bats, Ideas: Encountering the Fetish at the Museum of Jurassic Technology,' *Museum Anthropology* 20.2 (Fall 1996): 72.

121. The term "fictive" has been used sporadically in art for at least half a century, especially by artists and critics with literary leanings. For instance, Marcel Broodthaers used "fictive" in his press release to the Musée d'Art Moderne, Section XIXème Siècle (Bis), which opened in Düsseldorf in 1970. Hal Foster often employed the word during the 1980s and 90s in his critiques and historical analyses of modern and postmodern art. By the beginning of the 21st century, the term became linked to forms by artists who deliberately combine textual and visual strategies to produce works that straddle the boundary between art, fiction, and history. These "whole worlds" rely on a wide variety of fictive strategies and authenticating devices ranging from the nature of photography as objective witness (Nicolas Kahn and Richard Selesnick's *Circular River* project) to an appeal to the authority of specific cultural forms such as the museum (Wilson's Jurassic), scientific research (Joan Fontcuberta's Sputnik project), and the encyclopedia (Luigi Serafini's *Codex Seraphinianus*) and even computer games and other role-playing strategies unique to the Internet (The Plaintext Players). A panel entitled 'Fictive Art,' was presented at the annual conference of the College Art Association in 2003 (New York; Antoinette LaFarge and Lise Patt, chairs). The same year, a seminar in fictive art was offered for the first time at U.C. Irvine.

122. The decade of loss (1985–1995) in the United States and Europe, produced by an unrelenting HIV virus, remains a physical and conceptual lacuna in art even to this day.

to remain of art's once privileged *materia*—an archive of "holes and gaps" managed by imminently obsolescent media and devices (fig. xxx, below).¹²³ It may have even helped that the English version of the book came without the uneven edges of the German original that pointed to once avant garde but now culturally co-opted methods of artistic artifice. Because the enigmatic quality of the images is found in their surface instead of their edges, the pictures and text in the English version of *The Rings* often seem in perfect harmony and (dis)harmony (or a vacillation between the two), which creates, as the author once termed it, an 'echospace.'¹²⁴

One need only look at eight consecutive pages in the first half of the book that brings the reader from an image of a room full of dead herring on a ship in Lowestoft to an image of piled corpses in an open field at Bergen Belsen to understand how this echospace inheres. The first image is not what we expect to find from the surrounding text (fig. xxxi). The narrator is speaking of a film from the 1950s that showed a 'trawler from Wilhelmshaven' out on a herring run. But clearly the image is not from a film; as the title written on the top left corner claims, it is a postcard of Lowestoft that more likely depicts a hall in a market or a processing plant. When we turn the page, we are presented with a line drawing of a fish (fig. xxxii), which we assume to be a herring. Without the text it seems excessive: Why this fish? Why here? But once the text is introduced, its excess becomes depleted. In its rendered black and white form it cannot claim its herring status through the author's rich description of its luminous colors that grow more magnificent when the fish moves from a living to dead state. Neither 'reductive redundancy' nor 'descriptive economy,'¹²⁵ the drawing becomes a clue of some unrevealed secret. In the Andere Bibliothek original, the next drawing was only a pattern of blobs and lines; in the English translation, it now looks like an etching depicting a throng of people surging and receding like an ocean wave. The text speaks of cities illuminated by a 'phosphorescence' harvested from the herring three days after it died. But in the image's scratched lines that metamorphosis remains elusive (fig. xxxiii). Is the light to be found in the hanging

Cf. Project
Helen Mirra



123. In 2004, Helen Mirra's solo exhibition, 'miscellaneous papers' was presented at the Meyer Riegger Gallery, Berlin. For the installation, the artist manually typed 'a working index' for Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* onto 16 mm wide strips of cotton (thereby referencing 16 mm film). The text for the index was gathered from 'philosophical, scientific, historical and experimental literature,' and *The Rings of Saturn* itself. The strips of words were neither 'prose nor poetry,' but were instead 'a tool to place the new texts in close affiliation with the novel' (fig. xxx, pictured above). Since the reader of Mirra's work has to "travel" to read the text (much as Sebald did in his research for the book), the 'course of language becomes a physical condition': <www.meyer-riegger.de>. Another one of Mirra's "indices" appears in excerpted form in this volume, 198–201.

124. In the late 1990s, at least in the United States, "scrap-booking" emerged as a hobby and retroactively altered the public perception of fine art artist book projects (both past and present), often in less than desirable ways. *The Rings of Saturn* redirects the viewer's attention to the (often empty) center of the image instead of to its rough edges (the edge has been the site of attention in scrap-booking traditions).

Sebald used the term 'echospace' in his interview with Andrea Köhler. 'Die Burchdringung des Bunkels: W. G. Sebald und Jan Peter Tripp—ein letzter Blickwechsel,' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 14 December 2002.

125. Chefjec, 'Brief Notes,' 298. 'Descriptive economy' is the device by which the author includes an illustration as a means of clarifying a description of an object or event that is not readily imaginable. As discussed before, 'referential redundancy' is a picture's effect when it is included in a book that has enough text for documentary clarification.

lanterns we locate in the strongly drawn perspectival diagonals, or is it in the beacon on top of the single mountain whose rendered signal breaks that infinite perspectival regress? Or is it in that part of nature our eye keeps embracing, the mountain under the beacon with a form that echoes the back fin of the drawn fish we just left behind? Can the light from a fish's fin turn into rock? Is this a picture of nature in infinite re-dress? By now the phantasmagorical readings of this last image and the two before it have reached a fever pitch.¹²⁶ Hoping the forms hidden in the image's shadows will become illuminated by future (textual or visual) "lines," we eventually have to move on. But when we turn the page again, we are greeted by a photographic *stain of the Real*, that stops all "futures" and collapses all times. In the photograph we see a forested canopy under which lie human bodies, corpses of people clothed in their Sunday best (fig. xxxiv).¹²⁷ But who are these people? Are they the minuscule people that we've just left behind?¹²⁸

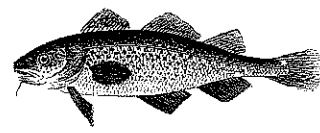
FIG. xxxi *Rings of Saturn*,
New Directions, 54.
FIG. xxxii *Rings of Saturn*,
New Directions, 57.
FIG. xxxiii *Rings of Saturn*,
New Directions, 58.

the gleam of the white underbellies of the fish, piled high on the deck, and of the salt they were mixed with. In my memory of that school film I see men in their shining black oilskins working heroically as the angry sea crashes over them time upon time — herring fishing regarded as a supreme example of mankind's struggle with the power of Nature. Towards the end, as the boat is approaching its home port, the rays of the evening sun break through the clouds, spreading their glow over the now becalmed waters. One of the seamen, washed and combed, plays on a mouth organ. The captain, with the air of a man mindful of his responsibilities, stands at the helm, looking ahead into the distance. At last the catch is unloaded and we see the work in the halls where women's hands gut the herring, sort them according to size, and pack them in barrels. Then (so says the booklet accompanying the 1936 film), the railway goods wagons take in this restless wanderer of the seas and transport it to those places where its fate on this earth will at last be fulfilled. I have read elsewhere, in a volume on the natural history of the North Sea



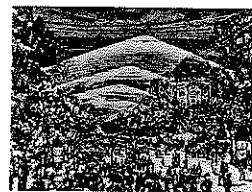
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the water between two and three hours were still moving, a circumstance that prompted him to investigate more closely the fishes' capacity to survive, which he did by cutting off their fins and mutilating them in other ways. This process, inspired by our thirst for knowledge, might be described as the most extreme of the sufferings undergone by a species always threatened by disaster. What is not eaten at the spawn stage by haddock and sucker fish ends up inside a conger eel, dogfish, cod or one of the many others that prey on herring, including, not least, ourselves. As early as 1670, more than eight hundred thousand Dutch and Friesians, a not inconsiderable part of the entire population, were employed in herring fishing. A hundred years later, the number of herring caught annually is estimated to have been sixty billion. Given these quantities, the natural historians sought consolation in the idea that humanity was responsible for only a fraction of the endless destruction wrought in the cycle of life, and moreover in the assumption that the peculiar physiology of the fish left them free of the fear and pains that rack the bodies and souls of higher animals in their death throes. But the truth is that we do not know what the herring feels. All we know is that its internal structure is extremely intricate and consists of more than two hundred different bones and cartilages.



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Among the herring's most striking external features are its powerful tail fin, the narrow head, the slightly prominent lower mandible, and its large eye, with a black pupil swimming in the silvery-white iris. The herring's dorsal area is of a bluish-green colour. The individual scales on its flanks and belly shimmer a golden orange, but taken together they present a metallic, pure white gleam. Held against the light, the rearward parts of the fish appear a dark green of a beauty one sees nowhere else. Once the life has fled the herring, its colours change. Its back turns blue, the cheeks and gills red, suffused with blood. An idiosyncrasy peculiar to the herring is that, when dead, it begins to glow; this property, which resembles phosphorescence and is yet altogether different, peaks a few days after death and then ebbs away as the fish decays. For a long time no one could account for this glowing of the lifeless herring, and indeed I believe that it still remains unexplained. Around 1870, when projects for the total illumination of our cities were everywhere afoot, two English scientists with the



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126. Elaborating on Lacan's tripartite system of the human psyche, the 'phantasmagorical' reading is an overabundant experience of being and knowing that results from the relay between the realms of the Imaginary (nebulous, vague visual parts) and the Symbolic (the "scripted" text), which acts to screen the Real (which holds the secret that is being kept from us). See my 'The Museum in the Age of Trauma,' 70–72.

127. I realize this description runs the risk of outing what for me is this photograph's *punctum*. Even though other images from this scene prove my vision to be wrong, my eye always falls on a body in the lower left corner that seems to be joined to a woman's foot, eerily shoed, and twisted at the joint. And because she lies under a blanket that looks like a coat, the cumulative vision becomes (for me) a woman who left the house for a Sunday walk but was forced to lie down under barbarism's cloak.

128. The place of plenitude (the phantasmagorical reading) falls away, leaving a space of non-being and non-knowing—a glimpse of the Real, or what Lacan referred to as the *stain of the Real*. In Lacan's system, the stain is the *tychic point*, a tangible trace of (the missed encounter with) the Real (an actual encounter only comes with death or psychosis). This stain is further complicated by the three herring-related images that preceded it. Since all four images are rhythmically positioned at the bottom of their pages, the first three pictures become linked to the photographic "stain" (the last image) which complicates our ability to link the corpses to (only) one specific historical time.

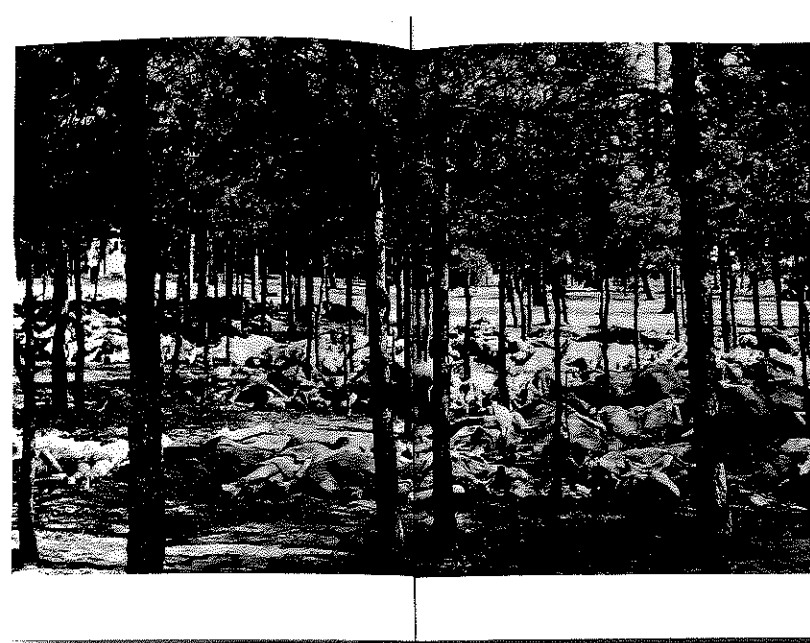


FIG. xxxiv *Rings of Saturn*,
Harvill, 60–61.

It is hard to think of another work of art produced in the last decade that within a short span of time makes such an aching appeal to the viewer to witness the incomprehensible workings of trauma. In this sequence of four images surrounded by accompanying textual narrative, we witness the work of an accomplished conceptual gymnast who uses words to hide form and images to hide stories. These photographs are tattoos in the first meaning of the word.¹²⁹ They set the rhythm for the prosodic chant that marks Sebald's move from a practitioner writing a language of trauma to an artist working in the (refigured) idiom of post-traumatic 'effects.'¹³⁰

Photographs are the appointed *Bildmaterial* that fuels Sebald's project, but in *The Rings of Saturn* he lets us know they are not the photographs of Barthes' battered modernism—they are not indices washed in a liquid light with iconic *studiums* that anchor the images to an accepted code, famous works of photography that guard against amateur indiscretions and allow for the redemptive wound of the *punctum*. By the end of the 20th century, artists ready to write their own theory of photography were drawn to the kind of images Sebald had scraped from the dirty underside of photography's (by then) demolished (but same) modernism. As the "amateurish" photo-like

129. 'Tattoo' is generally considered to be a permanent mark on the skin made by a process of ingraining indelible ink. But the initial meaning of 'tattoo' was 'a signal sounded on drum and bugle to summon soldiers to bed.' In this connection, a tattoo is 'a beating or pulsation as of a drum; the action of beating, pulsating, thumping or rapping continuously on something.' Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 105.

130. I allude here to Ernst van Alphen's term, 'Holocaust effect,' to 'describe' the imaginative discourse of artists to not re-present but re-enact an aspect of the Holocaust in which meaning is produced through a shared experience of 'effects.' *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 93–122. As Sebald himself described his method: 'It's the opposite of suspending disbelief and being swept along by the action...it's to constantly ask, "What happened to these people, what might they have felt like?" You can generate a similar state of mind in the reader by making them uncertain.' Jaggi, 'Recovered Memories.'

remnant from one of mankind's most famous (infamous) historic (not photographic) events attests, Sebald's images are not "shot" or "captured" but, in the dim light of the gloaming, are woven out of dust and scars into grisaille 'shadows quivering at the edges.'¹³¹

LOGIS IN EINEM LANDHAUS (1998)

With the publication of the English edition of *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's nearly decade-long investigation into the nature of visual signs seems to wane. While this bold assessment is supported superficially by Sebald's shift of publishers (*Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt* is the last book Sebald produces through the Andere Bibliothek) and temporal gaps (there will be a six-year period between *Die Ringe* and Sebald's next prose fiction), it is the shift in the images themselves that demand new critiques. In his first three prose fictions, Sebald seemed interested in photography's role in our perceptions and its great ability to dialogue with realms of the repressed. He is interested in how it produces what we see, what we want to see, and sometimes occludes what we should see. Although the many questions he posed in his first book projects are never abandoned, after these codices Sebald turns his inquiry to the nature of vision itself, to a "phenomenology of photography" that touches on how we construct meaning not through but with the images that surround us.

Some will argue for a quartet that ends with Sebald's last book, *Austerlitz* (2001), especially since the visual material that fills its pages appears to provide such a rich rejoinder to the images of the first three prose books.¹³² But in order to close the circle with that project, we must first consider the two publications that appeared in the interim between *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*. These are also critical works that employ images, thereby making them important to any study centered on Sebald's pictures.

In 1998 Sebald published *Logis in einem Landhaus: Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere*, a compilation of six essays, five focusing on literary figures who in various manifestations of marginality can be linked to Sebald's outsider literary leanings and the sixth centered on the work of Sebald's childhood friend, the visual artist Jan Peter Tripp. *Logis in einem Landhaus* marks a return to Sebald's critical writing, and so it is safe to assume that he selected the visual material for this compilation with documentary's demand for greater authenticity. Surprisingly, though, there seems to be little difference between the pictures in this text and in the books that immediately preceded it.¹³³ The reproductions in *Logis* are especially reminiscent of *Schwindel. Gefühle.*,

131. Sebald, *After Nature*, 96.

132. Gray Kochhlar-Lindgren calls the four books (*Schwindel. Gefühle.*, *Die Ausgewanderten*, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, and *Austerlitz*) a 'quartet...a series of personal albums—of photos surrounded by extended captions,' 'Charcoal: The Phantom Traces of W. G. Sebald's Novel-Memoirs,' *Monatshefte* 94.3 (2002): 372. Other scholars omit the tentative *Schwindel. Gefühle.* in their assessment of Sebald's great works, but few feel comfortable stranding *Austerlitz* by itself, such as Arthur Williams who feels that Sebald's three great works are *Die Ausgewanderten*, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, and *Austerlitz*, since they 'home in' on the problematic of the Holocaust, 'W. G. Sebald: (1944–2001)': <www.LitEncyc.com>.

133. *Logis in einem Landhaus* was published at the same time as the English *Rings of Saturn* and thus may offer evidence that Sebald's shift away from "bleeding" images in the English version of his book (whose revision he supposedly

but without the overuse of vignettes and idiosyncratic croppings. Even so, the latency of the photographs continuously interrupts their placement in a documentary register. Like the image/text projects before it, the visual material in *Logis* dialogues with itself through an odd assortment of part objects and details, water that flows from rivers to lakes to backyard fountains to specimen bottles, hats and crosses that unite people and plants, history and art in the shadows of a fold or the crosshatch of intersecting lines. But more often, the pictures assert familial connections, in the same way a crooked smile or a dimpled chin locates a lost relative in the pages of a forgotten photo album. The chapter on the "outsider" writer, Robert Walser, is particularly poignant in this regard. The ardent Sebald reader might note a similarity between an image in *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, cropped to draw attention to a man's hand—a hand the reader might have linked (through the text) to the narrator's grandfather or even Ernst Herbeck himself—and the same hand now solidly attached to the recognizable figure of Walser in *Logis*. If Sebald was tentative about grafting visual branches to his artistic family tree in his first prose work in the late 1980s, here, in the work that finally roots his first three books, the visual branches often grow over and obscure the earlier literary ones.¹³⁴ Not only does Sebald link Walser in *Logis* to Herbeck in *Schwindel. Gefühle.* by releasing the image of a hand from its tightly cropped frame, but, through a series of other snapshots, he links all three 'outsiders' (Walser, Herbeck, and Sebald himself) to his grandfather, who is, by *Logis*, the acknowledged progenitor of Sebald's creativity.¹³⁵ If there is a quartet of Sebald's books, it is *Logis in einem Landhaus*, not *Austerlitz*, that writes the final line of that image-text quatrain.¹³⁶

For the reader well-versed in images, but not as well-versed in the German language, who might first approach *Logis in einem Landhaus* as a picture book (as of the date of this printing, *Logis* has not been translated into English), the images bring to mind three important 20th century cultural texts of equal, but opposed, fame.¹³⁷ The first is Hans

oversaw) may have been intentional. With this book and the nonfiction book that follows it, Sebald has abandoned the tradition of scholarly footnotes, thereby collapsing the distinction between his prose and nonfiction (at least for the reader).

134. The book seems more directly linked to Gugging than the library or teaching rooms at UEA. Although Kafka is clearly still a prominent force in Sebald's literary world and Walser can be categorized as a writer, his micrograms and 'pencil method' bring to mind the outsider work of the Gugging artists more than that of a literary giant working at the literary margins.

135. In the chapter on Walser, Sebald draws not only narrative but also visual connections between Walser and his grandfather by offering comparison images and an accompanying narrative that links the two through sartorial and avocational predilections (like walking in nature). Sebald then inserts himself into this association through an image rendered in a stick-figure starkness—an image of the young Sebald and his grandfather, identically posed with walking sticks in hand as they are about to embark on a rural hike (136). In a rare glimpse of the adult Sebald's love for and identification with his deceased relative, another close-up image of his grandfather (137) reveals a mustache; a similar mustache is later a distinguishing feature of Sebald's countenance.

136. See Strathausen, in this volume, for a discussion of *Logis in einem Landhaus*, in which he uses Walser's writing to discuss Sebald's 'Regionen des Bleistiftgebiets' ('pencil-area'), 473.

137. *Logis in einem Landhaus* also offers a rare instance of Sebald's use of color pictures. There are four two-page spreads that display images in subdued color palettes. While Sebald generally avoided the color photograph for his own collection (see Christian Scholz's interview with Sebald in this volume, 104–105), he should not be considered chromophobic (in fact, only one of the color images in *Logis* is a photograph). *Logis* hints at how color might have informed Sebald's use of images, although, at this point in his career, the traces of color *Bildmaterial* are more likely linked to conceptual (or metaphysical) concerns than to any sudden change in personal preference.

Prinzhorn's *Bilderei der Geisteskranken* (*Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, published in 1922), as discussed above, this book had far-reaching influence upon some of the great visual art masters of early modernism in Europe and Russia. The second and third are books of equal but far more detrimental influence in the 20th century. In the chapter on Walser, small photographic portraits crowd a pair of pages—degraded “mugshots” that chart the author's changing facial features over the course of his life. Their spatial positioning on the page and their dated, staged posing bring to mind Max Nordau's *Entartung* (*Degeneracy*, 1892) and P. Schultze Naumberg's *Kunst und Rasse* (*Art and Race*, 1928), two books circulated among Weimar cultural critics and legislators that helped to spawn and perpetuate the warped thinking of the Nationalist Socialists' *Rassentheorie* (eugenics).¹³⁸ The visual echo of these latter texts in the important, but rarely discussed, *Logis* turns out to be an ominous hint of Sebald's final exploration in(to) vision.

LUFTKRIEG UND LITERATUR (1999)

In 1997 Sebald gave a series of lectures at the University of Zürich about the bombing of German cities by Allied forces in the waning days of World War II. The lectures, which addressed ‘the inability of a whole generation of German authors to describe what they had seen and to convey it to our minds,’¹³⁹ were met with mixed reviews, the least flattering coming from those living in Sebald's native country. In 1999, during the fallout from the Zürich lectures, Sebald's father, Georg, died. These two events, linked by temporal proximity, no doubt had other, deeper connections. The death of a parent is a significant event in any individual's life, but the death of a parent to whom Sebald had troubled ties—a father who had served in the *Wehrmacht* but maintained a silence about his role, who was essentially absent from Sebald's childhood but whose ghostly presence haunted him at regular intervals even before his actual passing—that parent's death may have proved to be even more difficult to work through.¹⁴⁰ In his revealing essay on Sebald's personal demons, Sheppard notes that after 1999 there was a darkening of Sebald's mood. The mixed response to his *Luftkrieg* lecture and the death of his father no doubt contributed to his growing psychic load. In addition, we now know that a series of physical ailments might have intensified the urge for ‘re-visioning’ that generally occupies the child of a recently departed parent (or simply anyone embarking on their second half century of life). For whatever reason, and we may never fully grasp the depth and breadth of these mitigating factors, after *Logis in einem Landhaus* Sebald often appears

Cf. *Project Suvan Geer*

138. It was Nordau, a student of Cesare Lombroso, who provided the psychiatric basis for the Nazi concept of degeneracy. In his book he developed a pseudopsychiatric aesthetic which he used to condemn the artists, writers, and musicians of his day. Max Nordau, *Entartung* (Berlin: Carl Dunker, 1893), translated as *Degeneracy* (New York: D. Appleton, 1895). Ironically (and tragically), Nordau was Jewish. Schultze-Naumberg provided visual “proof” of degeneracy in his book by placing reproductions of self-portrait paintings by modern artists next to photographs of mentally diminished individuals. The visual echo of the latter photographs appears in *Logis in einem Landhaus*. P. Schultze-Naumberg, *Kunst und Rasse* (Munich, 1928). For a history of the Nationalist Socialists doctrine of ‘degenerate art’ see John M. MacGregor, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 237–244.

139. W. G. Sebald, ‘Foreword,’ *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003), x.

140. As Sheppard astutely puts it, ‘Max's problematic relationship with his father’ was probably more a problem with the ‘image of his father and everything with which it was associated.’ ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 430.

to be drawing his images from another part of his by-then unwieldy *Bildmaterial*. Sebald collected the remainders and excesses of the archive as much as its images, and after *Logis* it seems more and more as if he has let these inarticulate parts manage the arrangement of his final book-bound ‘collections.’

In the year of his father's death, Sebald reworked the Zürich lectures, publishing them as *Luftkrieg und Literatur*.¹⁴¹ This book marks a return to Sebald's early life, not only in subject matter (the bombings occurred during his infancy) but also in the form of the book's visual messages. Because *Luftkrieg* is a work of nonfiction, it would be safe to assume the photographs were chosen to augment its carefully scripted narrative. Paradoxically, though, the limitations created by a demand for certain content allow peculiarities of the photographs' structure to rise and compete with their disturbing message. That form, oddly consistent throughout *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, is defined by the double, made present at times by the picture's content but more often by a bisecting line down a picture's middle. Doubling has been a hallmark of all of Sebald's work, and in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* that tradition continues—in a postcard of Frankfurt before and after the war (see fig. 140, p. 575), or in an image dominated by two pillows on a parent's conjugal bed.¹⁴² But, more often, the ‘twinning’ that earlier created a ‘mounting sense of dizziness,’¹⁴³ here alludes to the (more mechanical) doubling of human binocular vision; the discovery that our ability to see a dimensional world results not from the inherent unity of a *monocular eye* but from a negotiation between *binocular eyes with non-identical sights* (and sites). The *Gestern* and *Heute* that runs as a banner through the Frankfurt postcard souvenir, visually divides space and time into a yesterday and today, a before and after of a specific chapter in German history. But it also represents vision itself: its inborn demand that we wait out the delay between mismatched eyes (times) as their disparate visions bring the world before them (history) into view. This negotiation is determined by the degree of mismatch between the two eyes and, as the blank gray space under *Gestern* and *Heute* seems to both announce and elide, the mismatch that occurs in that other realm of visibility—memory, in the discrepancy between what our eyes are seeing now and what they (think they) have seen before.

The divided postcard Sebald gives us in *Luftkrieg* also alludes to another visual history, to a story linked to photography as well as optics. When the principle of stereo-vision was formulated in the 19th century, it found an immediate partner in stereophotographs, especially in an endless supply of “exotic” images that provided the viewer with immediate access to hidden parts of the world, through sight, of course, but also through an immersive “virtual” experience of being “in site.” As the viewer's eyes “traveled” over the surface of the stereocard, ‘repeated changes in the angle of convergence of the optical axes’ created ‘moments of blurring that were then brought into focus’¹⁴⁴

141. W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2001). Published in English translation as ‘Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures’ in *Natural History of Destruction*, 3–103.

142. Sebald, ‘Air War and Literature,’ 73.

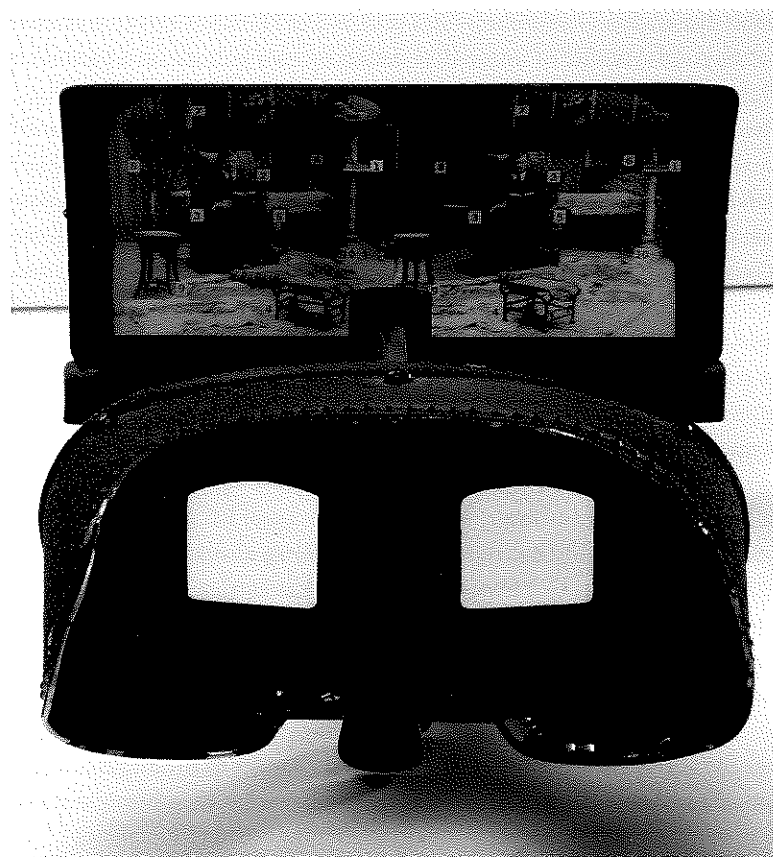
143. Shaffer, ‘Sebald's Photographic Narrative,’ 59.

144. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1990), 124–125. In this landmark book, Crary points to the “experience” of the stereoscope when he proposes that the ‘conceptual structure and the historical circumstances’ of the stereoscope did not develop out of a photographic tradition but was related to the theoretical principles of subjective vision that fed immersive technologies (like film), 118–124.

(fig. xxxv). Unlike a more traditional photograph that often fooled the eye, the stereoscopic experience worked instead by tricking the body. In other words, once two nearly identical images were inserted in the stereoscopic viewer and brought up to the face, the indexical capture of *place* was traded for a phenomenological experience of being *in place*.¹⁴⁵

By the end of World War II, interest in the doubled images of stereoscopic Victorian parlor games had waned. The photographic object had usurped the photographic experience as the means for capturing place.¹⁴⁶ As often occurs with obsolete technologies, the stereoscope's tools and devices were made into a child's toy, and it is here the history of stereo-vision and Sebald's biography align. In numerous interviews Sebald identified the 1950s Viewmaster as the original source of his later attraction to found photographic images. 'You had the feeling that with your body you're still in your normal bourgeois reality. But with your eyes you are somewhere else: in Rio de Janeiro or at the Oberammergau passion play or whatever was to be seen.'¹⁴⁷

FIG. xxxv Stereoscope, c. 1885.



145. The stereocard in fig. xxxv was printed as part of the Eye Comfort and Depth-Perception Series published by the Keystone View Company in the late 1880s. The viewing participant was instructed to move through the picture by following the sequence of numbers printed on the photograph. Number 1 was in the background, number 2 in the middle ground, number 4 in the foreground, number 6 in the background, and so forth. The slogan embedded on the front of the card proclaims: *The human body is strengthened by proper exercise—the eyes are no exception.*

146. Jean Clair, 'Opticeries,' *October* 5 (1978): 103.

147. Sebald, as noted in his interview with Christian Scholz in this volume, 105.

In look, at least, the bisected images in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* reference the early 20th century stereocard and in (implied) experience, they evoke Sebald's childhood Viewmaster toy. We have observed in Sebald's previous books how he crops images to accommodate the edge of a page, the cavern of the gutter, or even to mirror the book form. But many of the pictures in *Luftkrieg* are of codex-bound documents that Sebald reproduces without "correcting" or incorporating their doubled form into his book's bisected construction (fig. xxxvi, p. 67). The white line created by a ribbon of captured light in the gutter of a photographed book creates a *visual link* to a stereocard. The most telling "splits," though, are of similar (not identical) images that create an *experiential link* to a visual negotiation we enact multiple times a day. These pictures subtly exaggerate and powerfully rehearse the disjunction of seeing that girds human sight. We find a number of paired photographs that are similar enough to precipitate a reader's double take. But, because the pictures are significantly divergent, the second look can only locate commonalities in normally insignificant part-objects—lines and curves that acquire importance through their ability to orchestrate our stares. In one association, two images are united by rhyming angles of a city street, in another by serpentine forms wrapping around (visually) severed limbs.¹⁴⁸ The photographs are then further linked to the stereocard, not as a byproduct of a photographed book, but by the author's own hand. According to the rules of layout, we expect a division between a pair of figures, either a limiting frame or an invisible line created by a space between the two plates. In *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Sebald opts for the latter operation augmented by a consistent caveat—he has that divide mimic the gap that exists between a pair of human eyes.

The stereocard reverberates throughout *Luftkrieg*, yet one suspects the memory of a childhood stereoscopic device and the experience it elicited reverberated for Sebald beyond mere moments of escape. For it is another disparate vision that the bisected forms in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* seem intent on trying to rule—a (first) sight that is physically crisp but psychically out of focus—that must wait years, sometimes for decades, for a second sight (site) to bring it into an understandable view.¹⁴⁹ This is the vision linked to trauma, to a shock the psyche is not prepared to acknowledge that is then held in a kind of liminal prison until another trauma lets it loose. Sebald spoke in repeated interviews of his introduction to the Holocaust, which for him was clearly a visual and filmic introduction. He relates how as a teenager he watched a film of the release of Bergen Belsen, and then promptly went out to play sports after school:

We were confronted at school, when we were about 17, with these documentary films, the opening of Belsen and that sort of newsreel kind of material. But you saw it and it happened to be a beautiful April afternoon or something and you had to play football after school, and so the whole thing was a completely unreal kind of confrontation.¹⁵⁰

148. Sebald, 'Air War and Literature,' 39.

149. In psychoanalytic theory, the symptom appears when contents of the psyche that have been repressed in the unconscious threaten to return to consciousness. With trauma, that repressed material is the trauma itself—the entire trauma, and not just fragments of it—that resisted absorption into the conscious areas of the psychic system when it first occurred and has been banned to our unconscious depths. The symptom of trauma, then, is the return of that trauma that has been 'forgotten.' Thus, the famous dictum by J. Laplanche that 'it takes two traumas to make a trauma.' Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, trans. David Macey (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 88.

150. Jill Kitson, 'W. G. Sebald,' Radio National Interview (26 March 2005): <www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/booktalk/stories/s1329376.htm>.

Cf. Essay
Richard Crownshaw

Given the way the usually eloquent Sebald stumbles over the details of his memory, it is undoubtedly a traumatic one. He is remembering a beautiful day, only to have it subsumed in memory by a 'something' too awful or unknowable to name.¹⁵¹

In an image in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald gives us a "still" from this traumatic film.¹⁵² We have already discussed the two-page spread in which he presents the reader with a pile of bodies laid out under cover of cloth and trees. The text close to the image intimates that this is a photograph of the death camp, Bergen Belsen, days or perhaps only hours after it was liberated by an army that included a soldier named 'Le Strange.' Although the narrative does not indicate the picture's representational form, we assume it to be a photograph whose iconic display of decomposing bodies is eerily (re)enacted in the blurred and degraded surface of its (documentary photography) form.¹⁵³ The bodies are covered with tarps that in the overdeveloped *Rings* reproduction¹⁵⁴ appear to be a series of blankets, giving it a disturbing air of domesticity.

In *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Sebald gives us another disturbing photograph of bodies in "bits and pieces," an image of charred human remains scattered on an impassable road. Among these unidentifiable forms is an object that looks like an ashcan, which stands undisturbed, as if waiting patiently for the ashes of the decomposing bodies to eventually return to the earth (fig. xxxvi). Uncaptioned, like all of Sebald's images, the uncoded photograph is burned into the page by the sentences that surround it. 'Bluish little phosphorous flames still flickered around many of them [the bodies],' the text tells us; 'others had been roasted brown or purple and reduced to a third of their normal size... Other victims had been so badly charred and reduced to ashes by the heat.'¹⁵⁵ The text and photograph partnership becomes a formal enactment of the moral dilemma that has always shadowed photography; it allows the reader to "look and then look away."¹⁵⁶

151. Sebald struggles through the description ('or something') as does the reader when he reaches the phrase 'and it happened.' Sebald does not let that phrase stand as a confirmation of the Bergen Belsen event he has just witnessed, but uses it instead to begin the description that acts to keep that traumatic vision in repression: 'it happened to be a beautiful April afternoon.'

This memory was also most probably a "screen" one in more ways than the obvious one. In repeated interviews, Sebald was unable to fix a specific time to this memory. His age at the time of the viewing ranged from 13 to 17 years old. His relationship to the 'game of football' also shifts from spectator to participant. In all his recountings, though, the inarticulate nature of his expression remains. For instance, Sebald describes the film-viewing experience to Maya Jaggi this way: [While] 'at grammar school in Oberstdorf... It was a nice Spring afternoon and there was no discussion afterwards; you didn't know what to do with it.' Jaggi, 'Recovered Memories.'

152. Since we don't know what newsreel Sebald watched as a teenager, we don't know if the representation he saw was actually a moving image or a photograph made filmic through narration. Newsreels often integrated moving and still images.

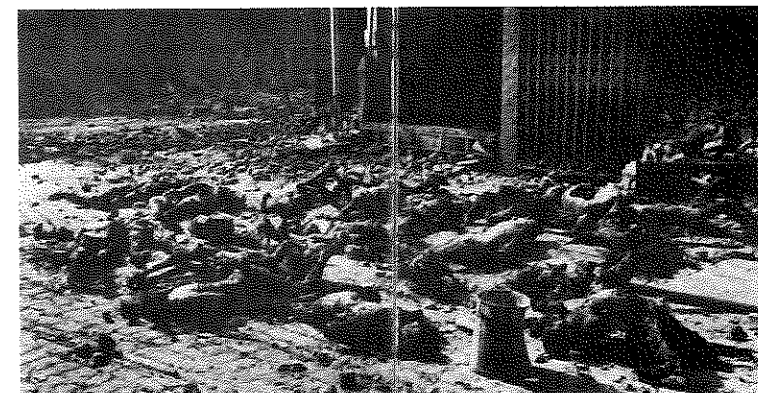
153. Specifically, we assume this image originated in a newspaper. The immediate association to newsprint is made through the content. The "atrocities images," (photographs of bodies discovered at the liberated camps), were printed in newspapers and hung in commercial centers all over Europe right after World War II. While this association might be linked to (a scholar's) 'insider knowledge,' the second association comes from the "story" itself. The image that immediately follows this two-page spread is a clipping from a newspaper chronicling the death of the soldier, Le Strange, through whose eyes we are meant to witness the scene at Bergen Belsen.

154. See *Intermezzo—The Rings of Saturn*, pp. 320–321 and Adrian Daub, in this volume, for a comparison of this image across various versions and translations of *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, 318–322.

155. Sebald, 'Air War,' 28.

156. I am paraphrasing Sebald here, who in his foreword to *On the Natural History of Destruction* says of the German people after the war, "We are always looking and looking away at the same time," ix. By linking his words to photography, I intend to question the role photography has played in enacting this "double vision."

... riesige Feuer, die so schnell zu-
bereits eine Viertelstunde nach
ersten Bomben der gesamte Luft-
ein einziges Flammenmeer war.
auf Minuten, um ein Uhr zwanzig,
sturm von einer Intensität, wie sie
lich gehalten hätte bis dahin. Mit
s jetzt zweitausend Meter in den
de Feuer den Sauerstoff an sich,
erkanstärke erreichten und dröhn-
geln, an denen alle Register gezo-
Drei Stunden lang brannte es so.
t hob der Sturm Giebel und Haus-
cken und ganze Plakatwände durch-
e aus ihrem Grund und trieb Men-
ackeln vor sich her. Hinter ein-



Rauch aufgestiegen und hatte sich dort ausgebreitet als eine riesige amboßförmige Kumulonimbuswolke. Eine wabernde Hitze, von der die Bomberpiloten berichteten, daß sie sie gespürt hätten durch die Wandungen ihrer Maschinen, ging lange noch von den qualmenden,

We learn from the text that this is an image of German nationals, not the victims of the German National Socialists, and that their *End*, as Hans Nossack titled the book he wrote of these victims' last day, resulted from the Allied bombing of German cities at the close of World War II.¹⁵⁷ Coming as it does, after the image of Bergen Belsen in *The Rings*, it is tempting to read this second image of bodies in bits and pieces, as many noted scholars have, as either a surrogate of Sebald's adolescent vision of a compulsive return to a spring afternoon, or as a traumatic re-vision of *The Rings*'s stilled (and also bisected) view.

Yet, while there is little doubt that this last nonfiction work is often a personal missal¹⁵⁸ of Sebald's working-through his role as a German national, a German exile, and (more often) simply the living child of one of Germany's "dutiful sons," it is the post-traumatic

In her thought-provoking essay on *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Julia Hell characterizes Sebald's description of the charred bodies, as a chronicle that results from 'the collision' of the symbolic and imaginary registers, alternating between 'past as past, and past as present.' 'The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes or the Gothic Beauty of Catastrophic History in W. G. Sebald's "Air War and Literature",' *Criticism* 46.3 (Summer 2004), 369–370. While I agree with Hell, I feel this passage in 'Air War' also comes close to articulating the immersive experience of the stereocard, wherein vision oscillates between a far and close view.

157. Much of the text that surrounds the image of burnt bodies in 'Air War' appears to be "borrowed" from Hans Erich Nossack's book, *Der Untergang: Hamburg 1943* (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1948), published in English as *The End: Hamburg 1943*, translated and foreword by Joel Agee, photographs by Erich Andres (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

158. Sebald was raised Catholic, and even though he often denounced organized religion, particularly later in his life, his writings offer evidence to that maddening phrase (especially to those who have purposely "strayed"): 'There is no such thing as a lapsed Catholic.'

FIG. XXXVI *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, Fischer, 35.

“effects” of the *Rings of Saturn* that create the book’s underlying tone.¹⁵⁹ As the title later selected by Sebald for the English translation of *Luftkrieg* suggests, if there is a ‘natural history of destruction,’ then the opposite could also be true. Perhaps there can be a natural history of *construction*, of a mourning sustained, that is, importantly, not repaired or completely worked-through.¹⁶⁰ In *Luftkrieg* this provocative proposal is found not in Sebald’s words, nor in the photograph of bodies that reveals that he is working less *with* and more *for* the images, but (by now not surprisingly) in the space between the two. In *The Rings*, Sebald produced a xerox-manipulated photograph that is unavoidably bisected by the gutter of his book. The image is literally and conceptually tied to the project’s form. In *Luftkrieg*, Sebald doesn’t *produce* but *reproduces* the doubled image. He neither obscures (by erasing the fold) nor acknowledges (by aligning folds or gutters) the image’s codex link. It is a relatively small shift in artistic practice, but one that makes *Luftkrieg* an important pivot between Sebald’s interest in photography’s ability to tell (or withhold) stories, and photography’s metaphysical and unplanned (unplannable)

159. Some have felt that Sebald’s books (or at least passages in his books) are the compulsive re-enactment of the traumatic moments of his youth. While a psychoanalytic reading of Sebald’s traumatic symptoms is beyond the scope of this study, fragments of text and many of the images invite speculation about the role of trauma in Sebald’s productions. As I have maintained, the space Sebald leaves exposed, the third space of his project, exposed even further in *Die Ringe*, suggests that his work is post-traumatic. It is a project born of an *acknowledged trauma* that is being worked through. Specifically, a passage in *The Rings of Saturn* suggests it was not the film of his adolescence that fueled his post-traumatic re-visions but another traumatic event also bound in his mind to filmic flickers. On October 17, 1987, a year before Sebald published *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht*, a hurricane ravaged his home in eastern England, destroying his garden and uprooting, according to Sebald ‘over 14 million trees’ in East Anglia. The vision that met Sebald on the morning of October 18 was clearly traumatic. The fact that it was “the second trauma” that coded the first (the film of Bergen Belsen) can be found not only in the language Sebald uses to describe the destruction (millions of tree destroyed like the uncountable numbers of people in the Holocaust that defy any capacity for naming), but also in the description he gave of the time and energy it took to clear the stumps away (‘five months,’ *Rings of Saturn*, 268). It is much like the enormous energy it took to clear the German bodies from the bombed out cities and (by inference) to cremate and dispose of the ashes of murdered Jews in the extermination camps. While this notion is purely speculative on my part, the hurricane that still lives in the memories (and imaginations) of those living in East Anglia to this day may have provided the “second trauma” that coded the *first* trauma (the film shown on “that Spring day”) that *should* have “traumatized” Sebald. He saw it, but he was not able to witness the memory of ‘something’ that would have remained present but symbolically inaccessible if it hadn’t been made available to psychic processing by a *second* trauma he WAS able to witness. It is often the case that second traumas are linked via the senses to first traumas, though they often are not related by causality or outcome (the backfire of a car linked to the firing of a gun). And so, it may be this second vision, which Sebald tellingly remembers as a film’s ‘flicker,’ (‘...again and again the sky was lit up by a terrible flicker,’ *ibid.*, 266) may have initiated the post-traumatic work of his prose fictions. An incidental comment by Richard Sheppard seems to confirm my suspicion, although (in true Sebaldian fashion) I must detour through another vision to arrive at my conclusion. Sheppard relates how, after the hurricane, Sebald initiated a tree-planting program that, to his great disappointment, met with little success, ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 422. Sebald’s campaign has interesting correlates to Joseph Beuys’s project, *7,000 Oaks* (fig. 83, p. 419). Beuys used balsalt columns to evoke [German] bodies and through the course of this ‘action,’ removed the columns one by one as the viewer/participant agreed to plant an oak tree. See Lerm Hayes, 413–416. I am grateful to Trish Gower for her memories of 17 October 1987.

160. Sebald’s books increasingly seem to be a post-traumatic working-through. Although he was clearly shadowed by melancholy, he often operates in the realm of what I have termed elsewhere, ‘failed mourning,’ a space opened up in Freud’s binary through his establishment of successful melancholy (by definition, suicide). Failed mourning requires psychic energy and conscious attention and allows for a continual search for meaning, even though the actual meaning remains elusive. Under the operation of a failed mourning, the Holocaust is pointed to but remains unrepresentable. See my ‘That Which Stimulates and Numbs Us,’ 218–220.

language of experience.¹⁶¹ As we shall soon see, this pivot lies between *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*, the book that is soon to come. Much as *Nach der Natur* initiated a decade-long cycle of work centered on (largely photography’s) visual forms, *Luftkrieg* seems to announce another route. The announcement comes not in the gruesome image that shocks even the most hardened visualist, nor even in the surface of this image that burns its message into the paper that holds the surrounding prose. It emerges in the accumulation of rhyming artifacts, in the scarred surface produced by a mechanized fold, in the gap between two images that mimics the inherited gaps in the human body—*on* our face, *in* our vision, *between* our memories and desires. It emerges in the impartial capture of the camera’s lens, in photographic images that suggest that the “crease” in the human body rules all creatures and forms in the world. These optical tics and gestures infiltrate *Luftkrieg und Literatur* with the ‘resonance of an affect under consideration,’¹⁶² signaling not only Sebald’s intention to sign but also divulging the place from where his new language will emerge. It will not come from his hypnotic words honed by a decade of melancholic and post-traumatic writing, nor from his carefully placed visual snares (now just as clever and assured), but from that space where non-thought is brought into thought, where the imperceptible is given a form, in that space that is “the outside of language” captured in vision’s tears.

VERTIGO (1999)

In 1999 Sebald’s first prose fiction, *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, was translated into English by Michael Hulse as *Vertigo*. Most of the changes between the original Andere Bibliothek first edition of the book and the English translation follow what by now are predictable patterns—loss of image bleeds, centered text, and disjointed junctures between the images and the lines of words. In some cases, the crops made to key photographs in the Fischer version of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* are augmented with additional cuts. As a result, some of the ‘textimages’ are pushed more exclusively toward an image identity after they lose most or all of their readable lines. For instance, a newspaper dateline that displayed a publisher’s name is now only a truncated, incoherent newspaper title.¹⁶³ There are some changes, though, that suggest Sebald was still, at this late date, thinking through each translated re-vision of his texts. For what are we to make of his English book title which directly links Sebald to Alfred Hitchcock’s most surrealist film? Especially since we know that by the end of the 1990s Sebald was teaching film at UEA and had more than a

161. And, perhaps, to some extent unplanned even by Sebald. The degree to which Sebald *intentionally* invoked the double image in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* will probably never be known. Many of the double images are not images that have been doubled but are depictions of repetitive forms that appear to be repeated when they are subjected to the dictates of the bound book, i.e., an endless field of bodies. It could be argued that the lack of image manipulation is related to Sebald’s commitment to documentary accuracy. Nevertheless, the side by side layout of similar but not identical images does hint at some kind of premeditated agency and, perhaps more importantly, the double images do create a slight unease in the reader, the type of experience that comes from recognizing a pattern (in Sebald’s images) without being able to discern (since he doesn’t tell us) what the pattern represents.

162. Gilles Deleuze, ‘He Stuttered,’ in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, ed. C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski (London: Routledge, 1994), 24, as cited in Inna Semetsky, ‘The Magician’s Autopoietic Action or Eros Contained and Uncontained,’ *Trickster’s Way*, vol. 2: <www.trinity.edu/org/tricksters>.

163. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, 233 and *Vertigo*, 214.

passing knowledge of the medium?¹⁶⁴ With Hitchcock in the picture (so to speak), the connection to Breton's surrealist text, *Nadja*, is also laid even more bare.¹⁶⁵ Overall, as Sheppard has noted, the English translation of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* lacks the light-hearted tone of the original, both in the text and in the absence of the scrap-book-appearing images. Perhaps no one alteration best sums up this somber turn than changes made to an image of a filmic still from the *Student of Prague* (Stellan Rye, 1913), a movie Franz Kafka (Dr. K. in *Vertigo*) might have seen one evening when he was in Verona. In the original book, the picture shows a figure looking in a mirror as he holds a sword at his side in a non-combative stance. In the English revision, the figure now stands with his sword fully extended, seemingly ready to duel his doubled self in the mirror.¹⁶⁶ Herbeck once wrote that 'poetry...teaches you how gazelles are reputable historiographers.' The schizophrenic poet's utopian vision inspired the writing of *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht*, and spilled over into the making of *Schwindel. Gefühle.* But by the time of *Vertigo* these mythical lyrics are drowned out by a no longer distant thunder—memories of a Holocaust that, although long past, still ring in the author's ears.

AUSTERLITZ (2001)

Sebald's final prose fiction, *Austerlitz*, was released by Hanser Verlag in the spring of 2001 and in English translation by Random House in the fall of that same year, only two months before the author's untimely death in an automobile accident on December 14, 2001.¹⁶⁷ *Austerlitz* tells the story of Jacques Austerlitz, who was born to Jewish parents after the First World War, and was sent as part of the *Kindertransport* to London¹⁶⁸ when he was only five. Raised in Wales by emotionally distant adoptive parents, he arrived into adulthood, only to spend the rest of his life hunting down his past. Many scholars have noted that Sebald's last book comes closest to being a straight novel, with a protagonist that drives the book forward through time, instead of just the ghostly narrator who pops in and out of Sebald's other fictions, sequencing events through his own disorganized, dream-infused memory. Compared to the choppy patchwork of *Vertigo*, the alternating mix of captions and "portraits" in *The Emigrants*, or the pictures and text stitched together with a sinewy line into the scratched and scarred palimpsest of *The Rings*, the layout of the images in *Austerlitz*, like the surrounding narrative, seems to follow a more traditional illustrated book form.¹⁶⁹ The degraded, scumbled images of *The Rings of Saturn* are gone, as are the bleeds of the German version of *Die Ringe des Saturn*. Even the doubled images and the "pseudo-doubling" of *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, that in look mimic the Vic-

164. Jo Catling notes that Sebald taught a class on Weimar Cinema at UEA, 'Gratwanderungen,' 39. Frey, in this volume, offers evidence of Sebald's extensive knowledge of film (at least German film), 226–241.

165. Sheppard notes this association, 'Dexter-sinister,' 456, n.35.

166. I am grateful to Roy Messineo for pointing this out to me.

167. W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2001). The first edition publication (Hanser) retains the color, dimensions, and overall feel of the Andere Bibliothek editions of Sebald's earlier prose fictions (including a ribbon bookmark). All references to *Austerlitz* in the pages that follow are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

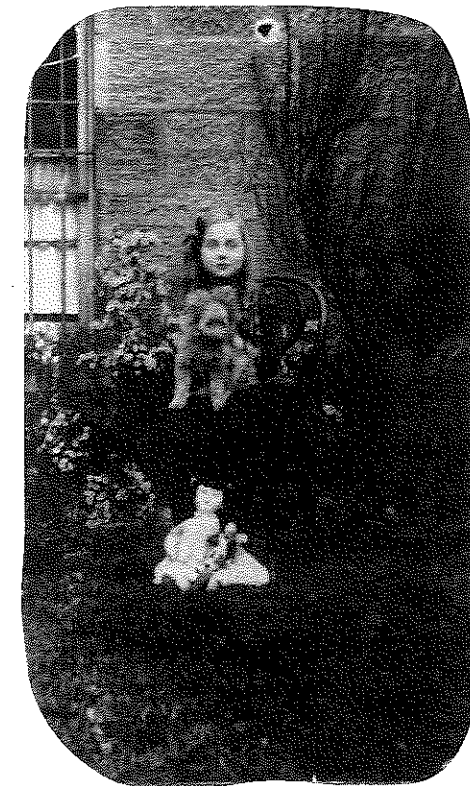
168. For a description of the *Kindertransport*, see Mosbach, 390.

169. And, oddly, because that narrative lacks traditional punctuation (there is a general dearth of paragraphs and commas, even in the English translation of *Austerlitz*), the layout of the images seems even more "traditional."

torian stereocard and in effect the Viewmaster of Sebald's youth, are largely abandoned except in acts of superimposition—in the absent images that create an arena of endless mirroring and doubling. Gone too are the discernable photographic types from *The Emigrants*, save for those that emerge from the story itself as the architectural forms (ruins) of post-war Europe assembled by the eponymous protagonist, who in his guise of architectural historian collects them for didactic and personal use. Even Sebald's first book, *Vertigo*, is now nothing more than a distant (visual) cousin. The ephemera that popped in and out of that early book as apparent *realia* exist here only in a reproduced form. We accept that we are looking at photographs—of a watch, a dome, a pair of billiard balls—intended from the first moment of their capture as visual aids for a classroom lecture or as reproductions in a pedagogical book.¹⁷⁰ Some images of dubious register seem to have trailed the still present, but greatly diminished, narrator from previous books (fig. xxxvii).¹⁷¹ In the opening pages of *Austerlitz* we come upon an enigmatic image of a girl holding a toy-like, but presumably live, dog. At the girl's feet there is an actual toy, a small doll that is holding another object that appears to be yet another doll of conjoined

Cf. Essay
Bettina Mosbach

FIG. xxxvii Austerlitz, Hanser, 77.



170. The folds are not completely lost. In fact, it often seems as if *Luftkrieg und Literatur* haunts the German edition of *Austerlitz* through these folds. For instance, an image reproduced in this volume, fig. 75, pp. 380–381 (from the Random House edition), in the German original of *Austerlitz*, contains evidence of faint folds. The creases are cleaned up and largely removed in the U.S. (Random House) version.

171. There are 88 images in this last prose fiction, 77 of which are photographs.

twins. The photograph has collected elements from Sebald's first three prose books as it moved through time towards its final resting place in *Austerlitz*. The irregularly cut edges echo the vignettes of *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, and the dolls at the girl's feet belong to a photographic (if not quite the narrative) story presented in an image of Ambros Adelwarth's empty living room in *The Emigrants* (see fig. 132, p. 533). Even the "traumatic" hole at the top of the photograph brings to mind the ravaged images of *Die Ringe*.¹⁷² But apart from these photographic fugitives from Sebald's earlier fictions, we generalize the images in *Austerlitz*—the most contemporaneous of all Sebald has given us (more Virilio than Foucault¹⁷³)—and begin to link all the photographs to the protagonist's camera. Since they seem to have the same provenance, we are able to overlook their improved quality and ascribe their more detailed, indexical surfaces to the demands made by a life-long historian wishing to create visual documents as proofs.¹⁷⁴ The pictures—sometimes clustered in groups and sometimes solitary—are spaced farther apart. They seem to acquiesce to their perceived new function of serving a narrative that insists they wait their proper turn. With diminished responsibility, though, the photos quickly become available for other work.

With a protagonist who is dependent on camera-produced documents to anchor and drive his historical research, there is little doubt that in *Austerlitz* Sebald has finally laid his photographs out on the table, so much so that many scholars claim photography is not only the means by which the main character undertakes his occupation (and preoccupations) but is used to structure the book as a whole.¹⁷⁵ Even so, the photography in *Austerlitz* is not clothed in modernism's robes; it is not defined by static, frozen, "decisive moments" fixed on photographic paper. It is linked to the few, powerful, non-static moments of the photograph's becoming and receding: the moment of its clicked inception, when light is captured on a piece of film; those blind moments of faith when film is developed into a negative; and those magical moments of the photograph's public coming-out, when under cover of arterial colored light, the negative is coaxed to give up some (but never all) of its secrets.

To underscore his interest in the non-static, ontological moments of photography, Sebald uses his main character to awaken the visual material in his book. More importantly, he uses Austerlitz (both the book and its protagonist) to *perform* photography as a means of soliciting thought beyond the story's scripted lines. In a beautiful marriage

172. These various scars reveal this image as a potent fetish (for Sebald?)—first, as a photo that was set out in a rounded frame (the irregular edges), and then as an image posted on a bulletin board (the hole at the top of the image), the psychic privilege of which is partially erased in the Random House (U.S. version) of the book (see fig. 109, p. 463).

173. I am referring here to Paul Virilio (b. 1932). His "contemporary" reign over image theory came with the ascendance of virtual technologies in the later 1990s. His writings on "bunker archaeology" and war trauma and art reverberate throughout *Austerlitz*, albeit more often in solely a visual form.

174. One of the most startling first impressions upon opening *Austerlitz*, especially after examining the prose book that came before it, is that many of the photographs teeter close to aesthetic objects, most visibly in the "cleaned up" American (Random House) version, in which images are also often reproduced at substantially larger size than the German original.

175. See John Sears, 204–210. Zinfert writes, 'the reproductions of pictures in his texts are not coming from outside the text, they are not added to the text, but are inherent in his writing.' Zinfert, 'What is the use of a book without pictures.'

of praxis and theory, Sebald animates his main character through a 'phenomenology of photography,'¹⁷⁶ a coming into being that exposes the hidden and often forgotten part of the medium's image-making process. Jacques Austerlitz gravitates to sites, either rooms that are mirrored and transparent (like the camera), or spaces that are dark and duplicitous (like the darkroom), so that he can give voice to the secrets he holds in reserve (often even from himself). Many times, we find him in rooms that visually and metaphorically recall the mechanisms of the camera, his own house on Alderney Street, with its 'glazed veranda door' reflecting 'a little fire,' being the most striking example.¹⁷⁷ The 'gray mat walls,' (like unexposed film) hold a seemingly endless number of images in reserve as they become the ground for an 'intertwining of sunlight and shadow always forming and re-forming... [into] mountainous landscapes with glaciers and ice fields, high plateaus, steppes, deserts, fields full of flowers, islands in the sea,'¹⁷⁸ a ground for images waiting to be "burned" into existence. Other times, Austerlitz performs photography through dynamic acts of translation, as when the light and shadow chaos of the negative is subjected to the first of its many coding procedures. With an eerie consistency, Austerlitz describes his world as if it were a black and white photograph—from 'gray coated porters' to a mother in an 'ashen-gray silk bodice,' to a father in a 'black velour hat,' to 'people ill and gray' in 'an overexposed day.'¹⁷⁹ It is a world of shadows and vapors, colored in a broad spectrum of grays, sprinkled with highlights of whites, and blacks.¹⁸⁰

Many of these "photographic" descriptions partner with actual photographs on the same page. We see 'cast iron columns' covered in 'greasy black coke dust and soot' illuminated by 'faint grayness' from the 'globes of the station lights.' We read of an 'octofoil mosaic flower in shades of dove gray' that is also reproduced in a photograph at the bottom of the page.¹⁸¹ Rather than mere 'referential redundancy,' these image-text collaborations confirm that the (darkroom) palette used to form the images in the book is the same palette that governs Austerlitz's sight. Increasingly, then, the photographs seem to be no longer indices of our color-filled reality, but surrogates for time in Austerlitz's black and white world.¹⁸² Since they are no longer *photographs of objects*, but

176. Although it is brought to the fore in *Austerlitz*, this 'phenomenology' is present even in Sebald's first prose fiction. See Zisselsberger, 288–289.

177. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 118.

178. *Ibid.*, 112.

179. *Ibid.*, 'porter,' 149; 'silk bodice,' 162; 'people ill,' 143. Even the moths Austerlitz collects are ivory-colored with 'silver-scaled' bodies and a 'staring black eye,' 165.

180. Agata, predicting her own demise, fixes Austerlitz's lineage. She asks to be remembered as an image emerging out of dark waters, like a photograph in its moment of becoming when negative and photographic paper still maintain a linked time: 'Go to Stromovka Park... [and] look into the dark water of the pools, perhaps one of these days you'll see my face,' *Ibid.*, 179.

181. *Ibid.*, 'columns, 128; 'flower,' 173.

182. Especially in the way Austerlitz keeps conceptualizing time. It is not a linear progression but an endless series of collapsed superimpositions. This concept of temporality is further supported by the subject matter of the photographs, architectural fragments that when photographed reside in both, or neither, temporal categories assigned to modern photography: the "snapshot" or the "time-exposure." I am alluding here to Thierry de Duve's influential article, 'Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox,' *October* 5 (1978): 113–125.

simply *pseudo-objects*, they connect with one another through a 'mimesis of mimesis'¹⁸³: the angles of certain lights, the depths of holes, 'the shape and the curve of banisters on a staircase, the molding of a stone arch over a gateway,' 'oracular utterances'¹⁸⁴ created by a simple turn of a line. In *Austerlitz*, Sebald builds a photographic archive of representable matter (not representational symbols), where the images, text, and even the characters in the narrative look like one another so that 'a thing looks like another thing, which looks like another thing, or another, producing an eternal ricocheting of meaning throughout the elemental which proves representation to be natural and nature to be representational.'¹⁸⁵

As much as photography informs the book on a number of levels, including the "negative" indexicality of its main character, the images more often seem to borrow their language from another celluloid medium linked to time: film. Many of the most poignant photographs in *Austerlitz* do not recall snapshots, vignettes, or photos from a family album, but appear to be—sometimes in dimensions, sometimes in content, sometimes in placement and timing—the outtakes and stills of a wayward film.¹⁸⁶ Many critics have noted how a sequence of images in the book strongly references the montage editing of a film (see figs. 43–44, pp. 234–235).¹⁸⁷ And yet, as Mattias Frey points out in this volume, film creates other cinematic associative links through allusions and metaphors. For instance, we find the bleeds so common in Sebald's previous prose books, at first apparently missing, are not abandoned but are given a diegetic disguise. And just as the written text of *Austerlitz* lacks paragraphs, indentations, or sub-headings, many of the images display a similar lack of "institutional punctuation." They no longer bleed from the book's gutter to the end of the page but, in what Barthes called, a 'third meaning,' they leak outside their frame into the viewer's mind.¹⁸⁸

Cf. Essay
Mattias Frey

183. See Fernando Baquero for a discussion of the 'philosophical roots, caveats, and perspectives,' of the view that time is not a pure dimension (or human condition) but an object in itself, 'Evolution and the nature of time,' *International Microbiology* 8 (2005): 81–91, archived at <www.im.microbios.org>. According to Baquero, in process physics, 'pseudo-objects' have been described as 'entities' that have 'no intrinsic existence...[and] are defined by how strongly they connect with each other, serving as scaffolding to organize chaos into order,' *ibid.*, 89.

'Mimesis of Mimesis' is the title of an article written by Germano Celant about Vik Muniz's work. Applied to photography, mimesis of mimesis 'is the definition of a photograph that, through the artist, becomes the mimesis of itself. It is potentially open to a pictorial and sculptural process in which the photographer is free to create any article that transcends both the real world and the reality of the photograph. This development appears to assert that photography has created a vacuum within itself, for it has attained the greatest possible reality....All that is left is the questioning of itself, to make enigmatic and elusive of all the things that have appeared so far. It is no longer to be used as a service for a particular purpose, which might be the communication or documentation of reality but rather for the very replacement of reality: its dissolution in image.' Germano Celant, 'Mimesis of Mimesis: Vik Muniz,' archived at <www.macro.roma.museum/english/press/muniz/celant_muniz.pdf>.

184. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 107–108; 195.

185. Vik Muniz, as quoted in Lisa Schiff, 'Vik Muniz: Playing on Transparency,' *Part 5* (Winter 2000): <http://dsc.gc.cuny.edu/part/part5/muniz.html>.

Like Muniz, Sebald reduces photography to 'its mnemonic essence' and then uses our photophilia to materialize images, which in time become reality. In this ashtray-like object (fig. xxxviii), *Wanderer Above the Sea of Ashes*, after Caspar David Friedrich (1999), Muniz uses cigarette ashes to create a re-vision of a painting by Friedrich, a German (romantic) painter. The photograph of the ash-made image is then transferred to the surface of a ceramic ashtray (6.5 x 7.75 x 1.25 in.). The resulting art piece is, thus, a triple tautology (at least, perhaps even a quadruple one).

Sebald "plays" with film in this book, much as he apparently toyed with the idea of making a film around the same time, but he does this not to relegate photography to a closed and distant chapter of visual culture but to investigate photography's (and, in some



FIG. xxxviii Vik Muniz, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Ashes*, after Caspar David Friedrich, 1999.

186. Other references to film exist in *Austerlitz*, albeit in purely visual form. For instance, an image of the 'ground plan' of the 'fortress of Breendonk' (21), looks like a film editing machine and another diagram of the same place (24), looks like a close-up view of a film projector.

187. The rhythm is greatly diminished in the Random House version of *Austerlitz*, particularly in the Terezín section of the narrative. Whereas the layout of the images in the German version creates a visual rhythm before the famous door sequence (see figs. 43–44, pp. 234–235) and even maintains the visual "beat" in the photographs that follow (not pictured in this book), the U.S. version seemingly disregards this rhythm by crowding the spreads with images (see figs. 36–40, pp. 220–222). For instance, the two images reproduced in a single spread, as shown in this volume in fig. 40, are split between two separate spreads in the German original.

188. Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning: Research notes on some Eisenstein stills,' *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1988), 52–68.

In fact, the text language does also bleed in a passage that extends for eleven pages in the English translation. This sentence is especially dizzying, given that English is a language that does not generally tolerate long, unpunctuated sentences. This "bleeding" effect is further amplified in Sebald's text by moments of "mis-hearing." As Graham Jackson has noted, Sebald uses words that sound like other culturally proscribed words: 'the name "Austerlitz" invites the reader to hear within it the name "Auschwitz."' "Gebrauntes Kind?" W.G. Sebald's "Metaphysik der Geschichte," *German Life and Letters* 57.4 (October 2004): 466.

The enactment of the insidious contamination of one sign system by another brings to mind a parallel act of reader/viewer "engagement" (as opposed to a more passive act of description or illustration). A similar historical

ways, film's) physical/metaphysical divide.¹⁸⁹ Just as the stereo-images in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* can be read as visual gestures that reach out to film¹⁹⁰ so in *Austerlitz* does the opposite tack seem to hold true. Unable to find a trace of his dead mother in the Nazi-directed film *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, the protagonist obtains a slow motion version of the movie, which he then subjects to further de-acceleration and hours of

"bleed" is seen in Christopher Wool's 1988 painting *Untitled (P78) Helter Helter* (fig. xxxix, below). Many viewers, upon their first viewing of this work, "see" a taboo word in the stack of stenciled letters (no longer words) that cover the surface of the canvas. Particularly when they first encounter the image in a flipping page of a journal or a book, they (mentally) create the letter—I—out of the backbone of the (present) letter—E—and, for a second at least, see HITLER (and sometimes, then, Helter Skelter) instead of the doubled word of the painting's title. This "misreading" is no doubt orchestrated (as Sebald's own visual work seems to be) by the painterly gestures of tags, punctures, and bleeds, that lure the eye away from the safe Symbolic realm to a place that skirts the Real, a place that has us (mis)see a traumatic word(s) in a jumble of fragmented lines.



189. Again, Sebald is drawn to controversial boundaries. Photography and film are intuitively (and visually) similar but have remained institutionally divided.

190. As noted above, Jonathan Crary feels the experience of the stereoscope follows a perceptual line that leads to film rather than fine art photography. See his *Techniques of the Observer*, 116–136.

study. The film finally releases an image of Austerlitz's mother only when he slows it to the pace of photography's becoming—that moment in the darkroom (as Austerlitz says of his altered film) when images emerge 'from the dark shadows.'¹⁹¹ Like the cinematic stills in Austerlitz's version of the Nazi film, many of the other images in Sebald's last book seem to reach back to photography as "sheets of time."¹⁹²

In this final prose fiction, Sebald is less interested in how we use photographs to construct our world. He has accepted, for better or worse, our photographic conceit. But he employs filmic language to help articulate the part of photography that is a burning and dissolving, an emerging and receding. Through a host of passages, Sebald makes this dynamic process *textually and visually* palpable. None are as hauntingly poignant as the moments entombed in a dying mother's wish to be remembered as a (photographic) face emerging out of 'the dark water of the pool,'¹⁹³ and the four seconds of (and on)¹⁹⁴ a slowed film that offers a *phantasized* image of that same mother to her son.¹⁹⁵ The author suggests that these momentary, transitory, flutters of the eye,¹⁹⁶ (like slips of the ear or slips of the tongue) are the powerful and potent building blocks not only of his protagonist's traumatic life, but perhaps of all creative thought.

Throughout his prose projects, augmented by excursions into prose nonfiction, Sebald has employed the smallest of visual, textual, and spatial 'quivers' to stitch his narratives (both individually and cumulatively) together. These quivers are a couple of "traumatic" holes in a photograph, the missing comma of a borrowed quote, a rebar-like line coming up from a gravure of a building, transposed letters in a list of names, and an undersized distance between the rows of words on a book's page. These slight movements point to the fecund but *almost missed* encounters of our existence that in the twitch of a second catch our ears, our touch, but mostly our eyes, becoming, so often, the *mis*-readings and *mis*-seeings that offer admission to ideas outside the Symbolic register that keep those "mis-steps" in line. Sebald solicits our thought through these 'discontinuities of the unconscious,'¹⁹⁷ these brushes with the Real, that he then brilliantly

Cf. Project
Tris Vonna-Michell

191. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 251.

192. Jerry Zaslove labels the photographs in *Austerlitz*, 'flickering outtakes of silent films,' 'Sebald and Exilic Memory,' 229. I agree except for the 'silent' aspect. There is always a sound in Sebald's book, the clicking linked to the flutters of film moving through the projector. "Sheets of time" allude to Gilles Deleuze's work on film in which he shows how time can be conceived as 'sheets of past.' In his *The Time-Image* Deleuze claims that innovative post-war cinema is able to reorder (the strata or sheets of) chronological time. The photographs in *Austerlitz* echo these types of sheets (in that they are semiotically open, like Barthes' privileged movie still). Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989) as discussed in John Marks, 'W. G. Sebald: Invisible and Intangible Forces,' *New Formations* 55 (Spring 2005): 89–103. Overall, Marks' provocative essay is one of the few that unpack Sebald's project through Deleuze's film theory.

193. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 179.

194. See Avi Kempinski, in this volume, for a discussion of how the inscription of the time code on the screen of the movie acts in opposition to Austerlitz's attempt to defeat time, 465.

195. Although it turns out that the mother in the film is not, in actuality, Austerlitz's mother, she is "recognizable" to him because she appears in the language in which he is most fluent, the language of photography's "becoming."

196. There are, in fact, so many moments in *Austerlitz* defined by a "flutter of the eye" that it is hard to resist the desire to join Sebald's *Austerlitz* and Chris Marker's landmark "film" *La Jetée* (1962), at that "fluttering" tythic point. Marker's film is a narrativized slide show that slips into a non-static filmic passage for a few brief seconds when a woman's face passes from a subconscious state (sleep) to a conscious one (wakefulness).

197. Atlas, 'Sebald: A Profile,' 281.

paces to cadences of *the conscious mind*. In *Austerlitz*, particularly, he orchestrates these slips through *photographic stutters*, employing this most chameleon-like of (artistic) materials with “part-jobs” (like “part-objects”) that undermine modernism’s (and the Symbolic register’s) demand that it be static and indexical. Through all his prose fictions, but most adamantly in *Austerlitz*, where the tendencies of the first projects finally begin to write a language, where Sebald becomes *Sebaldian*, the author gives photography the “off-label” job at which it has always excelled. As the calling card of the Real, the photograph becomes both instigator and interpreter of our psychic latencies and desires. Sebald’s images are great communicators of ‘unknown knowns’¹⁹⁸ they shuttle us between acts of looking and seeing, between hearing their histories and telling our stories, between experiencing their memories and our feelings, our forgettings, between the Imaginary and the Symbolic that constantly establishes and collapses the other who is writing and the I who is reading. These creative “conversations” occur in semiotic gaps that unfold in the moments needed for a photograph’s becoming or a film’s slowing, but not in the minutes and hours of traditional book-time. And so the creative (psychic) work that *Austerlitz* inevitably sets in motion relies on the ‘marginalia and glosses’¹⁹⁹ of *our* Imaginary, not the large Symbolic “scripts” of *his* (the other’s, Sebald’s) text lines.

It is hard to not read *Austerlitz* through the posthumous fog that immediately shrouded the book. The Sebald reflected in the Terezín window seems to be a man who is rehearsing his “beyond” of the “pleasure principle,” a man resigned to keep his inevitable appointment with the Real, a Real whose stain appears in the smudge above the head of his protagonist (fig. 77, p. 401), both on the cover and in the pages of the book, the same gray that surrounds the tangle of dust, wires, and air in the last image of the story and, now, the last picture of Sebald’s oeuvre.²⁰⁰ Even in the heavily “erased” English version²⁰¹ of *Austerlitz*,²⁰² how are we to read the photograph of the lonely backpack in the beginning pages of the book,²⁰³ the rucksack that carried ‘the head of the

198. Zaslove, ‘Sebald and Exilic Memory,’ 229.

199. Austerlitz describes the seemingly endless number of days he sat in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and lost himself in ‘the small print of the footnotes to the works I was reading, in the books I found mentioned in those notes, then in the footnotes to those books in their own turn, and so escaping from factual, scholarly accounts to the strangest of details, in a kind of continual regression expressed in the form of my own marginal remarks and glosses, which increasingly diverged into the most varied and impenetrable of ramifications.’ *Austerlitz*, 260. Although Sebald was not an art historian by training, he had an uncanny familiarity with their practices (and, as this document before you hopefully only hints at, their occasional delusions).

200. An image that materializes “Wittgenstein’s insane world,” a world as Sebald wrote of it in *After Nature*, ‘all grey-ness, without direction, with no above and below, nature in a process of dissolution, in a state of pure dementia,’ 65. This is the last image chosen for publication by Sebald but there will undoubtedly be many pictures that emerge after his death, such as the one we reproduce in this volume given to him by ‘an elderly couple’ that he hoped to use in a future work (see fig. 64, p. 314), or even the endless inverted images that live in each and every one of his current images (see fig. xliii, p. 88 and fig. xlvi, p. 92).

201. Sebald corrected inaccuracies in *Austerlitz* over four printings in 2001. Sheppard, ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 429.

202. In addition to the image “erasures” outlined above (the cleaned-up version of the “doll” image), the most glaring “revision” has to be the deletion (in the Random House edition) of the gray “smudge” above Austerlitz’s head in the famous “page boy” photograph on the cover. As the original photograph (now housed at the German Literature Archive at Marbach, Germany) confirms, the smudge was not an electronic addition (although its erasure undoubtedly was). I’m indebted to Christel Dillbohner for this information. For problems in translation in *Austerlitz*, particularly the elision of the important concept of super-imposition in the English, see Mosbach, 390–411.

203. As Sheppard notes, ‘The real rucksack definitely belonged to Max,’ ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 452n13.

Medusa,’²⁰⁴ as anything but a sack that has released its petrifying effects and is now abandoned by an author who is already commuting from the other side of the divide between the living and the dead.²⁰⁵ But as much as *Austerlitz* will now be linked to Sebald’s departure from our world, we have in this codex the most generous of good-byes. By rattling the tenuous screen that always seemed to be so fragilely placed over the holes, between the rhythms, and under the photographic traces in his books, Sebald finally slips us the orphans of the sign systems he has spent the last decade and a half bringing so powerfully into play. Yet even here, beyond the grave, the trickster is still engaged. The collection of “homeless signs” Sebald gives us in this great last “novel” turns out to be nothing but a deck of blank cards. We adopt Sebald’s orphans (for how can we resist) but we do so *under our own personal banners*. He makes it *our* job to give them a suite, a major and a minor arcana; he leaves it to us to give each of those cards a face.

That is why Anne Fuchs looks at the picture of the *Registrierungskammer*, the records room of the Terezín Small Fortress in *Austerlitz*, and calls it an ‘enigma.’ She is uncertain if it is ‘even a photograph.’²⁰⁶ But I look at it and am immediately reminded of

Cf. Project
Tim Wright



FIG. XI *Austerlitz*,
Random House, 40.

204. In his interview with Maya Jaggi, Sebald said, ‘The horror of the Holocaust is like Medusa’s head: you carry it with you in a sack, but if you looked at it you’d be petrified.’ Jaggi, ‘Recovered Memories.’

205. But it would seem now reunited with him in death. Axel Forrester recognized Sebald’s seeming ghost in the streets of Southwold three years after his death due in large part to the pack on his back. Diminished somewhat in stature (the price of haunting the earth as a specter?), the “apparition” had stopped and hesitated for a moment outside a tobacco store, forgetting but then remembering, perhaps, that smoking is a ritual for the living, not the dead. Forrester captured this Sebald sighting on film, excerpts of which are reproduced in this volume.

206. Anne Fuchs, ‘Sebald’s Painters,’ 182.

Cf. Project
Axel Forrester



FIG. xli (OPPOSITE)
Gerhard Richter, *Zelle* [Cell]
from *October 18*, 1977, 1988.

Gerhard Richter's 1988 painting *Zelle* (fig. xli), created from a photographic document that, like all photographs, disrupts painting, in a painted style that then turns around and disrupts photography.²⁰⁷ There in the 'on and on of the world,' in the bookshelf that is divided into squares, in the spaces of those shelves that are filled but are never quite full, I (mis)see some trace of fascism's form, a tectonic of order there in the Terezín records room. But then, in the space of a few seconds, a fragmentary image invades my sight, an indeterminate vision of a prison cell once occupied by a terrorist that fought and died trying to eradicate the remnants of that same fascism, a murky image that quickly comes into focus as an *image from my memory* of a Richter painting in which I (unconsciously?) had seen (in a bookshelf) the same tectonic form.

While I might have been reminded of fascism's architectural vernacular by looking only at the image Sebald gave us in his last book, it would have most likely remained locked in the Symbolic, where it would have been registered as merely an illustration of a historical form I have come to know in my capacity as an art historian. Instead, this symbolic, photo-like "slip of time" attached itself to a slight quiver of (mis)representation (most likely, as Fuchs says, it was spurred by the tentativeness of the photograph, the suggestions of painting that seep in at the image's edge), a (mis)reading that ferried me into the Imaginary, where my "vision" of the Terezín Reading Room merged with some disjointed memory of a form, and from there to Richter's painting; a superimposition that was assisted (I sense) by other "unknown knowns." No longer an illustration of Sebald's tale, nor even a piece of visual *evidence* of Terezín's institutionalized fascism, my instantaneous but *conscious* (hither and thither) weaving from *an image* of a reading room, to *a memory* of a prison cell used for a member of the Baader Meinhof terrorist group in the 1970s, to *a painting* of that cell from my own times (the late 1980s) turned this photograph into a visual *clue* of my understanding of history, of architecture, of painting, of my own artistic or critical practices, of Richter even,²⁰⁸ into a theater where I am the 'playwright, actor, stage manager, scene painter and audience,'²⁰⁹ all at the same time.

If there is a Sebaldian method, in *Austerlitz* we are given its opening line: "mind the gap" between words, between and in images and text, but most significantly, mind the gaps *in* (not only *between*) signs. Look at the spaces between seeing and not seeing (where you'll catch a glimpse of 'the phantom traces created by the sluggish eye'). Notice the gaps between cards being dealt or pages of a book flipping by. Don't turn away from the visual magma, after-images that "leak" out from their moving sides.²¹⁰ Pay attention to the momentary arrest of language required by a period, a comma, an "aside." Don't ignore the "whispered" secrets of the last spoken syllable hanging in the air, or the last

207. Gerhard Richter is the one artist that continually bumps up against Sebald's project, beginning with *The Rings of Saturn*. It's hard to believe that Sebald didn't have at least a passing knowledge of Richter's work, especially the highly-publicized series of paintings he executed in the late 1980s based on the newspaper coverage of the Baader Meinhof group in the early 1970s. In an interview, Sebald implicates the group when he speaks of a sea-change that began in the late 1960s in Germany: [There] 'was a generational war for half a decade that culminated in terrorism in Germany, which was brutally eradicated,' Jaggi, 'Recovered Memories.'

208. I am not the only one who has felt compelled to divulge some personal experience in relationship to Sebald's tales. As Mark Anderson notes, Sebald is not just a good writer, but he is also a good listener. 'Introduction,' 160.

209. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 80.

210. In the German edition of *Austerlitz*, the pictures consistently line up in the way images do in a flip book, another early "parlor game" that anticipated film. This effect is completely lost in the American version of the book.

written word of a paragraph stranded on its own line. Study those photographs created in slips of the shutter or captured in concert with bodily sighs. These are the gaps that open the way to the production of thought itself, to awakening not anesthetizing the creative mind.

FIG. XIII (OPPOSITE)

Sebald Archive: *Austerlitz*,
Deutsches Literatur-archiv,
Marbach.

AFTER SEBALD

After Sebald died in late 2001, a number of books created under his watchful eye were released and became welcome addendums to his prose project. *For Years Now*, published in the spring of 2001, but imbued with renewed visibility after the author's sudden death, was a collaboration between Sebald and the post-minimalist painter, Tess Jaray.²¹¹ In a telling gesture of Sebald's belief in the semiotic openness of his poems and the endless possibilities for their interaction with visual language, many of the 'micro-poems' he placed inside *For Years Now* (published in English) were also approved for *Unerzählt: 33 Texte und 33 Radierungen*, a collaboration with Jan Peter Tripp that was in the final stages of production when the author died. In this book, Sebald's poems seem terser when partnered with Tripp's photo-engaged, veristic drawings of eyes. The "photographic" line drawings are a fitting coda to Sebald's assertion in *Austerlitz* that photography lacks fingerprint type indexicality.²¹² *Nach der Natur* was translated into English, in 2002, as *After Nature*, although, as mentioned earlier, without the Thomas Becker photographs. The translation by Sebald's neighbor and fellow exile, the poet Michael Hamburger, was largely completed and approved by the author before his death, as was *On a Natural History of Destruction* (2003), the title Sebald gave to the translation by Anthea Bell of an anthology that included the previously discussed 'Air War' essay along with other related writings that had been published in German. *Unrecounted*, a Michael Hamburger translation of *Unerzählt*, was released at the end of 2003, along with *Campo Santo*, a compilation of obscure (previously published) essays mixed with other incomplete or unpublished writings by Sebald. The English translation, by Anthea Bell, of *Campo Santo* was released in 2005. Although there is only one image in this last text, it offers a fitting footnote to Sebald's final thoughts on photographs: we are sometimes simply their custodians as they travel through time *beside*, but not always *with* us.²¹³

Before her death in 2004, Susan Sontag suggested that Sebald's formidable collection of *Bildmaterial* be published in a kind of Sebaldian "Atlas."²¹⁴ For now, Sebald's archive has been divided among three sites. Many of his papers (including some photographs) are now at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany, where they are just

211. W. G. Sebald (poems) and Tess Jaray (images), *For Years Now* (London: Short Books, 2001).

212. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, Sebald's turn to collaborations with artists might offer evidence either that, by 2001, his relationship to art had posed questions he was not interested in answering himself (perhaps due to lack of skill or time) or that he realized there was great potential in these collaborations to dig deeper into the questions he had developed over the last two decades. The absence of fine art in his last book (as Anne Fuchs articulates in 'Sebald's Painters') and the presence of visual artists in his life and their participation in his process is another area of fruitful inquiry.

213. W. G. Sebald, 'La cour de l'ancienne école,' *Campo Santo*, 47–49. The image appears on p. 49.

214. Susan Sontag, who described Sebald as 'the contemporary master of the literature of lament and mental restlessness, has suggested to [Michael] Krüger that the hundreds of thousands of archived photographs Sebald left behind be edited into a book, a lasting memorial to his vision, his way of seeing.' Tim Adams, 'The Eyes Have It.'



becoming available to the public. As the “gift” from Marbach reproduced here attests (fig. xlii), the jewels inside the archive boxes will undoubtedly continue to write the story of Sebald’s complex relationship to images for years to come.²¹⁵

SYSTEMS: SEARCHING FOR SEBALD

There are some of you that will by now undoubtedly be crying foul. For you recognize the artist who has fueled my polemic is the same W. G. Sebald who, years before 2001, introduced a literary style that enraptured a wide range of readers in a multitude of languages in fields as diverse as German studies, comparative literature, and cultural studies, not to mention endless members of book clubs in living rooms and coffee houses across America and Europe. This is the same Sebald who has been the focus of a plethora of dissertations, conferences, journal articles (and more frequently, entire journal issues). And it is the same Sebald, whose presence in internet blogs offers an example of what an intellectual cottage industry looks like on the web.

I can only counter, *Yes, of course this is the same Max Sebald*. I would even concede that although Sebald fits nicely into a modern art history’s canon (if not quite yet *the canon*) and as I have lovingly parodied here, art history’s bifurcated written form,²¹⁶ his project that I’ve just dissected through an art historical filter is largely a literary one. I would even admit that attaching a literary label to the late author’s work, does not *ipso facto* rule out a detailed consideration of the images in his books. For, as many noted scholars have pointed out, W. G. Sebald is not the first man of letters to include pictures in his publications.²¹⁷

So why the ruse?

My first impulse in writing Sebald’s project into art history was to correct a perceived trend among many literary and cultural critics who completely ignore or (more often) see and quickly gloss over Sebald’s formidable work with pictures. This is a blind spot in Sebald scholarship that is striking to someone who works in the field of art and its history. But it quickly became apparent that bringing the footnotes regarding Sebald’s use of images into the main text of the critical analyses of his work would elide my initial meeting with Sebald’s work, and more generally, would belie the great *impact* Sebald has

215. And like all Sebald’s gifts, it presents more questions than it answers. The notes in Sebald’s hand, lying behind the apparent image proofs for *Austerlitz*, address image (re)preparation. The detailed instructions written in English (perhaps for Michael Brandon Jones or an English publisher or both) offer a telling close to this history of Sebald’s relationship to images, confirming once for all that what we see in his books is pretty close to what Sebald wanted us to see.

216. Art history has stubbornly held onto the footnote, a 19th century artifact that shows no abatement now that it has its *raison d’être* in hypertext strategies on the Internet. Clearly, I have used it here as a means of visually alienating Sebald from critical (and more usual) sites in comparative literature and German studies.

217. In fact, and not surprisingly, many of the authors Sebald freely borrows from—Kafka, Stendhal, Benjamin—mixed image and text in at least one of their book projects. Likewise, some of the most cogent writing about Sebald’s use of images has come from literary fronts. In addition to the landmarks essays already cited above: Harris, ‘Return of the Dean’; Shaffer, ‘Sebald’s Photographic Narrative’; and Horstkotte, ‘Pictorial and Verbal Discourse.’ J. J. Long’s thoughtful essay on Sebald’s photographic work in *The Emigrants* has set a high standard for scholarship in this area. ‘History, Narrative, and Photography in W. G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*,’ *Modern Language Review* 98 (2003): 118–139. Likewise, a few notable essays have addressed Sebald’s project within art history. In addition to Fuch’s excellent essay, ‘Sebald’s Painters’; and Zaslave’s ‘Sebald and Exilic Memory’; Mark Anderson has written a number of thought-provoking critiques of Sebald’s books within a “visual studies” template. See particularly his ‘The Edge of Darkness: On W. G. Sebald,’ *October* 106 (Fall 2003): 103–21. Russell Kilbourn has blazed a trail between Sebald and

had in disciplines of visual studies. For as I have already briefly outlined in this introduction, and as the artists’ projects in this book will convincingly support, as much as Sebald has enjoyed a privileged position in the relatively insular fields of German, cultural, literary and even Holocaust studies, he has led a dual life, a type of mirrored existence, in the spaces of another discipline just as susceptible to insularity—the studios and writing rooms of visual art. And yet, a parallel path is by definition not an identical one. In literature Sebald’s prose is often seen as a throwback to 19th century traditions, while in the visual arts he has caught the attention of critics, curators, and practitioners firmly rooted in the 21st century. By rewriting Sebald’s story in an alternative institutional frame of art history, to borrow John Tagg’s term, I hoped to expose—thus, the ruse—the subtle but significant differences between a *literary history* of a great 20th century writer with 19th century leanings (who had been co-opted by 20th century artists and art historians), and an “art story” centered on a 21st century visual practitioner (who had been heralded in allied fields for similar strengths under different “cover”²¹⁸). If the actual particulars of each of those Sebald histories are essentially the same, it is my strong belief that there is a notable difference between the ways we incrementally integrate each (or any) unfolding story into our already tightly woven (and institutionally regulated) understanding of the world and its meaning.²¹⁹

By writing Sebald into art’s troublesome (or at least troubled) canon I also hoped to underscore that at the beginning of 2007, five years after his tragic death, the only way we can really talk about Sebald is through the filter of reception. It is easier to articulate how he impacted a group of artists and art writers and their practices, myself included, than to speculate on what he intended or wanted or feared he would do with his projects. Although Sebald’s work has left us scattered clues to help sketch out a history of his art sources and forms, we have almost nothing from the author himself to help fill in our rough outline. Like most artists, he was particularly mum about his practices. The most telling evidence that he concerned himself with visual matters comes in an anecdotal aside by a colleague who remarked he was often more troubled by the way a picture was reproduced in one of his books than by any historical inaccuracy in the narrative—a doubt that seems to emanate more from Sebald the artist than from Sebald the writer.²²⁰ Similarly, we don’t really know what Sebald thought about the co-opting of his work by artists and by visual “culturists,” although we can safely speculate in the later case, that embrace was met with some chagrin.²²¹ Looking at the photo of Sebald and Tess Jaray on

film theory. See his ‘Architecture and Cinema: The Representation of Memory in W. G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*,’ *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, ed. J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

218. Art history has borrowed more from literature’s theory than literature has borrowed from art’s theory.

219. I am aware that by rescripting, or as some might say hijacking Max’s story I have elided ‘the threshold at which the investigation has to double back on the art historical enterprise itself, unsettling its truth, disturbing its pleasure and power, troubling its institutions and “striking against the frame.”’ Tagg, ‘Violence of Meaning,’ 205. Likewise, as it has been in literature it will undoubtedly be in art. Sebald’s texts offer several different levels of “visual reading”—a host of formal and historical references, each with their own ‘peculiar class of “in-script-ion”,’ as Milan Jonas characterizes these superimpositions. ‘Onto-Poetic Signatures of Mathematical Analogy in Arts & Literature,’ *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* 4.2 (July 2003). Archived at <www.aber.ac.uk/cla/archive/jaros.html>.

220. Jo Catling, ‘Silent Catastrophe: In Memoriam W. G. (Max) Sebald 1944–2001’: <www.new-books-in-german.com/features.html>.

221. Sheppard claims that at the time of his death, Sebald’s library contained ‘not a single work of theory or literature that could be described as postmodernist or poststructuralist,’ ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 420.

the back cover of the book, *For Years Now*, one of the few visual art projects he did participate in that we can unequivocally call “culture-based,” he looks uncomfortable as if the picture had been requested from a department head or provost to promote not the project but the university.²²²

While Sebald might have been troubled about his growing presence in the Symbolic order he railed against,²²³ he did seem to understand that a work of art is no longer the creator’s once it enters the public domain, and even that a single body of work can traverse different terrains at different speeds—a disjunction that makes reception based analyses difficult to align across disciplines.²²⁴ Within literature, especially in German-speaking countries, Sebald distinguished himself in small academic and intellectual circles from the beginning of the 1990s, but then by the mid-1990s, especially after the translation of *Die Ausgewanderten* into English as *The Emigrants*, in multiple languages and diverse venues. But during this period Sebald’s work had not yet found its way to artists’ studios, and his codex objects most likely would have been labeled secondary or derivative if they had been reviewed within the structures that defined the field of art during that time.

Around 1998 a shift begins to occur. Some of the changes were initiated by Sebald, as he matured into a visual practitioner more comfortable with his visual materials and more daring in his processes. Other changes arose from a shift within the art world. Sebald’s interest in alternate histories of Europe’s troubled past, in the archive’s power to undermine cultural collections and recollections, in pushing at the boundaries *within* photography and *between* photography and other mediums—Sebald’s longstanding interests—had, by the end of the 20th century, become the concerns of some key visual artists, and then quickly after that, of influential art critics and curators. When Sebald finally received the notice he rightfully deserved in the art world, sadly after his death, that regard had less to do with his growing fame in literature (although it certainly increased the probability that interested parties would be able to find his books) and more to do with shifting practices in art.

As I have outlined above, Sebald was not just a friendly interloper, a writer who dabbled with personal and idiosyncratic *Bildmaterial*, who was welcomed (like so many other literary figures) into art’s pantheon as an honorary member. Nor was he considered a master from an allied field, someone like Alfred Hitchcock,²²⁵ whose work was co-opted

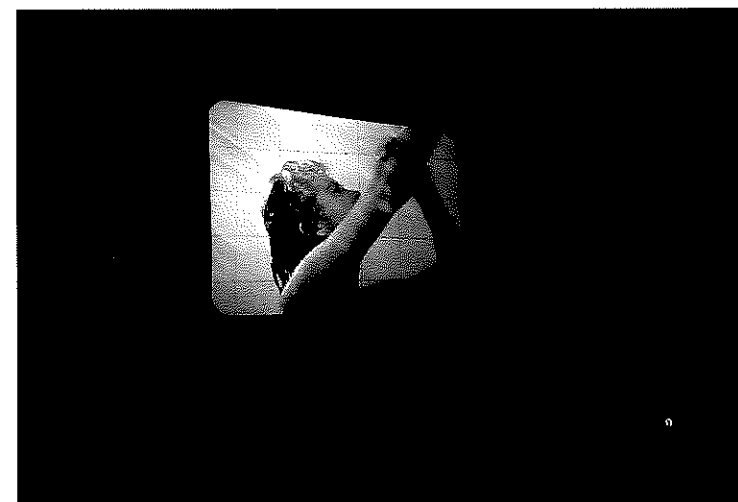
222. While Sebald’s books are clearly “culture-based,” created and supported by established institutions (with literary associations), his art (in those same books) has often escaped scrutiny within analogous visual art institutions or departments. Because he was never seriously engaged in visual art (either as an instructor or as a student), his visual work has not been subject to either the restraints (in practice) or critiques of “culture-based” art.

223. Sheppard, ‘Dexter-sinister,’ 433.

224. Especially when a chronological time line is used to anchor the analysis, an approach that for better or worse is hard to avoid in the nascent years of a new field of study.

225. Several passages in Sebald’s prose allude to Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* (1993). For this piece (fig. xliii, right) Gordon reset the duration of Alfred Hitchcock’s famous masterpiece from two to twenty-four hours. The chapter in *Die Ausgewanderten* centered on the slow “cremation” of Max Aurach (Max Ferber in the English translation) often seems to be a horrific fictive equivalent to the film’s famous shower scene in which we are forced to watch a death in excruciating slow motion. Likewise the strange voices and sounds that come out of the slow motion film Jacques Austerlitz watches over and over in Sebald’s last fiction (*Der Führer Schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*) echo the base noises that emanate from Gordon’s “re-mastered” film.

as raw studio material for new visual projects. And certainly Sebald’s literary work was not the type that art critics often embraced. As someone who wrote ‘feuilletonistic essays on literature rather than literary theory,’ his critiques could not be easily converted into a “theory of art’s own.”²²⁶ Instead of Sebald’s “arriving” it might be more apt to say he “came into view” for a group of artists and art writers, who were already laying the foundation for a genre that included his ‘post-medium’ practices. In other words, by 1998, *Sebald’s books looked like contemporary art*.²²⁷ There is no doubt that some of the “eye-by” passages in his codices eerily mirror the objects of contemporary artists. His image of Manchester’s “smoke stacks” (fig. xliii), for instance, draws strong visual and loose conceptual strings to Tacita Dean’s *Russian Ending* (see fig. 88, p. 426). But also, by 1998, *Sebald was an artist* in the new definition of the term. Or, as I have maintained here, he was a visual practitioner since his “practice” invited partnerships with art theory and created bridges between works of art that were visually similar but conceptually distant (for instance, between Anselm Kiefer and Vik Muniz).²²⁸



226. Anderson, ‘Introduction,’ 158. Especially after World War II, art history borrowed much of its critical theory from literary disciplines.

227. And, evidently, not only his book but his residence. In his profile on Sebald, James Atlas comments: ‘the only eccentric touch [in his library] was a row of hats hanging on the wall: they reminded me of one of those somber, depopulated museum installations of Joseph Beuys, where the once-living form is represented by an old coat or a scrap of fur.’ ‘Sebald: A Profile,’ 228.

228. During the last twenty years, many artists have auditioned new titles for their practices, including ‘culture worker’ and ‘visual composer.’ Visual practitioner is used by artists who wish to expand their practice (or perception of it) beyond traditional art genres, and who see their studio work as an active engagement of “theory in practice.”

In addition to Sebald’s influence in art (as has been articulated here), the most visible art link to Sebald was made through an exhibition at the Tate Modern in London in late 2006 entitled *Rings of Saturn*. The show included the work of Steven Claydon, Nathalie Djurberg, Saul Fletcher, Thomas Helbig, Dorota Jurczak, David Noonan, David Wojnarowicz, and Thomas Zipp. Curated by Emma Dexter and Cedar Lewisohn, it was the first exhibition in the Level 2 Gallery Series dedicated to exhibitions that present ‘the latest ideas, themes and trends in international contemporary art.’ *Rings of Saturn* exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Modern, 2006).

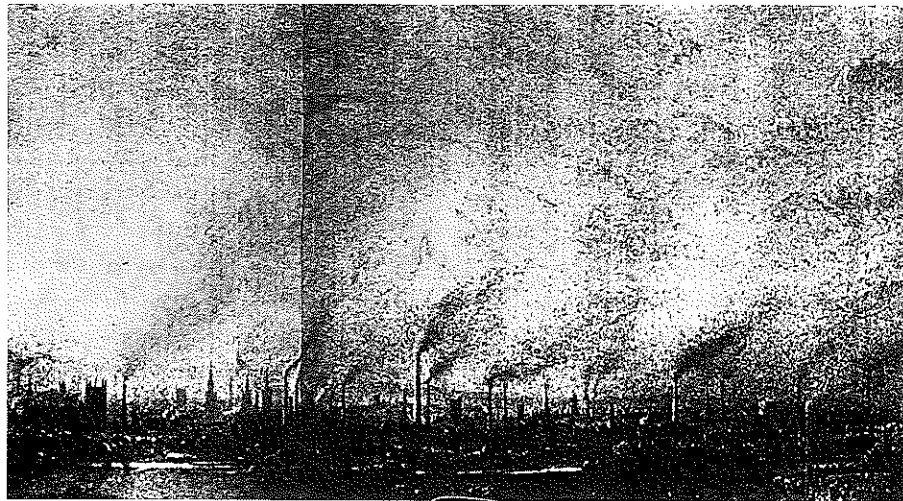


FIG. XLIV *Die Ausgewanderten*,
Andere Bibliothek, 250.

This rather long salvo hopefully articulates my feigned ignorance (in the first part of this essay) of Sebald's literary might, but even this *apologia* fails to explain the frequent "ruses" (of unexplainable origin) that crossed our path in the making of this book. There is another reception that figures prominently in this project, a set of circumstances marked by uncanniness and coincidence that anyone working with Sebald comes to know so well. That is our own ever-changing reception to a series of unfolding revelations about Sebald's visual oeuvre.

This project was jump-started by the 385 images and the equal number of absent images that make up Sebald's published *Bildmaterial*. Despite the fact that it is ultimately and so cogently represented here by its attendants, this book did not begin in the halls of academia, in seminars on German literature or comparative literature or in symposia on Holocaust writers; rather it began on the walls of artists' studios, in the catalogs of artists' exhibitions, and in the pages of the art journals *Artforum* and *October*. We initially deduced that Sebald's images had been "grandfathered" into art with only the most minimal fanfare because these visual (part) objects often displayed striking similarities to the pictures that hung in current *fin de siècle* exhibition halls. This would explain the quick adoption of the term Sebaldian in art journals, catalogues, and curatorial statements to describe a number of visual processes and effects and the rather paltry mention of Sebald the writer, the artist, the man, in those same writings.

It would be our job to parade Sebald's images out and give them the recognition and attribution they seemed to deserve. We did recognize, even then, that limiting our discussion of Sebald to his pictures was nearly as reductive as not looking at his visual material at all, but we were bolstered in our resolve by Sebald himself who more than once admitted he used images to begin his stories.²²⁹ Clearly Sebald's project was not only about images, any more than the artists he inspired had stuck to solely visual materials, but it did seem that his *Bildmaterial* was as important as the series of descriptive and

229. 'You have one image, and you have to make something of it—half a page, or three-quarters, or one and a half—and it only works through linguistic or imaginative elaboration,' Cuomo, 'Coincidence of Meaning.'

narrative passages that surrounded them. All things being equal they might offer a bit of structure, a formal objectivity, a less complicated way into a project that Sebald openly admitted was unscholarly and inexact. There was also an assurance—false it would turn out but nonetheless reassuring in the beginning—that these images were not the masterworks of modern art history, not the Kafkas, the Prousts, the Benjamins, that he seemed to borrow so freely from in literature, and that so many scholars have found embedded in his text.²³⁰ Freed from historical tradition, we thought we could focus on that element of Sebald's work we felt had been overlooked and in so doing open the door between literature and art. Sebald could be made part of a literary or artistic tradition, or could, at least, be placed in a ground between the two disciplines, between literature and art, between writer and artist, as a way of releasing him from either (or any) discipline.

Coming as we did from a wall of images, we find it a bit ironic that we did not notice the feature of Sebald's project that finally set the tone of this book. If the degradation of the pictures had properly been assigned to the will of the author and not to bad printing practices we might have suspected at the outset that Sebald's project was not linked just to images but more specifically to photography.²³¹ Whether we designate Sebald's layout as I have here—as 'the third space'—or, as many of the authors in the pages that follow have—as 'the third term'—of his project, what the hand that rules that site is first pointing to and then holding is a *photograph*. As so, the final part of the art historical hermeneutic I have applied to Sebald's oeuvre for this introductory essay, (that part of the analysis that positions the work within an established cultural system)²³² is not tied to the cultural system that mediates image production or reproduction (as we originally thought) but is centered on the problem child of so many of our cultural systems, that being photography itself. We may have been blind to this imperative at first, but we quickly learned, particularly from our essayists, that any *searching for* Sebald would have to include not only a nuanced investigation of Sebald's use of photographs, but also Sebald's own interrogation of photography. It was the artists in this project who suggested that this investigation should be taken one step beyond traditional hermeneutics (whether art historical or literary), these visual thinkers and practitioners whose projects *after* (post-) Sebald paved the way to the subtitle of this book. Through their works, we came to suspect that Sebald was not just asking what photography means in the construction of post-traumatic critical language, he was also donning the practitioner's hat and asking the laborers' questions: how and when and where do photographs create meaning within a heuristic tradition; how can photographs (and photography) initiate, engage, and propel thought?

230. In the beginning we didn't know that the masterworks were present, but in a more 'absent form.'

231. This blind spot is strong testament to the erasures Armstrong lays out in her book, *Scenes in a Library*.

232. Allen Weiss has articulated a method for analyzing works of art and has discussed the extent to which this model can be used with 'outsider' art. 'The hermeneutic context of the artwork may be determined according to three major intertwined rubrics: semiologically in the context of other artworks (ie., as sign); biographically in the context of the artist's life (ie., as symptom); and sociologically in the context of cultural systems (ie., as an object, whether sacred or profane, mythical or economic).' Weiss, 'Figurations and Disfigurations,' *Portraits from the Outside*, ed. Simon Carr, Betsy Wells Farber, Sam Farber, Allen S. Weiss (New York: Parsons School of Design, 1990), 36.

Cf. Interview
Christian Scholz

Pinning the photographer label on Sebald must be done with some qualifications. Susan Sontag wasn't speaking of his proclivity for cheap cameras and capturing his own portrait in reflected windows when she called his work sublime. In truth, Sebald was not a photographer who used camera and film within the established parameters of a modernist (or even postmodernist) medium but a visual researcher and practitioner who used photography to record phenomena, to capture but also collect sites, and as a tool to represent states of being — states as diverse as memory, coincidence, trauma, and (in the end) even hope. In this sense Sebald was someone who appeared after the de-skilling of the medium in the 1960s, when the artist's purposeful degradation of photography's materials, subject matter, and overall look (either through production or in the selection of raw materials) pointed to the tacit differences between the role photographs assume for the collector, the archivist, the researcher, the cataloguer, the historian, the investigator, and the artist. Each of these practitioners approaches the photograph in a different way. Each brings the language and rules (not to mention their own personal desires) inherent to their calling to the photographic (shooting, assembling, viewing, cataloging) interaction.

Sebald's *relationship to photography* was mediated by these varied roles. But it is also clear that Sebald's *relationship to the photographs* that resulted from these interchanges (and often the very same photographs) changed with each title, and maybe even with each translation. In terms of visual material, the difference between *Vertigo* and *Austerlitz* is startling. Without the surrounding text we might not initially attribute the two works to the same hand. Some of this evolution resulted from Sebald's continuous dialogue with the book form and his rethinking of the complicated relationships that inhere between images and text in a bounded codex—but some of his re-visions had to do with his silent dialogue with photography itself, which in the decade of Sebald's most ambitious image-text projects was also undergoing rapid redefinition.

In Sebald's first two prose projects (*Nach der Natur* and *Schwindel. Gefühle.*), photography is most present in the ekphrastic passages that dot the text. Even in *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, photography's great potential is not yet located in the visual plates. By the time of Sebald's second book, *Die Ausgewanderten* (*The Emigrants*), his attraction to photographs rested with their ability to tell stories. It is often said, especially after Barthes' *Camera Lucida* and the post-structural modifications centered on that text, that photographs are "things" rather than objects; indices rather than representations. But, as often happens when sound bites take the place of theories, Barthes' admonition that photography is a 'message without a code,'²³³ has left many scholars believing photography is a visual trace that has no meaning until it is given one by a caption or surrounding text. In *The Emigrants*, Sebald reminds us that it's not that images can't tell a story without a caption below them,²³⁴ it is that they hold an archive of tales, some of which remain untold until history catches up with their appointed moment (fig. xlv).

233. Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message,' in *Image/Music/Text*, 17.

234. For at least a generation, this image will tell many stories without the need for any caption(s). This "throw-away" image from a tourist excursion that was stuffed in a drawer for later "revelations," begs the question: where will the next generation of discarded images (the very images that Sebald relied on) come from? With digital technologies, the bad shot, the extra shot, the "take it because you climbed to the top of the winding stair" shot is quickly being relegated to the Trash folder on our computers. One can imagine a day in the future when we scour thrift shops for

Without captions to fix one of its many (phantasized) stories into a code, we quickly learn in *The Emigrants* that Sebald's photographs are able to do more than confirm a *studium* or wound us by a *punctum* only we can see. Without a caption photographs can sometimes (and in Sebald's books, can often) form alliances with other visual stories to create ever-shifting *studiums* that are able to perform an "effect" that joins individuals together through the scars that everyone can see.

By the time of *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald seems less interested in photography's ability to "fingerprint" the world than in the photographic skin that holds these "lines" in place. We sense a shift in Sebald's relationship with his own photographic collection. Whether he is dissatisfied with his archive (i.e. feels a deficiency that needs to be filled) or he develops a new task for the photographic trace (i.e. using the photograph to record "sensations"), Sebald begins to add photographic images captured in his own camera to the collection. Likewise, we witness Sebald's interrogation of the photograph's essence through his (xerographic) manipulation of the print's surface. By *The Rings of Saturn*, photographs are no longer just important *Bildmaterial* used to augment Sebald's prose, but they have become objects worthy of study in and of themselves. By undoing the photograph, by ripping out the seams that binds it to culture, Sebald reminds us that a sloppy address to the image can lead to messy returns. History should not be read only through its documents but also through the apparatuses that manufacture, transport, and preserve those documents.

As someone who learned the technique of the darkroom (so vividly evidenced in his descriptive visions²³⁵), he undoubtedly knew that the photograph is not an index of the

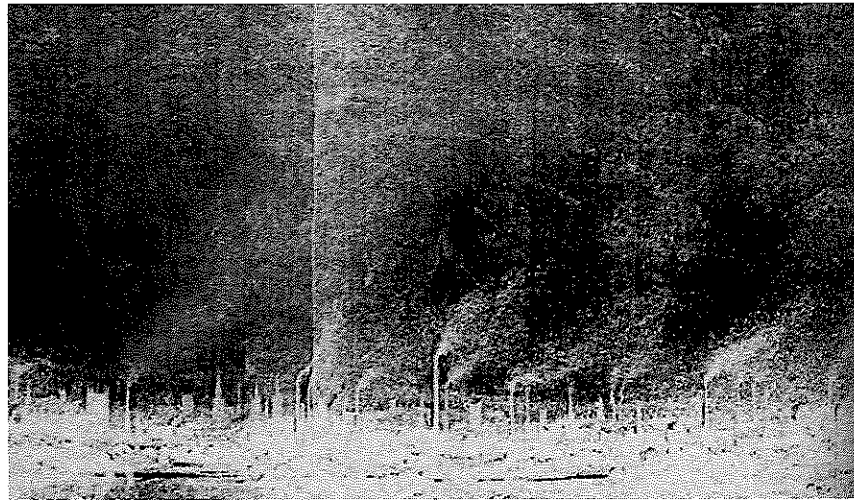
FIG. XLV Twin Towers, New York.
Shot from inside the Statue of
Liberty, c. 1993.

Cf. Project
Shimon Attie



discarded digital cameras, hoping they contain intact digital information left by someone too lazy or too technologically challenged to erase their digital "stories."

235. For instance, this description in *The Rings of Saturn* that seems to not only re-enact the early processes of photography, but hints at its multiple mediating roles: 'As I was sitting on the breakwater waiting for the ferryman, the evening sun emerged from behind the clouds, bathing in its light the far-reaching arc of the seashore. The tide was advancing up the river, the water was shining like tinplate.... And then, through the growing dazzle of the light in my eyes, I suddenly saw, amidst the darkening colours, the sails of the long-vanished windmills turning heavily in the wind.' Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 237.



world but is an index of the negative—a negative that may have captured ‘something we don’t recognize...the play of light and appearance of things that escape our perception.’²³⁶ Every story, every person, every object that is fixed to paper as a photographic trace is haunted by its negative—a keep(er) of secrets archived in the depths of white shadows, under black ice, and behind the vacant eyes of a specter’s face (fig. xlvii).²³⁷ It is in the language of that endangered photographic species (negative process photography), once nurtured by the photographic camera but quickly becoming only a memory in our photographically trained minds, that Sebald builds his final book, *Austerlitz*. Through image *and* word he “develops” images that are between seeing and saying, pictures that are bound to an ontological possibility that once nourished the photograph’s (and photography’s) creation. Through reversals, inversions, mirrorings and superimpositions, Sebald reveals the special bond photography has with metaphysics, and by extension the special bond photography has with thought production; the special bond we have had with photography, but also the special bond it has with us.

SEBALDIAN

It is hard to guess what Sebald’s “photography after *Austerlitz*” would have looked like. So often the images in that last book seem to be on the verge of disintegration. Perhaps he would have continued to dabble in film, if not directly in the celluloid medium, than in references made through the selection and layout of the images in his next book. One can imagine a number of future trajectories from the multiple filmic “trailers” given us

236. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 87.

237. We are reminded of the rich reserve that exists in any archive of photographic negatives with the recent artwork of Dorothy Cross. In her film *Antarctica* (2005), images are projected “in negative” creating a world of black ice haunted by white spectral divers. See excerpts from this film in this volume, pp. 550–557.

The hidden negative in each photographic print is brought to our attention in the picture of the Manchester smoke stacks that was printed (unintentionally?) in a negative form in a facsimile of *Die Ausgewanderten* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2001). In this “reversed image,” the soot of the original is turned into nuclear snow (fig. xlvii).

in *Austerlitz*. Or, as his last collaboration with Jan Peter Tripp seems to hint, perhaps Sebald would have left this formal interrogation to someone else as he delved deeper into a metaphysics that was “beyond photography.” In the end, the few hundred pictures Sebald “released” from the thousands that made up his archive may seem a paltry sample if it wasn’t for that other gift he left us,²³⁸ an essence we call ‘Sebaldian’ that floats from one discipline to another, and in so doing disrupts traditions, ignites heated discussions and produces creative thought.

Today “Sebaldian” continues to reverberate through art, drawing loose alliances with “medium” and “genre.” The half-life of this unattached adjective has proved to be particularly strong. When we began our “Search for Sebald” we, too, felt the urgency to tether the floating Sebaldian to a noun that would hasten and strengthen the hoped-for proclamation(s) of our extensive study: the list of ‘I know these things for sure...about these for sure things.’ Linking Sebaldian to “medium” seemed to be the obvious partnership even though we recognized medium’s tenuous position of importance in art and its history has been subjected to even more scrutiny and doubt in the last decade. Traditionally, medium refers to the materials of the artist’s expression. But it has also been used to describe the method of engaging those materials. Thus, an artist’s medium can be oil *paints* or the processes practiced by an oil *painter*, the latter distinction coming with a host of implied directives that impact not only the painter’s processes but also subject

238. Although we may not have immediate access to all of Sebald’s photographs, some of the photographic descriptions in his books are so rich that we are able to imagine a different kind of Sebaldian photograph. Readers that travel to the sites discussed in his last two prose fictions can often (re)capture (with their own camera) the photographs (present in the “photographic language”) in Sebald’s prose. For instance, this image of the skies over the Greenwich Observatory with its visual evidence of low-flying planes (fig. xlvii, below), was noticed and then photographically (re)captured because of a remembered line in *Austerlitz*: ‘the air was full of the drone of the great planes flying low and as it seemed to me incredibly slowly over Greenwich from the northeast...Like strange monsters going home to their dens to sleep in the evening, they hovered above us in the darkening air.’ *Austerlitz*, 102.



matter itself. But when medium has been applied to photographic practices it has been hampered by medium's "third meaning," a designation centered on acts of mediation—which is not only in the necessary inter-mediate step of a photograph's production but the mediating role of photography's reception, the way photographs mediate our experiences, our thoughts, and even our desires.

And so, photography, the very photography Sebald traverses in, has always struggled with medium status; the 'specificity,' required for a medium's 'language' is continuously shifting, is forever relocating dependent on that which is being mediated and that which the mediation leaves out. Sebald's employment of a multitude of photographic genres, his multi-lingual announcements of photography's porous boundaries, and his various attempts to "out" the wounds that ravage the photograph's surface are not acts that help build an argument for photography's medium status but seem instead to be acts that contribute to a tentative medium's collapse (if, in fact, we can agree that photography ever coalesced into a medium in the first place). We might (and we did) entertain the possibility that Sebald's practices constitute a new medium, for that seems to be the trend for photographic anomalies, but how do we construct the required language of that new medium²³⁹ from Sebald's tics, gestures, erasures, from a series of "acts" that are defined by what is cut and bled away? And how can we measure competence²⁴⁰ if the boundary we've drawn to stake out our new medium has been drawn under the well-worn rubric of pornography and art: "we'll know it when we see it?"²⁴¹

Despite the seemingly failed (or stalled) association between the adjective spawned from Sebald's practices and a medium of either traditional or innovative claim, I am still (even more) confident that there is *something Sebaldian* that has permeated art, as I suspect it has permeated literature and other established disciplines. While it hardly seems problematic (if somewhat tautological) to use the term Sebaldian as a descriptive for the type of archive of materials the author left behind for artists to mine (and mime), we can also imagine a number of theoretical and critical positions that can be written under the Sebaldian banner. For instance, points of confluence, confirmation, and contextualization can be drawn between Sebald's work and method and the silkscreened paintings of Adam Pendleton. Even though this young artist is grappling with an archive of images and formal precedents that are as distinctly "American" as Sebald's are European (Ku Klux Klan, Martin Luther King; Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg), his work operates *under a Sebaldian rubric* and is enacted *with Sebaldian strategies*. Unlike Sebald, Pendleton embraces a palette of colors and integrates quotes from popular music and oral (vernacular) tradi-

Cf. *Project Adam Pendleton*

239. Rosalind Krauss has discussed the difficulty of inventing new mediums. 'Inventing a medium is like inventing a new language,' it must have 'a grammar, a syntax, and a rhetoric.' She cautions against mistaking 'ruptures within a known medium,' as anything more than a 'single sentence' without a 'sequel.' Rosalind Krauss, '...And Then Turn Away?' *October* 81 (Summer 1997): 6–7.

240. According to Krauss, a new medium must have a 'way of deciding what counts as competence in its use.' *Ibid.*, 6.

241. I allude to the famous court case that defined the parameters of pornography. In *Jacobellis vs. Ohio* (1964) U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart wrote: 'I shall not attempt to define [pornography]...But I know it when I see it.' 378 vs. 184 (1964). The same judgment has been used to delineate the line between parody and art in more than one copyright infringement case. The most famous lawsuit involved the artist Jeff Koons who made a sculptural parody of a photograph of middle America that wasn't recognized as art by middle America (he lost the case). *Rogers vs. Koons* (1992).

tions into his photographically derived, silkscreen prints (fig. xviii, p. 96). But like Sebald, Pendleton's work has been saddled with a label that severs or at least seriously limits critical discourse. Many critics have called Pendleton's 'investigations in search of a dynamic mid-space location between first-person and third-person experiences of knowledge and historical production' *multi-disciplinary hybrids*. Part of the reticence to locate Pendleton's work within any one medium may derive from the artist's lack of academic credentials; like Sebald he is self-taught. The other obstacle to positioning Pendleton within an established "frame," emerges from his coyness about whether his paintings (with their 'complicating use of text and imagery, both appropriated and self-generated,') are 'satirizing clichés of black culture,' or are meant 'to prompt more subtle thinking about language and identity.'²⁴² For Pendleton, as it is for Sebald, a label of 'hybrid' does not encourage new and innovative thinking about his work as much as it seems to marginalize him (and other innovative visual thinkers) from current (art) frames. We can imagine a Sebaldian reading of Pendleton's output that moves him from his current position at the edges of critical discourse to a position at a de-historicized center. There, we could write a critique that focuses on Pendleton's traumatic rips, textual tears, visual stutters, and other cultural (and artistic) "points of inattention," which he uses to 'upset comfortably subjective interpretations of history and culture.'²⁴³ If anything can be hoped from Sebald's residency in art, it is that the term "hybrid" will be retired as a descriptive for visual practices that are clearly becoming more the norm.

There is another hope, suggested by Pendleton's active engagement with a dark chapter in America's history. Like Sebald, he seeks to rehabilitate a culture's silent immobility. The vision Sebald recounts in *After Nature*, of being a child who tripped over invisible bodies in the streets of his hometown, who was then forced to sit by an open window with hands bound in bandages, ferreting meaning out of an ashen sky,²⁴⁴ suggests an alternate view: that same child, now grown, with hands unbound, carrying the dust of those corpses into the future. Sebald's ambitious and courageous oeuvre attests that those who make and re-invent images should not be relegated to the margins of society, waiting to be called upon to *deconstruct* the detritus of history.²⁴⁵ They should be active partners as we *construct* our future stories.²⁴⁶ It is a revolutionary proposition that guarantees Sebald's legacy in art and culture will not be slowly relegated to the 'dustbin of history.'

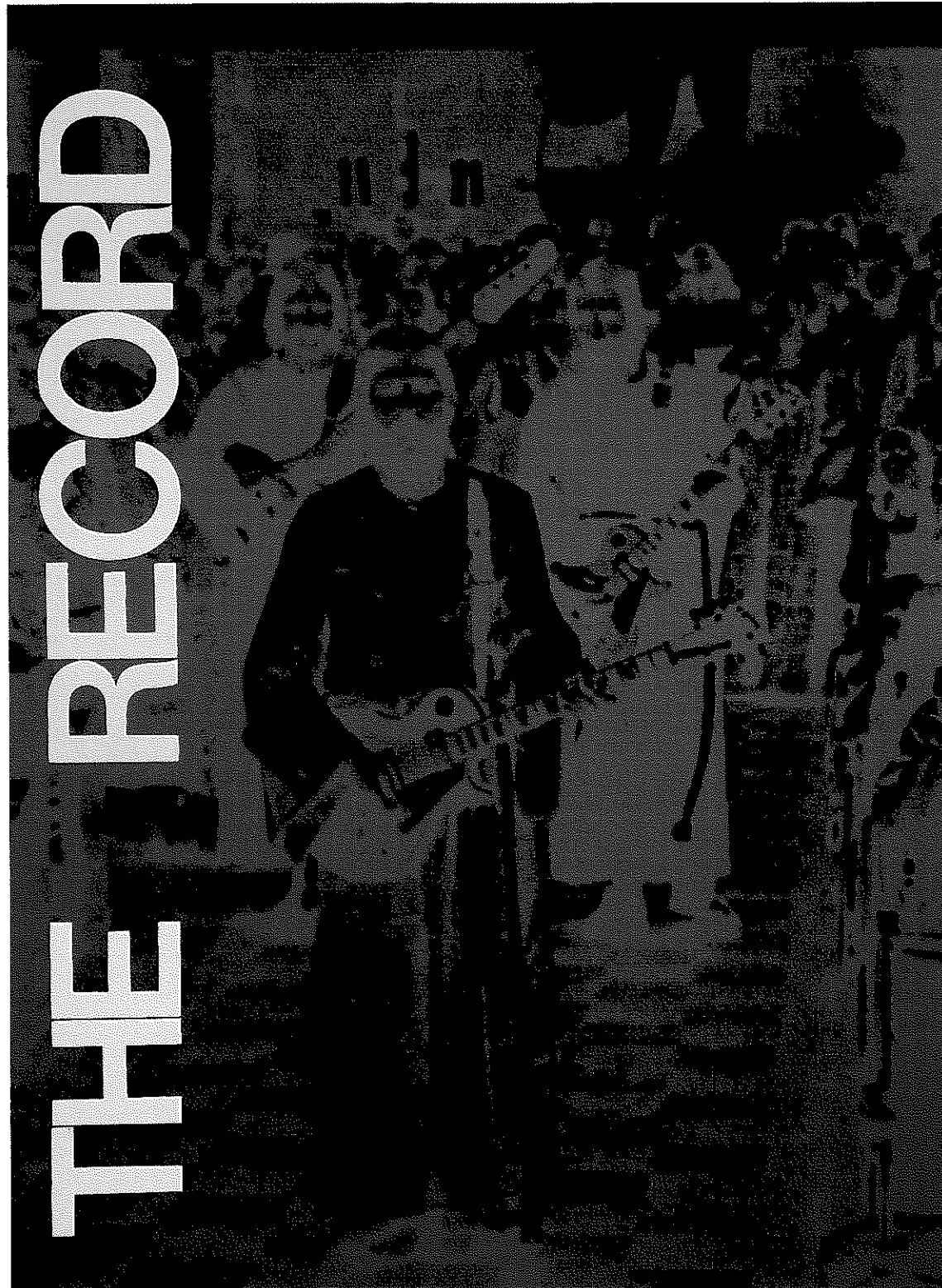
242. Ken Johnson, 'Art in Review: Adam Pendleton,' 20 May 2005: <www.nytimes.com>.

243. Press release from 'The Art World is Flat: Globalism — Crisis and Opportunity,' Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, Chicago, April 26–28, 2007. By utilizing numerous direct quotes from written reviews of Pendleton's work, I hope to underscore how easily they can be adapted to Sebald's own practices.

244. Sebald writes in *After Nature*: 'But the habit of often falling down in the street and often sitting with bandaged hands by the open window between the potted fuchsias, waiting for the pain to subside and for hours doing nothing but looking out, early on induced me to imagine a silent catastrophe that occurs almost unperceived,' 88–89.

245. See my 'ars monstimalis: die Erschaffung von Monsters,' *Die Anthologie der Kunst*, ed. Jochen Gerz with Marion Hofffeldt (Köln: DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 2004), 178.

246. During a recent panel at the College Art Association Annual Conference (New York, 2007), W.J. T. Mitchell concluded his presentation by noting that terrorism today is 'a war of images.' As such, it can only be 'fought through images.' Even in that artist-friendly environment, the final line of Mitchell's presentation hung silently in the air like the 'ten or so images' the cultural critic felt were so endemic to contemporary western culture, 'he didn't need to show them.'



WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE

Four years is a significant amount of time to give over to any one project. Often it seemed as if the more days and months I gave to my “search for Sebald,” the more information I needed to “apprehend.”²⁴⁷ As I bring this publication to a close I feel as if I know less about W. G. Sebald than (I thought) I knew when I began. But I do know more about the manner in which some of *my* memories are constructed, the role photography has played in *my* memory-formation, the way the visual links *I* create are made and broken through those photographic trajectories, and I even know how *I* use photographic part objects to categorize knowledge. Simply put, following the type of truism that only Sebald seems to get away with but those who study him, talk about him and write about him are forced to use, three years ago I went *Searching for Sebald*, through pages that he wrote, in places where he traveled, in libraries and reading rooms where he studied, and (sadly) even at that non-descript place where he fell, but what I found at the end of that search was not Sebald at all, but a *Sebaldian version of myself*.

Some will read this and shrug their shoulders (*who? what?*) but other readers will nod and smile and quickly rejoin with a Sebaldian question or add their own Sebaldian anecdote or thought. If the past is any indicator of the future, through this simple act of initiation (invoking Sebaldian as a means of describing something that is knowable but still indescribable) countless bonds will be made, networks will be formed, conferences will be urgently called and books such as the one in your hands will (continue to) be written. Ultimately the cultural system Sebaldian fits into may be so broad or so nebulous it will not be constrained by any medium, or genre. Perhaps it is so rhizomatic, as Carsten Strathausen suggests in this volume, that it will not be contained by only one (or any) institutional “frame”; Sebaldian may just continue to float through the air like the particles of dust that Sebald often used to form his strange and wonderful universe. But it does seem that no amount of theoretical posturing will deplete the power or persistence of our use of this adjective.²⁴⁸

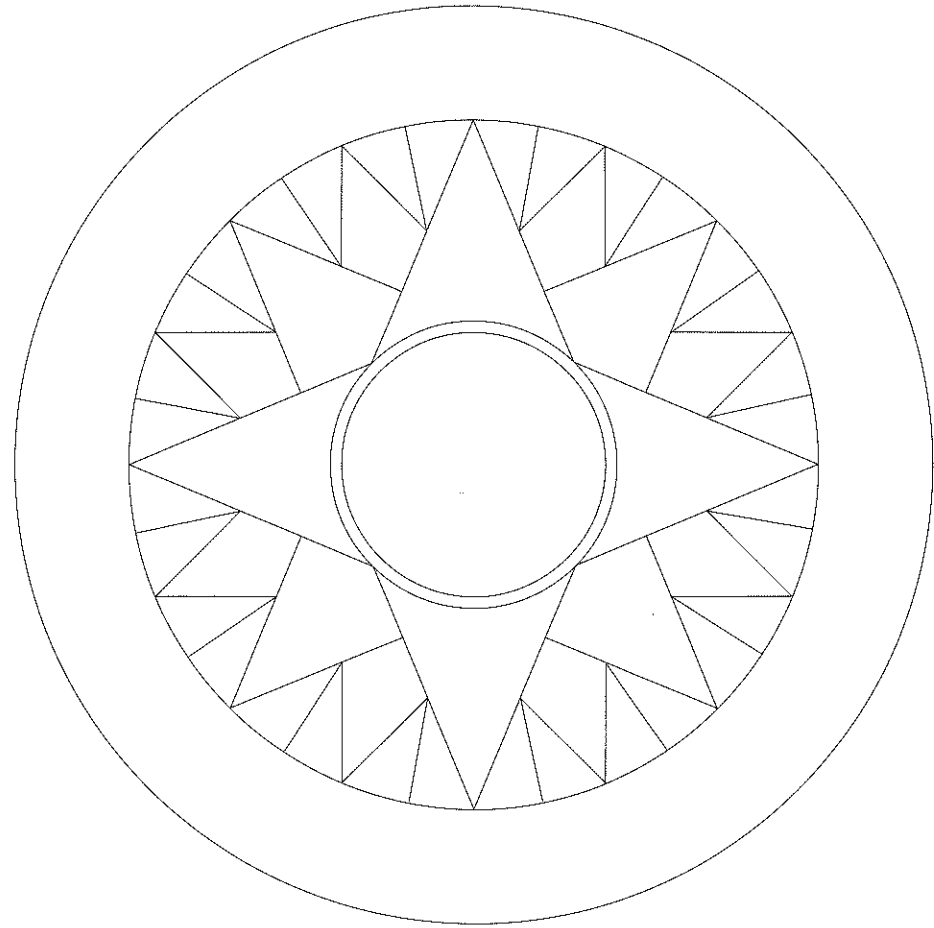
As I hope I have shown here, Sebaldian has infiltrated our art practices and our theoretical writing and as the scholar, the artist, the learned intellectual or even the unsuspecting lay reader who (drawn to an enigmatic cover or a title) has just picked up one of his books on a library or bookstore shelf can attest, Sebaldian has penetrated our conversations and our thoughts. After years of research and travel and the devoted (and devotional) work that has fueled the production of the more than six hundred pages that make up this book, it may not seem to be much “to know for sure,” but for now, oddly and reassuringly, it seems to be enough.

247. As Lisa Diedrich articulates in the closing line of her essay in this volume, Sebald’s project emerges from “apprehending” history rather than “understanding” it. In the end, this stance has proven to be the most productive for our approach to Sebald’s own work, 277.

248. The proliferation of “Sebaldian” in cultural discourse is reminiscent of the way Thomas Kuhn’s concept of “paradigm shift” (in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962) was quickly adopted by a host of disciplines, a cooption that did not abate even after Kuhn cautioned against such “abductions.”

FIG. xlviii (OPPOSITE)
Adam Pendleton, *History*
(*The Record Grey*), 2005.

Cf. Project
Jeremy Millar



In laying out the contents of this volume, we often felt like the eponymous protagonist in Sebald's last prose fiction, *Austerlitz*, who spent evenings in his house 'pushing pictures back and forth and over each other.... always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw.' In numerous planning sessions, we circled around possible topographies for this book—alliances drawn by colors, others by textual lines, and still others anchored to Sebald's photographs—images created with layers of dust and in the shadows of a dimmed light. Even the rather predictable task of book design was infected with this semiotic openness. We entertained a host of possible layouts we would have immediately dismissed if this had been a standard art book or scholarly text. We felt hindered by the framework of the western codex, a structure that invites linearity and rewards definable boundaries between images and words. With its potentially infinite series of superimpositions linked together by one of Sebald's favorite materials—a red silk thread—we often lamented the decline of the circular *volvelle*—a medieval device consisting of one or more movable circles surrounded by other graduated or figured circles—which was used to measure epicyclic and epicentric motions and trepidations.

All long projects seem prematurely completed, this one even more so. In the end we opted to trust the very forces Sebald used in his own working process—coincidence and chance—girded by a layout system that revives the tradition of the *volvelle*. While, due to the limitations of printing and binding, we have kept the form of Sebald's own production, this volume invites a multitude of possible readings through the (re)alignment of "circles" instigated by the user's own hand. The book before you is not a historical study, nor entirely a critical one, but a palimpsest layered in Sebaldian rhythms—a conjecture of possibilities.

For those readers already familiar with W. G. Sebald, the TABLE OF CONTENTS will be a welcome guide. It will lead you to some of the brightest and most innovative thinkers in the family of scholars that has convened around Sebald's project. You will also find signposts to the group of artists we have assembled under this title, some well-known and others with bright futures still before them, who have imbued the burgeoning field of Sebald studies with new materials by translating Sebald's language in their own visual tones. At the end of the book you'll find a BIBLIOGRAPHY, and one step beyond that, a series of INDICES to direct future scholars and artists to unexplored areas of Sebald thought.

To readers new to Sebald's works or to anyone who wants to best appreciate this book, we would like to suggest an alternate reading approach. Flip through the many pages before you, stopping where the eye first leads you. Through this method, images and words can be read in a Sebaldian cadence, through sight but gradually in site also, and then most importantly, through memory as well. To some this method will seem to oppose a reasoned perusal, a suspicion that will be well-founded when it is discovered we have honored Sebald by not titling any of his visual material in our book. This decision underscores how difficult it is to speak of images without a name. You are forced to rely on the picture's forms to construct working titles out of what you think you see. You have to link the images to Sebald's words or someone else's or invent another kind of shorthand that always seems to belie your own latencies. This volume is not always

easy to navigate, but neither are Sebald's codices for anyone who takes the time to enter his texts through the obscured entryways (and trap doors) the author has so expertly laid.

To assist movement through *Searching for Sebald*, we have divided the volume into four parts so that readers and viewers can make u-turns to revisit parts they missed in their rush to find a favorite picture or a cherished line. The heading for each section is drawn from the materials and methods Sebald often referenced in the interviews he granted over the short period he was still here to bask in (or, as some hint, suffer through) his public acclaim. Tautologies abound in Sebald's work, as they do in this book. In literature, this circularity is sometimes met with stern rebuke. In art, it is a method that often takes the artist and the viewer on a journey to a rich, hidden center.

SHOEBOXES alludes to the receptacles that housed the products of Sebald's accumulation processes—boxes hidden in closets that held the *Bildmaterial* Sebald shuffled through and studied in the quiet and dark of the night. An endless stack of shoeboxes speaks to the plentitude of the archive, a material *and a force*, which, like the photographs that often stoke its fire, can be monstrous, beautiful or sublime.

WEBS in Sebald's world are constructed from an accumulation of strings, a ball of dust, a sky full of vapor trails. These become powerful semiotic traps when they are bound together by some interweaving (and often tenuous) structure. Sebald built his webs through rhythms, through paraphrases, through rough edges and irregular gaps, and often, in the reversals of a mirror or through the sweep of light over a field of electrostatic dust.

WEAVING and the products employed in the service of that craft are often described in Sebald's books—the silk worm, the loom, and even the weaver himself. But weaving also describes a type of movement, like that produced by a dog on a hill. Weaving is that moment when Sebald's reader is led to wander between "fields," when Sebald's book medium becomes a *medium*—an arbitrator between realms—between languages, between memories, between the very structure of thought itself.

DUST is where the unforgettable is guarded; where the unrecounted waits to be said. It is the site where re-presentation becomes re-membering, where books become bodies, the place where scars create 'effects.' Dust is the remainder that hovers above the young Austerlitz, the smudge by which the artist speaks for the dead.

Each of these four sections contains a collection of scholarly essays and artist projects. While the contributions are complete enough to stand on their own, together they invite conversation with the essays and artworks that surround them, and as it will soon become apparent, with other contributions throughout the book. The interchanges within each section are not always apparent and at times may even be confounding. Messy exchanges were not necessarily something we discouraged. Our purpose was not to form fraternities but to invite discussion, sometimes even heated debate (and almost always unwittingly on the contributor's behalf), between artists and scholars—those who work with

words, those who work with images, and many who work with both. We have left in unplanned connections, and also, no doubt, the holes in our thoughts. It is our hope these slips will initiate debate, will lead some to fill in the gaping holes, and provoke sufficient ire in yet others to spawn rebuttals and addenda of equal length and depth to this book. *Searching for Sebald* is not meant to be a comprehensive study, and the rapidly changing field of Sebald studies has guaranteed it will not always be a completely accurate one, but it is a place to begin a conversation, to get up and turn around and look, and for some to look again, at those "shadows quivering at the edges" that, *after Sebald*, will now always infiltrate our thoughts.