

MINDING THE GAP: READING HISTORY WITH JOSEPH CONRAD,
PETER WEISS, AND W. G. SEBALD

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At the beginning of the twenty-first century the discipline of comparative literature faces the challenge of responding to expanding transnational readerships. Increasingly heterogeneous reading contexts not only highlight the need to extend comparative analysis to include formerly marginalized texts; they also challenge traditional analytical categories informing comparative literature as a discipline. This dissertation proposes that the notion of the implied reader, central to reader-response criticism based on hermeneutic conventions, has to be rethought in order to account for readers who cannot engage with a given text in an unimpeded relationship of dialogue; this is especially the case when literary texts revolve around histories of violence. Through an analysis of literary works by three European emigré writers, Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Peter Weiss (1916-1982), and W. G. Sebald (1944-2001), this study highlights postimperial, postgenocidal and post-Cold War reading positions that challenge the traditional hermeneutic sense of a textual horizon of understanding. The study further argues that comparative analysis of situated reading needs to go beyond constructivist notions of reading, which make it difficult to grasp relationships between literature and history. This analysis proposes instead that historical pressures in the twentieth century require comparative literature to address not only

implied but also various unimplied and unwelcome reading positions that engage twentieth-century history in displaced yet material ways that manifest in literary form.

The dissertation identifies a key stylistic feature in texts by three twentieth-century authors whose work, by virtue of this feature, cuts across stylistic periods and national literatures. It analyses indeterminate narrative and historical linkages that suggest elusive yet pivotal relations between historical and cultural contexts that would not otherwise seem to belong together in any obvious sense. The analysis of these weak analogies demonstrates the need for renewed disciplinary attention to reading literature as a form of historical imagination that engages postgenocidal and postimperial legacies in both timely and untimely ways. This dissertation opens up new perspectives on relations between postcolonial critique and transnational analysis of European literatures beyond a traditional focus on Western European canonical literatures and hermeneutics, and beyond the putative binary between West and non-West.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kaisa Kaakinen was born in Oulu, Finland, in 1979. She received her high school diploma from Madetoja Music High School, Oulu, in 1998. During her MA studies of comparative literature, history and philosophy at the University of Helsinki (MA in 2005), she studied two years in Germany: in 2000-2001 as a SOKRATES exchange student at Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen and in 2003-2004 as a participant of the Studienkolleg zu Berlin, an interdisciplinary program of the German National Academic Foundation (*Studienstiftung*) and the Hertie Foundation.

Kaakinen began her graduate studies of comparative literature at Cornell University in the fall of 2006. In addition to the Cornell Sage scholarship (2010-2012), she was supported by the ASLA-Fulbright Graduate Grant (2006-2007) and by the Lester and Sheila Robbins scholarship of Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation (2007-2008). In the academic year 2011-2012, Kaakinen conducted dissertation research at Humboldt University in Berlin as a DAAD fellow. Kaisa Kaakinen has taught undergraduate courses at Cornell University's departments of Comparative Literature and German Studies and a MA level course as visiting lecturer at the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Helsinki. As of September 2013, she will work as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Turku, Finland.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In his essay-travelogue *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1997), the German emigré author W. G. Sebald (1944-2001) recounts episodes from the early life of a Pole named Konrad Korzeniowski.¹ Korzeniowski spent his childhood in the turmoil of the Polish uprisings against the rule of the Russian empire and was later to become known by the name Joseph Conrad. Sebald's narrative follows Korzeniowski and his revolutionary parents sentenced by the Russian authorities to exile and eventually recounts Korzeniowski's journey to the Congo, which would serve as a backdrop to Conrad's most famous novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Sebald draws attention here to Conrad's meeting in the Congo with Roger Casement, who reported on atrocities committed by Belgian colonists and was later involved in the Irish revolution against British rule. By pointing to Conrad's Polish background, Sebald defamiliarizes for contemporary readers the subject position of Conrad, who is commonly understood by scholars to be a British imperial writer. Through this entangled narrative of Conrad and Casement meeting in the Congo, Sebald also suggests a linkage between different instances of colonization on the edges of the Western European imperial center, that is to say, between Ireland and Poland. Furthermore, against the background of Sebald's extensive preoccupation with the historical trauma of the Holocaust in mid-twentieth-century Europe, the narrative on Conrad suggests an unspecified link between imperial and Nazi genocides.

¹ The actual full name is Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski. Sebald uses several versions of this Polish name, also the form Teodor Josef Konrad.

This dissertation will analyze uneasy relationships between literary texts and historical contexts as such relationships manifest in a poetics of analogy and historical as well as narrative parataxis in works by three European emigré writers: Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Peter Weiss (1916-1982), and W. G. Sebald (1944-2001). Conrad, Weiss and Sebald all respond to complex and traumatic historical situations specific to the Central European region of the twentieth century, while also referring to global historical phenomena such as imperialism and its prolonged aftermath. These authors develop poetic strategies that rely on stylistic, informational, and sensory gaps of various sorts to create what I will call weak analogies of relation and comparison. My analysis identifies a stylistic feature in these twentieth-century authors' texts that cuts across stylistic periods and national literatures: indeterminate narrative and historical linkages that suggest elusive but nonetheless pivotal relations between historical and cultural contexts that would not seem to belong together in any obvious sense or for any obvious purpose. These weak analogies are at the center of my analysis because they help to show the need for renewed attention to the analysis of reading literature as a form of historical imagination. The unusual constellation of Conrad, Weiss and Sebald, who did not all work in the same language, the same cultural context or even the same time period,² is intended as a comparative

² Conrad, a writer, sailor and a naturalized British citizen of Polish descent, has a canonical position in histories of early British modernism, and during the twentieth century his work also became an important point of articulation in postcolonial studies, as both scholarly references and postcolonial literary responses to Conrad's texts indicate. The postwar author Peter Weiss, who lived in Sweden and wrote the main body of his oeuvre in German, responded both to the devastation of the world wars and to the division of Europe and parts of the world into two opposing political blocks. W. G. Sebald, one of the most crucial writers to tackle poetic challenges posed by historical trauma in the late twentieth century, emigrated from his native Germany to Britain but published his literary works in German during the 1990s and early 2000s, achieving a wide international reception.

experiment that works to the fore an important and often overlooked challenge to analyzing European twentieth-century literature: that historical pressures not only pose challenges to authors and their stylistic choices but also call for heightened critical attention to context-specific reading as a means of engaging historical legacies in both timely and untimely ways.

A poetics based on weak analogies is a profoundly ambiguous narrative mode with respect to representing historical experiences. Although the status of the evoked relation is not given, one must still ponder the nature of the linkage between two events or contexts brought into relation. The mode of weak analogy can be said to mobilize readers by drawing simultaneous attention to both a gap and a connection between given elements, but it is unclear to what exactly readers are mobilized. Furthermore, one is also led by the three authors in question to consider whether and how this ambiguous relation is embedded in some notion of totality, be it narrative or historical. In the case of Conrad, analogies could suggest but possibly also counter an imperial, developmental time that relies on a teleological narrative of progress. In Weiss's *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, analogies could be read in the context of the communist discourse on universal historical development that makes instances of oppression seem equivalent. Sebald's writing can be seen to suggest a generalizing, melancholic notion of history as traumatic condition. However, these authors' reliance on gaps in the analogical mode as well as their profound interest in transmedial narration and representation of sensory experiences creates another dynamic: that of situated or embodied reading. I will highlight how Conrad's, Weiss's, and Sebald's literary works emphasize in specific ways connections between sense

perception, embodied experience and narrative transmission. Their respective approaches to employing weak analogies both unhinge their literary narratives from a punctual relationship to context and nonetheless encourage readers to cultivate specific historical linkages. While invoking a relation between two historical moments might suggest a generalizing direction for interpretation, I will instead show how weak analogies also encourage a centrifugal mode of reading in Conrad, Weiss, and Sebald. Instead of understanding this dimension of analogy in terms of textual play that exists in mere tension with history, I seek to articulate how weak analogies in Conrad, Weiss and Sebald open up what I call a rehistoricizing mode of reading. This rehistoricizing mode focuses on temporally and geographically displaced but nonetheless material forms of historical relation.

An important concept I want to relate to weak analogy is parataxis, which I employ to talk about the way Conrad, Weiss, and Sebald place elements of a narrative into relation without coordinating or subordinating connectives.³ Parataxis is a term that operates in my analyses together with the terms analogy and juxtaposition: I use the term parataxis when I highlight the indeterminate nature of the evoked linkage between two elements brought into a relation of juxtaposition or analogy. Weak analogies are largely paratactic, because they leave the suggested relationship undetermined. The stronger an analogy gets, the less it is characterized by parataxis. The concept of parataxis is useful for my purposes, because it enables talking about different modes of unspecified

³ "parataxis, n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 24 April 2013 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137669?redirectedFrom=parataxis>>.)

relation on various levels of the text while highlighting the undetermined nature of linkage that is common to all these instances of narrative linking. While paratactic syntax plays a role in my individual readings,⁴ I use the term parataxis beyond the more restricted grammatical usage that refers to how sentences are structured.⁵ I seek to highlight how undetermined linkages are pivotal in all three authors' works on a more general narrative level as well: on the level of how larger units of narrative are linked to each other. Furthermore, I propose that the intense poetic preoccupation with paratactic structures in Conrad's, Weiss's and Sebald's texts also raises questions for scholars about the relationship between narrative form and narration of history. While hypotaxis emphasizes hierarchy and causality, parataxis is a mode of linkage that does not determine the evoked relationships in terms of cause or subordination.⁶

In my analyses, parataxis is not a form of linkage in passive tension with the historical dimension but an opening to construction of new perspectives on historical relatedness. I ask how weak analogies in Conrad, Weiss and Sebald relate to active modes of reading and to reading as historical imagination.

⁴ I pay attention to paratactic sentences in the analysis of the form of a list, for instance, employed by both Sebald and Weiss, or in my remarks on Conrad's condensed paratactic passages employed to evoke overhearing. In Weiss paratactic sentences are also at times employed as a hyperrealistic mode that illustrates the overflow of sensory stimuli.

⁵ Comparatist Gisela Ecker has also recently employed the term parataxis in an analysis that connects the level of syntax to larger questions of relation, in her case, those posed by German-language literatures of migration and their reconfiguration of the concept of *Heimat*. Ecker shows that "parataxes of things," such as lists of objects that migrants bring to their new home, are often employed in literary texts that deal with migration. These passages that connect things stemming from different contexts into spatial proximity use material objects to highlight affective processes that question static models of belonging based on an understanding of *Heimat* as a container-like space from which migrants are perpetually excluded. Ecker argues that a rereading of these passages, which are frequently overlooked in readings of these texts, could move analysis away from a fixation on origin and towards relational models better able to grasp construction of transnational spaces (See Ecker 2012, 222-225).

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno argues in his essay on parataxis in the poetry of Hölderlin that parataxis may be employed as a stylistic mode that works against teleological notions of time (see Adorno 1974, 475-477).

Conrad has often been discussed as an author who is strongly concerned with the effect of his texts on readers. Scholars have drawn attention to Conrad's interest in "making the readers see,"⁷ in creating strong sensory impressions that engage readers' sensory experience through an intensification of sensory representation. At the same time, Conrad defines his readers culturally and evokes an interpretive frame that operates with a teleological narrative of progress in which certain situated readers, such as non-European readers reading Conrad from postcolonial locations, ostensibly find themselves on a lower level of civilization. The postwar authors Sebald and Weiss draw from surrealist traditions and the historical avant-garde in their experimentation with different forms of juxtaposition in historical narration. In surrealist poetics, juxtaposition is often seen as a means to liberate readers' or viewers' imagination from conventional perspectives.⁸ My analyses ask how in specific the liberation of historical imagination can be thought in the case of analogical poetics in Conrad, Weiss, and Sebald, whose texts employ poetic juxtapositions in literary projects that engage with genocidal and imperial historical experiences.

Weak analogies that mobilize readers in a rehistoricizing vein are also related in my analyses to a temporality that I call untimely. In dictionaries, the word untimely most often means an event happening at a premature or unsuitable

⁷ Conrad's famous statement in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is often remembered as a statement about seeing: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see!" (Conrad 1933, xiv; see Fogel 1985, 48-49).

⁸ See also Walter Benjamin's notions of constellation and shock, in which creation of juxtapositions is linked to historical imagination, as two seemingly remote elements create a spark that mobilizes a reader into assuming a new historical perspective (see Benjamin 1977, 190-196; 260).

moment.⁹ However, the concept of untimeliness has also been discussed as a non-linear literary temporality, for instance by comparatist Natalie Melas, who articulates new paradigms for comparative literary studies beyond the developmental temporality that has traditionally been used as a basis for equivalence posited by the field between literary works and national literatures. Explaining untimeliness as a disjunctive and uncertain relation between times, Melas seeks to complicate simplistic notions of historicism that "presume an exact coincidence between a poem, a poet, or an event and a punctual moment in time" (Melas 2009, 565). Drawing from her research on postcolonial literature, she argues that literary works often articulate a disjointed relationship to time that gives expression to forgotten or unaccomplished dimensions of history as well as to alternative modernities that do not adhere to developmental time. While untimeliness is otherwise often evoked in terms of a posttraumatic temporality of haunting and the uncanny, I emphasize that untimely temporality should also be thought in relation to narrative futurity. In my analyses, untimeliness highlights anachronisms, which may take on various forms and functions in literary narratives. Untimeliness in this analytical sense signals a more general analytical concept than traumatic temporality, which is considered untimely to the extent that the experience of trauma concerns events that are not fully experienced at the time of their occurrence. For my purposes, Melas's concept of untimeliness encourages us to consider how literature may operate with a temporality that instead opens up new possibilities for conceiving historical relations, without ignoring historical factuality or specific real-world events.

⁹ "un'timely, adj.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 30 April 2013
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/218944?rskey=sTGq59&result=1&isAdvanced=false>>.

The title of this dissertation signals among other things a relationship to concerns of hermeneutics. Constance School theorists Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, who drew from the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics and especially from Hans-Georg Gadamer, developed an analytical school of reception aesthetics that addressed how texts coordinate reader response. Iser's writings articulated how gaps or *Leerstellen* are crucial in the interaction of text and reader, mobilizing readers into being active participants in the process of signification.

The indeterminate sections, or gaps, of literary texts are in no way to be regarded as a defect; on the contrary, they are a basic element of the aesthetic response... This means that the reader fills in the remaining gaps. He removes them by a free play of meaning-projection and thus himself provides the unformulated connections between the particular views. (Iser 1989, 9-10)

What is important here is the way Iser talks about the act of bridging. He calls it not only filling but also *removing* the gap. Iser's description suggests that the reader's act of reading succeeds in establishing a totality orchestrated by the text but completed in the act of reading. An important related concept in Iser's work is the notion of an implied reader, who "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect - predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself" (Iser 1978, 34). Iser's discussion of the implied reader concerns "conditions of actualization" detached from any concrete context. A literary text "[anticipates] the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him" (Ibid.). This reader is a "transcendental model which makes it possible for the structured effects of literary texts to be described" (Ibid.). Hence, Iser does not differentiate between different kinds of historically or culturally concrete implied reading positions, because he sees this abstraction as a heuristic move necessary to understand the way in which literary texts

orchestrate their effects. His description of the active implied reader is based on a notion of reading as a dialogue with the text, a dialogue in which the horizons of the text and its reader merge (*Horizontverschmelzung*). This model of dialogue is based on a hermeneutic notion of question and answer that in Hans Robert Jauss's work is the generating force of tradition and literary history (see Jauss 1982, 29-30). Jauss's work on literary history demonstrates how the idea of dialogue suggests that the implied reader is imagined as a part of a linear narrative that connects the implied author and the implied reader. The implied reader functions like a regulative idea that is imagined to exist in the posited narrative. Although Iser also talks about how literature changes readers' conceptions about the world (see Iser 1974, 28), the lack of differentiation in the notion of implied reader suggests that the readers filling and removing the gap all belong to a single narrative of cumulative tradition.

Through the three case studies analyzed in this dissertation, I seek to show that a postimperial and transnational readership of the early twenty-first century poses new kinds of questions for the analysis of the concept of an implied reader. Iser's notion of the implied reader is not useful for the analysis of how the texts I am studying interact with the reading context of the twentieth century. This is because the context of these texts has to be understood not only as diachronic, taking into account significant changes in prevalent frames of historical interpretation, but also as heterogeneous and noncontemporaneous. As Brian Richardson pointed out in 1997, after the heyday of reception aesthetics and reader-response theory, reader-response criticism, which had been an "exciting development in literary theory and criticism," reached an "impasse" in the 1980s

(Richardson 1997, 31). He argues that reader-response theory had produced two alternatives, formalist monism and subjectivist relativism, which were both unable to grasp the growing research, particularly in gender studies and postcolonial studies, focusing on oppositional reading positions. Richardson's criticism of the impasses of reader-response theory was part of a larger analytical tendency to rethink narratological and stylistic categories from the point of view of situated reading and context-specific effects of literary style. Scholars working on multilingual literature have also created useful analytical tools for analyzing the effect of different audiences. Naoki Sakai's distinction between heterolingual and monolingual address, for instance, is an excellent tool in analyzing texts that are written for several different types of audiences. In Sakai's terms, a monolingual address marks certain languages as foreign and mediates them from the perspective of a distinctively enclosed national community (see Sakai 1997, 6). It thus characterizes readers of a given text nationally and culturally, and it writes for one such community. Sakai uses the term heterolingual address for writing that implicitly addresses multiple audiences simultaneously and also lacks an assumption of coherent audiences and unproblematic communication.¹⁰

Multiple languages of narration and other multilingual effects are hardly the only aspects of style and poetics that are important for an analysis of specific effects that come about when literary writing meets a heterogeneous readership.

¹⁰ "Only where it is impossible to assume that one should automatically be able to say what one oneself means and an other able to incept what one wants to say - that is, only where an enunciation and its inception are, respectively, a translation and a countertranslation - can we claim to participate in a nonaggregate community where what I want to call the heterolingual address is the rule, where it is imperative to evade the homolingual address. In a nonaggregate community, therefore, we are together and can address ourselves as 'we' because we are distant from one another and because our togetherness is not grounded on any common homogeneity." (Sakai 1997, 7).

Questions about effects of postimperial reading on our analytical categories have also been posed by postcolonial narratology, which seeks to make postcolonial questions of hierarchy as important for narratological analysis as classical questions of focalization, perspective and self-consciousness (see Prince 2005, 377). A generalizing notion of an implied reader cannot address reading positions that arise when a given text is read by what I call an unimplied reader who cannot relate to the text according to Iser's model of cooperation. In the words of Mary Louise Pratt, "[o]ne must be able to talk about reader/text/author relations that are coercive, subversive, conflictive, submissive, as well as cooperative, and about relations that are some or all of these simultaneously or at different points in a text." (Pratt 1986, 70). The analysis of narratives and reader response has to be able to account for reading positions of readers who cannot posit an unimpeded relationship of dialogue with a given text.

Comparatist and Americanist Wai Chee Dimock has analyzed the position of unimplied and "uninnocent" readers with the notion of "resonance." In her article "A Theory of Resonance" (1997), Dimock gives an example of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, who in his readings of Dante Alighieri articulated his own position as a poet oppressed by the Stalinist regime. Through this example, Dimock wants to articulate how texts yield new meaning in ungeneralizable encounters with readers' specific backgrounds; additionally she highlights how Stalinist Russia was an environment "rich in noise" that amplified certain aspects of Dante's texts as opposed to others. Throughout Dimock's essay, aurality and, more specifically, noise, function as a metaphor or analogy for the way in which specific, impure and unpredictable aspects of a given interpretative context are

crucial in allowing the text to mean. For Dimock, the noise of the reader's present is not a disturbance of what the text "really" says but a generative force that has not been given enough importance in traditional literary history. In her book *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, which studies how American literature relates to literatures written in other times and continents, Dimock notes in passing that her concerns resemble those of Hans Robert Jauss but move away from Jauss's focus on collective "horizons" of expectation: "I follow Hans Robert Jauss in seeing literary history as a 'dialectic' between text and reader, but whereas Jauss explores that dialectic as a history of changing 'horizons of expectation,' I explore it as a history of incomplete domestication." (Dimock 2006, 225). Dimock suggests here a shift of perspective away from hermeneutics, which relies on a centripetal historical present, categorical historical epochs, and a linear understanding of tradition.

While Dimock talks about "unwelcome" readers and readers "not implied" without distinguishing between the two (see Dimock 1997, 1067), I would like to propose that such a distinction can be crucial. I follow Dimock's emphasis on contextual pressures, but I also see her proposal as vulnerable to accusations that she explodes literary history into an infinity of random individual acts of reading. In this sense, her proposal for new literary history comes close to a radical constructivism that, as Dominick LaCapra formulates, sees "history as sheer contingency and disjunctive event (or singular epiphany)," "itself a dubious absolutization, the inverted mirror image of the chimeras of a totally stable or progressive history" (LaCapra 2004, 6). I seek to show that analytical projects focusing on acts and events of reading do not have to share a radically

constructivist notion of a free and autonomous reader. Nonetheless, because of its emphasis on historical pressures, Dimock's analysis opens up the possibility of capturing better a tension between the dehistoricizing tendency of analogy and rehistoricizing perspectives on "incomplete domestication" performed by unimplied readers. Dimock's emphasis on individual acts of reading needs to be expanded and rethought to account for displaced but still material readings of history.

My readings of Conrad, Weiss and Sebald contribute to the project of specifying analysis of the implied reader by highlighting postimperial, postgenocidal and post-Cold War reading positions that cannot be understood as the text's horizon in the traditional hermeneutic sense. The chapter on Peter Weiss is the opening chapter, because Weiss emphatically proposes a poetic project that foregrounds a wayward reader with an active historical imagination. Weiss makes what I have called weak analogies into an elaborate, self-conscious poetic program and incorporates analogical modes of reading into contexts of political resistance. While his magnum opus *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (1975-1981) recounts a history of antifascist resistance through World War II on its explicit thematic level, it also construes a poetics based on mobilizing readers to create historical linkages across temporal, geographical and medial gaps. This poetics links historical contexts and narratives that would otherwise seem both temporally and geographically unrelated. The chapter reassesses Weiss's "aesthetics of resistance" by highlighting a comparative dimension of Weiss's novel beyond the ostensible narrative of communist resistance.

Conrad, the focus of the following chapter, lacks an explicit interest in concepts of history. However, an engagement with Conrad makes it possible to study a problematic important for comparative literary studies of the early twenty-first century: the legacy of imperial comparison and the task of comparative literature to rethink its reliance on the binary between West and non-West. Conrad is also an important author for articulations of literary modernism, in which analogies and juxtapositions were an important narrative mode, and his impressionism makes it possible to assess the significance of a poetics of parataxis and analogy that Weiss and Sebald employ in their respective postwar contexts as one important aspect of their experimentation with strategies of post-genocidal, transnational historical narration. The chapter on Conrad investigates reading positions beyond the implied reader of Conrad's texts, who is placed into the British context. I propose that Conrad's Polish reception has approached Conrad from an unimplied position that is not commensurable with the unimplied postcolonial position of Conrad's non-European readers. I focus on the case of Polish reception of Conrad in order to analyze the position of a readership that is not implied like readers located in the imperial center, the more obvious implied audience of Conrad's writings, but also not unwelcome in the same way in which the colonized of the British empire were deemed unwelcome.

The chapter on Sebald reassesses discussions of Sebald's narratives of trauma beyond the focus on melancholy and radical constructivism. In Sebald's writing, the analogical mode is connected with a post-World War II problematic: the representation of historical traumas, notably those associated with the Holocaust and colonialism, across several historical contexts and narratives. I argue that

reading Sebald in a rehistoricizing fashion opens up new comparative perspectives on this author beyond an exclusive focus on his representation of trauma in the context of the discourses on the Holocaust and melancholy. I propose that the tension between melancholy and rehistoricizing poetic strategies in Sebald's works functions differently when readers focus on concrete historical forms of relation that imperialism has created and that Sebald's works articulate by poetic means. All three main chapters pose the question whether there are different degrees and kinds of implied, unimplied, and unwelcome readers.

Here it is useful to return to Natalie Melas's analysis of untimeliness. In her article "Untimeliness, or Négritude and the Poetics of Contramodernity," she writes about Michel Foucault's analysis of modernity as a self-reflexive question posed about the now, and Homi Bhabha's critique of Foucault's silence on the exclusive and coercive nature of this questioning. Bhabha stresses that Foucault obscures how only a select few pose the questions and posit who can answer them. Melas points out that the "unspoken unity" of the present "cannot be maintained with so many unanswerable questioners at its edges" (Melas 2009, 572). Melas's analysis challenges the logic of question and answer central to traditional hermeneutic analyses of reading. Unimplied reading positions and postimperial reading focusing on displaced but material historical relations call into question the notion of a contemporaneous now as a unified horizon of expectation. In her reading of Conrad, Melas talks about a condition of dissimulation, an "interpellation into dislocation" that also "indicates sharing," which is crucial in postimperial reading (Melas 2007, 93-94). The unimplied

reading positions I investigate cannot be understood as a fully implied context of a given text. Nevertheless, they also do not suggest the impossibility of relating different specific reading positions to each other. Articulating how the condition of dissimulation both divides and connects readers highlights how literature can be understood as a medium of historical imagination and social fantasy.

My study responds to a concrete problem that the discipline of comparative literature faces at the beginning of the twenty-first century: reconfiguring analysis to account for expanding readerships with different experiences and awareness of colonialism. I seek to show that the dynamic of rehistoricization that I describe is crucial to comparative reading positions that traditional models based on national literatures or formalistic methods do not capture. The form of this dissertation reflects the activity that it studies: it links three case studies and suggests that by placing them next to each other we can shift the conventional focus of comparative literature, which obscures important perspectives on the interaction of text and context through the twentieth century. I seek to go beyond traditional forms of comparison that both presume and confirm coherent units that are being compared. My analysis will take into account both "questioners at the edges" and the fact that there are readers who are aware of more than one location. The texts in question function in a decidedly different manner both when one reads them from a location that is somehow excluded from the text's implied interpretive frame and when one posits a comparative perspective that includes more than one center. The rehistoricizing dynamic I describe stresses a

perspective that makes the text into what I call a contact narrative.¹¹ Here I draw from recent work on transnational analysis of European literatures pertaining to historical discourses around the Holocaust, colonialism and globalization. Leslie A. Adelson's analysis of "touching tales," as "literary narratives that commingle cultural developments and historical references generally not thought to belong together in any proper sense" informs my approach to moments of contact between historical discourses otherwise thought as separate (Adelson 2005, 20). Michael Rothberg's work on "multidirectional memory" between the memory of the Holocaust and colonialism makes visible how literary narratives provide resources for the interactive articulation of collective memories of particular groups in today's multicultural public spheres. Rothberg proposes that a mutual interrogation of collective memories is sparked by moments of contact between migrants who carry or interpellate memories of both the Holocaust and colonialism together. Rothberg shows how lived contexts heavily influence what readers perceive as significant in a literary text and how the actualizing process of reading participates in and shapes a larger discursive reorientation in the process of collective remembering (see Rothberg 2009, 1-29). Since I am not exclusively concerned with memory but also with historical orientation towards the future, I also draw from Leslie A. Adelson's analytical approach to futurity (Adelson 2011).

¹¹ My employment of the term contact narrative draws from Liesbeth Minnaard's articulation of the term as well as Mary Louise Pratt's much earlier notion of "contact zone" (Pratt 1991). Minnaard, who has analyzed literature of the Low Countries from postcolonial perspectives, points out that scholarly work on imperialism has to take into account work done on postimperial reading in several contexts because of the "transnational, global character of the imperialist project and postimperial responses to it" (Minnaard 2012, 124). In her own analytical work on contact narratives, Minnaard searches for "ways that so-called meta-narratives of the Holocaust, (de)colonization and labour migration co-constitute and mutually influence each other, in literature as well as in other discourses" (Minnaard 2012, 124).

In the discipline of comparative literature, an important debate has concerned the demand not only to bring formerly marginalized texts and contexts into discussion but also to rethink the very process of comparison. My study participates in this project, not only by taking into account new reading positions, but also by asking how our analytical categories should be adjusted to account for them. Since new forms of comparison are most often discussed in reference to postcolonial literatures outside Europe, my comparative study of transnational literatures and historical perspectives pertaining to Central Europe offers a fresh perspective on contemporary discussions of both historical narration and postimperial comparison in twentieth-century literature. In both the traditional model of comparative literature "around the river Rhine" (Moretti 2000) and in an exclusive focus on the putative binary between West and non-West, certain postcolonial questions and postimperial reading positions never come to the fore. Although my analysis has a certain geographic focus, I am not interested in construing an entity called "Central Europe." I propose that my geographic focus is crucial instead for conceptualizing contact between the different "posts" of postcolonialism and postcommunism, which pose a challenge to simplistic developmental narratives often used as a basis for literary analysis. The constellation of literary texts and analytical methods I bring together offers an opportunity for new critical perspectives on comparative literary studies in postcolonial, post-Cold War, and globalizing veins. The contact points of these perspectives to history are a gap in current discourses on postimperial reading and comparative literature.

CHAPTER TWO:

OUTLINING THE FUTURE: PETER WEISS'S *DIE ÄSTHETIK DES WIDERSTANDS* AND THE PARATAXIS OF HISTORY

1. Introduction

In 1959 a relatively unknown visual artist and writer named Peter Weiss released a film in Sweden under the title *Hägringen* ("The Mirage"). Employing surrealist montage and an experimental soundtrack, the film follows how a stranger enters a settled, unwelcoming city. Opening with images of fields and train tracks, the film evokes an act of walking with the background sound of strolling steps. The film's audience also hears birdsong alongside a humming voice that one may assign to the invisible walker. As the camera view glides steadily without tracking tremors in a walker's field of vision, the multisensory experience created by the aural and visual elements of the first scene evokes a sense of a gap between connected but distinct perspectives. It turns out, however, that the opening scene of the film *Hägringen* ("The Mirage," 1959) contains a further gap. The song that accompanies the protagonist's walk to the city is a chain gang song originally sung by African-American slaves. Does this relate the film to a history of racial oppression?¹² What are we to make of this unelaborated gesture of relation?

¹² This use of music is in line with what Weiss writes in his book *Avantgardefilm* (1956) on avantgarde film aesthetics. According to Weiss, film music should not be in a merely subordinate or ornamental role but should participate actively in creating meaning (Weiss 1956, 125-129; see also Huss 2013, forthcoming).

It might seem strange to begin a discussion of Weiss's last novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*,¹³ which focuses on the history of antifascist resistance, with his early experimental film, which lacks any manifest political content. However, it is striking that *Hägringen* and *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* share a distinct constellation of aesthetic strategies, albeit employed in different medial settings. With strategies possible for the respective media of film and literary text,¹⁴ both works use scenes of walking and multisensory aesthetics in which visual and aural elements work together without creating a seamless whole, and both also suggest paratactic cross-references between seemingly distant historical contexts.¹⁵ Unlike in the film *Hägringen*, however, in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* transmedial effects are deeply connected with problems of historical narration. Weiss's last novel develops a self-conscious mode of untimely representation that pushes readers towards historical concretization.

Peter Weiss began his career as a visual artist and published prose poetry in Swedish before his successful German-language debut in the early 1960s as a

¹³ I will cite the 1983 Suhrkamp edition, which includes all three volumes (indicated with I, II, III). Only the first volume has been translated into English (see Weiss 2005). The novel was written in German and translated into Swedish already during the writing process, under the supervision of Weiss himself, who had published his first literary works in Swedish. Further translations exist in Norwegian (1979), Spanish (1987), Danish (1987-1988), French (1989), Dutch (2000) and Turkish (2006).

¹⁴ It should be noted that the film is based on a literary text, a short story under the title "Der Vogelfreie," the first story Weiss wrote in German in 1947. The story was later published with the title "Der Fremde" (1980). The word "Vogelfreie" is mentioned in the third volume of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* in plural form, when the narrator discusses his parents' escape through Eastern Europe and the genocide perpetrated by the National Socialists. "[...] auch diejenigen, die sich früher eher ihrer Nation als einer Rasse zugehörig gefühlt und, auch als die ersten Zeichen der Verfolgung sichtbar geworden waren, noch für unbescholten gehalten hatten, mußten sich jetzt als Ausgestoßene und Vogelfreie zu erkennen geben." (ÄdW III, 11.)

¹⁵ My remarks on the use of sound in *Hägringen* are indebted to an article "The Linguistic Outlaw: Peter Weiss' Return to German as Literary Language" by Markus Huss, who reads the blues song on the soundtrack of *Hägringen* as an attempt to build a subversive poetics against forces threatening linguistic articulation (Huss 2013, forthcoming).

novelist and playwright. His last novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* was written in Sweden and published in three volumes in West Germany (1975, 1978 and 1981). Later, in 1983, the novel was also released in the German Democratic Republic, where the edition and the reading public were much smaller (Rector 2008, 21-22). The peculiar conditions of reception during the Cold War alone create an interestingly multiple context for this text, which recounts the history of communist resistance to German fascism on its overt narrative level. Residing in Sweden and trying to reconcile communism and avant-garde aesthetics, Peter Weiss was writing in German from beyond the rigid division into Western and Eastern blocs. Weiss's family had emigrated from Germany in 1934, because Weiss's father, who had converted to Christian Protestantism, was considered Jewish by the National Socialists. Weiss did not take a clear public role as a German-Jewish writer, but this subject position haunted many of his confrontations with the German public sphere.¹⁶ Already an outsider writing from Sweden, Weiss's position in the divided German context became particularly complicated when he turned to communism in the 1960s and began to write openly political essays and plays.

¹⁶ Weiss's much-discussed play "Die Ermittlung" (1965), based on the Auschwitz trials of 1963-1965, does not specify the victims at the concentration camp as Jewish. Jenny Willner describes how Weiss avoided a public position as a Jewish victim but experienced the West German rejection of his political speeches as a new form of persecution (Willner 2013, forthcoming). The West German media reacted strongly to the tone of pathos in Weiss's speech given at an international writers' conference in Weimar in 1965. In this speech, Weiss described himself as one of the "partisans of truth" in the Western world. Willner points out that Weiss had visited the memorial site of Buchenwald one day before his speech in Weimar, at a time when there were no such memorial sites in West Germany. After the speech in Weimar Weiss became an attractive figure for GDR cultural politics, but for only a short while. A clear break with the German Democratic Republic occurred when Weiss could not get his play *Trotzki im Exil* (1968-1969) performed in the German Democratic Republic. Weiss wrote about his relationship to the Holocaust and the survivor position in an essay "Meine Ortschaft" (1965), in which he describes his visit to the memorial site of Auschwitz.

Die Ästhetik des Widerstands is an interesting case for my analysis of weak analogies and active modes of reading, because it both employs weak analogies and provides us with a reflection of their role in a specific reading practice, linking them to its project of "aesthetics of resistance." It is also a text written in a historical situation in which multiple audiences had a special significance. East and West Germany had not only different political systems but also radically different political narratives about the Second World War and its legacy, the very subject matter of Weiss's novel. In West Germany, the communist resistance was barely spoken of and its thematization was easily seen as GDR propaganda, while in the German Democratic Republic the history of the communist resistance movement was used to support the official, state socialist narrative, which relegated war guilt solely to West Germany (the German state that through its capitalist market economy and ideology was seen to have inherited the legacy of the fascist past). The issue of responsibility for the legacy of the crimes of the National Socialists was an important point of contestation in these divided narratives of history. For several reasons, the official memory culture of East Germany suppressed the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust. This history did not fit the Soviet-dominated view of history, in which communists as antifascists had been the main victims of the National Socialists.¹⁷ In the West, the National Socialist crimes on the Eastern front became part of historical discourse only belatedly. The fact that the third volume of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* thematizes the Holocaust by referring to mass killings in Poland and the Baltic

¹⁷ The national focus of GDR communism and its tendency to see antisemitism as a tool of capitalism rather than as a more pervasive ideology contributed to the marginalization of the history of antisemitism in the German Democratic Republic. For a detailed discussion of the divided memory culture in West and East Germany during the Cold War, see Herf 1997.

States can be seen as significant against this discursive background. Bearing in mind these tensions due to Cold War politics, which were translated into particular perspectives on the history of World War II, one can contend that the Cold War context did not provide means for simultaneously addressing the history of communist resistance and the Holocaust - or for negotiating the significance of their coexistence in Weiss's novel.

The end of communist regimes in Europe after 1989 created a new reading context for Weiss's novel. Although it might seem that a novel that discussed World War II and antifascism from a communist perspective would no longer be relevant after the transition of European communist states into a market economy, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* has received quite a few new readings since 1989. While the early research on the novel was strongly influenced by political divisions in the readership and approached the novel as a narrative with a more or less direct reference to historical events,¹⁸ more recent studies have paid concerted attention to Weiss's interest in several media, addressing not only Weiss's work as a film director, painter and playwright but also the role of transmediality in his literary oeuvre. However, although some scholars have written about Weiss's project of combining aesthetic strategies developed by the historical avant-garde with a documentary novel concerned with political resistance,¹⁹ the relationship between Weiss's stylistic experimentation and historical narration remains a lacuna in the Weiss scholarship. Dieter Mersch

¹⁸ For Weiss's reception in West German newspapers, see Lilienthal 1988. For the early scholarly reception in West Germany see Hanenberg 1988, 112-128 and Meyer 1989, 4-11.

¹⁹ There are studies about this problematic both before and after 1989 (see Bohrer 1976, Huyssen 1986, Bommert 1991, Pourciau 2007, Langston 2008 and 2008b, Buch 2010).

points out in his introduction to the volume *Ein Riss geht durch den Autor: Transmediale Inszenierungen im Werk von Peter Weiss* that the contemporary study of Weiss requires new analytical methods in order to address the specific medial characteristics, the "inszenatorische [...] und konstruktive [...] Zuschnitt," in this author's works (Mersch 2009, 10). Mersch points to the need to approach Weiss's work in a way that does not fix it to the immediate concerns of the Cold War. However, his introduction does not yet clarify how medial analysis contributes to understanding the novel's political and historical dimensions after 1989.

Gewiss hat man damals alles im Lichte des 'Systemgegensatzes' zwischen Ost und West gesehen und als eine Frage höherer moralischer Legitimität diskutiert - und doch überlebt bis heute der Künstler Peter Weiss, den trotz aller Bekenntnisse nicht so sehr die Frage des Politischen, sondern der Darstellungsmedien, der Horizonts und ihrer Geltung bewegte. In diesem Sinne gilt es, Peter Weiss heute wiederzuentdecken und noch einmal zu lesen, um den 90. Geburtstag des Malers, Filmemachers, Schriftstellers und Dramatikers im Rücken und 30 Jahren nach Erscheinen der *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, seine Arbeiten, allen politischen Veränderungen zum Trotz, erneut auf den Prüfstand künstlerischer Gültigkeit zu heben. (Mersch 2009, 9-10.)

Mersch seems here to limit the political dimension of Weiss's work to what "moved" the author. On the other hand, by referring to "Horizont und ihrer Geltung" his introduction also implies that historical orientation was important in Weiss's experimentation with different media. The vagueness of the existing statements about the relevance of Weiss's poetic experiments for critical projects after 1989 suggest that we need to analyze better the relationship between transmedial narration and the elusive but pivotal historical reference in Weiss's novel.

Previous scholarship has often identified a tension between the novel's explicit political statements about communism and stylistic strategies complicating ideas about punctual reference to one historical moment and straightforward

communication of ideology. While agreeing with this general perception, my analysis departs from previous emphases in interpreting the significance of this tension. For instance, Genia Schulz offers a deconstructive reading that identifies a tension between the novel's Communist political program (which Schulz sees as the intention of the author) and a putatively "autonomous dynamic" ("Eigendynamik") of the text, which resists explicitly outlined political theories and underlines epistemological uncertainty (Schulz 1986, 14-15). Schulz seeks to show that the textual practice of the novel, especially its subjunctive mode and temporal structure of the narrative, undermines the novel's ostensible political program. While Schulz's study includes important insights into analysis of the novel's stylistic devices, the postulated tension between straightforward authorial intention and linguistic polysemy continues to understand the novel's historical references in terms of the notion of realistic copy. Complications to this mimetic principle are framed as a separate aesthetic universe that "sublates the unfinished reality" (Schulz 1986, 10). There is thus an important limitation to Schulz's analytical framework, because her interpretation prevents us from understanding the novel as an intervention in the world outside the text. Schulz misses a fundamental point in Weiss's novel, namely that aesthetic discourse is conceived here as a force of resistance in the world.

Some early responses to Weiss's novel in West Germany already noted that there was something uneasy about the way in which *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* intervened in the time of its publication. "An altogether untimely work" (Meyer 1989, 277), "a vast sketch opposing the *Zeitgeist*" (Lilienthal 1988, 73), "an erratic block" ("ein erratischer Block") (Buch 1978, Lilienthal 1988, 59) – these are just

some of the expressions used to describe a sense of bewilderment in trying to place the novel in relation to the historical moment of its publication.²⁰ These diffuse remarks about the untimeliness of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* invite us to think more profoundly about how exactly we might approach the novel's untimely relationship to history in analytical terms. For one, one could characterize as untimely Weiss's gesture of looking back to an oppositional force that had suffered a defeat, the gesture of reconnecting to an aspect of the past that had been obscured by later political developments. Weiss's project of resistance demands an open temporal register that makes it possible to link together historical moments that in and of themselves provide no prospect for change. This is why the end of the novel discusses the end of the antifascist resistance movement, the division of the postwar world into two blocs and totalitarian forms of communism in the German Democratic Republic in the uncertain mode of the future conditional.²¹ The reader provides an element of futurity, in the form of a new possibility of resistance to received traditions and actual political alternatives, possibilities that cannot be realized in the text itself.

²⁰ These remarks might have referred to the sheer scope of Weiss's 1000-page undertaking, which also demanded a significant investment of time from readers. The novel also did not initially meet the expectations of the reading public, which can be seen in the mixture of bewilderment, awe and dissatisfaction of the initial reception of the novel. The literary critic Fritz Raddatz, for instance, was puzzled by what he saw as indecisiveness between history and fiction, as well as by a will to instruct without a clear sense of who was being instructed (Raddatz 1975). Weiss's focus on resistance also seemed untimely in relation to many of his contemporary German-language authors, who had been politically engaged in the 1960s, had turned to work on more existential topics (Meyer 1989, 278-279).

²¹ "Immer wieder, wenn ich versuchen würde, etwas von der Zeit, die mit dem Mai Fünfundvierzig beendet wurde, zu schildern, würden sich mir die Folgen aufdrängen. Über die Erfahrungen, die durchsetzt waren von Tod, würde sich die grell kolorierte, längst wieder von Folter, Brandschatzung und Mord gefüllte Zukunft legen. Immer wieder würde es sein, als sollten alle frühern Hoffnungen zunichte gemacht werden von den später verlorengegangnen Vorsätzen. Und wenn es auch nicht so werden würde, wie wir es erhofft hatten, so änderte dies doch an den Hoffnungen nichts. Die Hoffnungen würden bleiben. Die Utopie würde notwendig sein. Auch später würden die Hoffnungen unzählige Male aufflammen, vom überlegnen Feind erstickt und wieder neu erweckt werden. Und der Bereich der Hoffnungen würde größer werden, als er es zu unsrer Zeit war, er würde sich über alle Kontinente erstrecken." (ÄdW III, 265).

However, while some scholars have noted the temporal ambiguity in Weiss's historical narration that has to do with marking a space for futurity in the text (see Buch 2010, 105-117; Jameson 2005; Pourciau 2007, 167-168), this futurity has hitherto been understood mainly in critical frameworks that either operate with linear and developmental temporality or do not inquire after concrete, material reading positions. What has not been adequately analyzed is the way in which Weiss's style relies on a much more radical openness, while underlining connections to situated extra-textual readers.²² In the following analysis, I will draw attention to a fundamental parataxis in Weiss's style that encourages us to question ready-made hierarchies, including those pertaining to linear historical narratives told from a definite, privileged narrative center. My analysis looks at an underlying logic of Weiss's "aesthetics of resistance" in which several historical moments and discourses are brought into contact.

On the level of sentences, Weiss's paratactic style²³ can be seen in the use of lengthy lists, of book titles or mere names of historical persons for instance,²⁴ or in the fact that the punctuation is managed with commas and periods, without

²² Weiss's use of deixis, second-person address and aural effects, for instance, helps create what narratologist David Herman calls contextual anchoring: his style prompts readers to draw analogies, "more or less direct or oblique relationship[s]" between the representations they have made of the storyworld and the representations of the world in which their act of interpretation takes place (Herman 2002, 331).

²³ Already the first pages of the novel center around a group of antifascist resistance activists observing the Pergamon Frieze in a museum in Berlin and display a paratactic tendency that dominates the syntax throughout the novel: "Jede Einzelheit ihren Ausdruck bewahrend, mürbe Bruchstücke, aus denen die Ganzheit sich ablesen ließ, rauhe Stümpfe neben geschliffner Glätte, belebt vom Spiel der Muskeln und Sehnen, Streitpferde in gestrafftem Geschirr, gerundete Schilde, aufgerekte Speere, zu rohem Oval gespaltner Kopf, ausgebreitete Schwingen, triumphierend erhobener Arm, Ferse im Sprung, umflattert vom Rock, geballte Faust am nicht mehr vorhandenen Schwert [...]" (ÄdW I, 7).

²⁴ "Die Außenseiter der Kultur hatten sich in diesen Winkel verzogen, weil sich hier billiges Obdach finden ließ. Utrillo, Picasso, Gris, Braque, Herbin, Apollinaire, Laurencin, Brancusi, Severini, Modigliani, Derain, Reverdy, Salmon, Gertrude Stein und Max Jacob waren in den Stallungen beherbergt oder zu Gast gewesen [...]" (ÄdW II, 38)

dashes, exclamations, question marks, or other signs that would define the relations of the words. The lack of definite coordination implies that readers of the text have to provide their own emphases while reading. However, parataxis is a more fundamental aspect of the novel's poetics that goes beyond the sentence level. Fredric Jameson has suggested that *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* can be understood as a "series of rooms that is philosophical in its implications" (Jameson 2005, xix). Jameson refers here to the manner in which the narrative is organized around spatial settings such as museums or working-class apartments. The notion of series of rooms captures how the novel consists of textual blocks, loosely connected scenes and settings that, rather than creating a coherent narrative, imply a possibility of linking them together in multiple ways. I will show how scenes of walking become crucial in Weiss's narrative, because they underline the possibility of moving into more than one direction from each spatial setting. Additionally, the novel's narrative also links changes in temporal registers to descriptions of sounds, which I will read as an emphasis on the historical present that limits the sense of unlimited possibility of directions. Furthermore, Weiss's poetics mobilizes readers with paratactic sensory representations. Through an analysis of these aspects of Weiss's style, I will propose an experiment in which I will de-emphasize the developmental time frame that makes readers focus on the most overt thread of narrative, the history of class struggle in general and German communist and anti-fascist resistance in particular. What happens if one takes the parataxis in Weiss's aesthetics of resistance seriously instead, that is to say, as encouragement to foreground non-linear and less familiar modes of historical relationality in Weiss's novel? What other paths of historical articulation emerge when we consider that a paratactic

mode de-emphasizes ostensible hierarchies of historical references? And finally, what alternative practices of historical and cultural comparison emerge when the text is no longer read solely against a linear or teleological frame?

2. Sensory Representations and Double Mimesis

2. 1. Poetics of the Outline

The motif of a gap that is important for the entire paratactic and sequential poetic structure of the novel is underlined in the opening section of the novel, in which a group of resistance activists is gathered in a museum in Berlin to observe the ancient Pergamon Altar, which depicts a battle between gods and demigods. The fragmentarily preserved ancient altar does not include the statue of Heracles, whom the narrator and his friends regard as a promoter of action and the “only one who was like us.” Heilmann, one of the activists, points out that the gap in the place of Heracles means the viewers have to imagine him themselves.²⁵ As I

²⁵ “Coppi nannte es ein Omen, daß gerade er, der unsresgleichen war, fehlte, und daß wir uns nun selbst ein Bild dieses Fürsprechers des Handelns zu machen hatten” (ÄdW I, 11). Towards the end of the third and last volume of the novel, there are two passages that most explicitly evoke the figure of the reader who is invited to look at the novel as a construction with gaps, with “Leerstellen” or “slots” that create meaning in interaction with the reader. First, at the end of the novel, the narrator returns to the figure of Heracles as an empty spot, when he imagines an “altar” for the resistance fighters who were executed by the National Socialists (ÄdW III, 267-268). Second, the third volume includes a scene in which resistance activists of the Schulze-Boysen-Harnack group are executed in the Plötzensee prison by the Nazis. One of them, Heilmann, writes a letter in prison, addressed to an “unknown reader.” The wording of the letter leaves it open whether Heilmann is talking about his or the reader’s attempt to understand the “thick net” of historical events: “Heilmann an Unbekannt. Versuche, aus dem dichten Gewebe einiges hervorzuholen, von dem sich ablesen läßt, was uns widerfahren ist. Auch wenn ich glaubte, Einsicht zu haben in vieles, ist alles jetzt so ineinander verschlungen, daß ich nur winziger Fäden habhaft werden kann. Du, an deinem Ort, besitzt größern Überblick, kannst vielleicht einmal, wenn dich meine Zeilen erreichen sollten, die Zusammenhänge deuten.” (ÄdW III, 199-200.)

will soon demonstrate, the Pergamon passage and the poetics of Weiss's novel suggest that readers insert their own bodies - their own situated perspectives - in place of the missing Heracles.²⁶

However, gaps or *Leerstellen* are not likely to come to mind when one first glances at the tightly filled pages of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. The long uninterrupted blocks of text create a uniform and closed visual appearance, and the long paragraphs and complicated sentence structures slow reading down. *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* operates under the paradox that while the novel is self-conscious about reading as an activity that happens in a specific time and place, and, as I will show, welcoming with respect to different kinds of readers, it can also be argued to be a stylistically uninviting piece of writing. Mobilization of a reader functions only with a certain pact between the text and its reader: the implied reader of Weiss's novel is someone who is prepared to approach reading as heavy labor. Ironically, one of the first readers of Weiss, his editor at Suhrkamp Verlag Elizabeth Borchers, was irritated by the small margins and the tight layout of the text, exclaiming that they made reading into a form of "slave labor" (Wagner 2007, 128).²⁷ Weiss explained in an interview that the uninterrupted textual blocks were necessary, because they created a reading

²⁶ See also Leslie A. Adelson's reading of the passage in *Making Bodies, Making History. Feminism & German Identity* (Adelson 1993). Adelson reads the name Heracles as an "image (in the text) of a missing image (erased from the surface of the frieze) of a missing body (the embodied subject on whom resistance is predicated)." (Adelson 1993, 32) Adelson contrasts her reading to that of Judith Ryan, who reads Heracles as a gap that has to be filled in. Ryan links the Heracles motif to her project of analyzing postwar German literature as investigation to the question of individual responsibility in history. Ryan's reading of Heracles in Weiss relies on a static idea of reproducing and recreating the past: "Remembering the past means at the same time reconstructing the past - searching for missing pieces, filling in gaps, re-creating lost images" (Ryan 1983, 13).

²⁷ However, there have been editions in which margins were large so that readers could write on them (see Huyssen 1986, 117).

experience without respite: [J]eder dieser großen Blöcke muss penetriert werden. Da ist schon die geringste Unterbrechung störend; das wäre schon ein Atemholen, aber für den Erzähler gibt es dieses Atemholen nicht, sondern er steckt drin in dieser unsäglichen Mühe, aus der Geschlossenheit, der Dichtigkeit etwas herauszufinden [...] – und deshalb ist dieser Blockcharakter notwendig (Gerlach&Richter 1986, 220). The text cannot offer a moment of rest, Weiss explains, because the situations it describes - attempts of antifascist resistance fighters during World War II to assess the political situation they were in and to determine the best course of action - did not offer it either. It is supposed to create resistance to leisurely reading; it is supposed to overload readers with an excess of information.

However, the block character of the text does not only have to do with reproducing a certain kind of reality. It also brings the novel's appearance close to visual art. Weiss also explained that he saw the pages of the novel and the words on them as a kind of images: "Es ist eine Überlieferung aus meiner Zeit als Maler: Ich will geschlossene Bilder vor mir sehen." (Gerlach & Richter 1986, 280). According to Weiss's wife Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss, Weiss's conception of the overall structure of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* was inspired by a piece of art that Weiss saw at an exhibition in Stockholm, Donald Judd's sculpture from the year 1968 (see Wagner 2007, 131). The sculpture consists of ten gray blocks separated by gaps that are attached to a wall into a rigidly ordered column. But what seems to have particularly fascinated Weiss was the fact that when spectators approached the sculpture, the blocks reflected their own mirror image. The rigidly shaped sculpture became alive when confronted with a viewer, and the viewer saw not only the blocks but also his or her own image on them.

This story of the novel's affinity to Judd's sculpture comes to mind when one reads the opening scene of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. As the group of young antifascist resistance activists move their gaze from one battling figure of the Pergamon frieze to another, the stony, static image comes alive: "Indem wir die Lanze unmittelbar vorm Wurf, die Keule vorm Niedersausen, den Anlauf vorm Sprung, das Ausholen vorm Aneinanderprallen sahn, wurde unser Blick von Figur zu Figur, von einer Situation zur nächsten getrieben, und im ganzen Umkreis begann der Stein zu vibrieren." (ÄdW 11). The narrator describes here an effect that seems to be the goal of the very first sentence of the novel, in which a paratactic structure and a repeated use of participle constructions create a strange coexistence of rigidity and mounting tension:

Rings um uns hoben sich die Leiber aus dem Stein, zusammengedrängt zu Gruppen, ineinander verschlungen oder zu Fragmenten zersprengt, mit einem Torso, einem aufgestützten Arm, einer geborstnen Hüfte, einem verschorften Brocken ihre Gestalt andeutend, immer in den Gebärden des Kampfs, ausweichend, zurückschnellend, angreifend, sich deckend, hochgestreckt oder gekrümmt, hier und da ausgelöscht, doch noch mit einem freistehenden vorgestemmtten Fuß, einem gedrehten Rücken, der Kontur einer Wade eingespannt in eine einzige gemeinsame Bewegung. (ÄdW 7).

What is interesting about this description is the fact that it seems both extremely intense, zooming close to the battling figures, and oddly vague. It is difficult to imagine any kind of totality of bodies depicted on the frieze based on this list of body parts. This makes it apparent that Weiss's turn of phrase quoted above, writing as production of "closed images," has to be taken with a grain of salt. The extensive use of parataxis in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* reminds us of Weiss's first novel published in German, *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers* (1960), a study of hyperrealistic perception and its rendering in prose, in which a narrator records an overflow of sensory perceptions with radically paratactic sentences

and disfigures conversations he hears into a condensed sequence that resembles a kind of poetic shorthand.²⁸ This radical parataxis becomes interesting for our current concerns when we connect it to how the narrator of *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers* describes his task as creation of a graphic outline that resembles drawing: "Mit dem Bleistift die Geschehnisse vor meinen Augen nachzeichnend, um damit dem Gesehenen eine Kontur zu geben, und das Gesehene zu verdeutlichen, also das Sehen zu einer Beschäftigung machend, sitze ich neben dem Schuppen auf dem Holzstoß [...]" (Weiss 1960, 38). The paratactic sentences he produces do not aim at representation in conventional terms but rather at what Christian Jany has characterized as the creation of a graphic outline that brings writing close to drawing.²⁹ Jany articulates a connection between Weiss's early novel *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers* and *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* by arguing that a procedure of creating a graphic outline can also be perceived in the ekphrases of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, which zoom in on details and body parts without conjuring up a whole. Writing thus does not, according to Jany, simply translate visual and spatial experience into signs and symbols but fixes an image on the page in multiple segments, in a mode of writing reminiscent of experimental visual collages that accompanied

²⁸ "[D]a stand ich auf und ging nah an ihn heran und legte mein Ohr dicht an seinen Mund und nun konnte ich mir aus seinen Atemzügen und Zungenbewegungen folgende Worte deuten, Wunden nicht heilen, wie ich auch schneide, tief aushöhle, bis auf die Knochen, Messer auf Knochen knirschen, schaben, abbrechen, sitzt noch tiefer, abbinden, die ganze Nacht, die ganze Nacht wacht, immer noch Blut, Eiter, weiter, unten am Arm, dann weiter oben, hoben, Achselhöhle, Oberarmknochen, Wasser kochen, Gelenk, verrenk, hochbinden, finden, bis zu den Rippen, in der Brust, tief in der Brust, Herz frei legen, Lungenflügel, Beine, Gips um die Knöchel legen, sägen, ausfegen, um die Waden, Schienbeine aufgeschnitten, Sehnen, Gips ums Knie legen [...]" (Weiss 1960, 46)

²⁹ I am referring to Christian Jany's conference talk "Poetics of the Outline: On the Conjunction of Space, Vision and Time in Peter Weiss's *The Shadow of the Body of the Coachman* and *The Aesthetics of Resistance*," presented at the German Studies Graduate Conference "Within or Without: Space in German Literature and Culture," Cornell University, February 26, 2010.

the text of Weiss's early novel. The creation of a spatial outline both abstracts and fixes the visual materially on the page.

The narrator of *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers* describes this creation of an outline as "making seeing into an activity" (Weiss 1960, 38). Transforming observation into activity suggests that although the narrator is clearly interested in precision, his labor cannot be understood in terms of creating an exact copy.³⁰ While Jany's analysis shows that Weiss's early experimental art and his last novel, which relies on extensive documentary material, are more connected than is otherwise apparent, Jany does not make a link between the poetics of the outline and Weiss's interest in historical narration in his last novel. I would like to address this connection by asking how Weiss's poetics of the outline in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* connects with the heightened concern in the narrative with situated and embodied reading.

³⁰ Weiss's transmedial narration in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* relies on a form of mimesis in which reference to the world outside the text cannot be thought in terms of a binary between an exact copy or a self-referential textual universe. Stephen Halliwell, who has studied the history of the concept of mimesis from antiquity to the present, points out that the habit of understanding mimesis as an exact copy in art of the real world has caused much theoretical confusion. Halliwell distinguishes between two main tendencies in the conceptual articulation of how an artistic work relates to the outside world. In a world-reflecting model of mimesis, on the one hand, the work of art depicts extratextual reality in one way or another and can be judged at least partly through comparison to this reality. It therefore enhances a better understanding of the world outside the text. In a world-creating model of mimesis, by contrast, art becomes an independent and coherent heterocosm that refers to itself and should be judged as an autonomous entity. (See Halliwell 2002, 1-33.) Weiss's novel is a good example of a realistic text that seeks to combine these two dimensions of mimesis.

2.2. Dante in Berlin

Die Ästhetik des Widerstands explicitly introduces a method of analogical and anachronistic reading in a passage in which the protagonists of the novel, a group of young working-class activists, are sitting in the Hedwig Cemetery in 1930s Berlin and discussing Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1308-1321). A potential relation between a historically remote literary text and the present seems to make the confusing and overwhelming present more readable to its interpreters in this scene. The process of reading is discussed in the Dante passage through a homodiegetic narrator who also brings into the text the temporal register of the moment of narration. The end of the novel makes clear that the narration takes place after the war, when most of the activist protagonists have been executed by National Socialists (ÄdW III, 265-267). Hence, the Dante passage implies a retrospective gaze of the narrator, who knows of the suffered deaths, defeats and disappointments. In addition to this linkage to the temporal register of the narrating narrator, the narration also performs linkages to extra-textual readers. I will quote the passage at length in order to show how this passage both discusses analogical and anachronistic reading explicitly and performs a connection to the novel's extra-textual readers in stylistic means.

Wir saßen sonntags im Humboldt Hain oder auf dem Friedhof der Hedwigs Gemeinde, in der Nähe der Pflugstraße, und versuchten herauszufinden, was die *Divina Commedia* mit unserm Leben zu tun hatte. Wie nahmen zuerst an, daß die Entkörperung eine der Voraussetzungen zur Herstellung von Kunst sei, daß der Produzierende sich aufgab, um etwas außerhalb seiner selbst zu gewinnen. Doch dies klang wieder unvernünftig, stellte die Kunst unsrer Überzeugung nach doch größte Realität dar, und solche war nur zu erreichen durch die Anspannung aller Lebenskräfte. Es erwies sich dann in dem bemessnen, bewußt durchgeführten Gang der Komposition, daß das Anrühren des Todesgedankens, das Leben mit dem Tod und mit den Toten in sich, wohl den Trieb hervorrufen konnte zum Kunstwerk, daß aber das fertige Produkt für Lebende bestimmt war und deshalb auch nach allen Regeln des lebendigen Aufnehmens und Reflektierens ausgeführt sein mußte. Dante zeigte diese Methode der Doppelheit, in der der Schreck vom Vergehn sich selbst überwand, indem er Zeichen hinterließ, die das eigene Leben

überdauerten, und wenn es anfangs schien, als verberge sich diese Transformierung unter Symbolen und Allegorien, die nur dem verständlich sein konnten, der mit der Scholastik vertraut war, so ließ sich das Filigranwerk der Gleichnisse doch mehr und mehr abtasten nach Einzelheiten, die von einer aus unmittelbarer Nähe beobachteten Wirklichkeit sprachen. Es war nicht mehr notwendig, daß wir die Aussagen so verstanden, wie sie vielleicht vor sechshundert Jahren gemeint waren, sondern daß sie hier, in dieser Parkanlage, neben dem Kinderspielplatz, hier, zwischen diesen Frisch aufgeschütteten Gräbern, unterhalb der Sankt Sebastian Kirche, Leben annahmen, denn das war es, was sie dauerhaft machte, daß sie unsre eignen Erwägungen weckten, daß sie nach unsern Antworten verlangten. (Weiss 1983, I, 81-82.)³¹

On the level of the explicit discourse on anachronistic reading, the quotation makes it clear that artistic creation, and implicitly also the reception of art, cannot be detached from a real embodied person, who produces art by "straining all vital energy." The passage does not spell out *who* is the actor that makes this effort - an ambiguity that implicitly links the labor of the artist with that of the recipient. It also turns out that the "reality observed up close" refers both to Dante's context and to the context of Dante's readers in this passage. There is no inherent link between them, only a connection actively created by these readers. Reading Dante as a realist does not mean getting accurate information about Dante as a historical individual or about his epoch. It rather seems to mean in Weiss's novel attentiveness to detail in the constellation that the text weaves together with the reader's own context. A world-reflecting precision in Dante's poetics makes Dante's text good source material for bridging a void separating

³¹ "On Sundays we sat in the Humboldt Grove or in St. Hedwig's Cemetery, near Pflugstrasse, trying to find out what the Divina Commedia had to do with our lives. At first we assumed that disembodiment was a prerequisite for making art, that the producer gave himself up in order to gain something outside himself. Yet this sounded irrational, for after all, we were convinced that art depicted utmost reality, which could be achieved only by straining all vital energy. It then turned out that touching on the thought of death, that life with death and with the dead in it, could trigger the drive to make art, but that the finished product was meant for the living, so that it had to be executed according to all the rules of living reception and reflection. Dante showed this method of doubleness, in which the fear of perishing overcame itself by leaving behind signs that outlasted one's own life, and though it initially seemed as if this transformation were hidden under symbols and allegories intelligible only to people grounded in Scholasticism, the filigree of metaphors and similes could be probed more and more for details speaking from a reality observed up close. Regarding what was said, it was not necessary for us to understand it as it may have been meant six centuries ago, it simply had to be transferred to our time, take on life here, in this park, next to the playground, here, amid these freshly filled graves below St. Sebastian's Church, for this was what made the statements permanent, the way they aroused our own deliberations, the way they asked for our answers." (Weiss 2005, 69.)

Dante's world from a new context, where the communist resistance activists see no clear path ahead. In this process the "signs left behind" become indices that can be read against different contextual concerns.³² The text *accentuates* certain things in the reading context that has no obvious relationship to it. For the protagonists of the novel, young people of working-class background, their analogical impetus specifically means that they need to learn how to read historical documents and artworks subversively, notably documents and artworks that contain very few direct accounts of the history of the lower classes.

What would attentiveness to precise reading mean in reading the texture of this particular passage of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*? First of all, I would like to point to the strong gesture of emplacement performed with the word "here." "Here" is a deictic sign that implicitly includes the temporal register of the novel's reader, because the reader of the past-tense narration would expect to read the word "there." The narration thus breaks its spatio-temporal frame and creates a meeting point between different temporal as well as spatial registers explicitly or implicitly active in narration, including the temporal register of the novel's extra-textual readers.³³ Second, on a closer look, one notices that the poetics of the

³² Both the novel and a separate essay by Weiss called "Gespräch über Dante" (1965, "Conversation about Dante") approach Dante as a "realist" in a manner that detaches Dante from being fixed into the scholastic system of his time (see Weiss 1968, 150). This applies also more generally to Weiss's interest in Dante, which began in the early 1960s and went on until Weiss's death. Weiss planned a tripartite drama on the basis of *Divina Commedia*, never realizing the plan in its entirety. In this trilogy Weiss wanted to use Dante's poem as an analogy to the contemporary, post-war reality, hoping to show that injustice had to be opposed in the here and now (see Weiss 1968, 125-140, 154). Weiss wrote a play called *Inferno* in 1964, in which a writer who has been given amnesty after a death sentence returns to his native land. It was not published until 2003, after the author's death. One of the parts of the "Divina Commedia Project," however, became the play *Die Ermittlung* (1965), Weiss's documentary drama based on the Auschwitz trials.

³³ One can read the ambiguous deictic signs as instances of "contextual anchoring" as understood by David Herman, who argues that deictic references and mechanisms of address are two

outline I discussed above is present also in the style of the Dante passage. The narrative not only repeats the word "hier" (here) twice but mentions three different, adjacent locations when it refers to the park in which the resistance activists discuss Dante. "Es war nicht mehr notwendig, daß wir die Aussagen so verstanden, wie sie vielleicht vor sechshundert Jahren gemeint waren, sondern daß sie hier, in dieser Parkanlage, neben dem Kinderspielplatz, hier, zwischen diesen Frisch aufgeschütteten Gräbern, unterhalb der Sankt Sebastian Kirche, Leben annahmen, denn das war es, was sie dauerhaft machte, daß sie unsre eignen Erwägungen weckten, daß sie nach unsern Antworten verlangten. (Weiss 1983, I, 81-82). Together with the other references to places at the beginning of the quotation (Humboldt Hain, Friedhof der Hedwigs Gemeinde, Pflugstraße), the passage draws an outline of the resistance activist's location of reading Dante.

I argue that the concern with outlining (rather than merely stating) the activist's location implies that historical linking should not simply be seen in terms of punctual reference, linear time and diachronic context. The narrator also refers to the structure of *Divina Commedia* with the words "Gang der Komposition" (this expression, "the gait of composition" in English, has unfortunately been removed from the English translation). This formulation that links composition of a text and the act of walking is suggestive, because walking is an important aspect of the novel's own narrative strategies. Many of the novel's discussions are

important aspects of the phenomenon of contextual anchoring in narratives (Herman 2002, 331-332). These deictic markers refer both to a point in the storyworld from the narrator's perspective as well as to readers' "here," drawing attention not only to a specific place but also to the activity of emplacement. This ambiguity can be seen in several other aspects of Weiss's narrative: it often operates with unmarked changes of narrative realms and temporal registers and thus creates points of contact between different situated perspectives. Some temporal adverbs, for instance, may first seem to refer to a situation that the narration has described before, but actually mark a change of temporal register or location (see Pflugmacher 2007, 283).

conducted on foot, and the narration inserts glimpses of surrounding scenery into the discussants' political and historical musings. In the Pergamon passage, for instance, the resistance activists are walking in the museum as if they were walking from one historical period to another:

Durch den lärmenden Strudel einer Schulklasse drängten wir uns in den nächsten Raum, in dem sich das Markttor von Milet im Halbdunkel erhob. Vor den Säulen des Tors, das vom Rathaus der Hafenstadt auf den offenen Handelsplatz geführt hatte, fragte Heilmann, ob wir bemerkt hätten, wie drinnen im Altarsaal eine räumliche Funktion umgestülpt worden sei, dergestalt, daß Außenflächen zu Innenwänden wurden. [...] Das, was beim langsamen Umschreiten erfaßt werden sollte, legte sich nun seinerseits um den Beschauer. Dieser schwindelweckende Vorgang ließe uns am Ende die Relativitätstheorie verstehen, fügte er hinzu, als wir, noch ein paar Jahrhunderte tiefer geratend, an den Lehmziegelmauern entlanggingen, die sich einst im babylonischen Getümmel des Nebukadnezar befanden, und dann plötzlich auf eine Anlage traten, wo gilbendes Laub, schwirrende Sonnenflecken, zweistöckige hellgelbe Omnibusse, Automobile mit blitzenden Reflexen, Ströme von Passanten und das taktfeste Schmettern nagelbeschlager Stiefel eine Umstellung unsrer Orientierung, eine neue Positionsangabe forderten. (ÄdW I, 14-15)

Finally, the activists step onto a platform leading from the museum to the street, which becomes another “room” in the sequence – one that exposes the museum visitors to confusing sensory impressions (and the hobnailed boots remind us of the pressing reality of the narrative taking place in Nazi Germany). On closer examination, walking appears so ubiquitous that it begins to look like part of the novel's poetic foundation. The museum passages of the novel, the walks in cities and the allusions to Dante evoke the classical *ars memoriae* tradition: a tradition in which architectural spaces were used to memorize speeches. Frances A. Yates, a scholar who wrote the first comprehensive treatise of how the *ars memoriae* tradition lived on and changed through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the early modern period, reads *Divina Commedia* as a memory system for memorizing Hell and its punishments - for remembering a certain static view of the universe (Yates 1966, 95). Rhetoricians conventionally committed their speeches to memory by turning words into mental images and placing these images into certain positions in an imagined building. Ideas or even exact words

of a speech could then be regained, unchanged, by moving within this building in the right order (see Yates 1992, 18–19). Since descriptions of places and buildings in Weiss's novel clearly draw from the *ars memoriae* tradition, it is important to underline ways in which my reading of the novel departs from the way space is understood in this model. That is to say, I will depart from its static notion of space, which, as Aleida Assmann argues in her study *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, suggests an illusion of permanence and accessibility (Assmann 1999, 151).

Scenes of ambulation are also often passages in which a decisive spatial center of orientation in the narrative changes, as characters move from the Pergamon Museum, for instance, to a working-class kitchen in Berlin. If walking is foundational to the narrative, then the novel rests on a shifting ground. After all, walking is described in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* as a movement in which coordinates of orientation are constantly negotiated from a particular perspective in the midst of new vistas and new stimuli. The walking characters of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* do not retrieve deposited contents from places and buildings that exist in a fixed space or along a pre-determined route. Walking much rather connotes an interruption to already established directions and the potential to compose new ones. According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, who has studied the implications of walking in literary narratives over several centuries, walking in literature often suggests a departure from a "container idea of space" (Bachmann-Medick 2009, 258). This is also the notion that Assmann criticizes in spatial models of memory. Therefore, the passages on walking in Weiss become important by gesturing towards a more dynamic understanding of space in the

midst of seemingly impenetrable blocks of text. As also the work of Michel de Certeau emphasizes, walking can be read as a subversive act too, as creation of a space of enunciation out of structures that have been established by someone else (Certeau 1988, 98). When the performance of space in the literary text and the imagination of the reader meet, new approaches to the spatiotemporal coordinates of a given culture and historical period can emerge, as Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann also emphasize (Hallet - Neumann 2009, 18). One could adjust Jameson's characterization of a philosophically inflected "series of rooms" to underscore instead walking from room to room. This shift of emphasis - from the series to the walking - has important analytical consequences: it forces us to think how Weiss's narrative mode combines nonlinear time, historical reference and sensory experience.

2.3. Senses as Catalysts

Ambulation is linked in Weiss's novel to a strong emphasis on sensory and bodily experience. I will elaborate in this section how this emphasis operates in the two seemingly opposing aspects of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*: its concern with the historical trauma and with political resistance. While the importance of trauma in Weiss's novel might seem to offer a frame for analyzing complications to linear temporality and punctual reference in the novel's narrative form, I contend that rather than primarily reflecting a traumatic temporality of endless repetition, untimeliness acquires a constructive structure in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. This constructive structure should not be understood as transhistorical but as something that is historically materialized through recourse

to situated readers. This is a structure of narration that encourages readers to go beyond established and received historical narratives. With the example of how aurality is employed in the novel, I will show how the actualizing manner of reading relies on affect in Weiss's conception of resistance aesthetics and how affect links resistance aesthetics and narration of trauma.

On close examination, Weiss's novel features an astonishing number of references to sound. For instance, when the activist protagonists walk through the Pergamon Museum, the narrative often reminds us of the surrounding museum space by describing sounds produced by museum visitors. In the second volume of the novel, the narrator's discussion with Max Hodann is interrupted with sounds produced by rabbits that sit in cages in Hodann's room (ÄdW II, 130). The role of sound seems so insistent that Jenny Willner and Markus Huss, who are among the first scholars to have analyzed the aural aspects of Weiss's poetics, even state that the references to sound evoke a "soundtrack" ("Tonspur") running throughout Weiss's whole oeuvre (Huss 2009, 74-75, Willner 2007, 154-160). Both Willner and Huss argue that references to sound often emphasize the danger and insecurity of the novel's activist protagonists (see also Willner 2013a). Willner and Huss link sounds in Weiss's novel to the uncanny or to instability of linguistic constructions. In this line of interpretation, sounds become noise that covers speakers' words or creates an ominous background against which even utopian political designs or thoughts on the possibility of communication lose something of their force.

But while scholars have drawn attention to how the sounds often serve disturbing or disorienting effects and evoke a sense of threat, I would like to focus on another dimension to the ubiquity of sound in the novel: their connection with historical linking. It is striking that references to sound often appear precisely when there is a shift in the temporal register of narration. This can be illustrated with analysis of the novel's opening passage, which is set at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. This passage introduces the shift from an ekphrasis of the ancient Pergamon Altar to the surroundings of the interpreters, young German communists, through references to sound. "Ein leises Klingeln und Rauschen tönte auf hin und wieder, das Hallen von Schritten und Stimmen umgab uns Augenblicke lang, und dann war aufs neue nur diese Schlacht nah, unser Blick glitt über die Zehen in der Sandale, sich abstossend vom Schädel eines Gestürzten, über den Sterbenden, dessen lahmwerdende Hand zärtlich auf dem Arm der Göttin lag, die ihn am Schopf hielt." (ÄdW I, 8.)³⁴ The narrative level of 1930s Berlin (not yet historically or geographically identified in the above quote) creeps into the imagination of the novel's extra-textual readers through a sequence of references to sound (often sounds produced by walking and whispering museum guests), dispersed amidst the ekphrasis of the altar (see Weiss 1983, I, 8, 11, 14, 15). The task of imagining the museum space as a sensory environment in Weiss's articulation encompasses both the effect of an artwork and the visitors' presence in the room. This imaginative process precedes the information that helps locate the scene described in a specific historical moment.

³⁴ "A soft ringing and murmuring resounded now and again, the echoes of footfalls and voices surrounded us for moments at a time, and then once more, only this battle was near, our gazes glided over the toes in the sandals, bouncing off the skull of a fallen man, over the dying man whose stifting hand lay tenderly on the arm of the goddess..." (Weiss 2005, 4).

Readers of Weiss's novel are invited to imagine their presence in the room before the distancing effect of a specific historical time and place sets in. The sensory stimuli are intensified and detached from an obvious relationship to a temporal and spatial setting.

I argue that aurality becomes important in Weiss's novel, because it can serve both dehistoricizing and rehistoricizing dimensions of analogical poetics. We should delve more into sound as a medium in order to understand the significance of the connection between temporal linkages and aural references in Weiss's narrative. In a discussion of the human voice as a medium, Doris Kolesch, Vito Pinto and Jenny Schrödl draw attention to hearing as a spatial and bodily event (Kolesch et al. 2009, 9-22). They emphasize the connection of phenomenal hearing and spatial orientation. According to their analysis, sounds generate a sense of space but also lack certain placement. Gernot Böhme also reflects on the bodily dimension of hearing in useful ways. On the one hand, Böhme emphasizes the placelessness of the acoustic - how sounds are not to be localized merely somewhere between the ear and the brain but create an acoustic space that is experienced with the whole body (Böhme 2009, 23). The connection that Weiss's narrative makes between sounds, imagination and temporal shifts can be linked to this understanding of hearing as a construction of space. The connection between sound heard and temporal shifts draws attention to the sensory experience of hearing as an opening of space beyond the enclosed rooms of the here and now. Hearing becomes connected both to the immediate surroundings of the text and to processes of long-distance imagination. However, aurality in the novel also foregrounds the role of the text's embodied

recipient through what Gernot Böhme calls "resonance phenomenon." Gernot Böhme's description of Jakob Böhme's language theory resonates with Weiss's employment of sound effects: "Kommunikation ist aber nicht, wie wir es von der Sprachtheorie heute vornemlich verstehen, symbolisch vermittelt. Vielmehr versteht man die Äußerung eines Menschen oder eines Dinges durch dessen Ton oder Stimme dadurch, dass sie im eigenen Inneren eine Glocke zum Mitschwingen bringt, also durch inneren Mitvollzug. Verstehen ist ein Resonanzphänomen." (Böhme 2009, 27.) According to Gernot Böhme, this theory is radical, because it takes seriously the effect of words and their affective impact ("affektive Betroffenheit") on recipients. One could understand the space construed by the aural effects and temporal shifts in Weiss's novel as a communicative space but not in terms of communication predicated on sending messages, understanding and intention.³⁵

Böhme's conception of resonance can be linked to my concern with historical reference through what Yael Balaban calls double mimesis (Balaban 2012). The

³⁵ *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* discusses production of affects in a passage that complements the discussion on anachronistic reading in the Dante passage. A passage in the first volume stresses explicitly the role of affect in transmission of historical experiences through artistic media. The narrator tries to understand how painters such as Géricault or Picasso, who had painted scenes of violence, conveyed something about a historical event without representing it directly. The narrator suggests that intensity of experience and precision in creating a medium that conveys this intensity in the audience have to come together to produce "proximity to reality": "Mit ihrer Einbildungskraft erzeugten die Maler Situationen, in denen Selbsterlebtes so lange über das gewählte Geschehnis geschoben wurde, bis der Eindruck von Übereinstimmung entstand. Diese Übereinstimmung stellte sich her, wenn der höchste Grad emotionaler Intensität erreicht war. (...) Er projizierte ein Bild, das in jeder Einzelheit einem Sachverhalt zu entsprechen schien und das so, wie es sich auf der Leinwand abzeichnete, doch nie stattgefunden hatte. Trotzdem war es den Malern gelungen, bei der Umsetzung des tatsächlichen Ereignisses in die Skala der Kunst, einschneidenden Augenblicken ein Denkmal zu setzen. Etwas Durchlebtes hatten sie in ihre eigne Gegenwart gerückt, und wir, die die Kristallisierung sahn, ließen sie aufs neue aufleben. Gezeigt wurde immer etwas anderes als das, woraus es hervorgegangen war, gezeigt wurde eine Parabel, eine Kontemplation über Vergangenes. Aus Vorbeitreibendem war etwas Bleibendes, Freistehendes geworden, und wenn es Wirklichkeitsnähe besaß, so deshalb, weil wir plötzlich davon angerührt, bewegt wurden." (ÄdW I 347.)

manner in which the narration of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* foregrounds bodily sensations prompts readers to recreate in their own context sensory impressions translated onto the page by the text's writer through the poetics of the outline. Weiss's graphic outline then prompts sensory experience and affect in readers. A mediation of sensory experience in Weiss's narrative of double mimesis aims to trigger sensations in the readers, but there is no inherent relation of similarity between them. Readers thus experience sensory impressions mediated by the literary text against their own experiential background. Sounds both unhinge the narrative from a punctual reference and create a linkage to readers through double mimesis.

A passage in the second volume of the novel, in which the narrator has reached Stockholm after serving in the international forces in the Spanish Civil War (ÄdW 1983, II, 122-124), provides a good illustration of the use of sound in passages that thematize historical imagination. Having lost touch with his activist friends and without a clear plan, the narrator begins to reminisce about reading Dante with his friends in Berlin. The doubly mimetic description of background noise here becomes a means of construing an alternative temporal dimension. The narrator imagines hearing the voice of his friend Heilmann and seeing a visual image of his moving lips, as he read Dante when the group was together in Berlin (we can note here as significant that the narrator remembers Dante's text as read by a specific person in a specific time and place). Heilmann's voice remains distant, while the narrator begins to imagine the sounds of his own immediate surroundings (the sounds of people, trams and cars passing by) as signs of a shared experience of exile, suggesting that the narrator reads *Divina*

Commedia, written by an exiled author, in relation to his own political exile. The function of background sounds is comparable to places or artworks in this sense, because they become a kind of meeting point of temporal registers. At the end of the passage, the narrator gets up and runs through a maelstrom of sensory impressions on the streets of Stockholm (represented as a paratactic catalogue of perceived objects)³⁶ to meet his friend Hodann, who will give him tasks in the resistance movement. Dante's text and the background noise in Stockholm get connected with a departure from the narrator's moment of disorientation. (Weiss 1983, II, 122-124.) The paratactic catalogue that the narrator recounts while he goes to meet Hodann seems oddly unnecessary to the narrator's goal. The narrator's activity of finding a bridge between his isolation by becoming politically active through meeting Hodann is accompanied with an impulse to build a narrative bridge through parataxis of sensory impressions. These impressions seem like traces of the narrator's moment of intense revolutionary energy to which readers of the novel could connect beyond the specific path that the narrator follows himself.

We should also note that *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* not only makes us imagine the sounds that the novel's characters are hearing. It not only refers to sound, it also creates it. In the aforementioned Stockholm passage, the rhythmic and aural dimension of language draws attention to itself as a medium producing sound.

³⁶ "Doch sank ich nicht hin, wie vom Schlaf befallen, sondern sprang die Stufen hinab, im Gewinde des Treppenhauses, dessen Perlmutterfarbe von einem Netzwerk dünner Risse durchzogen war, darin einzelne Löcher und tief eingekratzte Streifen. Von Absatz zu Absatz fallend, sah ich die Dächer der Hofgebäude aufwachsen und den Rathausturm verdecken, die Fleminggata lief ich entlang, vorbei an der Fahrradwerkstatt, der Kohlenhandlung, den Schaufenstern voller Urnen und Säрге, der graugrünen Bierhalle, mit den reglos Sitzenden an fleckigen Tischen, vorbei an der Fabrik, dem Plankenzaun, und auf der Kungsbrücke übers breite Feld der Schienenstränge, über den Wald der Leitungsmasten." (ÄdW II, 124)

Aus dem klirren der eisernen Räder, dem Verklingen der Glocke, dem Rasseln der Automotoren, dem harten Aufschlagen der Schritte stieg ein Seufzen, ein einzelner Klageruf, an den sich viele gleichartige Stimmen schlossen, ein Schaben und Schlürfen entstand, wie bei einem dichten, endlosen Dahinziehen, zu hören war, wie Lippen sich öffneten, Zungen sich regten, Zähne knirschten und aufeinanderstießen, Worte in allen Sprachen suchten sich aus dem Gormurm hervor, ein Pfiff, ein Zusammenklatschen von Händen, ein Schrei des Schmerzes, des Zorns durchschnitt das Stammeln, Raunen und Singen." (Weiss 1983, II, 123.)³⁷

The onomatopoeic and repetitive mode produces an effect on the reader beyond the exact meaning of the words. Thus, also sound participates in the paratactic poetics of the outline that mobilizes readers' sensory faculties without transmitting a definite message, or by intensifying a medium while transmitting a message.

The poetics that foregrounds sensory experience and double mimesis and serves a rehistoricizing function is also significant in the novel's representation of traumatic historical events. A passage in which a circle of exiled resistance activist, including the narrator, sits at Bertolt Brecht's office in Sweden studying Brueghel and discusses events from the Spanish Civil War exemplifies well how the double mimesis I have described above connects to the novel's preoccupation with trauma.

Vor fast zwei Jahren, in der Buchhandlung in Warnsdorf, hatte ich diese Bilder vor mir gehabt, jetzt, nach den spanischen Erfahrungen, ging eine neue Wirkung von ihnen aus. [...] So waren beim Starren auf Sanddünen und Steinhäufen aus Rillen und Löchern Gesichter hervorgetreten, so hatten sich Wurzeln, verkohlte Balken in lauernde Körper verwandelt, so waren staubgraue Wegstauden zu angehobnen Schußrohren geworden, und aus diesem Übergang zwischen blitzhaften Eindrücken und Täuschungen wucherten weitre Erscheinungen hervor, gezeichnet von dem Ekel, der stets der Furcht nah war. Versetzt in den Zwang, aus Notwehr zu morden, angesichts dieses Bilds drang das Unnatürliche ungehemmt auf uns ein, beleckte, betastete uns, strich uns grauenhaft über die Haut, streckte uns Borsten, Rüssel, Saugnäpfe, Hauer und Krallen (ÄdW II 149-150).

³⁷ "From the clangor of iron wheels, the fading clatter of the chimes, the rattling of the automobile engines, the hard strike of steps, there rose a sigh, an isolated lament, accompanied by many similar voices, a scraping and slurping ensued, like in a dense, endless motion, one could hear how lips opened, tongues stirred, teeth ground and clicked, words in all languages sought to stand out from the murmur; a whistle, clapping of hands, a scream of ache, of anger penetrated the stammer, mumble and singing." (My translation)

The words of the last sentence do not refer to events of the war but, through a list of words that conjure up pointed parts of an animal body, create a sensation of unbearable touch on the skin. When the narrator is asked to recount his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, the narration proceeds with expressive images and lengthy sentences divided into short fragments by commas:

Versammelt war hier, drastisch und frech, alles, was dem Geschäft des Gerüchteschmiedens, des Falschspiels, des Intrigierens nachging, in aufgehängten Blasen, unter Glasglocken, in hohlen Rieseneiern hockte äffisches, gefiedertes Gesindel, Schnauzen, Schnäbel aufsperrend, bereit, Galle, Pech zu speien, Bleikugeln herabzuwälzen, auf einem Dach saß, mit gespreizten Beinen, ein Unhold, die Kleider gerafft, den Arsch entblößend, mit einem Löffel stochernd im vorquellenden Kot. Diese krabbelnden Jauchetonnen, diese Käfer mit Hüten und Angeln, diese Spinnen, die Harfenstränge zum Einfangen der Beute spannen, diese Kreuzungen zwischen Maden und Fischen, Insekten und Nagern, das war das Gezücht, das sich sonst vor uns verborgen hielt, das am Werk war ohne Aufenthalt, das waren die Parasiten, die Pestbringer(...) (ÄdW II, 150.)

Especially when one reads the passage for the first time, it is not clear when the narrator is describing his experience in Spain or the image by Brueghel. What connects the two is the strong bodily experience of pain that the images aim to produce in a recipient and that the description conjures in the reader. This description of battle, pain, trauma, or "hell," thus serves, through the very reduction to words that conjure dislocated sensory experiences and affects, as a medium for representing traumatic experiences indirectly.

In some other passages sounds again connect different instances of historical trauma. In the first volume, the narrator shifts from a dream that alludes to the Holocaust to registering the presence of victims of the Spanish Civil War. This is done through a reference to voices of crying children. These voices seem to belong both to the dream and to refugees from Spain who are sleeping in the

neighboring room.³⁸ I argue that the gesture of using sound as a connecting thread between instances of historical trauma allows for a creation of linkages without collapsing them into a single phenomenon. Although this gesture could also be linked to a generalizing discussion of oppression as a historical constant, as a narrative mode it emphasizes specific acts of reception by the novel's characters portrayed as readers and by the novel's extra-textual readers. In this sense one could say that Weiss's representation of trauma is predicated on an embodied future reader. With this reader the possibility of working through historical traumas enters the narrative space of the novel.

Here I would like to return to the topic of untimeliness in order to highlight the difference of my interpretation of untimeliness as a structure of futurity - even when linked to representation of trauma - and the interpretation by Burkhardt Lindner, who discusses the temporality of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* as a traumatized "untime" (*Unzeit*). Lindner illustrates this temporality with a passage

³⁸ It is interesting to note that the narrator describes in this dream both an escape and his efforts to draw the contours of his path, evoking the discussions on drawing in *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers*: "Ich zeichnete den Tunnel im Längsschnitt, im Hotelzimmer, oder später im Zug, mit dem Bleistift zeichnete ich die Treppenstufen, den Fahrstuhl, der an riesigen Triebrädern hing, die Autos darin, den Wagen mit dem Kutscher, die hin und hergehenden Männchen im Rohr, die Fregatten und Ozeandampfer darüber und, gleich einer Fata Morgana, die Ufersilhouette mit Türmen und Packhausgiebeln. Ich war versunken in das Zeichen, versuchte, ein technisches Wunder zu lösen, doch etwas stimmte nicht, ich wußte nicht, wo meine Mutter verblieben war, eben noch hatte sie mich an der Hand gehalten, unten in dem schnurgraden Gang, eine schreckliche Ungewißheit kam auf, wo ich sie verloren haben mochte, vielleicht war sie verschleppt worden, ich hörte nur ein Geschrei und Jammern, Menschen eilten vorbei, es klirrte, als wären Scheiben zertrümmert worden, die Menge trieb eine Frau vor sich her, man hatte ihr ein Schild um den Hals gehängt, mit der Aufschrift Jidd, in jüdischen Lettern, vielleicht war es meine Mutter, ich schlug mich durchs Gedränge, doch die Frau war nicht mehr zu sehn, was jetzt von mir gefordert wurde überstieg meine Kräfte, etwas, das außerhalb des Faßbaren lag, sollte in einen Begriff gebracht werden [...] es wurden mir etwas zugeschrien durch den Rauch der Lokomotive, schrille Stimmen aber übertönten die Rufe, Kinderstimmen, um Hilfe wurde geschrien, in baskischer Sprache, ich eilte hinaus, in den Nebenraum, den Schlafsaal, wo Kinder sich zitternd, durchnäßt, an mich warfen." (ÄdW II, 76-77.) After this passage, the focal location of the narrative shifts to Stockholm, but a linkage is created through the motifs of train and tunnel: "Langsam fuhr der Zug auf der schmalen Brücke zum Bahnhof ein, mit hellem Tuten des Signalhorns war er aus dem Tunnel unter der südlichen Stadthöhe hervorgekommen [...]"

in which time becomes strangely materialized, something one has to dig through and crush between one's teeth (see Lindner 2000, 116).

Ich wußte in dieser Stunde nur, daß ich hindurch mußte durch eine Fülle von Ablagerungen, die sich so dicht ineinander verschoben und versponnen hatten, daß jede Bewegung gleichsam ein Knirschen und Bersten hervorrief, und nicht nur Bildnetze, Knäuel von Geschehnissen umgaben mich, es war, als sei auch die Zeit zerborsten, und als hätte ich sie, indem ich mich durch ihre Schichten wühlte, zwischen den Zähnen zu zermahlen. In diesem Zustand aber, der einem Rausch, einer Besessenheit ähnlich war, bestand der Wunsch nach einer Regelung, einem Abmessen weiter fort, mit Genugtuung stellte ich fest, daß sich hinter der Allee am gegenüberliegenden Ufer des Flusses die mit Skulpturen gefüllten Gärten der Tuilerien befanden, abgeschlossen von der langgestreckten Fassade des Louvre. (ÄdW II, 15.)

What I would foreground here, in contrast to Lindner, is the effect that the passage creates in the reader. Through its vivid sensory images, the passage transmits a sense of pressure and irritation. Traumatic pressure is represented indirectly in a manner that directly if not explicitly emphasizes contact between the text and the reader. But what kind of contact is this? I would like to stress here that while Weiss's use of sound is so insistent that one might be led to see sound or noise as a drone-like trail or "Tonspur," the references to sound participate in the paratactic tendency of narration in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. Reading these sounds as a traumatic foundation to the novel is only one way to relate them into a narrative.³⁹ The paratactic sensory stimuli are not placed into any definite interpretative frame in the text itself. Similarly, the text seems to be written in a way that it produces affects without defining their meaning at the outset. Even in the passages that evoke traumatic experiences, the insistence on strong sensory impressions and affects does not contradict Weiss's project of

³⁹ At times Weiss articulates, especially in his speech "Laocoön oder Über die Grenzen der Sprache" (1965), a historical trauma (the Holocaust) on the level of structural trauma (insufficiency of language), to use Dominick LaCapra's distinction. (See LaCapra 2001, 75, 77, 82.) However, as Weiss's speech proceeds, it becomes more difficult to ignore the historical dimension: verbal articulation becomes more and more closely linked to a concrete language with a specific history, against which the speaker of the text collides. (See Weiss 1968, 177; see also Willner 2013, forthcoming)

aesthetics of resistance and its reliance on futurity. The transmedial mode contributes to the project of resistance by becoming a medium of coordinating revolutionary energy through readers who are located in a specific time and place. The intensity of the sensory descriptions is important, because even passages discussing violent and traumatic experiences are made into a medium of resistance through the poetics of the outline.

The creation of intense sensory experiences works in a tension with Weiss's long and complicated sentence structures, which slow reading down. This co-existence of potentially affect-inducing and distancing effects can be read as an oscillation between readerly identification and analytical distance. Weiss's poetics involves the reader without the pitfalls of cathartic pleasure or overidentification: it is construed in order to avoid passive modes of reading.⁴⁰ This topic has been discussed recently by Robert Buch, whose analysis of the novel's scenes of violence, most notably of its graphic description of how resistance fighters were executed by the Nazis in Plötzensee prison, shows an oscillation between "recuperating the pathos of resistance" and creating a distance that makes it impossible to experience any sort of catharsis (Buch 2010, 104-117). By contrast, the emphasis on an active reader in Weiss's poetics makes the reader more of a historical agent and less of a mere observer. At the same time, the novel includes examples of dangerous overidentification – the painter Géricault, who painted suffering individuals and fell ill himself, or the narrator's mother, who saw crimes that National Socialists committed against civilians in

⁴⁰ Stephen Halliwell writes in his discussion of tragic pity in Aristotle that art evokes pity especially in a setting in which the recipients know they do not have to act upon their emotions (Halliwell 2002, 215).

Poland and lost her sanity. Weiss seeks to create a poetic space in which readers encounter history as a sensory experience they have through literary mediation without losing their analytical faculties.

The emphasis on sensory experience in Weiss's mimetic mode in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* is important because it moves the text away from ideas of historical knowledge as a fusion of purely mental horizons abstracted from context. It is in this sense useful to compare Weiss's stylistic approach to analogy to influential conceptions of analogical interpretation by Erich Auerbach and Hayden White. The topic of analogy obviously brings to mind Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, especially because of the importance of Dante for Auerbach's study. Dante is the very example that Auerbach uses in *Mimesis* to explain his conception of figurality, which, according to Auerbach, underwent a transformation in Dante's work (Auerbach 1973, 195-202). Based on an eschatological notion of history, the Christian model of figural interpretation established connections between episodes of the Old and the New Testament, seeing the former as figures and the latter as their fulfillments. In allegorical readings common in the Middle Ages, the evoked sensory experience of a description was subordinated to the figural meaning assigned to it. By contrast, according to Auerbach, the figural meaning in Dante's poem does not cancel the sensory reality of figures. Their attention seized by vivid descriptions, readers are likely to focus on experiences of human beings rather than on the divine order against which *Divina Commedia* places them (Auerbach 1973, 202.) The way in which Weiss discusses the effect of Dante's realism in his essay "Gespräch über Dante" supports Auerbach's claim: it is the vivid representation of reality in Dante against which Weiss as a twentieth-century reader weighs his contemporary thoughts (see Weiss 1968, 144-155).

It is possible to point out a tension in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* between historical analogies that would seem to suggest a pre-existing interpretative framework of communist developmental narrative and the emphasis on an active reader, who does not have to adhere to this frame. However, unlike Genia Schulz, who conceptualizes this tension as one between the author's ideological perspective and an autonomous textual dynamic, I would like to emphasize how interpretive agency, of characters and extra-textual readers, is also implicitly built into the aesthetics of resistance promoted in the novel. The novel's analogical connections are both unpredictable and rooted, because they cannot be detached from the context in which they are being drawn. While Weiss's narrative mode resonates with Auerbach's idea that representation of sensory reality has the ability to contest pre-given frames, his poetics of the outline breaks with representation as creation of images. As for Auerbach's analogical method in *Mimesis*, I would argue that it relies on a much stronger sense of unity inhering in a given historical moment than does the analogical practice in Weiss's novel. Auerbach consequently also relies on a much stronger sense of linear tradition and linear fulfillment. Again, I would suggest that the ubiquity of transmedial effects and walking in Weiss's novel encourages us to shift our analytical focus from the totality of a "series of rooms" to analyzing movement in Weiss' novel in less predetermined ways.

It is additionally useful to note the difference between my interpretation and Hayden White's concept of "figural realism," which draws on Auerbach's concept of figurality (see White 1999, 1-26; 87-100). White focuses on the world-making aspect of mimesis to an extent that his model reader is conceived as a free and

autonomous mind detached from any concrete historical setting if not from historical language. Although the world-making dimension of mimesis is prominent in Weiss's novel, Weiss's analogies also require an analysis that can address not only relations inside the text (or in history conceived as a kind of text). The analysis must also be able to address the pressure of history that limits and influences the process of historical imagination and textual interpretation. *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* exercises immense efforts at historical orientation by interpreters who do not possess a secure, settled position of any kind though they are certainly historically embedded. The seemingly arbitrary analogical reading strategy presented in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* thus differs considerably from figural realism, despite superficial formal similarities, because reading cannot be detached from the pressures of history, from the noise of the present that sensitizes readers to certain aspects of texts as opposed to others. "Über Kunst sprechen zu wollen, ohne das Schlüpfende zu hören, mit dem wir den einen Fuß vor den andern schoben, wäre Vermessenheit gewesen. Jeder Meter auf das Bild zu, das Buch, war ein Gefecht [...]"(ÄdW I, 59.)⁴¹ The novel resonates much more with Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf's emphasis on embodied social practice in their study *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (1995). We can note that Gebauer and Wulf also emphasize the role of the senses in mimetic practice that both affects and is affected by sociohistorical context:

Representation, contrary to Auerbach's conviction, is not the act of an autonomous mind but the product of a practice: the practice of the hands in the formation of materials, painting, or writing; of the face, the mouth, the whole body; of the collective activities of a linguistic community [...]. [L]iterary mimesis can intervene in the mimetic processes of social practice. It can provide models for the latter and influence the way in which social behavior is undertaken, alter codifications, or

⁴¹ "It would have been presumptuous to try and talk about art without hearing the shuffling as we shoved one foot in front of the other. Every meter toward the painting, the book, was a battle [...]" (Weiss 2005, 50.)

create new ones; it can persuade empirical persons of their ability to experience the world similarly to models found in literature, if they adopt the codification modes they find there. In short, literary mimesis can itself flow back into social practice. That literature can devise influential ways of seeing (potentially, even possibilities of action) is to be understood in terms of this double movement: literature works with mimetic material; literature can become mimetic material. (Gebauer and Wulf 1995, 21; 23.)

This understanding of literary mimesis resonates with Weiss's poetics because Gebauer and Wulf emphasize how both creation of a literary work and its reception are mimetic processes. Through its mediated connections to the world outside the text, literature can both represent and reconfigure social and linguistic practices.

3. Coordinates of Comparison

How does recognizing the radically paratactic poetics of the outline in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* influence reading the novel as a historical narrative? How does the narrative mode of aesthetic parataxis and double mimesis relate to logics of historical comparison in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*? In the following I will work to the fore dimensions of Weiss's narrative that outline a space of articulation for readers' negotiation of historical relations beyond a single teleological or centripetal narrative dynamic. For instance, the novel's narrative of communist resistance includes multiple references to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust but does not go on to elaborate these references extensively.⁴² They circulate in the novel in a paratactic manner, as do many references to women's emancipation, sexual liberation, linguistic minorities and non-European contexts. Not elaborated into full-fledged narratives or comparisons, these paratactically emplaced histories begin to appear as signs left behind for future reference and

⁴² See for instance Weiss 1983 I, 189; II 77; III, 11-20, 25, 246.

future readers as well. *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* implies a comparative dimension that could encourage connections between historical narratives and problems that are often discussed separately. Weiss's novel brings together not only historical experiences related to antifascism and communism but also evokes other struggles for emancipation. The radical parataxis can be seen also to imply the need to resist hierarchies between these different emancipatory projects.

In order to begin with passages that explicitly address the problem of historical comparison, I will first focus on passages that feature Bertolt Brecht, who the narrator assists to sketch a play based on the Swedish medieval peasant revolt led by Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson. These passages operate with heightened juxtapositions between the Middle Ages and the conflicts of the Second World War. However, I will demonstrate that the Brecht passages also perform historical linkages in more indirect ways. I will then discuss sections in the third volume, which feature the figure of Karin Boye, a Swedish writer who authored the dystopian novel *Kallocain* (1940). While working-class emancipation and *Bildung* are central concerns in the earlier parts of the novel, in the third volume of the novel problems of narration are posed more and more in the context of historical trauma and defeat, as the narrative thematizes the Holocaust and the death of figures of antifascist resistance. One of the important dimensions of the Boye section is its discussion of trauma and the Holocaust in relation to historical experiences related to gender and class. However, what I specifically want to highlight in my reading is the way in which the Boye section probes historical linkages in ways that distance it from generalizing models that focus on clearly

delineated comparative categories or the *tertium comparationis*. Focusing additionally on the paratactic presence of the character of Rosalinde Ossietzky, daughter of a well-known pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, I will show how the second and third volume of the novel perform historical linkages and the problem of historical transmission in indirect stylistic means that resonate with the poetics of the outline and double mimesis discussed in the beginning of this chapter.

I will then turn to a passage in the third volume of the novel dealing with the ancient Khmer temple of *Angkor Wat* and ask what this passage - the only extensive one in the novel that takes place outside Europe - suggests about aesthetic practices of cultural comparison in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. Both the Boye and Angkor Wat passages continue the employment of ambulation, and my central concern will be to show how these passages perform a reader-activated production of space for historical articulation beyond teleological models of development that are certainly questioned in the novel's explicit discourse but still not completely discarded. This becomes clear in the Brecht passage in particular.

3.1. Drawing Outlines with Brecht

The use of paratactic connections between temporal registers becomes programmatic in the second volume of the novel, in which the narrator lives in exile in Sweden and joins other German emigrants gathered around Bertolt Brecht. The narrator, who has aspirations to become a writer, begins to work as an assistant to Brecht and gather material in archives about the Swedish medieval peasant uprising. The account of the narrator's research in the archives is intertwined through unmediated shifts with a narrative of the exiled resistance movement and the beginning of World War II: the invasion of Poland by German troops and Finland by the Soviet Union. In his statements about the stakes of the play about the medieval peasant revolts in Sweden, Brecht emphasizes that the play should not spell out connections to the present as a simplistic history lesson (ÄdW, II, 230). However, it is intended nevertheless to guide the reader or viewer to draw connections on the basis of a developmental framework, to "draw lessons" (*Lehren*) out of the material and its unvoiced connection with the present.⁴³ "Wir hätten nur einzelne Richtpunkte hervorzuheben, aus denen sich die gewaltsamen historischen Veränderungen ablesen ließen" (ÄdW II, 230). Thus, Weiss portrays Brecht as deploying a certain degree of paratactic historical comparison. Brecht is depicted as not spelling out the "lesson" but encouraging

⁴³ "In der Einsicht, daß es anders nicht hatte sein können, wandten wir uns, wieder einmal geschlagen, umringt von weltweiter Übermacht, dieser Geschichtsperiode zu, um in der Wechselwirkung zwischen vergangnen und gegenwärtigen Erfahrungen etwas ausfindig zu machen von den Wurzeln der Verläufe, die heute noch gültig waren. Doch sollte es weniger darum gehn, die damalige, betrogne Einheitsbewegung mit der zerfallnen Front unsrer Tage zu vergleichen, als um die Aufdeckung ihrer Eigenheiten und besondren Bedingungen. Auf andre Weise hatten wir dann aus dem jetzigen, noch dumpfen, ungewissen Mißglücken Lehren zu ziehn." (ÄdW II, 213.)

his spectators into filling in the gaps of parataxis according to an already existing historical framework for critical analysis.

On an ostensible level the second volume of the novel does just this: it juxtaposes the medieval peasant revolts, the Second World War and, implicitly, the postwar register too. The passage also seems to move towards generalization as it contains narrator's explicit discussion of writing that relies on commensurability between historical situations and cultural contexts. In a passage in which the narrator reflects upon his project of becoming a writer who articulates experiences of manual labor, he formulates a conception of translation that is based on an idea of language as a tool towards "Weltwissenschaft":

Anfangs fand ich nicht mehr als bloße Wegzeichen, die sich, kaum sichtbar, in einem Dickicht erhoben, doch konnten von ihnen aus Vermessungen vorgenommen, Verbindungen hergestellt werden, die mir einen ungefähren Begriff von weiträumigen, bisher unbekanntem Gebieten vermittelten. [...] Ich blickte hinein in einen Mechanismus, der siebte, filtrierte, scheinbar Unzusammenhängendes zu Gliederungen brachte, der Vernommnes, Erfahres zu Sätzen ordnete, der ständig nach Formulierungen suchte, Verdeutlichungen anstrebte, vorstieß zu immer wieder neuen Schichten der Anschaulichkeit. Schon beim Aufwachen frühmorgens, und während der Stunden in der Fabrik, war ich Kombinationen von Wörtern ausgesetzt, die ich nach der Rückkehr in mein Zimmer, während der Tage der Schneeschmelze, aufzeichnete. Die ungeheure Kluft zwischen uns, die wir an die Stempeluhr gebunden waren, und denen, die sich in Unabhängigkeit der Literatur, der Kunst zuwenden konnten, hatte nichts Quälendes mehr, vielmehr war es, als sei mir grade durch den Druck der realen Verhältnisse das nahegebracht worden, was ich ausdrücken wollte. Indem ich beim Übersetzen dieses Materials, das in der Sprache dieses Lands verwurzelt war, in meine eigene Sprache das Allgemeingültige fand, verschwand die Kluft zwischen den Sprachen, die Sprache, die ich benutzte, war nur noch ein Instrument, zugehörig einer Weltwissenschaft. Gleichzeitig mit dem Heranfahen der Zinnbarre, dem Anheizen der Öfen, dem Herabsenken der Zentrifugen in die Säurebäder, fügte ich Stücke der schwedischen Gegenwartsgeschichte zusammen, spürte Engelbrekt nach und umriß, auch wenn Brecht nichts mehr davon wissen wollte, die abschließenden Szenen des Epos. (ÄdW II, 306.)

On an ostensible level the narrator discusses here writing as an emancipatory craft that can be brought closer to the workers' hitherto unvoiced experience and acquired through experience and practice. The narrator's reference to a "world

science" (*Weltwissenschaft*) would seem to imply that one could eventually be able to represent the whole world and the whole of history. However, I argue that it would be simplistic to read the narrator's evocation of an absolute commensurability of languages and experiences as the novel's poetic program. It is ironic that the narrator mentions the word "centrifuge" as he spells out his universalizing conception of translation, because it also stands in a tension with centrifugal poetic strategies of the passage and of the whole novel. The passage quoted above performs how Weiss's approach of drawing a graphic outline differs considerably from Brecht's focus on drawing lessons. The beginning of the quote can be read as a description of what happens when a reader of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* approaches the tightly filled pages of the novel: "Anfangs fand ich nicht mehr als bloße Wegzeichen, die sich, kaum sichtbar, in einem Dickicht erhoben, doch konnten von ihnen aus Vermessungen vorgenommen, Verbindungen hergestellt werden, die mir einen ungefähren Begriff von weiträumigen, bisher unbekanntem Gebieten vermittelten." The readers first find "only signposts" (Wegzeichen) without an actual path through the "thicket" ("Dickicht") of the tightly filled pages. They then notice that they can draw connections that give them an "approximate concept" ("ungefähre[r] Begriff") of "wide-ranging, hitherto unknown areas." It seems as if the narrator were here giving a description of reading as outlining and forging linkages. Moving further in the quote, we notice that what this reading strategy produces is not a lesson but a method: "[ein] Mechanismus, der siebte, filtrierte, scheinbar Unzusammenhängendes zu Gliederungen brachte, der Vernommnes, Erfahres zu Sätzen ordnete, der ständig nach Formulierungen suchte, Verdeutlichungen anstrebte, vorstieß zu immer wieder neuen Schichten der Anschaulichkeit." At

the end of the quote, the narrator refers to Brecht's play on Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson and creates a list of bodily gestures: "Gleichzeitig mit dem Heranfahen der Zinnbarre, dem Anheizen der Öfen, dem Herabsenken der Zentrifugen in die Säurebäder, fügte ich Stücke der schwedischen Gegenwartsgeschichte zusammen, spürte Engelbrekt nach und umriß, auch wenn Brecht nichts mehr davon wissen wollte, die abschließenden Szenen des Epos." Although the narrator ostensibly seems attracted to universalizing models of historical comparison that Brecht also advocates, the passage implies a poetics of going beyond Brecht. This is also emphasized by the fact that while Brecht stops writing when National Socialist victories make his presence in Sweden more and more precarious, the narrator continues the work on the play.⁴⁴

Astute sensory perception and its paratactic rendering in narration is connected in the Brecht passage with expansion and critique of Brecht's approach to emancipatory discourse. First, the narrator gives an extremely detailed description of his walk to Brecht's house, focusing on sensory impressions of smell, light and touch.⁴⁵ A passage in the first volume of the novel reads as a kind of commentary on the narrator's walk to Brecht's apartment: "[Die Form der

⁴⁴ Brecht's decision not to finish the play is linked in the novel to a situation of crisis: "Daß Brecht Mitte März sowohl die Arbeit am Caesar Roman, als auch am Stück über Engelbrekt aufgab, hing vielleicht mit der Einsicht zusammen, daß jene Modelle ihrer eignen geschichtlichen Gesetzmäßigkeit unterstanden und uns über unsre Krisensituation nicht hinweghelfen konnten" (ÄdW II 257.)

⁴⁵ "Jasminstauden standen an den weißen Pfosten des Tors, ihr Geruch vermengte sich mit dem Duft von Holunder. Durch ein Flimmern von Laub, Gräsern und Sonnentupfen ging ich auf das Haus zu, gleich halbvergrabnen Elefanten ragten die grauen Steinrundungen aus dem moosigen Boden. Blätter strichen über mein Gesicht, als ich nach dem Eingang des rückwärtig angebauten Ateliers suchte. Hinter einem Spalier führten zwei Stufen zur offenen Tür des Arbeitsraums. Beim Eintreten hörte ich, wie Tombrock mich mit meinem Vornamen anmeldete. Trotz der weißgekalkten Wände und hohen Fenstern lag die Werkstatt in einer dämmrigen Dunkelheit, da die Bäume ringsum das Licht stahlen. Die Größe des Raums war, wegen der zahlreich umherstehenden Tische, schwer auszumachen. (...) Die Anwesenden saßen im Halbrund auf Schemeln und Kisten, etwas abseits, unterhalb der Galerie, mit dem Rücken zum Fenster, kauerte einer, schmalschultrig, in einem tiefen Ledersessel. Ich setzte mich auf eine Truhe, neben Bischoff." (ÄdW II, 144)

Beschreibung] würde spüren lassen, wie unzureichend schon die Beschreibung der kürzesten Wegstrecke wäre, indem jede eingeschlagne Richtung ihre Vieldeutigkeit eröffnete (ÄdW I, 130)." While Burkhardt Lindner argues that the function of the narrator's walk to Brecht's house is to create a topographical imprint in order to remember something that took place in that setting,⁴⁶ I would argue that Weiss's precision in rendering spaces and walks has to do with the novel's preoccupation with future readers in less referential ways. The description of sensory experiences at the path to Brecht's house is an implementation of the poetics of outline: rather than urging readers to simply revisit the house in which Brecht's lived in his Swedish exile, the narration prepares an outline for engaging readers' own mimetic faculties. This implies that readers should not simply retrace a path drawn by the narrator.

While in the house, the narrator's eyes begin to wander and he notices how Brecht's work relies on the unacknowledged labor of women. The explicit discussion during the narrator's first visit to Brecht's house concerns the failure of the international brigades in the Spanish Civil War and the difficulty of resisting "erroneous" historiography, which according to the narrator had already covered the events he had previously witnessed in Spain. This process gives an implicit context to the narrator's perception of women in Brecht's house.

[W]ährend ich mich darum bemühte, etwas von diesen Überlegungen auszudrücken, sah ich durchs Fenster, hinterm Gebüsch, eine hagre dunkelhaarige Frau, eine Zigarette mit langem Mundstück zwischen den Lippen, Wäsche in der Zinnwanne waschen. [...] Später, als andre sprachen, und als mein Blick wiederholt von der Frau im Garten zu der Sekretärin mit dem spröden, mädchenhaften Gesicht, und von dieser zu einer dritten, kraftvollen Frau, die sich zu Brechts Füßen niedergelassen hatte, geglitten war, meinte ich, an etwas zu rühren von dem, was

⁴⁶ "Die *Ästhetik des Widerstands* ist so geschrieben, als müsse das Ich die Orte, Situationen, Zeiträume sich aufs Äußerste einprägen, um eines Tages etwas Verschwiegendes oder Ausgebliebenes von dort holen zu können" (Lindner 2000, 128).

Tombrock, der Freibeuter, als seine Verbundenheit mit Brecht bezeichnete. Die hellblonde Gehilfin, deren Züge an eine Zeichnung von Kollwitz erinnerten, wartete geduldig auf Brechts Anweisungen, resigniert verharrte die Frau draußen in ihrer Absonderung, und auch jene, die ihm den Arm aufs Knie legte, als wolle sie einen besondern Anspruch auf ihn geltend machen, deutete, mit ihrer Wachsamkeit, ihrem ständigen Beobachten, an, daß sie bereit war, sich ihm unterzuordnen" (ÄdW II, 152.)

The novel's overall project of "conscious deregulation of the senses" (ÄdW I, 8) becomes the basis here for a sharper vision of the surrounding reality able to articulate observations that are not taken into account in the discourse that is being fabricated in the middle of the room in Brecht's house. The focus of the narrative falls here on the figures that made Brecht's work possible, which reminds readers of the discussions at the Pergamon altar about construction workers who carried the weight of the stones (ÄdW I, 12-13). The Pergamon passage is stylistically evoked in the Brecht passage too, in the repetition of participle constructions (ÄdW II, 150).

The strong thematization of gender in the second and third volumes of the novel is an aspect of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* that has offered an alternative focal point to the reading of the novel as a narrative of communist resistance. A good example of this alternative focus can be found in a recent essay by Swedish writer Agneta Pleijel, who writes about her response to Weiss's novel in the 1980s and in the present (Pleijel 2010, 17-35). She describes taking part in a discussion on *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* in Sweden in the 1980s, when she criticized the novel for blindness towards the German Democratic Republic and the anticommunist resistance in Eastern Europe. In 2010, when a new paperback edition of Weiss's novel was published in Sweden, Pleijel's reading ends up with a different focus: the importance of women and gender in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

Pleijel writes that she now agrees with Birgit Munkhammar, who had defended Weiss's novel in the 1980s and lauded its manner of conceptualizing history in terms of a "manly" and a "womanly" pole. For Pleijel, the figure of Karin Boye, who discusses with the narrator the traumatized condition of the narrator's mother in the third volume of the novel, represents a key character of the novel and stands for an "isolated, denied truth that has to be expressed one day." In Pleijel's reading, this is the project of writing a counterhistory of women. In her post-1989 reading Pleijel reads the novel's female characters as counterpoints to both the figure of Heracles and an ideal of violent masculinity. (Pleijel 2010, 30-32.)

Fredric Jameson's introduction to the English translation of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* approaches Karin Boye's figure in a somewhat different vein. Jameson, who otherwise understands futurity in a determined manner, in terms of the future of the political left, reads Boye as an "unresolvable contradiction," as "some future agenda" (Jameson 2005, xxxv). What draws attention in Jameson's phrasing is the word "some," which suggests that Boye's role in the narrative is not merely subsumed under something like the "womanly pole of history." In his reading of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, Jameson stresses the innovative formal project of the novel, which, as he puts it, demands a new reading practice (Jameson 2005, xii). What is the connection between this claim and the difference between Jameson's and Pleijel's approach to Boye? What if we do not read the Boye passages solely in terms of the history of the left or the history of women but consider how the excessive concern with linkages and juxtapositions in the passages on Boye influences reading the histories she indexes?

3.2. Transmission and Parataxis: Karin Boye and Rosalinde Ossietzky

The third volume of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* begins as the narrator meets his mother, who has fallen into post-traumatic shock and ceased to utter a word. She has witnessed crimes committed by National Socialists in Poland on civilians, many of them Jewish. The discussion of the mother's traumatization is approached in the novel through the character of Karin Boye, who identifies with the mother's condition. This can be interpreted both as an example of overidentification, particularly because Boye later commits suicide, and an implicit suggestion that readers should contemplate links between Boye's suffering and that of the mother. In my reading of the Boye chapters, I will argue that we can capture the novel's manner of historical narration better if we consider how Boye's character plays an important role not only as a female character or visionary artist able to approach trauma, but also in a broader experimentation of the narrative with linkages and transmission. Both Karin Boye and Lotte Bischoff, the only member of the Schulze-Boysen-Harnack resistance group who survived to live after the war, become key figures in the third volume because through them the activity of mediation is foregrounded. One important aspect of the novel's last volume is to portray the role of mediators as valuable. But while Bischoff, "unbemerkte Wanderin" (ÄdW III, 267), comes to represent often invisible figures of resistance who performed their actions on the sidelines, Boye's role in the novel is more difficult to define.

Boye's "visionary" and "hymnic" artistic methods, in which art is supposed to represent a self-contained universe, are juxtaposed to the "hammering method"

of documentary realism that the narrator had begun to learn as an assistant to Brecht - a method that works closely with reality as a tool that also enables emancipation. The narrative probes here the two dimensions of mimesis I discussed above: the world-reflecting aspect of mimesis and the world-creating poesis. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that the problem of the mother's trauma foregrounds the imperative of combining them. Boye thus becomes an antithesis to Brecht's model, but this does not exhaust her role in the narrative. The relevant passages are constructed in a way that draws attention not only to a dialectic of oppositions but also to other forms of entanglement and contact.

Even a brief account of how the narrative juxtaposes Boye and the narrator shows that the narrative structure weaves together multiple threads of the novel's discourse of history. The narrator realizes that, in the year 1932, he had distributed communist leaflets outside a building in which a National Socialist rally took place while Boye had been inside, momentarily carried away by the "dark exotic rituals" of the gathering. The narrator suggests that Boye's aesthetic universalism as well as her bourgeois education makes her initially blind to the rising fascism and antisemitism in National Socialist Germany (ÄdW III, 28).⁴⁷ However, speaking about Boye's *Kallocaïn*, a dystopian novel about a fictive totalitarian state, the narrator suggests that Boye, who had not realized the dimensions of antisemitism and genocide in National Socialist Germany, had still been able to translate her experiences in Berlin of the 1930s into this novel. Boye

⁴⁷ "Obgleich Schindler jüdischer Herkunft war, und Margot, ihre Geliebte, eine jüdische Mutter hatte, sei ihr die Hetze gegen eine Rasse unverständlich gewesen, sie habe nie zwischen Religionen unterscheiden können, im Glauben allein eine poetische Kraft gesehn, gleich für alle Völker." (ÄdW III, 28.)

herself blurs this relationship between Nazism and her book: "vielmehr sei er von einer schon früh bestehenden Ohnmacht hergekommen" (ÄdW III, 28). It is unclear what Boye refers to here: to her earlier trip to the Soviet Union in which she grew disillusioned with its political project, or to her psychic imbalance. While Boye's character is connected to a narrative thread of suicide prevalent in the third volume of the novel, her psychic struggles are not linked to one specific cause and are explained in the narrative only gradually. They get linked to several factors: her difficulties in living out her lesbian sexual orientation, her guilt about her failed relationship with a Jewish woman named Margot, whom she had helped to come to Sweden,⁴⁸ and her political discouragement as totalitarianism gains hold in Europe.

While the Brecht section foregrounds sharp juxtapositions, one could say that the narrative forms of contact in the Boye passage could be more aptly characterized with entanglement and chains of transmission. The third volume of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* begins with a passage that, as readers gradually realize while reading, is focalized through the mother, or in the mother as imagined by the narrator (ÄdW III, 7). The narrative is also at times focalized in Boye but in the

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that the passage evokes here indirectly the presence of the novel's author. The author's own location is marked in the text with the city of Alingsås, where Weiss first arrived on his Swedish exile. In the novel, it is Karin Boye who escapes her complicated relationship to the Jewish woman Margot to Alingsås. This moment of contact between Boye and the author can be read against the context of Weiss's autobiographical writings. In *Fluchtpunkt*, Weiss writes about imagining the fate of his school friends, some of whom became perpetrators and some victims. "Zu wem gehörte ich jetzt, als Lebender, als Überlebender, gehörte ich wirklich zu jenen, die [...] ich längst verraten hatte, gehörte ich nicht eher zu den Mördern und Henkern. Hatte ich nicht diese Welt geduldet, hatte ich mich nicht abgewandt von Peter Kien und Lucie Weisberger, und sie aufgegeben und vergessen. Es schien mir nicht möglich, weiterzuleben, mit diesen unauslöschlichen Bildern" (Weiss: 1983b, 136.) A comparable sense of probing unactualized possibilities - even the possibility that a victim might have become a perpetrator - can be felt also in the Boye passage of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

next moment looks at her from the narrator's perspective. The narrative mode of the passage could be compared to the deictic ambiguity that Michael Pflugmacher discusses in his analysis of ekphrastic passages of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*: "Bedeutsam ist die Mischung verschiedener Realitätsebenen durch zahlreiche formale Mittel: der Leser ist bei seiner Romanlektüre angehalten zu prüfen, ob – insbesondere nach einem Absatz, aber auch mitten im Text – ein Ortswechsel, Erzählerwechsel, Zeitsprung oder ein Fokalisatorwechsel stattgefunden hat" (Pflugmacher 2007, 282). Like the spatial coordinate "here" in the Dante passage analyzed above, the character of Boye is a meeting point of historical discourses and perspectives, a narrative device to suggest otherwise unvoiced linkages between them.

I would like to highlight a passage in which Boye gets connected with a remarkable example of historical linking beyond the juxtaposition with the narrator and his mother. Boye, who later commits suicide, is not only linked to the traumatized condition of the mother but also to a paratactic chain of other characters and their deaths, diseases and disappointments. This passage begins when the narrator hears about the death of Willi Münzenberg, a German communist and antifascist activist, who has been found in the forest with a steel wire around his neck (ÄdW III, 23). The narrator talks about Münzenberg with Max Hodann, who argues that Münzenberg has not taken his own life nor become the victim of the Nazis, but has been killed by the Stalinist Soviet Union. The discussion with Hodann is at the end linked to Boye, as the narrator mentions how he talked about Münzenberg on a walk with Boye.

Auch als ich Münzenbergs Kindheitserlebnis erwähnte, wie er mit dem Strick die Treppe hinauf zum Dachboden gestiegen war, um sich dort auf Befehl des Vaters zu erhängen, wies er [Hodann] die Möglichkeit des Freitods ab, gab jedoch zu, daß ihn das Trauma jener Stunde über all die Jahre hin verfolgt haben könne, bis es sich, gespenstisch entstellt, durch fremde Gewalt, über ihm entlud. Wir waren, beim Gespräch über diesen Tod, auf die Krankheit meiner Mutter zurückgekommen und damit zu den seelischen Einwirkungen auf den Zustand des Körpers, wobei ich mich an einen Bericht Münzenbergs über Lenins Erkrankung in Zürich erinnerte. Darüber sprach ich im November auf einem Spaziergang mit [Karin] Boye. (ÄdW III, 23)

It is hardly likely that all these characters' experiences are here linked, because they are considered equivalent or having the same causes. Münzenberg's death, his father's suicide, the illness of narrator's mother, Münzenberg's report of Lenin's sickness in Zürich and, finally, the walk with Karin Boye are all connected in three sentences. The narrator then talks about trying to imagine the second of Münzenberg's death, which becomes an image of a lost future:

Beim Gedanken des Erhängens im Wald, diesem Wald, der, wie Hodann gesagt hatte, Münzenbergs Sinn für die Schönheit der Natur entsprochen haben müsse, [...] versuchte ich, mir die Sekunde vorzustellen, in der sich das Seil um Münzenbergs Hals zusammenzog, die Sekunde unter dem Ast, an dem er aufgehängt worden war, die Sekunde, als die Gedächtnisbläschen in seinem Gehirn zerplatzten und die dichte einzigartige Welt in der grauen Substanz explodierte, wobei auch die Engramme aus der Spiegelgasse auseinanderflogen, und Lenin, zusammen mit ihm, noch einmal starb, Lenin, der ihm, dem jungen, erwartungsvollen Revolutionär, entgegengekommen war, steif vor Schmerzen, denn er trug damals diesen Gürtel von dickem rotem Ausschlag um den Leib, dieses glühende Rosenbeet.

The narrator is here concerned with transforming pain and death into a revolutionary energy, while also commemorating victims of political violence. What is also significant is that the passage mentions Lenin and Spiegelgasse: it recalls an earlier passage in the novel that discusses a missed linkage between historical and political avant-garde, as Lenin was housed in the same street, Spiegelgasse in Zürich, in which a group of dadaists met at Cabaret Voltaire (ÄdW II, 62). The narrator also discusses Boye's suicide with Hodann while walking. We can see how Boye becomes an overdetermined contact point that cannot be subsumed into any one historical perspective. Her suicide makes it

more important for the narrator to foreground her life as a "verlorene Zukunft," a life that indexes possible paths for future emancipation to which the novel outlines paths of transmission. This is the key to understanding the novel's third volume: the remarkable Dantean *Hadeswanderung* of dying figures and hopes coexists with a heightened poetic concern with transmission and linkage. Through this complicated network, Boye's and narrator's discussions are linked to a larger history of a missing link between artistic experimentation and political resistance.

In addition to the heightened narrative linking in Boye passage, I would like to foreground one of the most pointedly paratactic figures in the novel, Rosalinde Ossietzky, daughter of the pacifist Carl von Ossietzky. I argue that Rosalinde is another sign of a "future agenda" (Jameson) not integrated in any obvious way into the main threads of the narrative. Rosalinde Ossietzky is introduced into the narrative after Hodann says to the narrator that they should go to meet Brecht. The narrator's meeting with Ossietzky interrupts this signaled narrative direction towards Brecht's house. The first thing the narrator notices about Ossietzky is her "appearance of total isolation" ("Ihre Haltung der völliger Abgeschlossenheit", *ÄdW* II, 131). She is described as a cosmopolitan ("Weltbürgerin"), but also as someone who is isolated in her Swedish exile (*ÄdW* II, 135). The narrator ostensibly connects this with Rosalinde's inability to engage herself in her exile context Sweden, unlike the narrator, who has links to the exiled antifascist resistance movement. The narrator and Rosalinde separate on Engelbrekt Street, which reminds readers of the narrator's project with Brecht and thus underlines a more fundamental separation. Rosalinde contemplates "following the example of

Toller," her protégé, who had committed suicide. The setting of Engelbrekt Street for this scene emphasizes that the narrator's choice of becoming an engaged author differs from Toller's and Rosalinde's disillusionment. Rosalinde's inability to connect is also thematized in a passage in which the narrator remarks that for Rosalinde the image of Toller after his death was more real than for the narrator, who, together with other members of the resistance, tried to create a "continuity" out of fragmented pieces of information on Toller's death.⁴⁹ Hence, Rosalinde also gets connected with the thread of suicides and to the character of Boye: the narrator remembers seeing Boye at Rosalinde's bed in hospital. However, although the narrative builds an expectation of her suicide, she deviates from the line of suicides: after a long while of not talking about Rosalinde at all, the narrator mentions that she got married, after which she disappears from the narrative.⁵⁰ Her figure is not written into any substantial narrative, it is rather unceremoniously left out of focus.

I foreground Rosalinde's paratactic position in the novel, because her role in the narrative goes beyond her ostensible role as an unhappy, unbelonging, apolitical exile. I am interested in Rosalinde as a character that brings different geographic places and historical experiences together without articulating their relations.

⁴⁹ "Als sie, mit tonloser Stimme, wiedergab, wie er gestern am Gürtel des Bademantels an der Dusche neben seinem Zimmer im Mayflower Hotel hing, glaubte ich zuerst, daß sie von etwas Geträumtem sprach, doch für sie war dieses Bild wirklicher als die Kontinuität, die ich, zusammen mit Rogeby, Bischoff, Lindner, aus fragmentarischen Meldungen herzustellen versuchte." (ÄdW II, 139)

⁵⁰ Mir fiel ein, daß ich sie in Viggbyhom einmal, als ich Rosalinde besuchte, getroffen hatte, und ich glaubte auch, sie an Rosalindes Bett im Krankenhaus gesehn zu haben, im Halbdunkel, aus dem die gelbe Krawatte leuchtete, die sie zum Pullower trug. Sie bestätigte ihre Freundschaft mit Rosalinde Ossietzky, die nun, wie Boye annahm, durch die Ehe mit einem Lehrer des Landschulheims, über ihre Entwurzung, ihre Nichtzugehörigkeit hinweggekommen sei. (ÄdW III, 28-29)

Importantly for my concerns, these experiences are related to imperial contexts beyond the immediate geographic and historical scope of Weiss's novel. "Mütterlicherseits stamme sie von einer indischen Prinzessin ab, erklärte sie, väterlicherseits von einem polnischen Ritter, der zu Metternichs Zeit für die Freiheit seines Landes gekämpft habe [...] " ÄdW II, 131) Rosalinde's family background connects places that would seem to have little to do with each other: India, the colony of the British Empire, and Poland, that was divided and under the rule of three different occupying states. Rosalinde, who speaks to the narrator "half Swedish half English," tells that she has been at school in Britain with the children of the leading imperial elite: "Sie sei erzogen worden zwischen der Elite, die für den Fortbestand des britischen Imperiums zu sorgen hatte, ausgewachsen sei sie unter der Vorstellung, daß ihr ein besonderer Werdegang beschieden sein müsse" (ÄdW II, 132). She then recounts that she had studied in a theater school in Britain and expected to be able to continue her education as an actress in Sweden, where she was invited to move after his father Carl von Ossietzky, who was imprisoned for treason by the National Socialists in Germany, got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1935. However, the director of a Swedish theater school named Brunius did not take her in, because she claimed Rosalinde could never learn to speak Swedish without accent (ÄdW II, 133). Rosalinde thematizes her own isolation as a lack of space in Sweden and Europe of the World War era for "internationality."⁵¹ In relation to Swedish and German context her character

⁵¹ Es sei nicht die Auswanderung, sagte sie, die ihr die Empfindung der Unzugehörigkeit eingab, ausgereist, eingereist, weitergezogen sei sie immer, die Unbeständigkeit habe ihre Familie im Blut. Die Großeltern meines Vaters, sagte sie, sprachen noch polnisch, meine Mutter war in Indien geboren, in England erzogen worden, aus Oberschlesien übersiedelten die Eltern meines Vaters nach Hamburg, dort lernte mein Vater vor dem Krieg meine Mutter kennen, die Anhängerin Pankhursts, Frauenrechtlerin war, in einem Dorf in Essex heirateten sie Neunzehnhundert Dreizehn, fuhren dann wieder nach Deutschland, lebten in Hamburg, Berlin,

highlights the lack of awareness of imperialism. She becomes a figure of disconnect between instances of imperial history in prevalent discourses. When the narrator leaves Rosalinde in an earlier passage at the Engelbrekt Street, she is described posing a silent question: "Rosalindes Mund blieb verschlossen, ihren Augen aber las ich die Frage ab, ob der Weg, den ich ging, mich nicht eher in die Irre führen, statt mir Genugtuung bringen würde (ÄdW II, 203). The fact that Rosalinde does not become an actress and is described as mute when she and the narrator part their ways suggests that a bridge that would integrate Rosalinde's experience, or historical experiences that she is an index of, has not yet been constructed - perhaps even that the narrator is not likely to construct them himself.

3.3. Stepping Outside the Frame: Beyond Europe

This thought (Marxism) contained seeds of the generalizing universal: it authorized the Stalinist monstrosities. Whereas the Marxist imaginary, if it had been separated from its obsession with seizing power, would have had the opposite effect, providing for Relation. (Édouard Glissant 1997, 223)

We should note that Boye's discussions with the narrator are conducted during extensive walks in which sense impressions from the landscape become intertwined with the words of the discussants. The landscape becomes a meeting-point between the distinct perspectives of the narrator and Boye.

Während des Gesprächs zwischen Boye und mir, bei dem unsre Wege immer ausgedehnter wurden, und das trotz wochenlanger Unterbrechungen doch Kontinuität bewahrte, eine Kontinuität, die von der immer gleichbleibenden Umgebung noch betont wurde, ereignete sich

waren oft unterwegs für ihre Zeitschrift, für die Antikriegsbewegung. Es war vielmehr so, sagte sie, daß sich gegen den Internationalismus, in dem sie aufgewachsen war, immer das Kleinliche, Engstirnige erhoben hatte. In Berlin habe man sie Ausländerin, Jüdin geschimpft, ihrer dunklen Haut, ihres dunklen Haars wegen, in der Viggbyholmschule riefen ihr die Kinder Inderin, Indianerin nach. (ÄdW II, 136).

im Winter und Frühjahr der Fall Ungarns, Jugoslawiens, Albaniens, Bulgariens und Griechenlands. (ÄdW III, 27).

The narrator's remark on the expanding walks is significant: the movement of walking implies the possibility of expanding the ground for historical articulation in the future.

In order to elucidate further the importance of topography and futurity for historical imagination in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, I will turn to a passage in the third volume, in which one of the resistance activists, Richard Stahlmann, describes to the narrator his visit to the ruins of the ancient Khmer civilization Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat in present-day Cambodia. While the most overt theme of the passage is the history of totalitarianism, I will read its narrative mode as a moment when the text reaches the limits of a universalizing logic of comparison.

Immediately before the Angkor Wat passage Stahlmann and the narrator discuss their divergent interpretations of the communist party's role in resistance (ÄdW III, 95-96). While Stahlmann emphasizes holding the party line, the narrator sees the party as a "sketch" that has to be continuously reworked and improved through open discussion and experiment. Stahlmann's visit takes place in the year 1927, when he is sent by the Comintern to support the revolutionary movement in China. Several instances in the Angkor Wat story emphasize how Stahlmann crosses the line from a resistance fighter to an oppressor. He travels by first class on a ship that is carrying imperial servants, and he is approached by one of them, who wants to show him the statues at Angkor Thom. Thus, he

socializes on the ship with functionaries of colonialism. When at the temple site, Stahlmann is told by one of the French colonists that in the moonlight, his own facial features resemble those of the gods depicted on the temple. Stahlmann smiles at this interpretation, which ironically makes the similarity even more striking. Stahlmann, whose actions are dictated by the party line, has drifted to the side of the oppressors. Stahlmann's story of losing his sanity underlines the novel's sense of a revolution gone astray.

Stahlmann relates this story to the narrator when the two are on their way to meet Rosner, the editor of the Comintern's newspaper *Die Welt*. Stahlmann's story is thereby framed as a "digression towards which Rosner would have no understanding," in the context of the perspective of the Comintern to which the two should eventually reconnect by entering Rosner's office (ÄdW III, 109). The figure of Stahlmann is based on a real historical person, who participated in the murder of deserters in the Spanish Civil War. Stahlmann is a functionary of the Comintern and thus promotes a certain kind of straightforward internationalism. The temporal structure of the novel, however, creates an implicit level to the narrative as the events are narrated from the post-war moment. It was known to Weiss that Rosner would eventually become a victim of the very discourse that he helped to promote. Weiss also knew that the historical Stahlmann co-founded the *Abteilung für Auslandsspionage* at the Ministry of State Security (*Staatssicherheit*) of the German Democratic Republic (see Brunner 1999). Stahlmann's figure in the novel is thus connected in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* to a critique of militaristic and antidemocratic dimensions of communism.

In his article "Gibt es eine hinduistisch geprägte Ästhetik des Widerstands? Postkoloniale Nachfragen, betreffend vor allem Angkor Wat," Michael Hofmann considers the Angkor Wat passage crucial for what he calls a postcolonial reading of the novel. Hofmann's interpretation of the passage is motivated by a wish to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the novel in the globalizing, post-1989 world. According to Hofmann, relevant topics in the novel would most likely have to do with historical memory and the Holocaust, intercultural constellations, gender and historical experience, and the representation of violence. Hofmann asks whether the novel could be read anew from perspectives of current literary studies interested in such concerns and whether the novel possibly even works as a "corrective" to assumptions in cultural studies that do not sufficiently consider hierarchies or material circumstances. (Hofmann 2008, 143-144.)

Hofmann's interpretation of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* suffers, however, from two problems that I would like to address in turn. First, he advances a normative reading based on a culturalist concept of multiculturalism, in which the "respect of cultures in their difference" is taken as a guarantee for functioning cultural contact. Second, Hofmann understands a postcolonial reading to be one in which one ascertains whether Weiss's novel is compatible with the aforementioned notion of multiculturalism. Hofmann's initial promise of a postcolonial reading that rethinks both the novel's project of resistance and the concepts used in current literary studies delivers only an investigation as to whether the novel offers a specifically "hinduistic" version of resistance aesthetics, "eine Art spirituelle Ästhetik des Widerstands (...) die als asiatische Variante eines

herrschaftskritischen Denkens zu verstehen ist und die in postkolonialer Perspektive das europäische politische und ästhetische Denken zu bereichern vermag" (Hofmann 2008, 146). Hofmann ultimately tries to find resistance potential in the inner logic of his notion of hinduistic spiritualism rather than in the aesthetic logic of Weiss's text. Reducing the postcolonial project to the "enrichment" of Western thinking, Hofmann's conceptual framework does not allow for close reading of the novel and consequently makes it difficult to understand how Weiss's literary text could play a specific role in producing knowledge.

One can agree with Michael Hofmann that the passage in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* approaches Angkor Wat from a European point of view. This description is given from Stahlmann's perspective, the temples are compared to European period definitions of classicism and baroque (ÄdW III, 104), and the Cambodian people who appear in the passage are almost indistinguishable from the ones depicted on the altar and serve as a background to Stahlmann's own political dilemmas and psychological states. One can say that the perspective of the passage remains European, in the manner described by Edward Said in the preface of his book *Culture and Imperialism*: the "source of world's significant action" is Europe and the non-Europeans present in the passage seem like figures from a prehistoric time (see Said 1993, xix). Hofmann is thus correct in noting these Eurocentric features, which play a role in the narrative. However, I would argue that we can better understand the postcolonial significance of the Angkor Wat passage if we focus attention on the function of space and place in the narrative. As with many other architectural representations in the novel, the

Angkor Wat passage serves as a meeting point, a shifter,⁵² between different historical moments and different thematic threads of the novel's narrative. Angkor Wat can be seen as a kind of parallel to the description of the Pergamon passage, and it also resonates with the Dante motif in the novel. While Hofmann emphasizes that the Khmer temple is described as an image of a "terrifying symmetry of a dominating instance" (ÄdW III, 99), I highlight instead Stahlmann's remark that the pyramid consists of gaps that are as important as the visible structures: "Diese Pyramide war eine gedachte. Sie stellte sich dar als ein teilweise durchsichtiges Gehäuse, dessen imaginäre Kontur über die Spitzen aller von den Seiten her anwachsenden Türme gezogen wurde [...] Die Zwischenräume waren von gleicher Bedeutung wie das Erbaute." (ÄdW III, 106.) These gaps become a point of entry for a different reading from the one favored by Hofmann, who argues that the novel gives a subversive reading of the Pergamon altar but leaves out such a possibility in the case of Angkor Wat (Hofmann 2008, 156). I would like to propose that a subversive reading of Angkor Wat is also possible and is even implied by the evoked linkage between Angkor Wat and the passages on Pergamon, in which the narration discusses and performs subversive and embodied reading. This becomes important for understanding both the novel's aesthetic project and its relevance for postcolonial critique.

⁵² Shifter is a term used by Roman Jakobson, among others, for grammatical units whose meaning cannot be determined without reference to the use of a given linguistic unit in a specific context of utterance. I am talking about architectural space as a shifter in the sense that it becomes a site of deictic shifts, transitions between temporal registers and narrative perspectives. See Jakobson 1971 and Herman 2002, 346-347.

What is also often ignored in the readings of the Angkor Wat passage is the fact that it is narrated during Stahlmann and the narrator's walk in Stockholm. At the beginning of this walk, the narrator emphasizes the opening of horizons: "Ein langer Weg lag vor uns, über Kungsholmen nach Sibirien, zur Upplandsgata Siebenundsiebzig, und ich wußte, daß während des Gehns, wie unter einem Scheinwerfer, sich unerwartete Ausblicke auftun würden, nach allen Richtungen hin. Auch ihn zog es immer wieder zu dieser Brücke, die den Schritten eine luftige Freiheit gab, und den Blick reich machte mit den goldgelben, über die Inseln ausgebreiteten Stadt, und die Augen befähigte, weit hinauszuschauen über die Horizonte." (ÄdW III, 94-95.) Similar to other ambulatory passages, the narration here weaves together Stahlmann's account and the surrounding scenery of the walk. "Beim Überschreiten der hohen Brücke, über den Kanal, die Eisenbahnlinie, geriet er wieder ins Erzählen, langsamer geworden im Gedränge, wurde auch seine Stimme verhalten, dem Brausen ringsum entstieg eine von Zikaden durchschrillte Landschaft. In schwerer und feuchter Hitze stand er aufrecht im offenen Automobil, neben dem Kolonialbeamten, der ihn eingeladen hatte. (ÄdW III, 97.) The ambulatory structure of the passage suggests contact between this imaginary pyramid in Angkor Wat and the Swedish setting. Although the temple itself depicts a totalitarian order in which lower classes endure absolute servitude, the description is interrupted by this poetic gesture of pasting it onto a different, remote setting. The significance of this connection, however, is never explicitly articulated; it could be seen as another future agenda that the topographical dimension of the novel establishes without discussing it.⁵³

⁵³ The gesture of linking Cambodia and Sweden resonated in Weiss's own context with the war in Vietnam. Weiss's notebooks as well as the newspaper clippings housed at the Peter-Weiss-Archiv

While Hofmann considers the historical avantgarde and Surrealism important for a "postcolonial reading" of the novel because these movements were interested in non-European thinking (Hofmann 2008, 150), I would see their importance in providing aesthetic models for the novel's poetic strategies, which continually gesture towards expanding possibilities of historical articulation. The passage on Angkor Wat suggests us a further future agenda: a postcolonial critique of historical comparison as well as a question of the relevance of historical avant-garde to articulating alternative modernities. The Angkor Wat passage implicitly raises the question of how to relate distinct historical experiences of oppression, which the novel's explicit frame - a Communist dialectic of oppression and resistance - universalizes. Through its emphasis on historical bridging and rendering sensory experiences in specific topographical settings, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* encourages comparisons beyond a binary of absolute equivalence or absolute incommensurability. The gesture of creating a medium for future concerns counteracts the universalizing tendency of the Communist frame by concretizing production of historical knowledge beyond punctual historical reference and ideological framing. One could characterize the novel's audience not only as readers with an active historical imagination sifting through an immense amount of detail, but also as pedestrians whose perambulations through the text produce new historical linkages.

in Berlin show that during the time of writing the third volume of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, Weiss was intensively involved in following and commenting publicly on events of the Vietnam War as well as the fall of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia (Peter-Weiss-Archiv 3029, 3030, 3031. Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin). Thus, the events of the war in general and the genocide committed by the Red Khmers in Cambodia in particular are among possible associations sparked by the discussion of colonialism and totalitarianism in this specific Cambodian setting. Through its placement in the middle of a narrative discussing the Holocaust and Stalinism, the description of Angkor Wat becomes a place in the novel that implicitly connects these different historical examples of totalitarianism, violence and genocide.

4. Conclusions

Dies alles fügte sich zusammen zu einem Gewebe, das seine Vollendung schon in sich trug. (ÄdW I, 305).

Wenn wir an die Zukunft der Welt denken, so meinen wir immer den Ort, wo sie sein wird, wenn sie so weiterläuft, wie wir sie jetzt laufen sehen, und denken nicht, dass sie nicht gerade läuft, sondern in einer Kurve, und ihre Richtung sich konstant ändert. (Ludwig Wittgenstein: Vermischte Schriften, 24.)

Reading Weiss's novel simply in terms of overt narrative content may lead to the conclusion that the text belongs to a completely different era disconnected from our own. As we have seen, though, the novel's poetics defy the very notion that it could become obsolete after certain political situations have passed. On the one hand, the novel's stylistic experimentation disturbs a straightforward approach to reference and a simple transfer of meaning from one temporal, spatial or medial context to another. On the other hand, the articulation of reading as a context-related and precise form of labor counteracts the otherwise dehistoricizing tendency of an analogical mode.

While *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* can be read as a novel about communist resistance written in a specific Cold War context, and less directly also as a novel about the Holocaust that would be difficult to assign to the category of Holocaust fiction, its project of formulating an aesthetics of resistance also makes it into something else. My analysis argues for including Weiss in a much less easily definable category of historical fiction: literary works that probe different forms of historical relatedness. These are works that, when read anew, create new ground for understanding how literary narratives can interrupt overdetermined approaches to history.

We should keep in mind, however, the novel's dual function as a narrative of resistance and a narrative of commemoration. We also have to consider how to approach the inscription of futurity in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* after the failure of the communist experiment has forced a questioning of political utopianism. I have approached futurity as a structural aspect of the novel's historical narration. Untimely reference in this structural constellation does not simply undermine an ostensible political program as for instance Genia Schulz argues (Schulz 1986, 14-15). Untimely reference also extends into the future as a paratactic grid that energizes a future reader through double mimesis. The temporal complexity and the poetics of rehistoricization I have described complicate historical narratives predicated on unified developmental progression - despite the fact that the novel pointedly refers to communist developmental narratives of a teleological history. The analogical and anachronistic reading method that Weiss's style promotes has a rehistoricizing dimension that counteracts the tendency of Communist master narratives to universalize instances of oppression and emancipation. Historical linking as a means to rethink received historical narratives or actual political alternatives is thus not only discussed in passages such as the one on Dante but also performed in the novel's poetics.

In certain other readings of Weiss, for instance the one advanced by W. G. Sebald, the aspect of historical trauma prevails over concerns of futurity. Sebald's essay focuses almost exclusively on the dimension of mourning (or melancholia) in Weiss's writings and the incapability of "our race to learn from its doings" (Sebald 2003, 146-147). Sebald discusses psychological motives behind Weiss's

interest in Dante and refers to *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* as the “place from which the author Weiss no longer returns.” It is interesting to note that Sebald reads the novel as a series of images rather than as a narrative that probes movement between them. Sebald's mode of reading seems to freeze the production of relations that I have analyzed above. Sebald's reading of the Dante passages in Weiss also does not include a discussion of the way in which Dante's *Divina Commedia* is evoked as a work of art meant for the living, one that has to be connected with their specific concerns. We can thus see that readers of Weiss can well choose not to focus on the moment of breaking the frame but reinforcing a familiar connection. Sebald's reading places static images next to each other and treats history as a totality understood as traumatic condition.

Fredric Jameson's interpretation of the novel as a "machine for reliving [a] sheerly corporeal agony" and a narrative that highlights the "immediacy of the body and the anguished mind which we are ourselves called upon to retrace by way of reading" (Jameson 2005, ix), does more justice to medial characteristics of the text as they pertain to its political dimension, which Sebald dismisses as “ungeheuerlichen ideologischen Ballast” (Sebald 2003, 147). However, the stylistic emphasis on historical specificity and sensory immediacy in the poetics of Weiss' novel resists both the melancholic and redemptive versions of history as totality. My interpretation of the construction of reading in Weiss's narrative resembles more what Corinna Mieth, who has studied the status of utopia in Heiner Müller and Alexander Kluge, calls "postteleological utopia" - a narrative futurity that no longer provides a positive idea of a better society but retains a potentially utopian perspective through the implied standpoint of an active,

critical recipient (Mieth 2003, 21). This recipient no longer exists in a frame predicated upon historical totality and teleology. The perspective of an embodied recipient is thus the only possible utopian position that the literary narrative can contain.⁵⁴

If we did embark on reading Weiss's novel in relation to the concerns of the historical period after 1989, what would this mean in practice? For one, the novel's gesture of looking back to a previous epoch seems to translate today into a task of making sense of complex and at times obscured dimensions of the Cold War era. Fredric Jameson argues that Weiss's novel "now has a significant role to play in the historicity a united Germany must construct in order to incorporate the experience of the GDR" (Jameson 2005, xii). Although one can hardly say that the novel has played such a role after 1989, Jameson's assertion indicates one of the areas in which the novel might prompt new perspectives - on narrating Cold War history and the turn to the post-1989 world, beyond models that emphasize resolutions or the end of history. Jameson's remark, however, would require additional clarification, because the novel's relationship to the "experience of the GDR" is highly complicated - the novel is representative neither of historiography of West Germany nor East Germany. If one places the novel

⁵⁴ Genia Schulz, who otherwise adheres to deconstructive methods, seems to hold on to the concept of totality in her reading of Weiss's novel. Reading the novel as an "also politically necessary correction of the political discourse," she claims that the aesthetic realm provides a possibility of completion, not possible in reality because of the pressure for political action. "Als Roman ist die Ästhetik des Widerstands ein Gegenentwurf zur Realität. Während diese dem Augenzeugen das Nicht-Gelingen aller Totalität vor Augen führt, schreibt die Schrift nachträglich "zu Ende" und stellt ein geschlossenes Ganzes her, hebt das Unfertige der Realität auf. Indem diese "Kunst" wird, erhält sie den Sinn, der ihr in Wirklichkeit abgeht, wird in doppelter Hinsicht "vollendet". (Schulz 1986, 10). I suggest that the temporal complexity in which the narrative operates complicates Schulz's claim. I read the image of a "net" that already carries its completion (Dies alles fügte sich zusammen zu einem Gewebe, das seine Vollendung schon in sich trug, *ÄdW* I, 305) not as a reference to a teleological conception of time and history, but as an inscription of the dimension of a future reader in the text.

against divided memory discourses in East and West Germany, Weiss's novel may actualize historical perspectives and tensions that are not captured in linear and insular models. Its geographic imaginary also goes beyond Germany and encourages questions on how to narrate historical experiences of World War II beyond national frameworks. As I have shown, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* is also a fruitful text for postcolonial reconceptualization of historical comparison.

Foregrounding a less determinate futurity in Weiss' novel could potentially renew its significance in analyses of modes of historical narration in postwar European literature in the wake of widespread concern with traumatic, post-genocidal and post-war memory. Leslie A. Adelson has argued that the critical vocabulary for aesthetic practices related to futurity is not yet as sophisticated as it is in the area of memorial cultures and the representation of history. Although Adelson writes in reference to the emerging literatures of the twenty-first century, her concern with "aesthetic practices in contemporary literature that revolve around the future in some still undefined ways" and her wish to draw attention to "a much more variegated palette of both concerns and forms than a dichotomous fixation on the genres of either science fiction or utopian writing allows" alert us to consider whether all figures of futurity in postwar German literature function according to a logic of utopia and totality (see Adelson 2011, 155). This emerging critical project would also provide new perspectives on reading Weiss's novel, which has to date been conceptualized primarily in terms of punctual reference, linear historical development and traumatic narration.

It is important to note that a comparative critic reading Weiss in this manner does not necessarily have to claim that a program of "multidirectional memory" or "minimal incommensurability" is fully articulated, realized or advocated in Weiss' novel. Instead, drawing attention to the comparative dimension of the novel stresses how the profound experimentation with modes of historical narration in Weiss's novel provides material that allows us to articulate history in this vein. It does so both in terms of content, addressing moments of contact between historically situated experiences (for instance, the Holocaust, colonialism and the modern oppression of women), and in terms of structure: processes of historical imagination that the poetics of the novel perform by indirection and parataxis. The comparative impetus and the rehistoricizing poetics I have described could provide us with material to articulate a conceptual logic of comparison "beyond the unique and the universal" (Rothberg 2009, 36). For twenty-first-century comparative literature Weiss's novel outlines a parataxis of different historical instances of emancipation. If we build a bridge between Weiss' novel and the concerns of twenty-first-century comparative literature, we will have to articulate further the muted critique of teleological comparison that I have identified in the novel. On the other hand, this kind of reading also continues the novel's project of resistance in spirit, as it uses the text as a space of articulation beyond its explicit content or original context of publication.

I emphasize reading Weiss's paratactic narrative not only as an archive of multidirectional memory but also as a medium of historical orientation towards the future. The narrative mode of Weiss's novel opens the possibility of revisiting both the narrative of antifascist resistance and its edges from the vantage point of

a noncontemporaneous reading context of readers attuned to different histories of belatedness, "lost futures" and expectations after 1989. The reading context after 1989 makes it apparent that what a renewed reading *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* means is formulating an analytic for reading the novel in which the significance of the gaps in Weiss's paratactic narration is not pre-determined.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Martin Rector, who has written an article on recent Weiss scholarship to the 2008 volume *Diese bebende, kühne, zähe Hoffnung. 25 Jahre Peter Weiss, Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (edited by Arnd Beise, Jens Birkmeyer and Michael Hofmann) suggests that in the future a new interpretation able to both engage with the historical material of Weiss's novel and to "leave it behind" might emerge ("Realienerschließung zugleich aufnehmende und hinter sich lassende Gesamtinterpretation des Romans"). While this formulation again evokes an unfruitful binary between punctual relationship to context and reading that somehow goes "beyond" history, it also seems to vaguely recognize the need to rethink historical reference in the analysis of Weiss's novel. Rector also remarks in passing that an "overarching interpretation" might not "yet" be possible, which poses the question why exactly the growing temporal distance to the novel's original publication enables such an interpretation. One may assume that Rector refers to a future in which Cold War narratives that have been used to interpret Weiss's novel will be less prevalent and less automatically applied to interpreting the text. Rector's article seems to operate with the premise that the "overarching interpretation" of the novel will be made in a German reading context.

CHAPTER THREE:

"I WOULD NOT EVEN INVENT A TRANSITION." (RE)CONTEXTUALIZING JOSEPH CONRAD

1. Introduction

Sebald's gesture of referring to Conrad by his Polish name in *Die Ringe des Saturn* opens up a rather unusual category of belonging in discussing this author, because Conrad is more often seen as a British early Modernist writer of the imperial era. It moves in the opposite direction to Conrad's own tendency to construe himself as a British author, or at least as an author who was "writing for the British" (see Walkowitz 2006, 38-39). By beginning from Conrad's childhood in Poland, Sebald reverses Conrad's own narrative gesture in *A Personal Record*, in which Conrad refuses to begin his autobiographical text from his childhood origins.⁵⁶ It is less well known in the Anglophone context that Conrad has for a long time had a parallel status in Poland as a "Polish author," whose work, although composed in English and mostly not even mentioning Poland, has invited readers to connect it with specific Polish cultural contexts. This chapter

⁵⁶ Conrad explains in the "Familiar Preface" that his choice to disregard chronology had to do with the "remoteness" of his origins: "Could I begin with the sacramental words 'I was born on such a date in such a place'? The remoteness of the locality would have robbed the statement of all interest. I haven't lived through wonderful adventures to be related *seriatim*" (Conrad 2008, 211). Instead, Conrad begins with a statement that introduces a concern with location of literature while simultaneously playing down the idea of a fixed relationship to context: "Books may be written in all sorts of places." Later on in the narrative, Conrad tells how the manuscript of his first novel *Almayer's Folly* traveled with him - as an idea in his mind and then as a physical manuscript - from the ship where its writing began, to Congo where Conrad had decided to travel already when he was a child, and finally to Poland. This strange itinerary of the manuscript that had yet to reach its audience is thus proposed as an alternative to the conventional fixation to place, the narrative gesture of "I was born on such a date in such a place." The traveling manuscript is an ambivalent image, as it could be read both as a metaphor of a hermetically sealed literary text that survives strangest of situations and as a suggestion of literary texts' wordliness. It is as if Conrad extended the context of his writing to all these places and at the same time refused to place it in them.

investigates the phenomenon of Conrad's "Polish" contextualization further by asking how we could understand the Polish connection analytically beyond Sebald's biographical invocation or Polish reception. I will investigate Conrad instead as a potential bridge linking postcolonial frameworks of analysis. This bridge is built on Conrad's multifaceted poetics of history. My reading also seeks to integrate perspectives on the more "marginal" European Conrad reception in Poland into the larger and dominant framework of postimperial readings of Conrad. I will further outline implications of this move for comparative literary studies. While the category of nation was for a long time central to Conrad's reception, it is more apt to characterize Conrad as a "denizen of empire" (Melas 2007, 45), and to recognize that his narratives emerged from the context of imperialism, a historical condition that produced lingering effects and still influences the way Conrad is read today. Since imperial contextualization makes Conrad's writing resonate with several particular locations connected to transnational histories of imperialism and their legacies of racism and inequality, the relationship between Conrad's texts and these interactive contexts becomes an important part of what these texts signify in reading contexts in early twenty-first-century comparative literature.

In the first half of this chapter I analyze Conrad's style and reader constructions by studying his poetics of juxtaposition and impressionism that foregrounds sensory experiences. While these stylistic juxtapositions and sensory representations in Conrad's texts resemble the strategies aiming to engage readers in the poetics of Weiss and Sebald, Conrad also integrates his readers into an imperial frame. In the next section, I will work to the fore ways in which

Conrad's readers have also amplified alternative forms of linkage in Conrad's work and explored different comparative dimension of Conrad beyond the closed universe of developmental time on which imperial comparison depends. As Natalie Melas has shown, the result of tensions between an imperialist frame and the presence of other cultures and locations in the imperial space that Conrad narrates is a breakdown of hegemonic imperial comparison into incommensurable, localized readers. These readers relate his texts to specific historical pressures of imperialism instead (Melas 2007, xiv, 84-95). My Conrad chapter is closely connected to the driving concern of the other chapters in this dissertation. What is the medial significance of literary writing that operates with and generates weak historical analogies? As in the chapters on Weiss and Sebald, I consider the possibility that these analogies can be read not as references to a generalized whole of historical experience (however broken or traumatic it might be) but in "rehistoricizing" or "reterritorializing" fashion, that is to say, as outlines for new historical perspectives to be actively construed by embodied readers. Moreover, my approach to Conrad's analogical poetics also draws attention to how historical imagination in reading his texts operates in an untimely manner, connecting literary texts to contexts not originally intended by a given text. The lingering history of imperialism as our own reading context makes these "unimplied" reading positions central for our investigation of how Conrad's writing prompts new historical perspectives. Thus, although Conrad did not produce texts with a manifest preoccupation with questions of historical narration as in the case of the two postwar authors Weiss and Sebald, the condition of postimperial reading that I elucidate poses crucial questions about how Conrad's narratives function as media of historical imagination.

In the second part of this chapter I study Conrad in terms of both a potential and actual linkage to a specific setting, as both this author's biography and his literary works have functioned as media of historical imagination in the Central European region that has to date not served as the primary analytical context for reading Conrad, who established himself first and foremost in the British letters. While Conrad's imperial gaze has also been read against the grain from a perspective outside Europe, for instance in the groundbreaking postcolonial discussion initiated by Chinua Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977/1988), I draw attention to Conrad's link to Eastern parts of Europe in order to provide a different perspective onto specific historical pressures that are also linked to reading Conrad. Conrad did not often write explicitly about Poland or East Central Europe. He addresses this location most directly in a short story *Prince Roman* (1911) and in his autobiographical narrative *A Personal Record* (1912), from which Sebald draws in his narration of Conrad's early life, as well as in a few political essays.⁵⁷ However, other Conrad texts, especially *Under Western Eyes* (1911), which deals with Russia and its revolutionaries, and the novel *Lord Jim* (1900) have also been important in Conrad's Polish and Central European reception. "Poland" can be approached as an erased context, absent as a readable text in most Conrad stories yet one that has had a peculiar second-order life alongside his texts' circulation through the twentieth century.

⁵⁷ The most relevant essays in this context are "The Crime of Partition" (1919) and "Autocracy and War" (1901).

Instead of conducting a survey of Conrad's reception in a specific setting or asking how we can link Conrad's texts, such as the novel *Under Western Eyes*, to Poland or Central Europe, I will discuss approaches to erasure of Poland in Conrad. I seek to highlight the potential function of his texts as a bridge between postcolonial and "continental" discussions of Conrad in European letters and, specifically, between approaches to comparison in these critical contexts. Hans-Christian Trepte and Elmar Schenkel, editors of a recent essay compilation titled *Zwischen Ost und West: Joseph Conrad im europäischen Gespräch*, perceive Conrad's work as an important mediator "between Eastern and Western Europe" (Schenkel & Trepte 2010, 7). These critics also point out that mediating function they ascribe to Conrad has become visible in the "contemporary new Europe" and that Conrad now provides a space for working through (*aufarbeiten*) East Central European history. However, Trepte and Schenkel's volume operates in an internationalist paradigm that does not respond to readings of Conrad that are sensitive to postcolonial reading contexts. The postcolonial approaches have read Conrad's texts against the grain of dominant internationalist approaches to his work in order to create new articulations of relation and comparison. Finally, I will also articulate a critical alternative to the modes of filiation with which national and internationalist paradigms alike have tended to understand the relationship between text and context in Conrad's oeuvre.

2. Imperial Comparison and Dissimilation

There are many readings of Conrad that articulate in general terms a tension between the ostensible subject matter of Conrad's texts and the author's interest

in experimenting with poetic strategies foregrounding problems of narrative transmission. On an explicit level, Conrad's texts operate with a clearly delineated British narrator and an audience that corresponds to its cultural assumptions. They thus employ what Naoki Sakai calls monolingual address by marking certain languages and cultural locations as foreign and approaching them as an outside to a distinctively enclosed community (see Sakai 1997, 6). Conrad's modernist style, however, is often seen as complicating what the stories mediate. In the context of a more formalistic research tradition, this tension has been incorporated into a narrative about how realist certainties were historically subjected to modernist doubt and later the postmodernist play of signification. By contrast, I will consider Conrad's narrative mode with respect to the texts' potential to function as archives of historical imagination, texts that through their readers have come into contact with specific historical pressures of the twentieth century. Drawing on Wai Chee Dimock, Fredric Jameson, Natalie Melas, Edward Said and Rebecca Walkowitz, I will articulate what Conrad's narrative mode looks like when we read it in terms of a textual dynamic that has historically specific significance in postimperial readings of Conrad.

2.1. Impressionism and the Reader

Some of Conrad's explicit comments upon his work as a writer seem to presuppose an active reader. For instance, Conrad states that the reader of his works provides the other half of the book (see Jean-Aubry 1927, 208). Conrad critics have also seen the author's style, often characterized as impressionist, as mobilizing the readership (see Acheraïou 2010). According to Ian Watt, an

important aspect of Conrad's fiction is the "problematic relation of individual sense impressions to meaning" and the "difficulties in translating perceptions into causal or conceptual terms" (Watt 2006, 355).⁵⁸ In this context, Watt introduced his famous concept of delayed decoding: "the delay in bridging the gap" between "the individual perception and its cause," between impressions rendered in the narrative and the protagonist's act of interpreting their meaning (Watt 2006, 356). Conrad's narrative strategy of delayed decoding potentially creates a reading experience in which sensory experience seems more important and memorable than any specific referent to which it is linked. Delayed decoding opens up a gap between an impression and its function in an interpretive frame. Drawing attention to this gap between sense impression and meaning can be seen to draw readers closer to the represented scenes and to foreground readers' experience of the text: "[T]he ordered narration of pre-impressionist novels presents the world of a universal observer [...] The impressionist novel tries to represent the immediate epistemological experience, so the reader almost becomes the one encountering phenomena, just as the characters do, but not in the after-the-fact reflection of traditional narrators" (Peters 2001, 24).

What end, however, does the foregrounding of readers' experience of sensory presence serve, if we posit an implied author and consider effects intended by this implied author? As we have seen in the analysis of Peter Weiss, there are very different ways of understanding the notion of an active readership. In

⁵⁸ The focus on Conrad's impressionism has tended to privilege the visual dimension of Conrad's writing. Ian Watt, one of the prominent British Conrad critics who have used the term, draws an analogy between literary impressionism and impressionist painting, in which "visual sensations of a particular individual at a particular time and place" became the central artistic concern (Watt 2006, 351).

Weiss, the interplay of analogical tendency and sensory representations emphasizes the readers' own mimetic faculties. In Weiss's construction of the reader, the author does not transmit impressions but creates a medium that sparks new relations beyond the text's frame. I showed that Weiss uses such moments both to break with chronological time and to suggest the construction of reconfigured historical narratives through readers pressured by specific historical situations to do so. Thus, although modernist analogical strategies are often read simply as atemporal or dehistoricizing, I emphasized the rehistoricizing aspect of such strategies in the case of Weiss. What is the relationship between this reading of Weiss's poetics of analogy and Joseph Conrad? How does a comparative dimension depend on readers in the case of Conrad, whose works operate emphatically in the paradigm of imperial comparison?

While both Conrad and Weiss foreground the creation of relations and strong sensory effects, Conrad's implied reader is activated not to contest historical narratives but to confirm them. The lack of a wayward reader construction in Conrad can be illustrated by drawing attention to how both Conrad and Weiss use paratactic sequences of descriptions of bodies for amplifying effects. Fragmentary images of body parts and a repetitive style seem to be in both author's texts devices that conjure bodily sensations in the reader and spark imaginative connections between impressions chained together in otherwise paratactic sentences. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for example, Africans are described as separate body parts that barely stand out from the "smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage" landscape (HoD, 13) - the

landscape is humanized and African people dehumanized, and together they build an ominous narrative background.

But suddenly as we struggled round a bend there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of African limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, or eyes rolling under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us - who could tell? [...] We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign - and no memories. (*Heart of Darkness*, 35-36)

Chinua Achebe points out that while there is a passage in the story in which an African woman momentarily stands out from the background as she walks towards her European spectators and makes a strong gesture, this moment remains subordinated to the racist frame in which she is silent and kept "in her place" (Achebe 2006, 340-341).⁵⁹ Thus, moments of strong sensory effects that might come dangerously close to breaking out of the story's ideological frame, as we saw in Auerbach's analysis of Dante (see chapter 2; Auerbach 1973, 202), are embedded in a narrative context in which Conrad's African characters are denied speech and emplaced in the past.

The opening of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* also interrupts the narrative with paratactic lists evoking gestures, body parts and strong sensory impressions.

⁵⁹ "She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash or barbarous ornaments [...] She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. [...] She came abreast of the steamer, stood still and faced us. [...] Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose. A whole minute passed and then she made a step forward. There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her [...] She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky [...] She turned away slowly, walked on following the bank and passed into the bushes to the left. Once only her eyes gleamed back at us in the dusk of the thickets before she disappeared." (HoD 61)

Rings um uns hoben sich die Leiber aus dem Stein, zusammengedrängt zu Gruppen, ineinander verschlungen oder zu Fragmenten zersprengt, mit einem Torso, einem aufgestütztem Arm, einer geborstnen Hüfte, einem verschorften Brocken ihre Gestalt andeutend, immer in den Gebärden des Kampfs, ausweichend, zurückschnellend, angreifend, sich deckend, hochgestreckt oder gekrümmt, hier und da ausgelöscht, doch noch mit einem freistehenden vorgestemmtten Fuß, einem gedrehten Rücken, der Kontur einer Wade eingespannt in eine einzige gemeinsame Bewegung. (...) Jede Einzelheit ihren Ausdruck bewahrend, mürbe Bruchstücke, aus denen die Ganzheit sich ablesen ließ (...) geballte Faust am nicht mehr vorhandnen Schwert (...) (*Ästhetik des Widerstands*, I, 7)

However, here we should remind ourselves that the depiction of body parts in Weiss's novel does not suggest a lack of agency in the humans depicted, as in Conrad's depiction of Africans, but is linked to what could be called bodily reading (see chapter 2). Weiss seeks to emancipate the aesthetic importance of the body and draws on modernist parataxis in his poetics of the outline that engages the senses of readers and does not create complete images. Weiss also uses delayed decoding more radically than Conrad. As I argued in chapter 2, Weiss's narrative prompts readers to imagine their presence in front of the depicted scene before the description is historically placed in time and space. In Conrad, fragmentary sensory impressions are soon distanced with teleological rhetoric and racist images of African bodies. Conrad's narrative seems to encourage readers to put together an image of prehistoric Africans whose strong bodies might present a threat but who are not allowed to enter the discourse of the story. Natalie Melas points out that in Conrad's comparisons "what ought to resolve itself into equivalence or proper metaphorical subordination veers into comparison as a momentary oscillation between foreground and background" (Melas 2007, 73). This effect creates a momentary tension with respect to the text's frame that nonetheless locates cultures in a fixed hierarchy, in which non-Europeans represent the past of Europeans, as if the former occupied lower stages of a single developmental narrative of progress. In the narrative frame of

Heart of Darkness, momentary parallels between foreground and background participate in an ominous sense that the difference between Africans and Europeans is smaller than one might think but that this difference has to be defended with effort. Conrad's implied reader is literally impressed by such images and participates actively in this interpellated defense.

Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* provides another example of a narrative that emphasizes strong sensory stimuli as well as visual and aural metaphors. At the same time the novel carefully orchestrates their effects. The discourse of *Under Western Eyes* emphasizes looking, hearing and multiple perspectives and often creates a sense of focalizing through the reader, as Gail Fincham has also observed.⁶⁰ An important aspect of the novel is the interplay between its explicit cultural binary of East and West and an implicit narrative dynamic that seems to dismantle this binary. Inconsistencies in the narrator's voice implicitly encourage readers to question an absolute gap between West and East, although this gap is argued to be unbridgeable, both by the narrator and by several Russian characters, whose arguments echo the Slavophile-Westerner debate that divided the Russian elite in the nineteenth century (see GoGWilt 1995, 150-151). Having first given the impression of his own Western origins, the narrator mentions only in passing that he was born in St. Petersburg and raised by his Russian parents in

⁶⁰ "These tableaux powerfully impress themselves upon the reader's consciousness, so that although it is the narrator who speaks of what he imagines a character seeing, that section of text is equally focalized by the reader." (Fincham 2008, 65). Fincham argues that Conrad's narrative technique of separating narration and focalization is designed to make readers sympathize with the protagonist Razumov, which she sees as a prerequisite for telling Razumov's story to Western readers (Ibid. 78). She sees the novel's narrative form as an act of bridging the "chasm" that separates the West and the East and as Conrad's attempt to bring about a union of Enlightenment rationality, acts of sympathetic imagination and vision that works as a catalyst of this unifying process (hence the obsession of the narrative with visual motifs).

Britain (UWE 187), revealing that he cannot himself be considered unproblematically British or Western. Thus, unlike Marlow, whose name refers to a town in Britain, the language teacher is not easily locatable in cultural terms.⁶¹ The narrator further undermines both his Westernness and his ostensibly neutral position through digressions and editorializing that draw attention to his person. He apologizes for rambling after having characterized wordiness and disconnectedness as something particularly Russian (UWE 4), and he seems to be more and more affected by Russian characters' speech and perspective as the narrative progresses. Additionally, by posing as an unimaginative, untalented mediator who "would not even invent a transition" (UWE 75),⁶² the narrator implicitly foregrounds the act of linking. While the narrator deems himself unable and unwilling to fill in gaps, the narrative form, which underlines abrupt breaks and transitions, foregrounds the imagination of an implied reader.⁶³ It

⁶¹ One might claim that this is precisely why Conrad discarded here his preference towards narrator figures, who transmit their stories *orally* to their audience. Unlike in the more famous Marlow stories, the language teacher transmits his story through writing - a medium that (if we imagined him as a real person speaking and writing) conceals possible traces of his Russian background in his speech. It is of course tempting to draw an analogy here between the narrator and Conrad's own relationship to speaking and writing in English. Conrad's own Polish background is indeed often thematized in the context of *Under Western Eyes*, because Conrad tried to distance himself from some British critics' attempts to define him as a "Slav." In the preface of *A Personal Record*, a text written simultaneously with *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad not only emphasizes how Poland had always drawn more from Western cultural sources than from the east but also how his father's activities against Russian rule should not be seen as "revolutionary" but as "revolts against foreign domination" (Conrad 2008, 202). Conrad's dislike of the word revolution echoes in the way revolutionary activity is in *Under Western Eyes* understood as a consequence to the uncivilized Russia's autocratic rule - as an "Eastern" practice that does not contribute to the historical development tied in the novel's rhetoric to the West. The ambiguity of Conrad's statements about his Polishness can be linked both to his wish to distance his authorial voice from his "origin" and to his attempt to construe this origin as Western.

⁶² "In the conduct of an invented story there are, no doubt, certain proprieties to be observed for the sake of clearness and effect. A man of imagination, however inexperienced in the art of narrative, has his instinct to guide him in the choice of his words, and in the development of the action. A grain of talent excuses many mistakes. But this is not a work of imagination; I have no talent; my excuse for this undertaking lies not in its art, but in its artlessness. Aware of my limitations and strong sincerity of my purpose, I would not try to (were I able) to invent anything. I push my scruples so far that I would not even invent a transition." (UWE, 75)

⁶³ *Under Western Eyes* thus employs parataxis both on its discursive level, as both the narrator and Russian revolutionaries argue for keeping the West and Russia apart, and on the level of

seems that the implied reader is meant to perceive the sense of how the narrator's act of posing as a Westerner glosses over several complications.⁶⁴

In his study on Conrad's "ethics of readership," Amar Acheraïou argues that in *Under Western Eyes* more than in any other of his narratives, Conrad "is clearly intending to establish a close relation with the reader via rhetorical and stage theatrics" that "aim to draw the audience's interest and shock them into active participation." (Acheraïou 2010, 166) I would argue, however, that this reader is one who collaborates with the text's project and defends rather than dismantles the proposed frame of cultural comparison. There is a noteworthy discursive relationship between *Under Western Eyes* and the better known Conrad story *Heart of Darkness*, because both texts characterize the object of their description - Africa or Russia - as a "blank space."⁶⁵ In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow recounts

narrative structure, which operates with abrupt breaks. For instance, the novel's first parts end with Counselor Mikulin's question "Where to?," with which he implies that Razumov, who has come to Mikulin in order to dispel any doubt that he has a part in revolutionary activity, has no place to go. The narrator then begins the second part of the novel, which moves the narrative from St. Petersburg to Geneva with his meditation on his own inability to invent transitions (see UWE 75).

⁶⁴ The complexity of the narrator figure has not always been noticed by readers; for instance Gustav Morf claims that events are seen through the narrator's "English, i. e. his emotionally detached and rather unimaginative eyes," which "gives the narrative an apparent objectivity it would have lacked if Conrad had given free rein to his indignation." (Morf 1976, 184).

⁶⁵ There are also other instances of imperialist and racist rhetoric reminiscent of *Heart of Darkness* in *Under Western Eyes*. The Russian peasant Ziemianitch (whose name echoes the Russian word for earth or land, *zemlya*, but even more closely the Polish *ziemia*) is referred to as a "brute" by Razumov, who has just given him a beating (UWE 28). A Russian woman walking down the street in her fur coat is referred to as a "savage": "But to the casual eyes that were cast upon him he was aware that he appeared as a tranquil student in a cloak, out for a leisurely stroll. He noted, too, the side-long, brilliant glance of a pretty woman - with a delicate head, and covered in the hairy skins of wild beasts down to her feet, like a frail and beautiful savage - which rested for a moment with a sort of mocking tenderness on the deep abstraction of that good-looking young man." (UWE 30)

The ambivalent coexistence of elegance and lack of civilization in the phrase "a frail and beautiful savage" recalls the way in which Marlow describes an African helmsman charged to steer a boat on the Congo River. Marlow calls the helmsman an "improved specimen," because having learned his skills from the colonizers, he seems to have unnaturally jumped over several steps in the process of civilization. The dashing woman on a Russian street seems to serve an analogous function in the novel's reliance on teleological notion of civilization. The "savage" woman in a fur

having as a child been fascinated by a map that included an empty white space at the center of Africa. Both in *Heart of Darkness* and in *Under Western Eyes*, the blankness refers to a location without history.

Razumov received an almost physical impression of endless space and of countless millions. He responded to it with the readiness of a Russian who is born to an inheritance of space and numbers.

Under the sumptuous immensity of the sky, the snow covered the endless forests, the frozen rivers, the plains of an immense country, obliterating the landmarks, the accidents of the ground, levelling everything under its uniform whiteness, like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history. It covered the passive land with its lives of countless people like Ziemianitch and its handful of agitators like this Haldin – murdering foolishly. (UWE 25)

The relation between these two different parts of the West is ambiguous, because Conrad's narrator is here speaking about a colonizing empire, not about colonized lands. Christopher GoGwilt proposes that this kind of linkages in Conrad ultimately reveal how Conrad's texts, which dealt with Empire and Revolution, the two important political topics of the imperial era, operated at the intersection of discourses about European divisions and discourses about Empire (GoGwilt 1995, 3). The seemingly unlikely connection between Africa and Russia echoes the position granted to Africa and Siberia (the limit of Europe that is evoked in *Under Western Eyes* with the images of vast snowy spaces) in Hegel's philosophy of history, in which both Africa and Siberia are treated as outside history.⁶⁶ The linkage between *Heart of Darkness* and *Under Western Eyes* reveals

coat suggests that even the cultured upper classes in Russia are not far from the uncivilized peasants. This reminds readers that although the narrative urges them to identify with Razumov's perspective, they are reading about another side of a "chasm." There is also an allusion to the phrase "exterminate all the brutes" in *Under Western Eyes*, as one of the Russian revolutionaries talks about "Balkan intrigues" and proposes that one should "extirpate the scoundrels" (UWE 163).

⁶⁶ Hegel famously refers to Africa as "no historical part of the World" and thus places it altogether outside history (Hegel 1996, 99-100). When it comes to the geographic direction of the east, Hegel places Siberia in an analogous outside position: "We must first of all eliminate Siberia, the northern slope of Asia. For it lies outside the scope of our enquiry. The whole character of Siberia rules it out as a setting for historical culture and prevents it from attaining a distinct form in the world-historical process." (Hegel 1975, 191.)

how the construction of the West was a response both to colonial endeavors in non-European lands and to the political divisions of Europe. As we see in the textual description of Russia as a blank space, *Under Western Eyes* operates with an interplay of sensory immediacy which draws readers close to the Russian story and orientalist rhetoric which distances them.⁶⁷ These stylistic complications to the binary of West and East are ultimately subsumed, as in *Heart of Darkness*, to an ideology in narrative that temporalizes cultural differences. Aaron Fogel argues that in the presentation of the narrative of *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad struggles with showing how all human discourse is coercive - even British discourse that is often thought as civil and democratic. At the same time, the narrative tries to keep Russia apart from the West by displaying Russian speech as a more extreme version of "coercive dialogue" (Fogel 1985, 185-188). These attempts to mobilize the reader thus ultimately suggest a reading position that defends a teleological comparative frame. The proposed reading method of analogies moves from sensory immediacy towards general principles.

⁶⁷ Before the aforementioned quote about endless landscape covered in snow, the narrative of *Under Western Eyes* focalizes on Razumov and his bodily experience of standing on the Russian ground: "Razumov stamped his foot - and under the soft carpet of snow felt the hard ground of Russia, inanimate, cold, inert, like a sullen and tragic mother hiding her face under a winding-sheet - his native soil! - his very own - without a fireside, without a heart. He cast his eyes upwards and stood amazed. The snow had ceased to fall, and now, as if by a miracle, he saw above his head the clear black sky of the northern winter, decorated with the sumptuous fires of the stars."(UWE 25)

2.2. A Reader Not Implied? Sensuousness and Territorialization

The literary, it seems, comes into being not only through the implied reader (see Iser) but also through the reader not implied, not welcome. This includes both the reader who turns a deaf ear to a particular tone of voice and the one with ears newly and differently sensitized, who now hears nuances the author did not. (Wai Chee Dimock: "A Theory of Resonance", 1067)

The object of my digression from the straight course of Miss Haldin's relation (in my own words) of her visit to the Château Borel, was to bring forward that statement of my friend, the professor's wife. I wanted to bring it forward simply to make what I have to say presently of Mr. Razumov's presence in Geneva a little more credible - for this is a Russian story for Western ears, which, as I have observed already, are not attuned to certain tones of cynicism and cruelty, of moral negation, and even of moral distress already silenced at our end of Europe. (*Under Western Eyes*, 121)

This passage from Conrad's novel *Under Western Eyes* recalls the concerns of the section 2.1. on creating impressions for particular kinds of readers located in the imperial center. While the novel's title operates with the visual image of Western spectators, we notice that here Conrad illustrates the developmental scale of civilization with the image of detecting tones with an attuned ear, or, in this case, of failing to do so. Although the narrator of the novel repeatedly underlines his own lack of imagination and inability to transmit these tones to a Western civilized reader, the passage implicitly suggests that the story that he supposedly transmits to Western readers as documentary evidence could be read differently by a reader with differently attuned ears - a reader who knows more about the experience of being persecuted by an oppressive regime. This reader would be someone figured as overhearing the conversation between the narrator and his intended audience.

Overhearing, the accidental snapping up of messages by an unintended third party, is a common figure of transmission in Conrad's texts, both as a stylistic device and a theme (see Fogel 1985, 55-56). In Conrad's story *Heart of Darkness*,

the author dramatizes a scene of overhearing by employing parataxis in the form of elliptical sentences.⁶⁸ Marlow is at the Central Station in the Congo and happens to overhear a conversation between the Manager and his uncle, who are talking about Kurtz. While Marlow traveling in the Congo has not yet met Kurtz at this point, the narrating Marlow establishes with this passage readers' expectation that there is something ominous about Kurtz. The novel *Lord Jim* also employs a notable scene of overhearing, as Marlow's first discussion with Jim is initiated by Jim's mistaken belief that a curse aimed at a dog by Marlow's discussion partner refers to Jim himself. While the passage in *Heart of Darkness* urges readers to fill in the fragmentary sentences and imagine the figure of Kurtz to which they are linked, the scene of overhearing in *Lord Jim* seems to have more to do with what Fredric Jameson calls an element of postmodernism in Conrad's style: a trivial detail in the background gets foregrounded and generates a tangential turn in the narrative (Jameson 1981, 223-224).

Jameson's analysis suggests that we might think of overhearing as a structure of transmission that deviates from the ostensible model of conversation between the narrator and his readers. While Aaron Fogel connects Conrad's overhearing to Fogel's larger argument on Conrad's "coercive dialogue," the operative

⁶⁸ "One evening I was lying flat on the deck of my steamboat I heard voices approaching - and there were the nephew and the uncle strolling along the bank. I laid my head on my arm again and had nearly lost myself in a doze when somebody said - in my ear as it were - 'I am as harmless as a little child, but I don't like to be dictated to. Am I the Manager - or am I not?' [...] 'Look at the influence that man must have. It is not frightful?' They both agreed it was frightful, then made several bizarre remarks: 'Make rain and fine weather - one man - the Council - by the nose' - bits of absurd sentences that got the better of my drowsiness, so that I had pretty near the whole of my wits about me when the uncle said, 'The climate may do away with this difficulty for you. Is he alone there? [...] 'Anything since then?' asked the other hoarsely. 'Ivory,' jerked the nephew: 'lots of it - prime sort - lots - most annoying, from him.' [...] I heard: 'Military post - doctor - two hundred miles - quite alone now - unavoidable delays - nine months - no news - strange rumours.'" (HoD, 31-32).

structure of overhearing in Conrad's poetics is to my mind a much richer figure of narrative transmission. According to Fogel, the central concern of Conrad's writing is the fact that speaking situations are saturated with "disproportions," "pressures" and political force fields (Fogel 1985, 3).⁶⁹ We could, however, also focus on the fact that the overhearer is not the explicit addressee but an unintended address that skews the line of transmission. The notion of overhearing thus combines both forceful pressure and deviation from intended lines of communication. It would seem that in addition to their ostensible national and imperial reading constructions, Conrad's texts ended up outlining other figures of transmission that foil the ostensible model of transmission, partly because of their excessive concern with sensory representations and acts of transmission. In the following I will demonstrate how this different approach to Conrad's style helps us analyze the particular position of postimperial readers, rather than a generalized notion of a reader confronted with literary polysemy.

Critics have pointed out that the modernist or impressionist narration Conrad practices is likely to produce drastically different readings. According to Fredric Jameson, "the discontinuities objectively present in Conrad's narratives have, as with few other modern writers, projected a bewildering variety of competing and incommensurable interpretive options" (Jameson 1981, 208).⁷⁰ While this

⁶⁹ "Conrad 'repeats' the scene of dialogue abstractly, not merely in the story of the characters but from level to level of the story's production, until we finally see Conrad, or the author, in a dialogical relation to us that resembles, in its desire for conquest, all the others. What Conrad called 'secondary' plot of *Heart of Darkness*, in this reading, is this gradual identification of all dialogue relations as disproportionate and imperial." (Fogel 1985, 21)

⁷⁰ Jameson lists in *The Political Unconscious* (1981) nine "influential" critical approaches to Conrad (which are tied to Jameson's time and do not yet include postcolonial readings): Conrad as a "writer of adventure tales, sea narratives and 'popular yarns'," Conrad as an impressionist, a myth-critical reading, Freudian reading, ethical reading interested in heroism and honor, ego-

description of Conrad's style sounds a lot like a general description of literary style, it is important to pause here to consider how this aspect of Conrad could be understood in relation to history and context. In Jameson's own analysis, Conrad's impressionism, which he also calls Conrad's "will to style," is seen as a mediating bridge between the aesthetic realm and his historical moment, the imperialist heyday of industrial capitalism. Jameson emphasizes the way in which Conrad's stylistic innovations treat "fragmented senses" in an almost autonomous manner, which reflects in the aesthetic realm the increasing separation of different spheres of life, typical of the process of modernization. Jameson argues that this aspect of Conrad is both a "waste product of capitalist rationalization" and a "Utopian compensation for everything reification brings with it" (Jameson 1981, 236). This formulation suggests that Conrad's aesthetics of impressionism developed in order to make the adverse effects of industrial capitalism tolerable for those involved in it.

Jameson also considers sensory autonomy in Conrad's style in terms of an anticipation of the future. First, Jameson points out that Conrad can be read not only as an early practitioner of modernist "fragmentation of the raw material, which allows a relative independence between foreground and background" but as a forerunner of postmodernist "schizophrenic" writing that self-generates meaning according to a "narrative logic of the aleatory and the accidental"

psychological reading interested in questions of identity, existential, Nietzschean, and finally the structuralist-textual reading focusing on self-reflexivity of the text and problematization of linear narrative. On a more general level, Jameson's reading foregrounds a basic opposition in Conrad between "reified tendencies to romance" and modernist "will to style" - something that makes him both a late Victorian writer and a modernist - or even a proto-postmodernist, whose texts not only experiment with point of view but also with textual self-generation.

(Jameson 1981, 223, 219). Conrad's style thus anticipates postmodern style when seen in the linear frame of realism, modernism and postmodernism. However, Jameson also suggests that Conrad's general modernist focus on isolating and foregrounding the perceptual anticipates its importance in the political movements of the 1960s, in which the perceptual domain had politically revolutionary significance (Jameson 1981, 237). This remark reminds us of Jameson's introduction to Peter Weiss's *Aesthetics of Resistance*, in which he writes about Weiss's re-evaluation of avant-garde techniques in a poetics that foregrounds linkages made by active, embodied readers beyond pre-given historical narratives. In the context of my investigation of the relationship between certain kinds of modernist poetic strategies and the mobilization of readers' historical imagination, Jameson's approach begs a question that I would like to foreground for analysis. How does the "semi-autonomy of fragmented senses" in Conrad's style relate to more wayward reading that the author himself did not intend?

Jameson's suggestion of the linkage between Conrad and later political or revolutionary contexts remains unreflected, in part because his analysis fails to consider Conrad as an imperial writer with a considerable postcolonial reception. It is therefore interesting to look at critical projects that share with Jameson's reading the concern with anticipatory aspects of modernist style in Conrad but that imply reading positions beyond the Western European historical narrative that Jameson construes. These would be readings that follow more centrifugal trajectories than Jameson but nonetheless continue to negotiate the relationship between Conrad's intricate narratives and historical context. Rebecca

Walkowitz's recent study on connections between modernism and cosmopolitanism operates with the more modest premise that Conrad's stylistic experimentation anticipates later work of literary imagination by late twentieth and early twenty-first century writers such as W. G. Sebald, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie writing in the British context, who sought to imagine more flexible national and cultural categories. According to Walkowitz, Conrad's "impressionism," his interest in perception and "readers' perception of perception," reveals seemingly natural cultural categories to be constructs to which it is possible to adapt (Walkowitz 2006, 38). While Conrad does not dismantle the categories of the nation or imperial hierarchy in her view, Walkowitz sees in his works openings towards "dynamic conceptions of local and global affiliation" not thinkable in Conrad's own context. Conrad's writing would thus open up the possibility to foreground relations of affiliation instead of those of filiation on which national frameworks depend. My analysis of Conrad's poetics of juxtaposition will thus build on Walkowitz's observations but also press the analytical point further to argue that reading Conrad could bring into relation different incommensurable postimperial reading positions.

Edward Said also suggests that Conrad's style was "more advanced" than what he was "actually saying" (Said 1984, 90). According to Said, Conrad's "persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality" made him write provisional and liminal narratives that opened towards an unspecified outside (Said 1994, 25). With this notion of provisional and liminal narrative, Said establishes a link between Conrad's own mixed cultural heritage and Conrad's postcolonial reception. "Since Conrad dates imperialism, shows its contingency, records its

illusions and tremendous violence and waste [...] he permits his later readers to imagine something other than an Africa carved up into dozens of European colonies, even if, for his own part, he had little notion of what that Africa might be." (Said 1994, 26.) Conrad's own background leaves a trace on the text, a trace with which postimperial readers may connect in order to imagine alternatives to the present - alternatives that are not equivalent with Conrad's own liminality. In Said's view, then, Conrad mobilizes his readers, but in ways other than implied in the text. Said emphasizes the active impact of situated readers who amplify seemingly marginal aspects of literary texts: "[M]y approach has tried to re-situate writers in their own history, with a particular emphasis on those apparently marginal aspects of their work which because of the historical experience of non-European readers have acquired a new prominence." (Said 2000, xxix). We should understand this liminality as a medium rather than as a referential representation, as a kind of outline that will be filled with significance by later situated readers.

Jameson's reading ignores both later postcolonial readers and the influence of colonial contexts on Conrad's narrative mode. Natalie Melas points out that Jameson's redemptive reading of Conrad's "will to style" never leaves the historical narrative of the West to consider how locations outside Europe might influence the "political unconscious" of Conrad's works (see Melas 2007, 65-66).⁷¹

⁷¹ While Jameson does not consider locations outside Europe as relevant to the political unconscious of Conrad's works, he occasionally makes references to Conrad's Polish background. He sees it as a "nonsynchronous overlap in Conrad's own values and experience (feudal Poland, capitalist England)" (Jameson 1981, 217). A more surprising departure that Jameson makes from the Western European context is an unelaborated reference to the Ukrainian painter Kuindzhi, whom Jameson mentions as possibly even more relevant comparison to Conrad's impressionism than Western European painters (Jameson 1981, 231).

Thus, if we do not investigate alternative ways to link Conrad's style to historical context, we do not sufficiently question the imperial comparison of cultures on which Conrad's texts relied. In her own analysis, Melas reads Conrad's impressionist narrative experiments in terms of a "co-presence of inassimilable figures in colonial space" that "ultimately foils Marlow's narrative authority" (Melas 2007, xiv). She shows how Conrad's narrators struggle with trying to establish a stable community of the narrator and his listeners in an imperial context that makes such a project problematic, as this context is characterized by dislocation and the presence of the natives (Melas 2007, 65).

What is particularly important for my concerns is Melas's argument that Conrad's writing "dissimilates" the readership. The texts by Conrad that ostensibly address a homogeneous audience record something about a transnational situation of imperial context and make readers aware of a "dissimilation from a transcendent common ground" (Melas 2007, 92). The imperial context of Conrad's texts creates particular conditions for the texts' reception that go beyond the obvious fact that every literary text is interpreted differently by different readers. The racism of Conrad's texts to which postcolonial readers such as Chinua Achebe reacted so strongly after innumerable previous critics had not raised the issue at all, divides Conrad's audience in a highly non-arbitrary manner. The dissimilation makes a neutral position to Conrad impossible and crucial to take seriously the "distinctly local positionality as well as a partial and an almost intimate mode of identification" in early postcolonial readings of Conrad's works (see Melas 2007, 89-90). Melas

proposes that instead of an ostensible generalizing attempt in Conrad that assimilates figures of comparison to the imperialist frame and moves "from sign to symbol" (Melas 2007, 76) - a movement that Jameson's act of contextualization echoes in linking Conrad's "will to style" almost exclusively to the master narrative of Western modernity - postimperial readers may work to the fore another dynamic in Conrad's stories that implies a possibility to "read the symbol back to sign," a reading strategy that "territorializes" Conrad's texts once more albeit in different ways (see Melas 2007, 85). Conrad then becomes a medium for recognizing the condition of dissimulation and articulating local positionality. This also opens up the possibility to reconnect Conrad to Poland and ask questions about the relationship of the Polish context to imperial comparison and to postcolonial responses to it.

A tension between generalizing imperial comparison and particularizing stylistic effects can be illustrated with a passage from the novel *Lord Jim*, in which the narrator Marlow discusses the protagonist Jim with a German seaman Stein. This passage, which foregrounds Stein's non-English pronunciation and syntax, is interesting for our analysis, because it shows the tension between the ostensible reading construction (foregrounding a British reader and imperial comparison) and Conrad's intensification of sensory effects that foreground the opacity of transmission instead. Stein and Marlow discuss in this passage Romantic idealism, something that Jim supposedly embodies. The passage, which mixes German expressions into the English narration, uses multilingualism to stage an unresolved task of connecting ideals with everyday reality. The passage ostensibly moves through a distinction between national languages to a

distinction between alienated human language and the equilibrium of nature.

I was very anxious, but I respected the intense, almost passionate, absorption with which he looked at a butterfly, as though on the bronze sheen of these frail wings, in the white tracings, in the gorgeous markings, he could see other things, an image of something perishable and defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death. "Marvellous!" he repeated, looking up at me. "Look!" The beauty – but that is nothing – look at the accuracy, the harmony. And so fragile! And so strong! And so exact! This is Nature – the balance of colossal forces. Every star is so – and every blade of grass stands *so* – and the mighty Cosmos in perfect equilibrium produces – this. This wonder; this masterpiece of Nature-the great artist. [...] 'We want in so many different ways to be,' he began again. 'This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it; but man he will never on his heap of mud keep still. He want to be so, and again he want to be so.'... He moved his hand up, then down. (LJ, 125; 128-129.)

As Melas points out, the multilingual poetics of this passage draws attention to a specific idiom of Stein and suggests reading responses that move from the generalizing capacity of language "to its location in space" (Melas 2007, 75). Stein's words have a wonderfully estranging effect: the word "so," which could belong to both English and German, refers to a manner of doing something and therefore directs attention indexically beyond itself. The reference to Stein's gesturing body could be read as an illustration of the limits of verbal language, as the written text cannot provide the gesture that needs to accompany it for this meaning to be realized. However, at the same time this passage also implies a degeneralizing dynamic as it draws our attention to both Stein's idiosyncratic speech and his gesturing body.

Conrad's multilingual passages function as instances of overhearing, including in the sense I explore in this chapter. They outline tenuous lines of transmission beyond the readers implied in the text. This can be illustrated by pointing out is "Polish resonances" in the passage on Stein from *Lord Jim*. I would argue that in addition to its multilingual effects, historical and geographic references in the Stein passage also divert attention away from an ostensible generalizing

dynamic. Stein is a Bavarian who has left Germany after the unsuccessful liberal revolution of 1848. The discourse on this revolution could be read as a displacement of another discourse on failed revolution intimately known to Conrad through his parents, namely, the history of Polish revolutions in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, positing an erased Polish context influences reading this kind of passages in Conrad beyond the author's biography. Doing so makes it apparent that contact between English, French and German in the multilingual passages of *Lord Jim* is hardly the only means by which the novel touches upon cultural relations of the imperial era. When read against the context of partitioned Poland, the passage could be viewed not only in terms of how the British narrator Marlow relates to the languages other than English employed in *Lord Jim*, German and French, but also with respect to relationships between Polish and those languages. French was the language of the Polish nobility, especially important in connection to the fine arts, while German was the language of one of Poland's occupying nations. In Prussian Poland almost all education was delivered in German, with Polish instruction repeatedly banned. An erased Polish context tacitly troubles the depicted moments of cultural contact, which ostensibly move towards generalization as so much Conrad scholarship has demonstrated. Expressed attitudes towards German in *Lord Jim* could surprisingly translate from Marlow's British condescending perspective into the perspective of a colonized subject. The language contact of the passage potentially conjures up a much more complicated entanglement of locations and histories, a network that readers enter from particular locations.

The effect of overhearing is implied in Fogel's reading of Conrad's "coercive dialogue," because Fogel links the notion of overhearing to Conrad's relationship to the English language. "Conrad 'overhears', 'rereads', quietly distorts the English language by amplifying some of its most familiar and simple terms. He was interested dramatically in scenes of overhearing, and he also presented English diction at times as 'overheard.' Conrad approached English, as he had to, with a studied alertness to its terms and its polysemy; but it was also one of his gifts to be able to 'dramatize' polysemy and polyglossia unsentimentally." (Fogel 1985, 41.) Hence, Fogel proposes that Conrad wrote texts that are extremely focused on aural effects, manners of speaking, and hearing, because Conrad was able to observe the English language as if from the outside and make it sound foreign even to the ears of native speakers.⁷² Fogel's description of how Conrad "quietly distorts" the English language with effects such as prose rhymes recalls some aspects of the notion of "minor literature" coined by Deleuze and Guattari, who describe ways in which Franz Kafka subverted the German language from within. Conrad's situation is not equivalent to that of Kafka, who wrote from the specific minority position of a German-speaking Prague Jew and drew in his own writings on minor literature from his observations of Yiddish-language theater in Prague (see Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16-27). Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari's concept is also useful in our analysis of Conrad's contexts, because

⁷² In an interesting twist, Fogel shows how Conrad's way of overhearing culminated in "chimes," or prose rhymes, that are like ideas generated from aural qualities of words. For instance, the plot of *Under Western Eyes* begins with a detonation: an explosion as the activist Haldin throws a bomb at "Mr de P-, the President of the notorious Repressive Commission" (UWE 6), and it ends with a "de-tonation," as Fogel puts it, when the student Razumov, who has become an unwilling overhearer of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary intrigue, loses his hearing as the activist Nikita breaks his eardrums with a violent blow. Even Conrad's way of employing "impressionism" in the meaning of "to impress" would function according to this logic of adjusting or generating new meaning by hearing English words differently. (Fogel 1985, 184-214)

it helps us articulate how literature may relate to historical pressures in ways that are not directly referential. We might say that Conrad "deterritorialized" British letters from within and opened "the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility," as opposed to the national paradigm of linear time (Deleuze & Guattari 1986, 17-18).⁷³ One could thus say that Conrad's writing includes a lot of "noise" around the construction of address required for a conception of national literature, which relies on an idea of a "solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (Anderson 2006, 26). The focus on the sensory in *Lord Jim's* passage on Stein comes close to emphasizing what Walter Benjamin, in his essay on Kafka's gestures, calls communicability or transmissibility of language (see Benjamin 1996, 326). The intensity of the medium emphasizes for Benjamin "sheer transmissibility" rather than a pre-determined message.

However, as Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the "deterritorializing" effect of minor literature articulates, the radically "intense use of language, a materially intense expression" creates an "overdetermination" that is also likely to produce "all sorts of worldwide reterritorializations" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 19). This phrasing suggests in turn that the intensification of linguistic expression in Conrad, in which sensory intensification plays an important part, not only compensates for the Western European process of rationalization, as Jameson argues, but also, through its ambiguous relationship to readers, refers to the outsides of this ostensible context. Thus we notice that there are two dimensions

⁷³ Rebecca Walkowitz seems to read Conrad somewhat like this, although she does not articulate Conrad's modernism in terms of "deterritorialization" (see Walkowitz 2006)

to Conrad's well documented "impressionism": the "semi-autonomy" of the senses in Conrad's style and the dissimulation of readership caused by the pressure of postimperial history. The latter confronts Conrad's readers with a deterritorializing and a reterritorializing dynamic. In this more complex sense, Conrad's "utopian compensation" also emphasizes the position of unimplied, uninnocent postimperial readers, who detect and amplify traces of the colonial space foiling Conrad's writing.

3. Conrad as a Bridge

English critics – and after all I am an English writer – whenever they speak of me they add that there is in me something incomprehensible, inconceivable, elusive. Only you can grasp this elusiveness, and comprehend what is incomprehensible. *That is Polishness*. Polishness which I toll from Mickiewicz and Słowacki. My father read *Pan Tadeusz* aloud to me and made me read it aloud... Later I liked Słowacki better. You know why Słowacki? Il est l'âme de toute la Pologne, lui.

(Joseph Conrad)⁷⁴

In this section I analyze how Polish reception of Conrad has bridged the gap in Conrad's poetics between Conrad's texts and Poland. Throughout the twentieth century, Conrad has been instrumentalized in various attempts to strengthen a Polish national narrative under changing political circumstances. The Polish mainstream reception of Conrad has imagined a second, implicit address to a Polish readership and seen Conrad's texts as organically linked to this implicit context. The aim of my investigation in the remainder of this chapter is to compare Conrad's Polish reception with the condition of postcolonial reading that, as V. S. Naipaul has formulated, reads Conrad in terms of "matching of

⁷⁴ "An interview with J. Conrad" by Marian Dąbrowski (1917), printed in English in Najder 1983, 199.

experience" (see Naipaul 1974, Melas 2007, 94-95).⁷⁵ I bring together the Polish mainstream reception of Conrad and the postcolonial problematic in order both to highlight the difference between these reading positions and to argue that Conrad's texts nevertheless provide a ground for relating "outsides" to Conrad's texts. I thus read Conrad's texts as contact narratives that enable degeneralizing comparison between postcolonial history inside and outside Europe.

3.1. "Polish Background"

In Conrad's story *Amy Foster* (1901), a man from the Carpathian Mountains, a multinational region in the Eastern borderlands of Poland and the Ukraine, experiences a shipwreck on his way to America. He ends up as a castaway in a small English village, speaking a language unknown to his surroundings. As many of Conrad's narratives, *Amy Foster* also features a diegetic narrator, one whose English perspective seems to hold throughout the story. He hears and transmits the story of the Carpathian man Yanko Gooral and his marriage to an English village woman named Amy Foster. Yanko's name is written as the Anglophone villagers would transcribe it from heard sounds (the Polish version would most likely be Janko Góral and the name refers to "górale," the "mountainers"). Yanko Gooral's language is never identified in the story and never enters the language of the narration.

⁷⁵ Melas points to Naipaul's formulation as an articulation of the peculiar condition of postcolonial reading that responds to Conrad by connecting postcolonial historical experience and those experiences articulated by Conrad in his texts. Melas points out that Naipaul's reading resonates with Said's notion of contrapuntal reading (Melas 2007, 94-95).

However, there is a passage at the beginning of the story in which the solid locatedness of perspective seems to weaken for a moment. The narrative that is told from the "here" of the British Isles seems to provoke readers into imagining another "here" from which Britain appears as an unknown, potentially savage land:

He was a castaway. A poor emigrant from Central Europe bound to America and washed ashore here in a storm. And for him, who knew nothing of the earth, England was an undiscovered country. It was some time before he learned its name; and for all I know he might have expected to find wild beasts or wild men here, when, crawling in the dark over the sea-wall, he rolled down the other side into a dyke, where it was another miracle he didn't get drowned. But he struggled instinctively like an animal under a net, and this blind struggle threw him out into a field. He must have been, indeed, of a tougher fiber than he looked to withstand without expiring such buffetings, the violence of his exertions, and so much fear. Later on, in his broken English that resembled curiously the speech of a young child, he told me himself that he put his trust in God, believing he was no longer in this world. And truly - he would add - how was he to know? (Conrad 2011, 92-93)

After this opening the story uses rhetoric that compares the outsider to animals and children. Nevertheless, the passage implies that the perspective on the recounted events could be shifted and we could imagine the story narrated anew from the vantage point of a Central European immigrant, shipwrecked to an "undiscovered country" on his way to America. Such moments of juxtaposition are not uncommon in Conrad's texts; they mark moments in which stories and perspectives that are foregrounded touch on other frames of reference without elaborating them. These other frames are backgrounded but not in my view marginalized in narration because Conrad's poetics of juxtaposition depend on them.

When Yanko and Amy's final rift is sparked by Yanko's attempt to speak his own language to the couple's son Johnny, the problem of language and belonging is directly thematized in the story. At the end of the story Amy even attempts to

erase traces of Johnny's father. On the one hand, the story thus seems to show the impossibility on the part of the villagers to imagine a co-existence of more than one linguistic identity in one individual. Ironically, some Polish responses have performed this very stance, as Conrad was attacked for not specifying the Carpathian region and its language as Polish and for referring to its "dialect" as "disturbing" and "bizarre" (see Morf 1976, 225-226). One can argue that the story's vagueness in locating Yanko Gooral has to do with the assumed British viewpoint, for which specific information about Central European reality hardly was important. At the same time, the absence of clear national markers does not have to be seen as a complete misrepresentation of the multilingual border region of the Carpathian mountains. By blurring the nationality of Yanko Gooral, and in a competing narrative trajectory, the story opens a space for perspectives that do not match the expectations of some of Conrad's Polish readers, who wished to see their Polish national viewpoint enhanced in a story written by an author of Polish descent.

This example shows that while there are references to the geographic region of Central and Eastern Europe in Conrad's works, they are not necessarily framed in narrative from a specifically Polish perspective. However, this did not inhibit Conrad's Polish readers from elaborating explicitly Polish perspectives themselves. After certain prominent intellectuals in Poland, such as Eliza Orzeszkowa and Wincenty Lutosławski, had criticized Conrad fiercely for his choice of English as a literary language,⁷⁶ another form of Conrad reception

⁷⁶ Conrad was first rejected as a traitor to the Polish national cause because he did not write in Polish or about Poland. In an essay "The Emigration of Talent" (1899), Wincenty Lutosławski,

developed in Poland, in which Conrad's writing was linked to the "Polish cause." In this line of reading, Conrad was construed as a Polish writer who was influenced both aesthetically and culturally by the Polish context. Many studies have been conducted about the influence of the Polish oral tale *gawęda* and Polish romantic literature (by authors such as Mickiewicz, Norwid or Krasiński) on Conrad or about the impact of the values of Polish nobility on Conrad's treatment of moral themes (see Krajka 2010, 58-59; Zabierowski 1971). One motivation for these readings seems to have been an attempt to construct a Polish canon that could compare to the "Great Tradition," against which British critics measured Conrad. As Stanisława Przybyszewska put it, this line of reception "tried to prove that Conrad 1) is 100% Polish, and 2) has a decisive influence on English literature (of course, 2 follows from 1)" (Przybyszewska 1989, 176). In the language of Pascale Casanova's theory of literary capital, the first attacks on Conrad's choice of language reacted to the fact that his literary talent accumulated literary capital in the British literary field which was actually not in need of it, unlike Poland which had to prevail culturally in a situation in which the Polish state had ceased to exist (see Casanova 2004, 9-24). Later, however, many Polish readers seemed to use Conrad as proof of the strength and value of the Polish literary tradition, despite the fact that he wrote in English. These readers believed that Conrad's international acclaim enhanced the status of Polish literature in the world.

professor of philosophy at the Stefan Batory University of Vilnius, condemned Conrad's choice to write in English as an act of treason towards his native land. Polish writer Eliza Orzechowska, who lived in the part of Poland that suffered the most from the Russification policies against Polish language and culture, also attacked Conrad for the same reason, by writing a letter to Conrad and publishing an essay in a magazine *Homeland*. (See Acheraiou 2009, 25-32)

For this process of accumulation to happen, however, Polish readers had to strengthen Conrad's ties to Poland which were not apparent in the texts. While Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* failed to generate interest in Poland immediately after its first Polish translation in 1904, the situation changed when the Polish discussion of Conrad began to circulate around a suggestion that the author wrote in the novel about his own experience, having left Poland.⁷⁷ The themes of idealism, romanticism and failure in the novel were seen as "Polish" testimonials to Conrad's Polish origin. In the 1920s and 1930s an interpretation gained force, most strongly articulated by the Polish writer Stefan Żeromski, that Conrad's novel could be read as a "symbolic confession" of his guilt at having left Poland (Żeromski 1924, 153-154; see Zabierowski 2006, 101).⁷⁸ Polish readers who assumed that Conrad had written in the novel about his own personal loss of homeland thus construed another address: an indirect conversation with Polish readers, who could read the novel's signs as symbols too obscure to be deciphered by the British audience.

Alongside a directly biographical focus also developed a tendency to focus on

⁷⁷ The writer Wiktor Gomulicki's reminiscences about his response to Conrad describe this shift: "I was about to close Conrad's book with a sense of complete dejection, I was already telling myself: 'No' This writer never *detached himself* from Poland - for he never belonged to her...' - when suddenly I heard something shouting in me: - And what if all this is only a symbol? This ship doomed to sink... these travellers, weary of their dream, with nerves exhausted by religious ecstasy [...] These egoists whose lust for life makes them abandon the ship entrusted to their care [...] and especially this young man, noble to the core, but lost among the mean and the wicked, and whose heart, for the rest of his life, will be torn by the promethean vulture of remorse... this nobleman, who found wealth, love and trust in the foreign land, and yet seeks the ultimate relief in voluntary death - is all this, in all its depth, merely what it appears to be to the *English* reader?" (Gomulicki, quoted in Zabierowski 2006, 100)

⁷⁸ The Swiss scholar Gustav Morf was also an important proponent of biographical interpretation. He proposed that the name of Jim's ship *Patna* carried a possibly unconscious displacement by the author from the words "Polska" (Polish for "Poland") or "Patria." Morf further explained that the fact that the ship *Patna* is rescued by a French gunboat resonates with the Polish tradition of expecting help to come from France (Morf 1976, 150-152).

moral messages in Conrad's novels. These messages were seen as having their source in Conrad's personal experience and their relevance for Polish readers.⁷⁹ The moral situation of Conrad's characters was interpreted as somehow equivalent to challenges faced by the Polish nation, most strikingly in the strongly affective and identificatory responses that *Lord Jim* received in Poland following World War II. Even today, it is well known in Poland that during the German occupation, the Polish resistance used Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* for inspiration in their attempt to persevere against the overwhelming forces of the occupying powers. The novel was printed by the cultural committee of the exiled Polish army on the basis that, as the editor Wit Tarnawski put it, the Polish readers understood Jim's psyche better than the English readers, because Jim was "one of us", a "Pole" (see Morf 1976, 149). Jan Józef Szczepański, a Polish writer, who had belonged to the Polish resistance, wrote in a later essay "Conrad mojego pokolenia" ("The Conrad of My Generation") that the occupation and resistance "created a moral climate of a Conrad novel" (Szczepański 1957, in Najder 1983, 279). "For us Conrad was more topical than before. His books became a collection of practical recipes for men fighting lonely battles in the dark that was dense enough to hide personal defeats and therefore represented an additional challenge" (Ibid.). Szczepański even tells an anecdote of a Polish resistance

⁷⁹ Józef Ujejski, for instance, saw the relationship between the novel and Conrad's Polish background in terms of analogy based on the "moral situation" Jim faced: "We will not follow the example of G. Morf and will not claim that the Patna is Poland, Jim is Konrad Korzeniowski, and the position which Jim earned in Patusan is an allegory of the fame and English esteem enjoyed by Joseph Conrad. No. All that is called for is the realization that the moral situation in which Jim found himself after the unfortunate 'jump' seemed (maybe suddenly appeared?) to Conrad – to be in many ways analogous to his own inner situation at the time when his imagination was preoccupied with this character" (quoted in Zabierowski 2006, 102).

fighter, whose death was a "direct result of his reading of *Lord Jim*." He identified so strongly with Jim that he was urged into an "act of needless bravado" by his image of how this Conrad's character would have acted in his place (Ibid.).

Szczepański suggests that, while there was a gap between Conrad's texts and the situation the resistance fighters were in, the intense pressure of this reading context made readers identify strongly with the text.⁸⁰ He approaches this "intimate" reception as something Conrad would not have foreseen, as his texts at most expressed patriotism that was only English. The strong affective response by so many Polish readers bridged a gap between the text and this context, which was, in the words of Wai Chee Dimock, an "environment rich in noise" that amplified some words instead of others (Dimock 2001, 179). The idea of expanding the present through recourse to a seemingly unrelated literary text reminds us of the situation of Weiss's resistance activists; the readers described by Szczepański, who identified with Conrad's *Lord Jim* in the midst of the Warsaw Uprising, sought to expand their outlook in order to persevere in a pressing historical situation. However, if we think back to Weiss's description of anachronistic reading in *Gespräch über Dante* and *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, we notice that the difference between these identificatory readings lies in the stress in Weiss's model of reading on a gap. In the case of Conrad's Polish readers, the Conrad text was placed against a national narrative that was solidified rather

⁸⁰ Szczepański's essay also moves beyond the Polish context in claiming that in the case of postwar literature Conrad had less influence on English writers than on someone like the French author Vercor, whose works took up Conrad's stylistic strategies and addressed the experience of occupation and resistance in France. For Szczepański, the linkage between Conrad's texts and the historical experience of resistance had to do with "climate of autonomous ethics" common to both (see Najder 1983, 280.) Szczepański thereby reached to the French context in order to find a space for writing a continuation to the narrative of Polish resistance.

than reconfigured; the background of the text overwhelmed the possibility that Conrad's texts could propose a challenge to that narrative. Unlike the cases that Wai Chee Dimock describes in her "Theory of Resonance," these readings were strongly dependent not only on a private reading experience but on sedimented reading conventions that had already developed in pre-WWII Poland (see Zabierowski 2006, 103). Therefore, the difference between Weiss's anachronistic reading and the Polish identificatory readings of Conrad lies less in the fact that Weiss' readers of Dante or Kafka were Marxist internationalists than in Weiss's emphasis on precise attention for aesthetic forms of "reality observed up close." These forms open the possibility to outline new historical narratives in Weiss's case. In the case of Conrad's Polish readers, the Conrad texts are used to mend a break in a national narrative that the Conrad readers perceive as endangered.

An interesting aspect of Polish identificatory readings in the reception of the novel *Lord Jim* was the tendency not so much to link Conrad to Poland as to universalize Polish historical experience through Conrad. Much of the Conrad reception built a bridge between Conrad and Poland through universal moral themes rather than merely through showing specific Polish references or influences. Szczepański's essay "Przed nieznanym trybunalem" ("Before an Unknown Tribunal," 1980) explains this with reference to the lack of hope in the generation of resistance: "'The Conradian condition' - especially that of *Lord Jim* - suited us so well as a definition of our own imposing threat, because it did not seem to be a ghetto condition. It was universal. And we did not want to yield to the paralyzing sense of the Polish doom. We did not want the cloak of that other Konrad, from the Basilian cell, nor Kordian's bayonet, nor the greatcoat of The

Wandering Soldier."⁸¹ (Szczepański 1980, 10). However, this momentary need to look beyond the hopelessness of the historical moment also suited well the tradition of Polish messianism: the idea that Poland had a special role in the history of mankind. Thus, for various reasons, the codified and glorified Conrad became a "national bard," a reference point for myriad later readers who tried to articulate their own situation in terms of a Polish national narrative.

The mainstream of Polish reception did not address the significance of imperialism and racism in Conrad's writings. This topic was left to Stalinist censors, who approached Conrad as an "agent of imperialist companies" and pronounced Conrad an unwanted author in the new Communist state. They drew from an essay by the critic Jan Kott, who condemned "Conradian faithfulness to oneself" (a central theme in the prewar Polish Conrad reception) as the "faithfulness of slaves" who merely submit to the existing laws of the world (Kott 1945, 105; Zabierowski 2006, 105). Conrad thus became a battleground for interpretations of the historical significance of the Polish resistance.⁸²

These politically charged readings continue to influence contemporary readings of Conrad by Polish critics, who are also interested in Conrad's Polish

⁸¹ These names refer to literary figures of Polish writers Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Żeromski.

⁸² Also some German-language writers have used Conrad to discuss the history of resistance to fascism. German authors have also often thematized the Holocaust in their responses to Conrad. Elmar Schenkel lists several authors, such as Thomas Mann, Christa Wolf, W. G. Sebald, Urs Widmer, and Brigitte Kronauer, who used Conrad to articulate aspects of German 20th century history; however, Schenkel's essay lacks a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon (see Schenkel 2010). Anthony Fothergill's essay on the German reception of Conrad argues that Conrad's "stoical melancholic outlook" appealed particularly to those, who had fought fascism and sought other forms of resistance after the political resistance to fascism had failed. Fothergill also links Sebald to this tradition but does not analyze other aspects of Sebald's use of Conrad (Fothergill 2007, 162). For an analysis of how Hannah Arendt's image of Africa in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was influenced by "the cultural memory encoded in Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*," see Rothberg 2009, 33-65.

background. Two post-1989 essays on Conrad by seasoned Polish literary scholars Stefan Zabierowski and Wiesław Krajka are good examples. Zabierowski, after having outlined the reception history of *Lord Jim* and recounted how during the Stalinist era Conrad's works were not published in Poland because of their association with anticommunist opposition, articulates Conrad's importance in Poland as a way to reconnect to Polish life before World War II.

It could be surmised that at the end of the last century, the Polish studies of Conrad's literary achievement came full circle: the same questions about *Lord Jim* which were noticed and discussed at the beginning of the century, but were later forgotten, began to be raised again [...] Conrad's works - including *Lord Jim* - reflect those traditions in Polish culture which were allowed to resurface only after the political transformation, before which they had been suppressed for over half of a century. Conrad was a cultural heir of the Polish nobility and especially of their ethos whose central point is the idea of honour. The spectacular revival of the chivalric and noble traditions which has been noticeable during the last years creates a very auspicious atmosphere for the interest in Conrad's writing. (Zabierowski 2006, 108, 112.)

Zabierowski approaches Conrad as a tool for writing historical narrative that emphasizes continuity between the pre-World War II independent Poland and the present. He thus plays down the position of the communist period in this national narrative. At the end of the essay, Zabierowski also refers to the new situation of Poland's membership in the EU, which requires a new international outlook. As a nod to multiculturalism, he reminds readers of the fact that Conrad came from an Eastern borderland that now belongs to the Ukraine, a "space where many cultures blended together." However, the topic of multiculturalism is contained by the national narrative: "such coexistence and mutual understanding of different cultures is a distinguishing feature of Conrad - which he derived from home" (Zabierowski 2006, 112). While Zabierowski, like many British scholars of Conrad's "impressionism," emphasizes how Conrad's reader is an active and involved partner "thanks to the narrative structure and complex

story-telling techniques," he again understands this reader as someone who much rather confirms a "background" (in this case, of Polish national narratives) than reconfigures it. Zabierowski himself uses Conrad to reconnect contemporary Poland to the nineteenth and early twentieth century national narrative and, further, to the European present.

Another Polish Conrad scholar Wiesław Krajka has been an important figure in more recent studies of Conrad's Polish and East-Central European contexts, as an editor of the series of publications under the title *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives*. Published in 1991, his essay "Conrad and Poland: Under the Eyes of My Generation" is also included in a collection of essays edited by German Conrad scholars Elmar Schenkel and Hans-Christian Trepte, who aim to portray Conrad as a "mediator" of East Central European history and as a "collective site of memory" (Schenkel, Trepte 2010, 7-8). The title of Krajka's essay alludes both to Conrad's novel *Under Western Eyes* and to Szczepański's account of Polish wartime readers of Conrad. However, Krajka also borrows from Conrad's novel the motif of haunting, seeing the notion of Conrad's "betrayal" as a ghost that has haunted Conrad studies in Poland for too long. The fervor with which Krajka wants to liberate Conrad from this ghostly legacy seems to confirm Shenkel and Trepte's claim that discussing Conrad in Central and Eastern Europe often gets closely connected with working through the recent history of the region: "Nowadays, however - in free Poland - these older types of national feeling seem out of date and harmful. For this reason we should eliminate everything that excites and revitalizes it, like the polemic over Conrad's 'betrayal.' I sincerely hope that this ghost can be laid to rest for good and never come again to haunt us Conradians, to haunt us Poles." (Krajka 2010, 60).

Krajka seems to have wanted to lay to rest not only this particular ghost but also the very fact of haunting: tensions related to narrating the history of twentieth century. Krajka's essay also betrays a wish to use Conrad to mend breaks in the Polish national narrative, which was shattered by experiences of World War II and communism (see Krajka 2010, 66-67). Krajka's essay makes even more problematic political claims than Zabierowski's, as the former uses Conrad to plead for a "more moral politics," in which Poland could be an example to the world.⁸³ Krajka even places Conrad next to Pope John Paul II as a figure who helped Poles fight communism. Moreover, while Krajka pleads for linking Polish Conrad studies more effectively with international scholarship, this broadening of critical scope never endangers his nationalist premises.⁸⁴ Krajka's prediction for the future of Conrad scholarship in Poland betrays a wish to keep the author's link to "Polishness" intact while getting international recognition for it.⁸⁵ Krajka merely refutes the notion of betrayal but not the organic national conception of literature on which the idea of betrayal depended.

⁸³ Krajka continues the tradition of Polish messianism. "It has been strongly claimed that it is Poland's mission to make politics as moral as possible. And I think it is a sound approach, although we have to be careful not to believe too strongly in this mission. And Conrad's works may help propound the idea of moral politics: in the '80s one could read in Polish newspapers and hear in the mass media quotations from Conrad, pointing to the necessity of introducing morality into public life." (Krajka 2010, 67.)

⁸⁴ "We Polish Conradians are best placed to appreciate and measure his Polishness, and the relation between his work and Polish literature and culture. We, of all Conradians, should feel and understand this most comprehensively, should be best able to illuminate it. It should be our specialization and contribution to world research. [...] We Polish Anglicists strive for such co-operation, since both these standpoints ideally complement each other: one deepens insight into the literature and culture of our nation, and the other broadens the critical mind. [...] Polishness is deeply ingrained in his character and texts, and therefore it should be constantly re-examined. We should be proud of the impact that our national culture, mind, and ethos had on Conrad."

⁸⁵ "Polish Conradology will become more international, more intergrated with investigations conducted abroad. [...] I hope that the impact of Polish culture and literature upon his oeuvre will be more extensively, thoroughly and profoundly researched, and more convincingly proven. And I very much hope that Conrad's deep moral insights will help imbue politics with morality. And in these ways Conrad will be serving his first homeland, as he has been serving it all the time, in many different ways, throughout century" (Krajka 2010, 68).

3.2. Outsides in Contact

Amar Acheraiou describes the pleas of Polish critics to consider Conrad's Polish background as an impulse to "read back" and "decolonize" Conrad studies (Acheraiou 2010, 47-48.)⁸⁶ However, we should define better the sense in which concepts of reading back and decolonization can be used in this context. The Polish critics' readings can be seen as "decolonizing" to the extent that they pointed out a Western critical hegemony that has automatically connected Conrad with Western European stylistic periods and historical events. Nonetheless, the Polish mainstream critical reception of Conrad that has used Conrad to universalize Polish historical experience has not been prompted to undertake a more fundamental decolonization of Conrad studies. When Polish readers of the national line of reception added their voices to critical discussions on Conrad, they did not expose the differentiation of readers that Conrad's poetics undertakes. As Melas foregrounds in her analysis of Conrad's "rhetoric of dissimulation," in stylistic terms "every reader is implicated in the racial differentiation into which *Heart of Darkness* and imperialism itself place her" (Melas 2007, 89). The racism of the imperial frame puts certain postcolonial, unimplied readers of Conrad in an incommensurable position with the majority of Central and Eastern European readers and their historical experiences of

⁸⁶ My approach is different from Acheraiou's, because he emphasizes Conrad's own authorial intention of "disseminating" both the author's voice and the Polish context into the "interstices" of the text. Citing Conrad's letter in which he proclaimed that he wanted to "make Polish life enter English literature," Acheraiou suggests that Conrad himself prompted this "reading back" by subversively "disseminating Polish themes in his work" (Acheraiou 2010, 27). I would argue, however, that it is more fruitful to consider Conrad's poetics as medium that may prompt linkages to the Polish context, rather than argue that the Polish themes are "in" the texts. The specific manner in which this erased context is filled with significance depends heavily on the reader.

inner-European colonization, because the racism of Conrad's texts defines those who are able to enter a position of dialogue within Conrad's texts. As we saw in the example of *Under Western Eyes*, even in the case of a novel that places the developmental scale of civilization into European context, Polish readers could imagine themselves in a "Western" position. Moreover, even the "uncivilized" Russians are portrayed in *Under Western Eyes* as something more than collections of body parts making a "violent babble of uncouth sounds" (HoD, 19). *Under Western Eyes* suggests an attempt to contain the discourse of these Russians rather than questioning whether they have one in the first place.

The contrast I wish to underscore in my reading of Conrad is that between the sorts of readings just described and the postcolonial "matching of experience" highlighted by Naipaul. This contrast becomes clear if we look at the way in which postcolonial readers from outside Europe, for instance the Guyanese writer Wilson Harris and Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul, as discussed by Melas, had to rearticulate Conrad from outside in even more fundamental ways than Conrad's Polish readers. Harris and Naipaul had to resist the symbolizing tendency of Conrad's texts that suggested metaphorical readings (of Africa as a metaphor of dark sides of a human psyche in *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, or of a Malay half-caste woman Jewel as an Eastern Bride in *Lord Jim*), in order to reconfigure Conrad as the "first writer of 'half-made societies' in the context of those societies making themselves" (Melas 2007, 78-95). Harris also connects this reading position with a particular manner of reading Conrad's stylistic "undecidability." In a manner that echoes Said's and Walkowitz's approaches to Conrad's style as "anticipatory," Harris argues that "the pressures of form that

engaged Conrad's imagination transform biases founded in homogeneous premises" (Harris 1981, 87). He calls *Heart of Darkness* a "frontier novel" that "stands upon a threshold of capacity to which Conrad pointed though he never attained that himself" (Ibid.). Melas argues that Conrad proves useful for this reason for Harris' own attempts to articulate a postcolonial aesthetic "within a heterogeneous asymmetric context" (Harris 1981, 86; Melas 2007, 90).

Although Polish readers also read Conrad from outside metropolitan centers of power in Europe, they could continue to operate with the basic premise of Conrad's imperial frame, which is the putative commensurability of cultures. This can be seen in suggestions by readers interested in Conrad's Polish background about an equivalence between the author's "Polish experiences" and the position of non-European colonies. Gustav Morf, interested mainly in tracing the unconscious influence of Conrad's guilt at having left partitioned Poland, makes a linkage between the "outsides" of Conrad's British point of view by imagining a Conrad who looks at Malays and is reminded "in many ways of the simple Polish peasants he had known in his youth" (Morf 1976, 143). A more recent interpretation of this linkage can be found in the doctoral dissertation "One of us or one of them? Joseph Conrad's European Experience," completed by Joanna Młynarczyk in the Department of Slavic and Baltic Languages at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2006. She claims that Conrad's "Polish experience enabled Conrad to make the colonial Other participate in colonial discourse" (Młynarczyk 2006, xiii). Młynarczyk goes on to argue that Conrad experienced a tension or "dialogue" between his complex subject position as a European "inferior" and an agent of European imperialism and that "owing to his

unique European experience, Conrad was able to incorporate African, Malay, and Polish counter-discourse into the fabric of his fiction" (Młynarczyk 2006, ix-xiii). Młynarczyk's reading shares with some Polish readings discussed above the attempt to bridge gaps between different cultural sites through universalizing notions of morality and the human. Młynarczyk's interpretation seems like an amalgamation of Polish Conrad research traditions and vaguely postcolonial intentions: she claims that "Conrad's 'special regard for the rights of the unprivileged of this earth' can be traced back to the experience of suffering brought about by the political/material failure of Poland" and that Conrad ultimately "de-centers Europe as the world's moral core, by suggesting that moral values are shared by humanity" (Młynarczyk 2006, 221). She rearticulates Conrad's teleological scale of civilization in terms of "noble savages": "The non-Europeans retain moral values that the Europeans have lost (although they can still require them as their own)" and "ultimately, Conrad's fiction suggests that moral ideals are shared by humanity." (Młynarczyk 2006, xiv-xvi). In Młynarczyk's reading, a universalizing paradigm results both in a kind of disavowal (Conrad's Polish "Otherness" is more heavily weighed than his complicity with imperialism) and in models of comparison that rely on commensurability.

Młynarczyk's reading is strikingly different from that of Achebe, who claims precisely that Conrad blocks not only an African counter-discourse but the possibility of an African discourse in the first place. It thus seems that Młynarczyk's position is possible only from a European point of view, and yet she seems to need Africans and the Malay in order to articulate her contemporary version of Polish history. One gets the impression that Młynarczyk is working

through European divisions of the twentieth century, including those that became a political reality long after Conrad wrote his fiction.⁸⁷ One can see in Młynarczyk's study a revised version of the teleological gesture that Zabierowski and Krajka perform in a more restricted Polish national context. Młynarczyk outlines a redemptive reading of instances of colonization of Poland by its neighbors by linking this experience, through recourse to the noble non-European colonized in Conrad's works, to a positive current of history leading to recognition of universal human rights. She needs the Africans and the Malay for her moral narrative, which redeems Polish (or more broadly Central European) historical experiences of failure. This is apparent in her consideration of Polish Romanticism as a non-materialist ideology outside Enlightenment rationality, which in her account also produced imperialism (Młynarczyk 2006, 123-124).⁸⁸ She establishes her "moral narrative" by arguing that Polish Romantic literature can be compared to certain postcolonial texts, and she reads Adam Mickiewicz alongside Franz Fanon (Młynarczyk 2006, xi, 33). In Młynarczyk's study, this analogy is based on moral ideas that are both "deeply rooted in European traditions" and "shared by humanity" (Młynarczyk 2006, 221).

This review of Conrad's "Polish context" underscores for my purposes the uneasy status of Poland and Central Europe in discourses on colonialism and

⁸⁷ "Since in my dissertation I explore the motif of the European divisions in Conrad's fiction, I have given special attention to those of the novelist's works that, exceptionally, tackle the Polish themes. My selection is determined by the fact that those works are the only pieces presenting both parts of Europe with which Conrad was connected; subjugated Poland on the one hand, and the imperial countries on the other." (Młynarczyk 2006, x)

⁸⁸ She argues that Conrad recognized a "profound split between his native Poland (which for him represented the Romantic, 'spiritual' view of the world) and imperial Europe (representing rationalism and materialism engendered by the ideology of the Enlightenment)" (Młynarczyk 2006, xiii).

postcoloniality. This is also apparent in Młynarczyk's criticism of "postcolonial critics who uniformly oppose 'Europe' to the non-European world formerly colonized by various Europeans" and who "tend to triple-marginalize the parts of Europe which were subdued by imperial expansionism" (Młynarczyk 2006, 14). Młynarczyk thus criticizes postcolonial discourse for using the word "Europe" without recognizing that there were "postcolonial experiences" on the European continent. However, Młynarczyk's redemptive narrative itself propagates a Eurocentric model based on essential entities even though she also divides these entities into smaller units.⁸⁹ Moreover, postcolonial discourse is hardly the primary culprit for the fact that Central European historical experiences of imperial domination have not been given theoretically rigorous comparative articulation similar to attention garnered by the impact of colonization in various contexts outside Europe. Młynarczyk's study makes apparent that we need different analytical models to consider important linkages between postcolonial discourse and Central Europe, beyond binary and competitive models of comparison.

In his study of links between Holocaust memory and decolonization, Michael Rothberg emphasizes the need to contest a competitive "zero-sum struggle for pre-eminence" of different histories of victimization. Such struggles often imagine a straight line between remembering a particular past and constructing a particular identity that prevailed in politics of identity dating largely to the so-

⁸⁹ "Every reading of Conrad, including a reading by a critic belonging to a 'Great tradition' or by someone who holds the claim of 'objectivity,' to some extent must be 'national' or stemming from a particular tradition or some 'ontological articulation' or specific system of beliefs and values." (Młynarczyk 2006, 3)

called culture wars of the 1990s (Rothberg 2009, 3). In his study *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Rothberg seeks to make visible a "multidirectional" articulation of collective memories of different groups and contexts. This goes far beyond Młynarczyk's study in analytical terms, as the latter represents an "additive model in which histories are brought together without producing an interchange of memories and ideas" (Rothberg 2009, 35). Yet even Młynarczyk's study attempts to articulate the historical experiences of one particular context (histories of domination in Central Europe) with cross-references to an existing discourse from another context (postcolonial studies). For a genuinely multidirectional contact to occur, however, one would need to acknowledge how "multidirectionality provides a conceptual logic beyond the unique and the universal and outside the problem of the human" (Rothberg 2009, 36.) With this in mind, Conrad's works can now be perceived as an archive for comparative work on the conditions of postimperial reading in multiple contexts. How does the encounter that Conrad mediates between Central European historical experiences and postcolonial discourse influence these respective lines of discourse?

Elmar Schenkel and Hans-Christian Trepte's volume on Conrad's Central European contexts illustrates well how postcolonial discourse on Conrad might benefit the transnational study of European literatures. While Schenkel and Trepte collect multifaceted information on how Conrad's work has prompted reactions in different locations, many writers of the volume seem to understand a transnational perspective on Conrad in terms of linking Conrad's texts to distinct national cultures. Frank Förster's article on Conrad as a "transnational space of

memory," for instance, imagines Conrad's readership in terms of a concert of voices of individual readers who all have a link to a distinct nation: "Jeder Leser, jede Nation sollte Joseph Conrad, sein Gesamtwerk oder einen Teil davon für sich selbst entdecken und jeder Leser, jede Nation für sich seine Anlehungsfläche, seine thematische Nische finden." (Förster 2010, 262). Schenkel and Trepte's book adds more contexts of reception to Conrad studies without contemplating the way in which a postimperial reading of Conrad implicitly requires us to rethink comparison as a method.

Nonetheless, drawing attention to Conrad's Central European contexts could also influence postcolonial discourse. Conrad's work did emerge historically after 1989 as a discursive site that makes visible an otherwise missing link between the former "Second World" and Anglophone discourses on colonialism. This can be perceived in an article entitled "Postcolonial Poland" (2004) by Clare Cavanagh. Cavanagh draws attention to a persistent "blank spot" in master narratives of colonialism and postcoloniality circulating in the beginning of the twenty-first century. As some other scholars before her,⁹⁰ Cavanagh argues that there is no good reason to ignore the historical experience of the former "Second World" in such discussions. Cavanagh shows that the automatism with which theorists such as Fredric Jameson or Edward Said omit this context should be examined more closely. With the example of Czesław Miłosz's essay collection *Zniewolony umysł* (1953) (*The Captive Mind*), a depiction of the intellectual and

⁹⁰ David Chioni Moore's seminal article "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique" brought this to attention already in 2001. In the field of German Studies, Kristin Kopp has written about Poland and Eastern Europe as a colonial space in German cultural imaginaries (Kopp 2012).

psychological effects of Stalinism on Polish intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s, Cavanagh exemplifies contact points in this specific context with the postcolonial discourse. Miłosz had written a critique of the universalizing Marxist version of developmental narrative against his historical experience in a Soviet satellite of the Stalinist era.⁹¹ Cavanagh suggests that texts such as *The Captive Mind* can be analytically fruitful because they do not fall neatly into linear narratives of colonialism followed by decolonization. "Is not the interesting issue for postcolonial theory that there have been colonies in Europe—the continent of the intercontinental empires—and that most of these colonies did not attain their independence until forty-one years after India and twenty-seven after Algeria?" (Cavanagh 2004, 85) Unlike Młynarczyk, Cavanagh suggests that connecting the experience of the so-called "Second World" with postcolonial discourse gives scholars the opportunity to reconsider developmental narratives that also influence some postcolonial critics.

Joseph Conrad holds a prominent place in Cavanagh's plea for a more differentiated approach to postcolonial studies. Cavanagh shows that while some Conrad critics have reflected upon the significance of Conrad's Polish experiences in his depiction of Western European imperialism, the opportunities that Conrad's work opens for more differentiated study of discourses of Empire have remained "perfunctory" (Cavanagh 2004, 86). However, the bridge that Cavanagh herself creates, between Conrad's "wariness, not simply toward one

⁹¹ This is in itself already a good reason to consider resonances between Miłosz's book and postcolonial discourse, even without the explicit link that Miłosz makes in *The Captive Mind* to Western European colonial history and that Cavanagh seems to see as decisive. Miłosz recounts how his inability to resist his own present translated into a frustrated rage when reading accounts of colonial violence at the beginning of the early modern era (Miłosz 1981, 223).

empire or another but to the very idea of empire" and the "unmistakably postcolonial sensibility" she ascribes to later Polish literature by authors such as Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska and Ryszard Kapuściński, remains analytically unclear because it again overemphasizes Conrad's voice as distinctly postcolonial (Cavanagh 2004, 88). As we have seen, however, Conrad himself expresses very different attitudes towards the Russian and British empires and his oeuvre operates with racist and imperialist notions of cultural comparison. I would stress instead that Conrad's oeuvre has functioned as a ground of resonance for readers who have sought discursive spaces for articulating historical experiences from the "Second World," as Cavanagh's own article also implicitly attests. Conrad may function as a bridge between Central European historical experiences and postcolonial discourse, but not in terms of relations of equivalence.

Milan Kundera's essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (1984) illustrates well the discursive background for proposals such as those by Cavanagh and Młynarczyk. Kundera's text, which was important in the history of articulations of the concept of Central Europe during the Cold War, also uses Conrad to communicate a "Central European experience" to the West (the essay was written for Anglophone audiences and published in the United States). Kundera uses the concept of Central Europe in the Cold War context precisely to create an alternative space between the Western and Eastern blocks and beyond a dichotomy of capitalist and communist notions of progress. The Cold War context also explains why Kundera uses Conrad to emphasize the distance between his cultural location and Russia. Kundera suggests that he can identify

with Conrad's predicament as someone whose cultural position could not be understood in the West, where Conrad was connected to the Russian cultural sphere.

Joseph Conrad was always irritated by the label "Slavic soul" that people loved to slap on him and his books because of his Polish origins, and, about sixty years ago, he wrote that "nothing could be more alien to what is called in the literary world the 'Slavic spirit' than the Polish temperament with its chivalric devotion to moral constraints and its exaggerated respect for individual rights." (How well I understand him! I, too, know of nothing more ridiculous than this cult of obscure depths, this noisy and empty sentimentality of the "Slavic soul" that is attributed to me from time to time!) (Kundera 1984, 8.)

Although the essay ostensibly tries to reconfigure European narratives of Cold War division, it reconnects to the othering gestures of texts such as *Under Western Eyes*, to the tradition, common in East Central Europe, of drawing the border of Europe to the east of one's own location (see Kaakinen & DiPuppo 2005, 202).

Kundera also invokes Conrad to remind his readers that such a canonical (Western) European author had roots in this part of Europe, which emphasizes the central argument of Kundera's essay that instead of Western Europe, Central Europe preserved European cultural heritage, which was now endangered because of the Russian domination in Central Europe. Although Kundera's text does not use Conrad to articulate a linkage between different instances of colonialism, it conveys an important background for attempts such as those by Młynarczyk and Cavanagh to portray Conrad as a postcolonial voice from a "subdued Europe":

Central Europe as a family of small nations has its own vision of the world, a vision based on a deep distrust of history. History, that goddess of Hegel and Marx, that incarnation of reason that judges us and arbitrates our fate—that is the history of conquerors. The people of Central Europe are not conquerors. They cannot be separated from European history; they cannot exist outside it; but they represent the wrong side of this history; they are its victims and outsiders. It's this disabused view of history that is the source of their culture, of their wisdom, of the "nonserious spirit" that mocks grandeur and glory. "Never forget that only in opposing History as such can we resist the history of our own day." I would love to engrave this sentence by Witold Gombrowicz above the entry gate to Central Europe.⁹²

⁹² Interestingly, it was precisely Witold Gombrowicz who in his review of *The Mirror of the Sea* (1935) criticized Conrad for transmuting everything into "greatness, grandiloquence, cosmos."

There is a tension in Kundera's essay between attempts to portray Central Europe as the heart of European culture and as a site that does not adhere to the narrative of progress associated with it. Critics articulating links between postcoloniality and Central Europe will have to work through this tension as long as Central Europe is conceived in this way. Conrad could provoke a postcolonial rethinking of literary analysis in Central European contexts, but precisely not because his texts help to claim that Central European historical experience is just as "postcolonial" as African or Malay experience, but because his texts bring the postcolonial critique of imperial comparison into contact with the Central European analytical context, in which this critique is still unestablished. However, the effect is multidirectional, because the contact between postcolonial discourse and colonial history inside Europe makes it apparent that the postcolonial discourse should not exclude the historical experiences of colonization inside Europe. The exclusion of Central European experiences from analyses of colonialism and decolonization erases that part of Europe from history and thus reproduces imperial hierarchical gestures of cultural comparison.

"We wonder how it all fits us, how it fits the dimensions of existence; and we see it does not fit at all." (quoted in Najder 1983, 275-276). Gombrowicz argues that Conrad is actually not well liked by Polish readers, despite the attempts of Polish critics to "look for a sign of Polishness in his every sneeze" (Ibid., 274-275). One could say that Gombrowicz, who articulates his criticism of Conrad mainly in literary terms, attacks in his essay the tendency to move from sign to symbol that the mainstream Polish reception followed and the postcolonial reception of Conrad outside Europe contested.

4. Conclusions

What we call the world today is not only the convergence of the histories of peoples that has swept away the claims of philosophies of History but also the encounters (in consciousness) among these histories and materialities of the planet [...] If, however, we mean to escape either vague rambling or the neutralizing tactics of suspension we ordinarily use to avoid it, we must not just imagine totality as we earlier suggested nor simply approach Relation through a displacement of thought; we must also involve this imaginary in the place we live, even if errantry is part of it. Neither action nor place are generalizable. (Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation*, 196)

Conrad's texts, which have had an exceptionally complex afterlife and global reception, challenge the conventional understanding of what constitutes a relevant context for literary analysis. My reading seeks to draw attention to a transnational aspect of Conrad that is more difficult to define than, for instance, multilingual effects used in narration: the texts' potential to resonate in several specific historical contexts and the history of readers using a given author's texts as tools in their projects of historical imagination. I emphasize the fact that discarding a reliance on linear models and unified "horizons of expectation" may help us see hitherto obscured relationships between Conrad's texts and their multiple, specific reading contexts. Conrad could then be seen as a much more complex archive and medium for postimperial reading in the twenty-first century.

The case of Conrad's reception through the twentieth century and across several reading contexts highlights the analytical gain of extending the analysis of reading constructions beyond the generalized notion of the implied reader. I have shown that while Conrad's poetics can be claimed to mobilize readers, the implied active modes of reading that depend on imperial hierarchical forms of cultural comparison present only one response to Conrad's poetics of

impressionism and analogy. I further emphasize that an analysis of unimplied readers of Conrad does not have to lose grasp of history into stating an endless possibility of different readings but can instead highlight concrete and situated effects of imperialism and racism on reading Conrad. Conrad's postcolonial readers have used his texts to articulate a position of an unwelcome reader, who resists manifestations of racism in Conrad's texts and their generalizing and symbolizing tendency. Postcolonial responses have highlighted how the presence of the imperial space manifests in Conrad's narrative form and how Conrad's ambiguous texts can be used to articulate a heterogeneous, nongeneralizable context. My reading contrasts this reading position with that of the mainstream reception of Conrad in Poland, which has been able to imagine the relationship between Conrad's texts and their Polish readers in terms of a dialogue. Finally, Conrad's texts now emerge as a potential bridge between postcolonial critique and articulations of historical experiences of domination in Central and Eastern Europe. While scholars interested in Conrad's Polish background have at times posited equivalence between Polish or Central European experiences of domination and colonial domination outside Europe, I propose that an investigation of Conrad's texts and contexts can instead establish a degeneralizing, multidirectional contact between postcolonial discourse and Central European historical experiences of domination. The current attempts to articulate the relevance of Conrad's Polish background have not yet taken into account the postcolonial critique of imperial comparison.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PARATAXIS AND THE NARRATION OF TRAUMA IN W. G. SEBALD'S *AUSTERLITZ* AND *DIE RINGE DES SATURN*

1. Introduction

Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt (1995) by W. G. Sebald has embedded within it several narrative fragments, including the narrative on Joseph Conrad's meeting with Roger Casement described in my introduction. The combination of travelogue, essay, biography and novel as well as an interplay of text and image make *Die Ringe des Saturn* the most complex example of Sebald's characteristically hybrid prose. Walking through the contemporary emptiness of the once affluent County of Suffolk, the novel's narrator weaves the setting of his walks into entangled narratives of the history of imperialism, industrialism and capitalism. In Sebald's oeuvre, *Die Ringe des Saturn* represents a transition between the associative form of Sebald's early fiction⁹³ and the more coherent story and architectural form of the last novel that Sebald published before his death, *Austerlitz* (2001).⁹⁴ In both of these novels, which are the focus of this chapter, Sebald's poetics is based on largely undetermined linkages across vast temporal and geographic distances. In the following I will analyze Sebald's analogical mode in these formally distinct works from the perspective of how this mode represents traumatic histories in a transnational, postimperial reading

⁹³ A good example of Sebald's early associative prose is *Schwindel. Gefühle* (1990), which includes fewer elements of style that create coherence than the later book *Die Ringe des Saturn*.

⁹⁴ See also Richard T. Gray, who sees *Die Ringe des Saturn* as a "bridge-text" in Sebald's oeuvre (Gray 2009, 27).

context. I will additionally address the cultural benefits and limits of reading traumatic histories of empire in this vein.

An expatriate German professor of European literature in Britain until his death in 2001, Sebald wrote his literary and essayistic work in German but has received widespread international attention, especially in the Anglophone context.⁹⁵ Born in 1944 in Wertach, Southern Bavaria, Sebald belongs to those postwar German-language authors in whose oeuvre the world wars and the Holocaust as well as the West German history of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* form central concerns. Sebald emigrated from Germany while still a university student, and he criticized German memory discourses in his scholarly and essayistic work. Nevertheless, the perspective on history in Sebald's oeuvre cannot be characterized as national. Sebald's narratives refer to episodes in the history of modernity more broadly and often connect geographic settings that would at first glance seem to have little to do with each other. The texts often focus on individuals, especially outsiders who are male writers, whose life stories are fractured by traumatic historical events and traverse several lands, cultures and languages.

Sebald's style resembles that of Weiss in a shared attention to detail, description, ekphrasis, as well as the frequent use of and allusions to historical documents. Unlike Weiss, however, Sebald also includes reproduced photographs in his

⁹⁵ Rebecca Walkowitz includes Sebald in her study of twentieth-century British writers who created a tradition of "critical cosmopolitanism." According to Walkowitz, Sebald was "emerging as a major figure in British letters when he died in a car accident in December 2001." (Walkowitz 2006, 1). Walkowitz's study also includes chapters on Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Ishiguro and Rushdie.

texts. These photographs interrupt the flow of Sebald's prose, which often lacks clear paragraph breaks. These photographic images are not employed in a directly illustrative manner,⁹⁶ but suggest instead an active creation of relationships between images and text. Furthermore, Sebald illustrates transmission of historical experience between characters and narrators with parataxis, most pointedly in the novel *Austerlitz*, in which the narrator transmits to readers not only the words of the protagonist Jacques Austerlitz, but also those of Austerlitz' discussion partners, whom the narrator has not met.⁹⁷ Recurring in many passages of the text, insistent parataxis prompts questions as to how we should link together these accounts, and, ultimately, how readers should relate to them, as I will argue.

There has been much discussion about Sebald's poetics of patching together documentary material from disparate historical contexts. Richard T. Gray, for instance, has analyzed closely what he calls an "art of transition" in the narrative form of *Die Ringe des Saturn*. Gray calls transitions in this text "segues," "points of cohesion in an otherwise disjointed text." They "build transitions that serve to move the narrative forward at precisely the moment when it is in danger of stalling and losing momentum" (Gray 2009, 27). Gray proposes that the key to Sebald's narrative mode is less content, the "what" than the "how" of linking elements of the narrative together (Gray 2009, 44). While Gray articulates the complex structure of Sebald's book well, his analysis addresses the problematics

⁹⁶ This point has been made by several scholars, see for instance Harris 2001, 379–380; Long 2003, 117–119.

⁹⁷ The narrator passes Austerlitz's story to the reader by repeating the formula "said Austerlitz," or even "said Vera, said Austerlitz," to indicate the speaker in question.

of Sebald's historical narration in ways that leave important questions unanswered. Gray proposes that "paratactic reordering and creative remembering of [Western history's] remnants and fragments is explicitly a critical history, one that bears little resemblance to the passive resignation of the chronic melancholic, for which Sebald is commonly (mis)taken" (Gray 2009, 54). Gray's notion of critical history is based on the idea that by "re-membering" existing narratives of history and encouraging readers to do so too, the narrative challenges ossified historical discourses. However, as Dominick LaCapra points out, Gray moves too quickly from parataxis to critical history and bypasses both the undecidable nature of parataxis and an analysis of the significance of melancholy in Sebald's narratives (LaCapra 2013, 163 f. 19). The bridge that Gray builds between Sebald's narrative mode of "re-membering" and critical perspective on historical narration needs more analytical reflection. I propose that Sebald's attention to the history of imperialism and his transnational reception pose new perspectives on the analysis of his literary mode of analogy and juxtaposition. The pressure of postgenocidal and postcolonial history makes it difficult to approach Sebald's narratives only in terms of their structure without due attention to thematic and contextual concerns.

Sebald's manner of linking stories related to historical trauma in complex webs of correspondences has also aroused suspicion, because these links have been read as suggesting a repetitive, traumatic history. Anne Whitehead is the author of *Trauma Fiction*, which studies narratives representing symptoms of trauma on formal levels. She criticizes Sebald for representing trauma in such a way that history as such appears traumatic. She claims that Sebald's representation of the

Holocaust relies on a generalizing "rhetoric of the sublime" (Whitehead 2004, 138). Whitehead draws here from an important distinction made by Dominick LaCapra, who criticizes a common tendency in discussions about trauma to conflate a posited absence of metaphysical foundations with the analysis of historical trauma.⁹⁸ Whitehead bases her criticism on Sebald's networks of coincidences, which imply a sublime order that is inconceivable, with coincidences providing a vague sense of hidden significance (Whitehead 2004, 136). In this line of interpretation, Sebald's historical linkages make traumatic experiences seem fundamentally similar and undermine the possibility of individual agency. The present chapter thus asks, how Sebald's narratives relate to a specific mode of active reading especially important in the context of postgenocidal writing: that of working through historical traumas.⁹⁹

Sebald himself understood his oeuvre as a search for an aesthetically and ethically sustainable way to write about the histories of violence and of oppressed, outcast people. In an interview with Michael Silverblatt he argues that if a writer takes on the "practically impossible" task of writing about genocide, he has to include in the text a profound reflection on the limits of such a project, a reflection that convinces readers that the author of the text has spent

⁹⁸ "One may well argue that the Holocaust represents losses of such magnitude that, while not absolutely unique, it may serve to raise the question of absence, for example, with respect to divinity. Still, despite the extremely strong temptation, one may question the tendency to reduce, or confusingly transfer the qualities of, one dimension of trauma to the other – to generalize structural trauma so that it absorbs or subordinates the significance of historical trauma, thereby rendering all references to the latter merely illustrative, homogeneous [...]" (LaCapra 2001, 82.)

⁹⁹ In psychoanalytic practice, working through is a process in which the patient gradually frees himself from the traumatic symptoms of repetition compulsion and is able to recognize the difference between the past and the present. Historian and critic Dominick LaCapra has emphasized working through in a broader framework of ethics and politics and argued that both its importance and its complexity have not been stressed enough in post-Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly not by Lacan. (See LaCapra 1994, 205-223). My use of the concept working through relies on the broader understanding of the notion.

considerable time wrestling with this problem (see Silverblatt 2007, 80). Sebald also emphasizes the need to represent traumatic experiences indirectly, which translates in his prose into metonymical references to the Holocaust as well as into a stress on mediation in his narrative structures. Sebald's poetic mode can in this sense be characterized as "traumatic realism," which seeks to respond to the challenge of trauma to representation. Michael Rothberg coined this term to argue that traumatic realism responds to three demands: the demand for documentation, the demand to reflect on the limits of representation, and the demand for the "risky public circulation of discourses on the event" (Rothberg 2000, 7). While Rothberg does not discuss Sebald in his book *Traumatic Realism*, his approach suits Sebald's narrative mode because of Rothberg's stress on how trauma challenges writers to discover a mode of representation that does not discard historical reference and yet understands traces of the past as representations of an absent historical referent.

However, the third demand identified by Rothberg, the "risky public circulation" of narratives of trauma, raises further questions in terms of politics and ethics, as this demand is the most dependent on the context in which the texts are read. Sebald's explicit understanding of postgenocidal writing does not stress reflection on what a future-oriented process of working through might mean. At the same time, his texts do create tensions between representing symptoms of trauma and mobilizing readers through juxtapositions and analogies. As I will argue, indirect representation and emphatic juxtaposition encourage readers to draw connections between textual passages and historical contexts that are otherwise separated by paratactic gaps. As some scholars have observed,

Sebald's poetics of juxtaposition draws from the legacy of pre-war surrealism but employs surrealist strategies in a changed postwar context (see Ryan 2007). But what exactly is the effect of bringing any poetics of weak analogy, which relies on gaps, to bear on representation of historical trauma? How do Sebald's texts, which, unlike Weiss's, do not actively reflect on futurity, relate to future readers, who arguably become a further link in the received representation of trauma? I will show that Sebald's poetics of analogy and juxtaposition both suggests a reading position characterized by melancholic identification and constructs a more open dimension that I seek to articulate through an analysis of the role of juxtapositions and digression in *Austerlitz* and *Die Ringe des Saturn*. The rehistoricizing reading mode that Sebald's paratactic poetics opens mobilizes readers to juxtapose historical contexts in a manner that does not focus on their transhistorical similarity but on forging linkages on the level of displaced but material history.

Sebald's poetics of weak analogy has also been approached in ways that valorize what I have called the dehistoricizing aspect of the analogical mode. While Gray also participates in this tendency, it is perhaps best exemplified by Deane Blackler's study on Sebald and readerly "disobedience." Blackler argues that through montage and gaps, Sebald's texts promote a "disobedient" reader, one who draws links between passages and contexts in imaginative ways (Blackler 2007). She connects this "disobedience" with readers' acts of resistance with respect to their own context: "Our position as readers is to disobey the coordinates of our own present reality and to pursue the adventure of reading which takes us out of our spatial and temporal moment into 'another realm,' one

created by the writing of another.” (Blackler 2007, xiv). Readers' contexts are here not understood as historically specific. Blackler says that she is interested in Sebald as a writer of fiction, for example, not as a German author (Blackler 2007, 8). Blackler’s analysis highlights an ahistorical, aesthetic realm and connects Sebald’s readers together with a generalizing pronoun “we.” However, the pressure that post-genocidal and postimperial history exerts on Sebald’s writing makes this analytical perspective insufficient in analyzing the interaction of Sebald’s pointedly historical poetics and active modes of reading. By suggesting that Sebald can be read either as a "German writer" or as a "writer of fiction," Blackler evades a crucial aspect of how Sebald's narratives relate to history and context: that they have important relationships to German historical discourses but not only to them, that they bring together reading contexts that are otherwise often discussed separately.

Instead of simply hailing the open dimension of Sebald’s poetics as liberating or inherently critical, I would like to consider reading positions of Sebald’s narratives in a mode I have called rehistoricizing. Two scholars interested in widening critical perspectives on literary works of the twentieth century pertaining to imperialism and transnationalism have proposed that Sebald offers fruitful material for re-examining both national frames of analysis and historical discourses related to World War II and colonialism. For example, Rebecca Walkowitz proposes that Sebald’s transnational narratives of trauma may have a salutary effect when they come into contact with readers who have a less comparative historical and geographical imaginary (Walkowitz 2006, 154). Michael Rothberg mentions *Austerlitz* in his study *Multidirectional Memory* as an

"obviously multidirectional" book to which one could apply Rothberg's own methodological approach (Rothberg 2009, 27-28). He suggests one could read *Austerlitz* not only as a narrative about the Holocaust but also as a narrative that brings the Holocaust into "multidirectional" contact with European imperialism. These two scholars thus propose reading positions beyond a sole focus on melancholic frames or decontextualized notions of imaginative readers. Although Sebald's texts are elusive when it comes to their relationship to processes of working through historical traumas, my claim is that their potential to function as contact narratives counteracts their generalizing dimension. However, this dimension of contact narrative depends on readers who have various specific relationships to the history of imperialism and genocide. I seek to show that postimperial reading contexts amplify a centrifugal effect of Sebald's narratives that is obscured by radical constructivist analytical approaches or approaches that focus solely on melancholic frames in Sebald's texts.

2. Repetition and Working Through - Sebald's Narratives of Trauma

2.1. Poetics of Juxtaposition in *Austerlitz*

In the chapter on Weiss's *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* I argued that Sebald reads Weiss's oeuvre as a series of images that suggests a traumatic thread running through Weiss's works. Sebald's manner of reading Weiss is shaped by his own

representation of traumatic temporality.¹⁰⁰ In his novel *Austerlitz*, Sebald figures non-linear time in metaphors that visualize it as a building, the rooms of which remain in contact with each other. The protagonist Jacques Austerlitz articulates a subjective experience of time in which moments also exist simultaneously and come into contact with each other.

Es scheint mir nicht, sagte Austerlitz, dass wir die Gesetze verstehen, unter denen sich die Wiederkunft der Vergangenheit vollzieht, doch ist es mir immer mehr, als gäbe es überhaupt keine Zeit, sondern nur verschiedene, nach einer höheren Stereometrie ineinander verschachtelte Räume, zwischen denen die Lebendigen und die Toten, je nachdem es ihnen zumute ist, hin und her gehen können [...] (*Austerlitz*, 269)¹⁰¹

On one level, the spatialization of time in *Austerlitz* mimics the protagonist's traumatic experience of time. His traumatic experience breaks a conventional linear notion of time, because its placement in time is uncertain. Austerlitz's explanation of time echoes the phenomenon of repetition compulsion after traumatic circumstances, in which all events have in a way already happened, because these past events keep the future ones in their grasp. The past and future are figured as spaces that are elsewhere but exist concurrently, in a container-like space.¹⁰²

The figure of time as a container is enhanced by some aspects of Sebald's poetics of narrative linking. Some photographs and text passages of *Austerlitz* can be perceived as diptychs that are placed far from each other in the narrative but

¹⁰⁰ I am referring to Sebald's essay on Weiss (Sebald 2003), which I mentioned in chapter 2 on Peter Weiss and also discuss in the current chapter.

¹⁰¹ "It does not seem to me, Austerlitz added, that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the rules of a higher form of stereometry, between which the living and the dead can move back and forth as they like [...]" (Sebald 2011, 185)

¹⁰² Alle Momente unseres Lebens scheinen mir dann in einem einzigen Raum beisammen, als existierten die künftigen Ereignisse bereits und harrten nur darauf, dass wir uns endlich in ihnen einfinden, so wie uns, einer einmal angenommenen Einladung folgend, zu einer bestimmten Stunden einfinden in einem bestimmten Haus. (*Austerlitz*, 360.)

strongly refer to each other. In the first part of the novel, buildings and places are marked by an often undefined oppressing atmosphere, even in the very first scenes, in which the narrator is in Antwerp, visiting the zoo and the Central Railway Station. The uncanny effect becomes more substantial when connected to Breendonk, the former fortress used as a prison camp during the Second World War by the National Socialists. The fact that such motifs anticipate aspects of Austerlitz's story can actually be understood only after having read the whole text. Only in the second part of the novel are the uncanny sites and buildings are linked to Austerlitz's own story of *Kindertransport* and to the Holocaust. The Breendonk fortress is paired with Theresienstadt, for example, where Austerlitz's mother was brought from Prague. Some photographs can also be seen as forming a pair, when for example the picture of Austerlitz's study filled with books and the picture of an archive at the Theresienstadt ghetto are linked (*Austerlitz* 51, 402-403; [32, 284-285]). The pairings contribute to a stylistic strategy that enables indirect representation of traumatic events. The novel could be read as a series of spaces - the Nocturama of the Antwerp Zoo, the Antwerp Railway Station, Breendonk fortress, Theresienstadt ghetto and so on - that implies a missing referent: the concentration camps to which Austerlitz's parents were sent by the National Socialists. The resonance between different parts of the narrative creates a sense of the text as a closed container that refers to this silent referent as a missing center. Following an analogue utilized by Marcel Proust for his novel series *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *Austerlitz* can be compared to a building in which the visitor is encouraged to move back and forth between its parts and to experience them simultaneously. In this sense, the poetics of *Austerlitz* has a close relationship to "spatial form," which Joseph Frank analyzed in modern poetry

and in modernist prose by authors such as Marcel Proust or Djuna Barnes. According to Frank, readers have to understand the text as a whole in order to grasp the meaning of individual passages and their relations (see Frank 1991, 10–15).¹⁰³ While this aspect of the narrative mode in *Austerlitz* would seem to mobilize readers into piecing together the unchronologically and indirectly told story, I will propose that the investment in Sebald to postgenocidal and postimperial writing complicates readings in terms of spatial form. Although the present is figured in Sebald as an empty space that cannot interrupt time conceived as a container, the readers' present can interrupt the process of constructing history as a container-like whole.

Critics have already drawn attention to how Sebald's defamiliarization of cityscape in *Austerlitz* as well as his focus on surprising coincidences and correspondences bring his project into relation with surrealism. Since in surrealist poetics juxtapositions are used to liberate readers' or viewers' imagination, one must ask whether there are dimensions to Sebald's poetics of analogy other than the diptych-like logic of pairing. The most obvious direct relationship between *Austerlitz* and a surrealist work is created by the four photographs at the beginning of *Austerlitz* (one depicting animal eyes and another one the eyes of two philosophers), which resemble the photograph of Nadja's eyes in André Breton's novel *Nadja* (*Austerlitz* 11; Breton 1964, 129). We saw that Peter Weiss seeks to connect surrealist techniques with documentary

¹⁰³ I am using the concept "spatial form" in a narrow sense, as a concept employed to analyze non-linear representation of time. Main threads of the discussion on the concept of spatial form can be found in the collection of articles Joseph Frank published in 1991 with the title *The Idea of Spatial Form*. In this volume, Frank responds to the critics of his article "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," published in 1945. See also W.J.T. Mitchell 1974 and 1986.

realism in order to create a narrative mode that prompts new avenues for historical orientation. But what is the significance of the linkage to surrealism in Sebald's project, which does not seem to have a similar investment in futurity? Judith Ryan argues that Sebald's relationship to surrealism is pessimistic: he evokes it only to show the loss of its initial promise to provide "flashes of insight" that would produce something new. Ryan emphasizes that Sebald's engagement with surrealism is mediated through that of Walter Benjamin, who was critical of the surrealists but still retained hope in surrealism's promise by combining it with his own project of historical materialism. In Ryan's view, Sebald's writing, at least towards the end of his career, lacks such promise. Ryan argues that Sebald rather evokes a search for correspondences and flashes of insight as a longing that may momentarily create a sense of purpose but ultimately always faces the recognition that it is only an illusion (Ryan 2007, 241-246).

But does Sebald's own pessimistic intention extend to all the narrative effects of his extensive use of linkages and juxtapositions? Even Ryan recognizes that Sebald "works hard" in his narratives to "create the conditions that Konrad Lorenz saw as necessary for 'fulgurations,'¹⁰⁴ moments when two independent systems come together and produce a new linkage.

From sentence to sentence, page to page, independent systems create new connections in Sebald's works. Text and image, history and fiction, past and present, self and other, original and borrowed words are just some of the 'independent systems' that come together, seemingly accidentally, in his writing. Yet no fulgurations occur. Occasionally, sparks seem about to fly; but almost as swiftly, they are swallowed up. (Ryan 2007, 245).

¹⁰⁴ In *Unheimliche Heimat*, Sebald explains fulgurations as moments when "two independent systems" come together "in a kind of short circuit" ("zwei voneinander unabhängige Systeme in einer Art von Kurzschluß unversehens zu einer neuen Verbindung zusammentreten," Sebald 1991, 70).

It is interesting that Ryan argues both that the “independent systems create new connections” and that “no fulgurations occur.” If one looks carefully at Ryan’s argumentation, one notices that it is structured according to the logic of a teleological narrative. Ryan needs to decide whether there is a fundamental “fulguration” somewhere in *Austerlitz*, presumably at the end of the narrative, and she decides in the negative. This is apparent in the way Ryan reads the novel’s conclusion, in which Austerlitz and the narrator part ways. Ryan argues that while Austerlitz continues his search for knowledge about his past, the narrator “seems to give up” and “does not even finish reading Heshel’s Kingdom [a book Austerlitz hands to him].” Ryan reads the “difference between the final positions of the two figures” as “significant for the novel’s reflection on surrealism” and concludes that the narrator “recognizes that the dark shadow cast by the Holocaust puts an end to any hope for - or belief in - flashes of insight” (Ryan 2007, 245). But are the surrealist strategies employed only to evoke revelation of fundamental impossibility? Is it possible to perceive more modest ways in which they puncture the container-like space of traumatic time? I shall argue that Ryan overlooks one important “independent system” that surrealism emphasized, the reader of the text. Sebald’s use of surrealist strategies also opens the possibility to foreground moments of contact shy of a notion of an ultimate illumination.

First of all, I would argue that the end of the novel is ambiguous: Austerlitz’s act of giving his photographs, the key to his London apartment and Dan Jacobson’s

book *Heshel's Kingdom*¹⁰⁵ to the narrator can be read as both encouraging and discouraging gesture. This ending implies that Austerlitz both gives the narrator the task to write the narrative we now read and also prompts him to consider words by Jacobson, who at the beginning of his book characterizes studying the past as an encounter with absolute darkness and void. Second, the poetics of *Austerlitz* operates with several stylistic strategies that emphasize readers' active participation. I will come back to the use of architecture and photography in the novel, which mobilize readers in more complex ways than merely by pointing to a telos of the narrative, Austerlitz's quest to find out what happened to his parents (see section 2.3). Third, points of contact between distant moments of time often appear in a markedly ambivalent light in *Austerlitz*. A good example of an ambiguous temporal linkage is the description of Liverpool Street Station in the middle of the novel. Austerlitz steps into a waiting room at Liverpool Street Station in London and suddenly remembers how he arrived at this very room as a child refugee. The experience of suddenly remembering this moment is overwhelming, and at the time of its occurrence Austerlitz does not know how to interpret it. The experience of ambiguity also applies to readers of the passage, who are presented with a reversible figure of a ruin and construction site:

Ich entsinne mich, sagte Austerlitz, daß mitten in dieser Gefängnis- und Befreiungsvision die Frage mich quälte, ob ich in das Innere einer Ruine oder in das eines erst im Entstehen begriffenen Rohbaus geraten war. In gewisser Hinsicht ist ja damals, als in der Liverpool Street der neue Bahnhof förmlich aus dem Bruchwerk des alten herauswuchs, beides richtig gewesen[...] (*Austerlitz*, 195).

¹⁰⁵ *Heshel's Kingdom* is a biographical essay written by Dan Jacobson, a descendant of a Lithuanian rabbi who died in the 1920s and whose family moved to Southern Africa before WWII. Jacobson's book is an account of his trip to Lithuania, where he is trying to find evidence about the past of his family. Michael Rothberg reads this reference to Jacobson's book in *Austerlitz* as a "multidirectional link between South Africa and the challenges of remembering the Holocaust" (Rothberg 2013, 39).

On the day Austerlitz visits the station, this Victorian building is under renovation: the new construction is emerging from the old. Austerlitz's experience of stepping into the room is represented as accordingly dual. This reversible figure underlines the fact that remembering the events that led to Austerlitz's traumatization are overwhelming, but the reversible figure also suggests a possibility of their overcoming.

In Ryan's analysis the Liverpool Street Station passage figures as an example of a moment in which Sebald's narrative negates the possibility of "fulgurations."

The feeling has nothing of the ecstasy Aragon attributes to the sudden brightening of the arcade; instead, Austerlitz experiences feelings of anxiety and shame that he is unable to formulate in words. From the physical explanation for the sudden penetration of sunlight into the waiting room to the psychological description of the main character's traumatic memories, these illuminations do not point forward to an empowering revision of reality as in Aragon, but back to terrible memories whose import Austerlitz cannot yet grasp. [...]The naive optimism of the surrealist project cannot be recovered in the present day. Sebald's narrator returns from his expedition to the Breendonk fortress 'als es Abend wurde' [...] He has received a message about power and empire, and it is a message that lacks hope. Like the rays of light that entered the Liverpool Street station waiting room through the glass cupola in the ceiling, any hint of optimism is swallowed up in a 'darkness that gives back nothing.' [...] (Ryan 2007, 233, 246)¹⁰⁶

Unlike Ryan, who mainly contrasts Sebald's use of fulgurations to the "naive

¹⁰⁶ Ryan further points out that the last words of *Austerlitz*, "als es Abend wurde," are a reference to Franz Kafka's short story "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft," in which "a person who hopes to receive a message from the emperor can only dream of it as he sits at the window while evening falls" (Ryan 2007, 248). Ryan thus suggests that the Kafka citation strengthens the sense of pessimistic closure in the novel. However, I would argue to the contrary: that the Kafka citation undermines a sense of definite closure. Kafka's narrative has a peculiar structure, since the ending turns the relationship between the sender of the message (the emperor) and the recipient (the emperor's subject) around. This suggests two possible interpretations. The emperor becomes an image that his subject fabricates, and in this sense the message is sent by the recipient. However, as the reader has been reading Kafka's narrative as emanating from the emperor's court, the narrative evokes another interpretation in which the message comes from somewhere else and never reaches the addressee, or reaches it only much later, as an obsolete message that has to be deciphered in the new context. The sender of the message is here both some party outside the recipient's context and the recipient himself, who becomes the sender retrospectively. Walter Benjamin's reading of Kafka's story emphasizes how the message in the story continues to carry the potential to be interpreted in different times and places, placing less emphasis on the question of its origin (Benjamin 1978). In this sense, Benjamin's interpretation of the Kafka story foregrounds mediality beyond transmission of definite messages.

optimism of the surrealist project," I would argue that the reversible figure of ruin and construction site emphasizes not only a pessimistic closure and a negation of the possibility of fulgurations but also the perspective of a reader or viewer, who actively juxtaposes the two opposing interpretations of an ambiguous spatial figure. The decision that Ryan makes towards the ruin is in the eyes of the beholder. The spatial ambiguity underlines the openness of the juxtaposition - it can be interpreted in both ways and consequently also implies multiple possibilities for linking it into a narrative. The novel constantly represents these ambiguous states of mind through palimpsestic spaces – buildings in which new and old structures meet. These ambiguous moments in Sebald's novel may evoke both epiphanic moments of opening reminiscent of Proust's "pure time" and traumatic moments without expansion that collapse into themselves, but they emphasize the oscillation between these opposites rather than a resolution.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ There are also other passages that emphasize the coexistence of traumatic narrowness and temporal openness, for instance a description of how Austerlitz listens to a circus orchestra near Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris. Hearing the music that combines different, distant, but perhaps also familiar tones, which on the basis of the description could probably be East-European, he does not know whether his heart is "contracting in pain or expanding with happiness" (*Austerlitz*, 383).

2.2 Coherence and Digression in *Die Ringe des Saturn*

Unlike *Austerlitz*, *Die Ringe des Saturn* does not have one central narrative plot but consists of numerous narrative fragments that are pieced together in artful ways.¹⁰⁸ *Die Ringe des Saturn* does not trace one person's life story but suggests a more diffuse tracing of a traumatic history of modernity, evoking a sense of a traumatic logic in history. The disparity of the material in *Die Ringe des Saturn* is counteracted by several centripetal poetic strategies. The narrative is held together by geographic place, the countryside of Suffolk, and the narrator's walk through it. The subtitle of the German original also proposes that one could read this walk as a "pilgrimage," which suggests a vague notion of a telos. The narrative voice, often described as melancholic, is also a constant that gives coherence to the text.

At the beginning of the book, which is divided into ten different chapters, there is a table of contents section that lays out the topical focal points of the narrative of each individual chapter. In the actual narrative, these stages of narrative are not visible as the text proceeds from one topic to another through subtle transitions. In the actual text, these transitions occur in passages that in the table of contents are marked with a dash. The third chapter, for instance, is

¹⁰⁸ Richard T. Gray lays out in his detailed analysis the different "concentric narrative circles" of the text. According to Gray, the text can be divided into the outermost layer of the genre of travelogue, the layer of geographical or historical place that prompts diverse narrative fragments, the reflections on the past in general (especially with respect to colonial history of places like the Congo), embedded historical narratives told to the narrator by figures he encounters on his trip, textual sources incorporated in the text, intertexts such as Thomas Browne, Grimmelshausen, or Borges that provide formal or structural models and encyclopedic paradigms for Sebald's own narrative, leitmotivic patterns, intermedial insertion of illustrations, images, ekphrastic descriptions, and so on (Gray 2009, 28-32).

summarized as follows: "Strandfischer - Zur Naturgeschichte des Herings - George Wyndham Le Strange - Eine große Herde Säue - Die Verdoppelung des Menschen - Orbis Tertius" (RS, 6).¹⁰⁹ While the contents section appears to give readers orientation, it actually displays the disparateness of the material that the narrative itself manages to suppress through artful transition. The table of contents evokes the beginning of the book's last chapter, which describes a collection of texts on diverse topics by Thomas Browne, a seventeenth-century physician and writer. Since both Jorge Luis Borges and Chinese history feature in several passages of the text, it also resonates with Borges's famous "Chinese encyclopedia" based on absolute incommensurability. The fundamental tension in Sebald's text consists of the two poles of arbitrariness and sense of hidden significance provided by the narrator. I propose that if we discard the notion of absolute fulguration, this oscillation between absolute incommensurability and commensurability could be rewritten into concretized and localized questions about forms of relation other than such a binary.

I will demonstrate the interplay of coherence and digression with the example of the third chapter, which begins with a description of fishermen that the narrator sees on the beach of Lowestoft. The narrator remarks that the number of fishermen stays the same, although the individual participants change - a remark that strengthens other allusions to constancy among historical change. The narrator adds that these fishermen rarely talk to each other and are hardly there only to catch fish but rather to be able to turn their backs to the world. A remark

¹⁰⁹ "Fishermen on the Beach - The natural history of the herring - George Wyndham Le Strange - A great herd of swine - The reduplication of man - Orbis Tertius" (Sebald 1998)

on the pollution of the ocean leads him to telling how herring used to be an important object of study at his school in the 1950s, as a "principal emblem, as it were, of the indestructibility of Nature" (Sebald 1998, 53; "das Hauptemblem sozusagen für die grundsätzliche Unausrottbarkeit der Natur," RS 70.) He describes a film he saw as a schoolboy, filmed in 1936, depicting herring fishing as a "supreme example of mankind's struggle with the power of Nature" (Sebald 1998, 54; "als einer der exemplarischen Schauplätze im Kampf des Menschen mit der Übermacht der Natur," RS 70). The passage also features an image of men from Lowestoft, standing around a huge pile of caught herring. The narrator goes on to describe fluctuations in the numbers of herring, and he mentions that nobody has been able to determine what causes these fluctuations. He then mentions theories about how herrings might not feel pain when they die and an attempt by a certain Moel de Marinière to cut the body of a herring open to find out its inner structure. A description of a herring is accompanied with a photograph that shows a fish as if pictured in a textbook. The narrator goes on to tell how herrings begin to gleam when they are dead, as well as about a project of two scientists Herrington and Lightbown to use herrings for a "total illumination of our cities" (Sebald 1998, 58; RS 76). Typically for Sebald, the passage on herring seems to gather momentum and escalate into an allegorical evocation at the end: "Das Scheitern dieses exzentrischen Planes war, wie ich letztthin in einer Monographie über die Geschichte des künstlichen Lichts gelesen habe, ein kaum nennenswerter Rückschlag in der sonst unaufhaltsamen Verdrängung der Finsternis" (RS, 77).¹¹⁰ These evocations build up a sense of a

¹¹⁰ "The failure of this eccentric undertaking, as I read some time ago in a history of artificial light, constituted no more than a negligible setback in the relentless conquest of darkness" (Sebald 1998,

catastrophic logic of history, of a telos that in this book is evoked not at the end of the book but at various junctures of the narrative. In a sense, all the chapters of *Die Ringe des Saturn* are variations on the same topic: exploitation and extermination of weaker beings in the project understood by many as the process of civilization. The poetics of linkages and correspondences as well as the allusions to some kind of underlying logic in the combination of disparate material contribute to the sense that everything in the text connects on some higher level of abstraction.

Nonetheless, the tension between detailed historical material and the narrator's work of linking it creates only a vague and abstract sense of significance. The third chapter of the book contains an example of a moment in which this form of representation becomes particularly puzzling. When readers turn the page after having finished the account on the herring and begin another one concerning the death of a major called George Wyndham Le Strange, they encounter an image of bodies lying on the ground between pine trees, encompassing the whole two-page spread. This image interrupts a sentence in which the narrator mentions that the major participated in the liberation of the camp of Bergen Belsen (RS 80). The effect is striking, because this photograph has an unsettling but vague visual resemblance to the photograph of the men displaying their catch of herring - because of the horizontal and vertical lines and the contrast of light and dark colors. Furthermore, also the image of a fish on page 75 and the image of Herrington's and Lightbown's project of total illumination include a visual repetition of an abstract figure - the scale pattern of the fish is repeated in the cones of light thrown by the street lamps (RS 76).¹¹¹

59.)

¹¹¹ This reading is indebted to a remark by Lise Patt, a commentator in a film made on W. G.

As the passage does not spell out what exactly the herring and the human bodies have in common, and as the bodies, because of the reference to Bergen Belsen, link to atrocities committed by the National Socialists in Germany,¹¹² the linkage poses an irritating task for the reader, who has to consider the status of this implied relation. Does this suggest that catching herring is part of the same sliding scale of violence that peaked in concentration camps? Does Sebald's narrator here propose something similar to J. M. Coetzee's character Elizabeth Costello, who compares violence towards animals, in the organized form that it takes in factory farming, to concentration camps (Coetzee 2003)? Or does he rather use all these instances of violence to create an image reverse to progress, a pile of bodies and debris that grows skyward, as in Walter Benjamin's image of the Angel of History?

The repetition of the scale pattern brings to mind the beginning of the book, in which the narrator explains the structure of quincunx, a net-like figure "composed by using the corners of a regular quadrilateral and the point at which its diagonals intersect" (Sebald 1998, 20) and how a certain Thomas Browne, a seventeenth-century doctor and writer, believed the quincunx pattern repeated in all living and dead matter. As the narrator remarks that Browne's writings "defy all comparison" (Sebald 1998, 9; RS 19), he places Browne and his notion of

Sebald's *Die Ringe des Saturn*, who tells that the visual resemblance between the photographs first made her turn back the pages to consider this striking linkage, which then in turn also made her realize that the photographs were linked by the repeating visual pattern of scales. (Gee 2012)

¹¹² This context is evoked also by the narrator's reference to his school years in the 1950s and the film on the herring from the year 1936. For someone who knows Sebald's whole oeuvre, this suggests that the history of the Holocaust surrounds his discussion of the herring. Sebald describes in an interview with Silverblatt that when one reads Virginia Woolf's description of a dying moth written during the First World War, one has the impression that Woolf's knowledge of the battles in the trenches envelop this description (Silverblatt 2007, 80-81).

quincunx in relation to a more fundamental level of narrative, the level of organizational models that bring coherence to disjuncture. Richard T. Gray notes in his systematic exposition of different narrative levels of Sebald's text that the pattern underlying Sebald's text is not simply a network or a rhizome, because the narrator is an active agent who forms connections himself. Gray argues that the model of encyclopedia is more apt to describe the combination of structural coherence, its arbitrariness with respect to content (as encyclopedias operate with an alphabetic logic of organization) and the narrator's active creation of a sequence out of the possibilities that an encyclopedic structure opens through cross-reference (Gray 2009, 32-42). Gray proposes that both the quincunx and the paratactic encyclopedic structure are enacted by the walking narrator as a structure of branching: a found piece of historical information, a geographic place or some other detail functions as a point of departure for "secondary offshoots, with growing intricacy in relation to the initial starting point as one follows the further references" (Gray 2009, 38). The figure of branching off becomes a fundamental spatial pattern according to which the narrative operates.

Gray's reading does not address the question what this pattern suggests about the relationship between text and reader. If we think of the narrator's activity as an analogue to that of readers, the figure of branching off would also suggest that readers may continue the activity of branching off beyond the text's own universe. However, if history is understood as a kind of text, as Gray's spatial model that also refers to kaleidoscope as a metaphor for text (and even of history) would imply, this would suggest an endless reorganization of fragments

in an empty present (see Gray 2009, 50). For anything new to enter the picture, one should have to imagine a logic of organization different from the narrator's own mind (the kaleidoscope of this text) which creates correspondences according to a melancholic logic.

While the narrator's work of reorganizing historical material gestures towards coherence, the narrative logic of the text also creates moments that emphasize what I have called rehistoricization: they create offshoots that direct readers' attention to the specificity of the presented historical and factual material. I would like to illustrate the potential of Sebald's narrative to create offshoots here by coming back to the sequence of images in the herring passage, which contains a further twist beyond the visual repetition of the scale-like triangular structure. While one is likely to understand the textbook image of a fish first as an illustration of the accompanying text that describes the features of a herring, on a closer look one notices that the fish does not actually represent a herring at all, but it quite markedly does *not* have a "slightly prominent lower mandible" of a herring (Sebald 1998, 58; RS 75). Why would Sebald introduce such a "mistake" to this very passage? It diverts one's attention from the visual repetition that crafts correspondences and similarities towards the specificity of different species of fish. It alerts readers to question the narrator's attempts to provide coherence to disparate material.

What must also be noted is that the narrator begins his in-depth study into Browne's work after an experience of a coincidental connection with the narrator's own life: he notices in an encyclopedia article that Browne's skull is

preserved in the hospital in Norwich - the same institution to which he was brought after his fit of depression (RS 19). It is thus misleading to suggest, as Gray's analysis does, that the narrator would combine narrative fragments according to a wholly arbitrary logic. The narrator's interest in this coincidence seems to have produced this whole narrative, since the coincidence is linked to two of its underlying patterns: Thomas Browne and the motif of silk, which begins in this very passage, as the narrator reports that Browne was a son of a silk merchant.

What I referred to with the word "fulguration" in the case of *Austerlitz* thus seems to be connected with digression in *Die Ringe des Saturn*: two "independent systems," here the narrator's mind and the encyclopedia he reads, together spark an experience of recognition that makes the narrator create a new narrative direction. In the second half of this chapter, I will elaborate on objective chance as another model of reading in Sebald's work. Here I would like to illustrate how Sebald connects the logic of a reader's situation influencing his interpretation to historical narration by reading a passage from chapter 1, in which the narrator provides ekphrasis of an image by Rembrandt, the Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Tulp (RS 22-27). Sebald's striking ekphrasis of Rembrandt's painting reveals that there is also a mistake in this painting: the left hand of Aris Kindt is not depicted realistically but looks like a right hand. Sebald proposes that Rembrandt made this mistake deliberately to draw attention to how the realistic painting does not actually show us what the group of spectators to Tulp's lesson saw. According to Sebald's narrator, it shows how they focus their gazes on the anatomy atlas and not on the victim, Aris Kindt. The hand depicted as Aris Kindt's hand is actually

a montage evoking the images on the atlas - as if the depicted hand had been cut out from a picture in the atlas. Sebald's reading argues that Rembrandt thereby makes viewers focus on the deceased victim and the violence committed upon him.

In chapter four, Sebald's narrator tells about an incident that happened in Den Haag, the day before he went to see Rembrandt's painting (RS 99-102). He was caught in the middle of a sudden, almost surreal-seeming scene. A dark-skinned man running past the narrator on the street was about to push him in front of an angry man pursuing him on the street with a knife, wearing a cook's uniform. The narrator refers to the man with the knife as the first man's "countryman." After this, the narrator goes to see Rembrandt's painting but cannot concentrate on thinking in front of it.

Ich bin daher in einer ziemlich schlechten Verfassung gewesen, als ich am nächsten Vormittag im Mauritshuis vor dem beinahe vier Quadratmeter großen Gruppenporträt *Die anatomische Vorlesung des Dr. Nicolaas Tulp* stand. Obzwar ich eigens wegen dieses Bildes, das mich in den nächsten Jahren noch viel beschäftigte, nach Den Haag gekommen war, gelang es mir in meinem übernächtigen Zustand auf keine Weise, angesichts des unter den Blicken der Chirurgengilde ausgestreckt daliegenden Prosektursubjekts irgendeinen Gedanken zu fassen. Vielmehr fühlte ich mich, ohne daß ich genau gewußt hätte warum, von der Darstellung derart angegriffen, daß ich später bald eine Stunde brauchte, bis ich mich vor Jacob Ruisdaels *Ansicht von Haarlem mit Bleichfeldern* einigermaßen wieder beruhigte. (RS 102)

Having read the description of the painting at the beginning of the book, we now learn that the narrator's experience of the painting is somehow influenced by his panic the previous day. Since the narrator puts a lot of emphasis on his reading of Rembrandt, we might even see this emphasis on the narrator's distressed state as another reading model in addition to the more constructivist notion of encyclopedic linking that Gray's reading emphasizes. The attention given to a viewer's affects as a foil to ekphrasis emphasizes situational, embodied modes of reading.

We can see that Sebald's program begins to resonate surprisingly with that of Weiss, whose aesthetics of resistance emphasizes affective and embodied responses to artworks as productive of subversive perspectives. The strongly affective experience in front of the Rembrandt painting resembles the descriptions of similar experiences in Weiss's *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, in which working-class activists feel into paintings in order to connect them to the concerns of their own project of emancipation. The resonance appears even stronger, since Sebald's narrator connects the gesture of overlooking practiced by the audience in Rembrandt's painting to a "history of subjection," and sees making the body invisible and "disregard [of] the flesh" as the "main chapter" of this history (RS 25-26; Sebald 1998, 13). The narrator points out that the philosopher Descartes, whom he holds as one of the main proponents of a philosophy requiring turning one's gaze away from the "flesh and to the machine within," could well have been present at the lecture (Ibid.). Sebald thus suggests that a critical or subversive history would somehow restore the body back to history.

It is instructive to compare more closely Sebald's approach to the body and subversive reading to that of Weiss, because this helps us understand better the different role of embodiment in these authors' works. Sebald's essay on Peter Weiss has a close relationship to the Rembrandt passage in *Die Ringe des Saturn*, because this essay also refers to the Rembrandt painting. But if one reads the essay alongside *Die Ringe des Saturn*, one notices further connections between the texts. Sebald's essay on Weiss makes visible that the surreal scene in the Hague depicted in *Die Ringe des Saturn* is written in homage to Weiss:

Zu den frühesten Alpträumen des Peter Weiss gehört die Vorstellung, geschlachtet zu werden. Die zwei Männer mit den Messern, die, wie er in *Abschied von den Eltern* berichtet, aus einem dunklen Torgang heraus auf ihn zukommen - im Hintergrund auf einem Reisighaufen liegt das Schwein, an dem sie eben ihr Werk verrichtet haben - sind die Sendboten einer Übermacht, der das Kind schon sich ausgeliefert fühlt und deren Agenten es in sämtlichen Autoritätsfiguren, insbesondere aber in den Ärzten erkennt, die ja ganz offensichtlich ein professionelles Interesse daran haben, in seinen Körper einzudringen. Zweifellos liegt diesem gesamten Themenkomplex die panische Angst vor einem Strafvollzug zugrunde, der den Leib des schuldigen Subjekts bis über den Tod hinaus durch weitere zerstörerische Maßnahmen verfolgt." (Sebald 2003, 133.)¹¹³

In the essay, Sebald presents Weiss as someone he holds in high esteem because of his response to postgenocidal writing. Sebald writes that Weiss's whole work is "designed as a visit to the dead," and it is a "struggle against the 'art of forgetting' [...] consisting in the constant transfer of recollection into written signs" (Sebald 2003, 172). Sebald connects Weiss's focus on "cruel procedures" to what he describes as Weiss's attempt to write in a mode that, as Weiss himself wrote in his notebooks, "sets our own death before our eyes" and sets "memory to work" (Sebald 2003, 129-130; Sebald 2004, 172-173).

Deutlicher als jedes andere zeitgenössische oeuvre demonstriert das des Peter Weiss, daß ein abstraktes Totengedächtnis wenig vermag gegen die Verlockungen des Gedächtnisschwunds, wo es nicht auch in der Erforschung und Rekonstruktion der konkreten Stunde der Peinigung eine übers bloße Mitleid hinausweisende Mitleidenschaft beweist. In solcher Rekonstruktion nimmt das dem Andenken sich verpflichtende künstlerische Subjekt, wie Weiss es versteht, nicht zuletzt auch Eingriffe vor in die eigene Person, die in ihrer Schmerzhaftigkeit das Anhalten des Erinnerns gewissermaßen garantieren. (Sebald 2003, 129-130)

Sebald proposes here that the artist's pain in depicting cruelty creates lasting images that work against forgetting. His essay thus focuses both on the depiction

¹¹³ "One of Peter Weiss's earliest nightmares was the idea of being slaughtered. The two men with knives who, as he writes in *Abschied von den Eltern* ("Farewell to My Parents"), are coming towards him out of a dark gateway - in the background, the pig on which they have just been working lies on a pile of branches - are the envoys of a superior power to which the child already feels he has been delivered up, and whose agents he recognizes in all figures of authority, but more particularly doctors, who obviously have a professional interest in invading his body. At the heart of this entire complex of themes there undoubtedly lies panic terror of an execution that will inflict further destruction, even after death, on the guilty victim's body."

of pained bodies in Weiss and the artist's *own* pain during this process, and Sebald calls *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* "that genuinely catastrophic novel in which, with a shattering sense of system, Peter Weiss wrecked what he knew was the little life remaining to him" (Sebald 2004, 180). This reading of the role of violence in Weiss's novel is matched by Sebald's gesture of ending his reading of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* with the execution scene of the resistance fighters at the Plötzensee prison, without a reference to the ensuing reflections by the novel's narrator in the future conditional.

This passage brings out a crucial difference between my reading of the role of the body in Weiss's novel and Sebald's perspective on it. While Weiss elaborates a method of bodily reading and implies that future readers could use it in their specific and situated projects of emancipation, Sebald approaches the body as a site of trauma from which history can be written as a history of violence. In fact, I would argue that Sebald's reading of the body in Weiss's aesthetics is less illuminating of Weiss's complex poetics of embodied reading in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* than it is of Sebald's own poetics of melancholy in *Die Ringe des Saturn*. In his essay on Weiss, Sebald presents Weiss's *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* as "Pilgerfahrt [...] durch die Geröllhalden unserer Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte" (Sebald 2003, 147, "pilgrimage over the arid slopes of our cultural and contemporary history," Sebald 2004, 190), which expresses a wish to "stand on the side of victims at the end of time." This description would not be unsuitable in the case of his own book *Die Ringe des Saturn*, which even includes "pilgrimage" as the subtitle of the German original edition. Sebald emphasizes the dimension of trauma in Weiss and sees it as more fundamental than the

dimension of resistance. He reads Weiss's description of Géricault's work, who painted bodies in pain and fell ill himself, as a contradiction to the political program in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*. I have argued that the focus on the body is an instrumental part of Weiss's aesthetics of resistance, not in opposition to it. Hence, I would contend that what is missing in Sebald's reading of the significance of the body in Weiss's novel is the dimension of bodily reading that, as we saw in chapter 2, is an elaborate poetic program seeking to inscribe futurity in a text concerned with political violence and historical trauma. Weiss is also concerned not only with sympathy ("Mitleid") (Sebald 2003, 129-130) but also with a reflection on finding a path toward affective involvement on the side of the recipient while preventing a seamless identification or a cathartic experience. It seems, then, that Sebald focuses much more on the body in pain as a creaturely body. Consequently, Sebald's affective mode of identification with the represented victim seems to lack something of Weiss's insistence on critical distance. In the following, I will therefore elaborate on the problems related to Sebald's tendency to foreground melancholy as an ethical response to historical trauma.

2.3. Melancholic Identification

There have been many attempts to present the melancholic dimension of Sebald's narratives as an ethical approach to representing trauma. Martin Swales, for instance, highlights Sebald's use of indirection and metonymy as a respectful manner of writing about the past. "Sebald offers us the metonymy of melancholy – the adjacent, contiguous things of the pained condition, rather than the condition itself. He gives us the rings caused by the destruction and deprivation, rather than the haemorrhaging centre" (Swales 2003, 86). Another critic to hail Sebald's writing as an ethics of melancholy, Eric Santner, reads Sebald's texts as an ethically productive immersion into the "creaturely," fallen state of another human being. Santner argues that Sebald's narratives insist on the attempt to respect the other as Other. Santner's theory suggests that the Other is in some transhistorical sense similar – he or she shares the general, structural trauma of finite existence with the melancholic subject (see Santner 2006, xiii-xv). Hence, while an aesthetic of indirection emphasizes gaps that merely gesture toward a traumatic center, Santner's reading arguably suggests an act of filling in the gap with the notion of a shared creatureliness.

Historian Dominick LaCapra has argued in the context of trauma studies that it can be problematic to build one's identity on the basis of a melancholic relationship to the past (see LaCapra 1994, 209-210). In LaCapra's view, valorization of melancholy leads to uncritical and displaced subject positions, often in the form of generalization of a specific loss into questions such as fallen

language and traumatic human condition.¹¹⁴ Anne Whitehead has analyzed Sebald's texts in this vein, as relying on generalizing logic of the "rhetoric of the sublime" (Whitehead 2004, 138). This analysis indicates that Sebald's poetics might create problematic reading positions, because it could extend repetition compulsion of a traumatized character to compulsive reading: reading that identifies with the repetition compulsion represented in the text. "The danger of Sebald's writing is that, like the mazes in which his protagonists are trapped, it offers the reader no escape from the repeated acting out of trauma. The novels respond to trauma by evoking its disorientation and its symptomatic dimensions at a stylistic level, but they do not offer any way of coming to terms with the traumatic experiences which they represent." (Whitehead 2004, 138).

Thus, one strong implied reading position in Sebald's texts is that of melancholic identification, hailed by Santner as ethical and criticized by LaCapra (and Whitehead reading Sebald) as symptomatic and generalizing. The relationship between Austerlitz and the narrator is a good example of this form of identification, because both seem to share the similar melancholic state of mind – sometimes both are even using almost the same words to describe it.¹¹⁵ In some

¹¹⁴ Dominick LaCapra criticizes the tendency to conflate the idea of absence of metaphysical foundations, formulated by poststructuralism and deconstruction, with analysis of historical trauma. "One may well argue that the Holocaust represents losses of such magnitude that, while not absolutely unique, it may serve to raise the question of absence, for example, with respect to divinity. Still, despite the extremely strong temptation, one may question the tendency to reduce [...] one dimension of trauma to the other – to generalize structural trauma so that it absorbs or subordinates the significance of historical trauma, thereby rendering all references to the latter merely illustrative, homogeneous [...]" See LaCapra 1991, 75–82.

¹¹⁵ A good example of the identification between the narrator and protagonist is the similarity of their voices. This can be illustrated by comparing the beginning of the novel to a passage where Austerlitz tells about his recurring visits at the Liverpool Street Station in London. The narrator begins the novel as follows: "In the second half of the 1960s I travelled repeatedly from England to Belgium, partly for study purposes, partly for other reasons which were never entirely clear to me [...]" (*Austerlitz*, 1 [5]). In another passage, Austerlitz uses almost the same words when

passages, it is suggested that the motive of the narrator to write down Austerlitz's story can be seen in connection with his indirect and partly repressed guilt as a German born after the Second World War.

In order to understand existing critical approaches to Sebald's focus on melancholy, we need to recall that melancholy has been a topic of critical discussion in the context of various theorizations on political implications of remembering and mourning. According to the conception of melancholy as pathology, elaborated in modernity by psychoanalysis, melancholy is understood as failed mourning, in which the subject lingers on the memory of the lost object and is unable to accept the past as gone (see Freud 1946, 428-431). Some theorists, however, have contested the idea of melancholy as an illness and insist on some kind of knowledge and resistance that is produced by refusing to let go of the remnants of the past. Sebald's own writings on the critical potential of melancholy resemble those of postcolonial theorists David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, who argue for melancholy as a way to oppose the present reality and to produce alternative histories that contest the teleological and linear story of modernization.¹¹⁶ In his study about Austrian literature, in which he identifies "descriptions of unhappiness" as this literature's recurring motif, Sebald proposes an understanding of melancholy as a paradox of inconsolable suffering that produces knowledge (Sebald 1994).

speaking of his visits at the Liverpool Street Station in London: "I went there quite often at the time, said Austerlitz, partly because of my interest in architectural history and partly for other reasons which I could not explain even to myself [...]" (*Austerlitz*, 184 [188]).

¹¹⁶ In the preface for a compilation of essays on mourning in postcolonial context, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian propose an understanding of melancholy that looks at it as a "creative process" that also has political implications (Eng & Kazanjian 2003, 1-23). As in Eric Santner's study, the meaning of the political remains rather vague. In Eng's and Kazanjian's case it seems to mean some kind of production of alternative histories that do not conform to a grand narrative that marginalizes certain approaches to history.

Melancholie, das Überdenken des sich vollziehenden Unglücks, hat aber mit Todessucht nichts gemein. Sie ist eine Form des Widerstands. Und auf dem Niveau der Kunst vollends ist ihre Funktion alles andere als bloß reaktiv oder reaktionär. Wenn die, starren Blicks, noch einmal nachrechnet, wie es nur so hat kommen können, dann zeigt sich, daß die Motorik der Trostlosigkeit und diejenige der Erkenntnis identische Exekutiven sind. Die Beschreibung des Unglücks schließt in sich die Möglichkeit zu seiner Überwindung ein." (Sebald 1994, 12.)¹¹⁷

This idea suggests that although melancholy is heavily linked to repetition, this repetition has a potential to create some kind of knowledge and point to a "possibility of its own overcoming." However, even this faintly optimistic formulation suggests that the melancholic mode might turn around itself endlessly and the overcoming is linked more to perseverance than to change. It seems to risk producing a generalized notion of history as trauma. The melancholic immersion would then seem to lose the specificity of historical events and seize readers with a generalizing sense of a shared human condition. In this sense, Sebald's melancholic mode can be argued to produce passive modes of reading.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ "Melancholy, the contemplation of the movement of misfortune, has nothing in common with the wish to die. It is a form of resistance. And this is emphatically so at the level of art, where it is anything but reactive or reactionary. When, with rigid gaze, it (melancholy) goes over again just how things could have happened, it becomes clear that the dynamic of inconsolability and that of knowledge are identical in their execution. The description of misfortune includes within itself the possibility of its own overcoming." (Cited in English in Santner 2006, 44-45.)

¹¹⁸ Fridolin Schley observes that there has been a certain automatism in the positive response to Sebald that Schley characterizes as emotional and uncritical. Schley claims that Sebald's non-fictional essays on other writers created a demand to which his fictional works offered the supply. He further argues that Sebald manages to cause an emotional reaction in readers that has contributed to a "hagiography" in which Sebald emerges as the morally superior voice with respect to writing about the Holocaust and other histories of oppression. Schley's analysis indicates that the implied reading position of Sebald's writing is precisely a melancholic immersion that can also be argued to have little to do with critical modes of reading. Schley proposes that a critical engagement with Sebald *resists* the emotional effect of the melancholic mode. This is apparent in the introduction, where Schley argues that Sebald himself practiced a very emotional and subjective form of reading. "Die Studie intendiert keinen Denkmalsturz, Sebald soll nicht auf Sebald angewandt werden. Es geht vielmehr um die Positionierung und Wahrnehmung der Autorschaftsinstanz W. G. Sebald; ein Entsagen der auch auf fachwissenschaftlicher Ebene eigenartigen Emotionalität der Auseinandersetzung versteht sich da grundlegend von selbst." (Schley 2012, 11). However, I would argue against such a binary between emotional effect and critical reading. As my reading of Weiss demonstrated, these two may be understood to work together.

The problem of identification that is reflected in the narrative structure of *Austerlitz* has also been discussed in relation to Sebald's own subject position. Sebald, who writes about Jewish emigrés not only in *Austerlitz* but also in the collection of stories *Die Ausgewanderten*, has been criticized for the tendency to identify with stories of Jewish victims.¹¹⁹ Sebald's position (and the narrator's position in *Austerlitz*) resemble what Eric Santner analyzed in his study *Stranded Objects* as a tendency of children of the perpetrator generation to identify with victims of the Nazis. According to Santner, they inherited "not only the unmourned traumas of the parents but also the psychic structures that impeded mourning in the older generation in the first place" (Santner 1990, 37). The children of the perpetrator generation became to see themselves as victims - of their family histories. For some of them, a way to displace the preoccupation with this trauma has been to identify with the stories of the victims - a preoccupation which is substituted for mourning (ibid.). For instance, Mary Cosgrove has shown that in an essay on Wolfgang Hildesheimer, Günter Grass and melancholy, Sebald's valorization of melancholy is linked to an identification with Wolfgang Hildesheimer, who was one of relatively few Jewish authors in postwar German literature (Cosgrove 2006). Cosgrove argues that the overall

¹¹⁹ See for instance Wirtz 2001, Taberner 2004, Cosgrove 2006. Identification is discussed directly in *Die Ringe des Saturn* in a passage on Michael Hamburger. The narrator transmits the story of Hamburger, who had to leave Berlin as a child and emigrate to Britain.

"Über was für Zeiträume hinweg verlaufen die Wahlverwandschaften und Korrespondenzen? Wie kommt es, daß man in einem anderen Menschen sich selber und wenn nicht sich selber, so doch seinen Vorgänger sieht? Daß ich dreiunddreißig Jahre nach Michael zum erstenmal durch den englischen Zoll gegangen bin, daß ich jetzt daran denk, meinen Lehrberuf aufzugeben, wie er es getan hat, daß er sich in Suffolk und ich mich in Norfolk mit dem Schreiben plage, daß wir beide den Sinn unserer Arbeit bezweifeln und daß wir beide an einer Alkoholallergie leiden, das ist nicht weiter verwunderlich. Aber warum ich gleich bei meinem ersten Besuch bei Michael den Eindruck gewann, als lebte ich oder als hätte ich einmal gelebt in seinem Haus, und zwar in allem geradeso wie er, das kann ich mir nicht erklären." (RS 217-218)

impression of Sebald's argumentation is that he remains opaque about on what grounds he prefers Hildesheimer's version of melancholic poetics over Grass's. Both Hildesheimer and Grass build on melancholy, but in very different ways. According to Cosgrove, Hildesheimer writes about the inconsolability of trauma in his novel *Tynset*, whereas Günter Grass's novel *Das Tagebuch einer Schnecke* looks for approaches to negotiate between apathy and political extremism. One may conjecture that Sebald reacts in his writings to a tendency of the project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* to become a discourse dominated by a select few, especially in the context of Gruppe 47, which has been claimed by some to have reproduced the exclusion of Jewish authors in the postwar West-German public sphere (see Braese 2001, 8-10, Briegleb 2003). Melancholy seems to have become a suitable framework for Sebald, because its failure to move on also draws attention to the multiple voices absent from the postwar West-German public sphere. However, Sebald's melancholic mode is also strongly exclusive, because it seems to concern only those with whom the melancholic figure can identify. An important bias in Sebald's writing concerns gender, since Sebald's narrators almost never identify with women and fail to give as detailed accounts of non-belonging female characters as in the case of nomadic male writers like Conrad, Weiss, or Stendhal. Sebald's nonfictional essays on writers are also exclusively concerned with male authors. Thus, although Sebald's insistence on melancholy may be linked to opening a possibility for an alternative history of postwar German literature, even this history depends on a major exclusion.

As already suggested in my analysis of *Austerlitz* and *Die Ringe des Saturn*, however, I would argue that Sebald's affinity to narrative linkages and analogies

also encourages other, more implicit reading positions. If we go back to the passage in which the narrator of *Die Ringe des Saturn* recounts the sudden threat of violence he experienced on the streets of The Hague, we notice that it is notable not only because the narrator feels threatened by the man with the knife, but also because it is one of the few moments in which the narrator's observer position is punctured by the bodily touch of another person. First, a man with a dark beard brushes him with his elbow on his way to a mosque. Then, he encounters the dark-skinned man who almost runs into him, as does his pursuer. Eric Santner reads this passage as evidence of a repressed trauma of homosexuality in Sebald, drawing also from other passages that include threatening male characters or an oppressive presence of sexuality (Santner 2006, 167). Santner's reading is salutary in bringing attention to a "blind spot" of Sebald's narratives that has often been ignored in analyses of Sebald's work: an almost exclusive focus on male figures and their experiences creates an insistent homosocial tendency into Sebald's oeuvre. Nonetheless, I would like to move in a different direction and emphasize the fact that the passage in The Hague portrays a Dutch city with immigrants from outside Europe. It is one of the few passages in the book that draws attention to contemporary reality as something other than an empty landscape. The tension in the passage is also created by an allegorical impulse on the part of the narrator, who describes the place as "extraterritorial," and the presence of the contemporary, created by detailed descriptions of the city scene. The sudden situation the narrator describes threatens the narrator's impulse to detach himself from his present setting, as if the contemporary Dutch city punctured the narrative here with force and the narrator would try to suppress this. Recalling the pressure of the present central

in Peter Weiss poetics, we can say that the moment of contact on the street of the Hague - ironically the very passage written in reference to Weiss - threatens Sebald's very paradigm of melancholic reading, which looks at history as a container-like space.

Sebald's representation of architecture, a central poetic device in *Austerlitz* that creates juxtapositions, is ambiguous in a profound way.¹²⁰ Buildings do not refer indirectly only to Austerlitz's story through uncanny effects: they also provide potential contact points between historical moments and experiences, between subjective and collective processes of remembering. While architectural sites in *Austerlitz* are important in indirect, metonymical references to the Holocaust, they also function as shifters in a more general semiotic sense,¹²¹ which creates another, more open dimension to Sebald's spatial poetics. In a sense, architecture is both a structure that gives coherence to the text and one that multiplies potential referents. A good example of a multidimensional building in *Austerlitz* is the railway station. The railway stations bind the different parts of Austerlitz's life story together and point to the importance of the travels made between Prague, London, Paris, and Theresienstadt in this story. In the course of the novel it becomes evident that the railway stations and tracks are in a metonymical

¹²⁰ The use of photographs in *Austerlitz* is another stylistic feature that has an open dimension. While the photographs may function as diptychs that frame Austerlitz's story and refer to an absent traumatic referent, this is just one of their functions in the text. As Roland Barthes points out in his writings on photography, photographs have a connotative dimension dependent on a viewer's context (Barthes 1990, 19). Barthes's analysis is useful in that it not only emphasizes free play of signification but also the affective grasp of photographs that Barthes refers to with the word "punctum." Although Barthes argues that an ultimate punctum of photographs is the passing of time towards death, the notion of punctum is also described by Barthes as a specific experience created in the relationship between the photograph and its viewer (see Barthes 1981, 25-26, 42-46). Photographs thus do not simply have an illustrative function, but they open multiple tangential relationships to the text.

¹²¹ See footnote 47 on page 83 of this dissertation.

relation to the concentration camps.¹²² In addition, the railway stations have a role in the novel's discourse on time. Austerlitz explains to the narrator at the colonial building of Antwerp Central Station how the railway gave birth to the need to synchronize clocks, which used to show different times in different places (*Austerlitz* 14 [18]). They are also a knot in a huge net of railway tracks that connects different times and people separated by vast chronological and spatial distances. Sebald's texts are full of geographic and historical detail and reference real buildings that readers could visit. While Austerlitz's interest in monumental architecture can be read both as a symptom of repression and as a rather generalizing gesture of comparison, the narrative that traces connections between various buildings and places actually comes to create a highly detailed and geographically broad grid for readers who have a different historical experience and orientation.

The importance of Sebald's representation of geographic space can be explained with the notion of family resemblance that is mentioned repeatedly in *Austerlitz* (see *Austerlitz*, 44, 168 [48–49, 172]). Family likeness is mentioned in the novel as the principle with which Austerlitz connects monumental buildings as well as his own photographs lying on his table in the passage in which the narrator pays a visit to Austerlitz's apartment (*Austerlitz* 52). The notion of family resemblance

¹²² Already the name Austerlitz can be seen pointing toward Auschwitz – by the similarity of the names and also on the basis of the fact that Austerlitz is also the name of a railway station in Paris where Austerlitz's father was sent away as a prisoner of the Germans. The name Austerlitz also obviously refers to the battle of Austerlitz, which is the favorite subject of Austerlitz's history teacher Hilary. Austerlitz's name is a good example of the chains of associations that seem to have potentially infinite connections. The name of the battle can be associated to Napoleon and, through chains of associations even to Hitler, who also had vast plans of conquering Europe. Austerlitz also looks for information about people who have carried his name, but concludes that he does not know where these clues are leading (*Austerlitz*, 96 [99–100]).

would at first seem to encourage filial principles of organization. However, in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, the concept emphasizes the fact that the range of meanings of a certain word is not based on an essence that is to be found in every meaning. The meaning of a word is rather a bundle of different uses of the word, the individual members of which do not all have the same characteristics. They are nonetheless connected to each other like a rope (the metaphor used by Wittgenstein himself), in which no single thread runs through the whole length but together with other threads forms a firm structure (Wittgenstein PU, 67). We can thus see that while the spatialization of time in *Austerlitz* evokes unchanging container-like structures and a melancholic search for correspondences, the architectural poetics also entails the principle of family resemblances, which suggests a more open mode for linking historical contexts brought into relation. I would like to foreground a passage in which Jacques Austerlitz discusses his experience of traumatic crisis with a reference to Wittgenstein's image of city of language.¹²³ While Austerlitz explicitly discusses his inability to articulate himself, in the context of Wittgenstein's work the city of language serves to illustrate Wittgenstein's focus on the meaning of language as its use. Michel de Certeau elaborates in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* Wittgenstein's image into a conception of walking as a subversive act in which structures created by someone else are transformed by pedestrians who forge their own paths in the midst of the city (de Certeau 1988, 91-110). Following de

¹²³ "Wenn man die Sprache ansehen kann als eine alte Stadt, mit einem Gewinkel von Gassen und Plätzen, mit Quartieren, die weit zurückreichen in die Zeit, mit abgerissenen, assanierten und neubauten Vierteln und immer weiter ins Vorfeld hinauswachsenden Außenbezirken, so glich ich selbst einem Menschen, der sich, aufgrund einer langen Abwesenheit, in dieser Agglomeration nicht mehr zurechtfindet, der nicht mehr weiß, wozu eine Haltestelle dient, was ein Hinterhof, eine Straßenkreuzung, ein Boulevard oder eine Brücke ist." (Austerlitz 183).

Certeau, we can also conceptualize reading as using,¹²⁴ instead of reproducing or consuming, and propose that Sebald's evocations of a container-like text of history can be approached differently by readers who use existing discourses for their own purposes. Michael Rothberg articulates such a possibility in his book *Multidirectional Memory*, which studies cross-references in memory discourses between the Holocaust and colonialism. With examples such as the interaction between Holocaust memory and French-Algerian relations in 1960s France, Rothberg demonstrates that a more established memory discourse can contribute to articulation of historical experiences that do not yet have a discourse (see Rothberg 2009, 229). As I will elaborate in the following section, the rehistoricizing mode of reading Sebald's poetics of juxtapositions opens up the possibility of approaching Sebald's oeuvre as an "archive of multidirectional memory" and an outline for new perspectives to imperial history.

¹²⁴ De Certeau also discusses reading as production of space. For de Certeau readers are not simply recipients but users of a text. "In reality, the activity of reading has [...] all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words. [...] The readable transforms itself into the memorable: Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text; the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news. The thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces. A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place" (De Certeau 1988, xxi).

3. Contact Narrative

While Sebald's project reacts very much to German contexts, as his essays on the air war or on German authors such as Andersch or Günter Grass (representatives of Gruppe 47) testify, his works also create linkages beyond one national context. Furthermore, Sebald's considerable reception in multiple languages makes it important to ask how Sebald's mode of writing about trauma and history functions in the context of an increasingly transnational readership. The globalization of both trauma discourses and of readership of fiction that gets circulated beyond its immediate context should prompt new critical questions on Sebald's articulations of trauma. In this section, I will show that readers' interest in specific historical issues or contexts may foreground aspects of Sebald's poetics that serve to strengthen rehistoricizing modes of reading, despite the melancholic frame that I have studied and critiqued so far. I will now investigate textual references to the transnational historical phenomenon of imperialism and the linkage between the Holocaust and colonialism in Sebald's *Austerlitz* and *Die Ringe des Saturn*. Then, I will proceed to some further specific reading positions that do not operate in the logic of melancholic identification.

3.1. Unassimilation

In her study *Cosmopolitan Style*, Rebecca Walkowitz highlights the manner in which Sebald opts to "assemble cultural and ethical points of view that seem inconsistent or incommensurate" (Walkowitz 2006, 2). She argues that Sebald's texts provide material for new articulations of the relationship between the local

and the global and prompt readers to rethink "which comparisons are relevant and which irrelevant or impertinent" (Walkowitz 2006, 11). Walkowitz reads Sebald's narratives against the background of British memory discourses and proposes that they may have a salutary effect as they prompt readers to rethink well-known or automatized frames of historical explanation. Walkowitz points out that while Sebald's gestures of discussing the Holocaust in connection with the British air war on Germany or Belgian or British Imperialism "may resemble too closely the efforts of Holocaust deniers or apologists who have tried to diminish the Nazi genocide by comparing it to other, implicitly worse crimes" (Walkowitz 2006, 154), when approached by British and American readers, the same novel could also "serve to correct an uncritical self-righteousness about German violence and British or U.S. liberalism" (Walkowitz 2006, 154). This effect figures in two passages of *Die Ringe des Saturn* in particular, in which the German emigrant narrator meets a British person, who narrates experiences related to Germany in World War II. The first of these passages gives an account of the bombing of German cities during World War II, told from the perspective of a British man, who at a young age became obsessed with the air war. He tells how he learned German in order to read what Germans wrote about the bombings of German cities – only to find that these accounts did not exist. While Sebald discussed the lack of representations of the air war on German cities in his lectures and essays published as *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999), in *Die Ringe des Saturn* he chose to approach the topic through the viewpoint of a British character, who discusses it with the German emigré narrator. This further suggests that the representations of the air war might have a function beyond the German-language public sphere.

What is important for my own analysis is the fact that Walkowitz's reading operates with a different understanding of comparison than readings emphasizing the melancholic frame. Rather than constructing a *tertium comparationis* out of the things brought into relation in Sebald's texts, her analysis of Sebald's narratives proposes that a moment of contact between two systems, here two established national discourses on history, may adjust habitual perspectives in both of them. This perspective on Sebald's writing foregrounds less a closed structure implied by Sebald's correspondences than more limited and local effects sparked by contact between the text and a specific context. Walkowitz proposes that Sebald does not "transcend the categories of British, English, foreign, German, and Jewish writing" but he nevertheless "unsettles the differences among them." (Walkowitz 2006, 2). Walkowitz terms this effect "unassimilation," which refers to the effect of destabilization such as Sebald's gesture of calling Conrad by his Polish name.

'[U]nassimilation' [...] refers to the literal de-Anglicization of proper nouns and also to the less-literal disaggregation of collective experiences. Unassimilation does not return names to an original state of propriety: rather, it displays the history of translation, it uncontracts that history, by situating individuals, places, and even novels within several national, subnational, or transnational traditions. (Walkowitz 2006, 160).

The notion of unassimilation thus has a relation to what I have called weak analogy: it unhinges definite, punctual relationships and suggests, by withholding a clear linkage, an activity of creating new linkages.

What is important in Walkowitz is that unassimilation prompts historical, not transhistorical reading. If we recall Sebald's chapter on Conrad, we can argue

that this particular gesture of unassimilation has the potential to make readers ask what actually constitutes imperialism and which locations should be understood as postcolonial. It suggests perspectives beyond established centers of discourse - both in the case of discourses centering on Western Europe and established postcolonial discourses - and it poses the possibility that this destabilized perspective may sharpen the analytical discourses on empire. As I argued in chapter 2 on Conrad, Sebald's gesture could encourage us to look at areas inside Europe, such as Poland and Ireland, as postcolonial contexts, without equating them with a context like the Congo.

Sebald's treatment of Conrad is additionally characterized by both identification and critique implied by the juxtaposition with the story of Casement. A case can be made that Sebald identifies with Conrad, on the one hand, because he sees Conrad's relationship to colonialism as analogous to his own troubled relationship to the Holocaust (see LaCapra 2013, 108).¹²⁵ After a short reference to Conrad's uneasiness at the sight of colonial violence in the Congo that he tried to forget (RS 154), the narrative leaves Conrad and shifts to Casement, who made the colonial violence public in his Congo report. While Conrad might have been uneasy about the imperial exploitation he witnessed in the Congo and also perceived a relation between imperialism in Africa and his own experiences in Poland, Sebald's chapter in *Die Ringe des Saturn* suggests, he never made such a connection explicit nor turned openly against imperialist racism. The chapter creates an implicit connection between Casement's writing and Conrad's own

¹²⁵ Sebald's position as a writer can also be seen to resemble that of Conrad, as both were expatriate "British" authors.

response to his experiences in the Congo, *Heart of Darkness*. It was Casement rather than Conrad who acted upon his opposition to racism and the colonial rule in the Congo. However, Sebald also unassimilates the proposed juxtaposition between Conrad and Casement. First, he moves beyond the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, stating that Casement's homosexuality might have made him more sensitive to the position of Congolese subjects to the Belgian rule, the "white Indians of Ireland" and "those who were furthest from the centres of power" (Sebald 1997, 162). Second, as the narrator falls asleep, there is a sentence that rings in his mind: "Klappere, Mühle, klappere, ging es mir zuletzt in einem fort durch den Kopf, du klapperst nur für mich." (RS 126) This sentence, unidentified in Sebald's text, is from Franz Kafka's *Der Schloß*. Kafka comes up more directly later in the chapter, albeit in a rather cryptic fashion. The narrator mentions that when Korzeniowski was leaving the Congo, disillusioned by the imperial project, Joseph Loewy, Kafka's uncle, was heading there, where he would excel in serving the Belgian state to an extent that he would receive a medal from King Leopold (RS 147-148). The quote from Kafka's story thus prefigures this strange pasting of the story of Kafka's relative in the middle of the chapter that focuses on Casement and Conrad. While there hardly is a definitive answer to why Sebald refers to Kafka's uncle, this gesture emphasizes the production of further perspectives on the entangled history of imperialism. Like the topic of homosexuality, it disturbs the comparison between Conrad and Casement, or Poland, Ireland and the Congo.

Austerlitz suggests possibilities for destabilizing perspectives on historical trauma by connecting the Holocaust and imperialism in a weak analogy. As in

the chapter on Conrad that begins with narrator's dream-like associations, blurring of vision often precedes unusual perspectives also in *Austerlitz*. The description of Antwerp Central Station first introduces the theme of imperialism through the narrator's experience of confusing his previous place of visit, the section for nocturnal animals at the Antwerp zoo, with the Station. It occurs to the narrator that the station foyer should be filled with "cages for lions and leopards let into its marble niches, and aquaria for sharks, octopuses, and crocodiles, just as some zoos, conversely, have little railway trains in which you can, so to speak, travel to the farthest corners of the earth." (*Austerlitz* 6). This seemingly irrational vision is ostensibly explained with the proximity of the two places in the narrator's experience that day. The last sentence, however, can also be read as an allusion to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, one of the most famous literary texts on the Western European colonial endeavor in Africa, a text in which the protagonist Marlow and his listeners travel on the river Thames, a "waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth" (Conrad 2006, 4). The Conrad intertext is also present a few pages later, when Austerlitz begins an account of the history of the Antwerp station (*Austerlitz* 10). Austerlitz tells how "Belgium, a little patch of yellowish gray barely visible on the map of the world, spread its sphere of influence to the African continent with its colonial enterprises [...]," evoking the famous colored maps in *Heart of Darkness* that are also mentioned in the chapter on Conrad in *The Rings of Saturn* (A 9; RS 143). Austerlitz adds that this imperial expansion happened a long time ago, "although it determines our lives to this day." This remark extends the oppressive presence of the past that the opening scene of *Austerlitz* establishes from a mere premonition to Austerlitz's own personal trauma, the ostensible

narrative telos of this novel, to the lingering effects of Western European imperialism. This means that when readers arrive at the end of the novel, which explains why Austerlitz and the narrator are interested in the imperial buildings, the effect is not that the first part of the diptych serves as a mere background that recedes from view at the end. The detailed descriptions of the imperial buildings are not sublated into a teleological narrative: they also index historical projects of articulation other than the history of the Holocaust. Austerlitz and the narrator are more directly engaged in. Although Sebald evokes a “rhetoric of the sublime” in the novel in which specific historical experiences are sometimes sublated into a notion of history as trauma, the descriptions of buildings also become potential contact points pointing to multiple historical narratives.

The contact points between the Holocaust and colonialism in *Austerlitz* can be illustrated further with a passage in which the narrator happens to meet Austerlitz after an interval of several years and Austerlitz first begins to relate his story about a *Kindertransport* from Prague. This passage also is preceded by a blurred vision: the narrator has lost his eyesight for a while and traveled to London to see a doctor, who explains that his condition is common in people who have read extensively. The place of the chance encounter between the narrator and Austerlitz is the Great Eastern Hotel in London. Here, Austerlitz puts great emphasis on the fact that he and the narrator meet by chance at this very location:

Sonderbarerweise, sagte Austerlitz, habe er heute nachmittag [...] an unsere so weit schon zurückliegenden belgischen Begegnungen gedacht und daran, daß er bald für seine Geschichte, hinter die er erst in den letzten Jahren gekommen sei, einen Zuhörer finden müsse, ähnlich wie ich es seinerzeit gewesen sei in Antwerpen, Liège und Zeebrugge. Und wenn er mich nun hier angetroffen habe in der Bar des Great Eastern Hotel, die er zuvor nie betreten hatte in seinem Leben, so sei das, entgegen jeder statistischen Wahrscheinlichkeit, von einer erstaunlichen, geradezu zwingenden inneren Logik. (*Austerlitz* 68).

The imperial hotel is described here as a setting that is somehow suitable for Austerlitz's first attempt to share his story. The Great Eastern Hotel is a setting that indexes a different history, that of British and Western European imperialism, but the fact that these two characters do not discuss it creates a paratactic connection between the background of the building and the foreground, Austerlitz's narrative. As the passage draws attention to the act of mediation between the narrator and Austerlitz and the location in which this mediation occurs, it suggests further tasks of mediation beyond the explicit story. The word "east" in the name of the hotel is a good example of a geographic index that connects multiple, incommensurable perspectives. As it refers to the direction where Austerlitz is from (Prague), it participates in the overall narrative dynamic in the first half of the novel that includes details pointing towards what is revealed about Austerlitz's story in the second half. However, it also brings into play the East as construed by Western European imperial discourse, which is vague and unable to locate Austerlitz, who comes from the Eastern part of continental Europe, from a place not specified in the British usage of the term "East." The passage thus destabilizes the use of the term "east" by implying that it has several incompatible referents.

However, the destabilizing effect of Sebald's narratives depends on readers. The poetics of "unassimilation," as Walkowitz calls it, is rather a weak analogy than a proposal of critical cosmopolitanism, into which Walkowitz herself writes Sebald's narratives, in as much as she places them into relation with other authors writing in Britain and her interest in critical cosmopolitanism. Sebald's gesture of blurring or vertigo, which for Walkowitz is productive in that it shifts

conventional perspectives, is often manifest in the same passages that gesture towards melancholic logic. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sebald's affinity to an apocalyptic undercurrent in history at times runs into the risk of counteracting the promise of an analytical or critical response. I argue that while Sebald's texts provide material for multidirectional negotiation of imperial history beyond established centers of discourse through gestures such as referring to Conrad with his Polish name, his poetic project also has dimensions that hinder the logic of multidirectional memory. I will elaborate on this in the following section.

3.2. Dissimilation

Actual readerly reactions to the logic of melancholic identification can be illustrated with two recent literary responses to Sebald. In his essay "Always Returning," Nigerian-American author Teju Cole makes explicit what is implicit in his critically acclaimed debut novel *Open City*: the profound influence of W. G. Sebald on his literary work. Cole describes in the essay his trip to the town where Sebald lived and his visit to Sebald's grave. The main gesture of the essay consists in presenting Sebald as Cole's "precursor," as "the teacher I never knew, the friend I met only posthumously" (Cole 2012). Teju Cole thus reads Sebald with a strong gesture of identification. Cole cites in his essay the passage from *The Rings of Saturn* in which the narrator tells about his identification with the poet Michael Hamburger:

At St. Peter Mancroft was the memorial to Sir Thomas Browne, the seventeenth-century physician and antiquarian whose weird and digressive texts "Urn Burial" and "Religio Medici" had meant much to me as a young would-be physician. I did not read S. until later, after I

abandoned my medical studies. Only later still did I find out that S. had been strongly influenced by Browne. That connection with Browne, and with others, like Nabokov and certain obscure historians of Northern Renaissance art, helped me to understand something of the uncanny feeling I had when I first read S., and the feeling that I still have each time I read him: a feeling of return rather than of arrival. That afternoon, thinking of Jason's eyes and the slight mischief in his serious mien, I was faintly aware of others travelling the same circuits, pulled by an unidentifiable gravitational force into certain habits of mind and psyche. In "The Rings of Saturn," S. had written: "Across what distances in time do the elective affinities and correspondences connect? How is it that one perceives oneself in another human being, or, if not oneself, then one's own precursor?" (Cole 2012)

Cole's novel *Open City* shows a more complex response to Sebald's oeuvre than this gesture of identification might imply. Like a Sebaldian narrative, Cole's novel is structured around the narrator's associative walks, in this case, through New York and Brussels. By making its narrator also visit Belgium and reflect on Belgian colonialism (as well as early modern Dutch art, which Cole sees as a link between himself and Sebald), the novel creates an unvoiced but unmistakable linkage to Sebald's narratives *Austerlitz* and *Die Ringe des Saturn*. What brings Cole's novel even closer to Sebald is the narrator's German-born mother and the grandmother who, he assumes, is still alive and living somewhere in Brussels. Cole's novel creates a juxtaposition between the Nigerian setting of the narrator's childhood, the history of the narrator's German family, the present post-11/9 New York and contemporary Brussels with its racial tensions. Cole's novel discusses histories of genocide in a more openly comparative mode than *Austerlitz* and is more embedded in concrete historical present than *Die Ringe des Saturn*. Cole's novel is a profoundly transnational response to Sebald's narration of trauma, set on another continent, at the beginning of another century, and linking locations in America, Africa and Europe.

Cole's response of repeating the gesture of identification prevalent in Sebald's narratives can be contrasted to a response by another contemporary writer who

creates a connection to Sebald's poetics in her work, Judith Schalansky. Schalansky, who writes in German, links her debut novel *Blau steht dir nicht: Matrosenroman* (2008) to Sebald by citing a passage from Sebald as her novel's epigraph and by using black-and-white photographs in the written text. Schalansky has pointed out that she wanted to write a narrative that draws from Sebald but departs from Sebald's exclusive focus on male characters.¹²⁶ Her novel is a fragmentary coming-of-age story of a young girl who grows up in East Germany. She spends her summers with her grandparents on the island of Usedom and dreams of sailor outfits and traveling the sea. Her novel thematizes gender and homosexuality and deals with German historical experiences that Sebald never directly addresses: the history and memory of the German Democratic Republic. I see Judith Schalansky's book as an interesting engagement with Sebald's poetics of juxtaposition, because Sebald's own geographic and cultural imaginary is centered in the so-called Old Europe and in male subjects. Ironically, while Schalansky is culturally and linguistically closer to Sebald than Cole, her narrative creates much less a sense of identification with Sebald. Schalansky, whose narrator traces the life story of Sergei Eisenstein in the city of Riga, Latvia, seems more inspired by Sebald's transmedial poetics of juxtaposition than by Sebald's melancholic frame or the suggestions of identification that in Sebald always happen between men. Although Sebald suggests the weak analogy between Conrad's Polish background and colonialism, his discussion of modernity generally reproduces the neglect of the former Eastern Block in narratives of modernity and imperialism. This is a

¹²⁶ This is based on my conversation with Judith Schalansky at her reading in Helsinki, Finland, 09/14/2010.

concrete effect of his melancholic representation of postwar Europe as a postapocalyptic space beyond history.

I would like to expand the discussion from the focus of the previous section, linkages between discourses on national or collective histories such as those connected to Germany and Britain, to effects of parataxis in Sebald's works that have less to do with established collective entities. I would like to connect back to the topic of surrealism with an example of a reading that not only links together the fragments of Sebald's texts but also begins to incorporate new historical material into a reading of Sebald. In her essay on Sebald, British visual artist Tacita Dean recounts how her own life and reading *Die Ringe des Saturn* intersected, prompting Dean to research complicated connections of her own relationship to the events and details depicted in the text. It is impossible to summarize Dean's essay here, as it grows into a highly branched study of the relatedness of concrete people and places in history. At the end of the essay Dean discusses her realization that her own great uncle, Rufus Isaacs, was the judge who had sentenced Roger Casement to death.¹²⁷ Dean then goes on to tell about the Isaacs family's involvement in the so-called Marconi scandal around the Marconi Telegraph Company, in which Rufus Isaac's brother Godfrey was a

¹²⁷ "From that very moment in the drawing room at Glendun Lodge, when I first heard the account of Roger Casement's life, I found it very difficult to reconcile the conflicting truths in his story. Yet I am very attracted to him as an historical figure, and even though I can see the obvious treason to the British government by landing in a German submarine off the coast of Ireland during World War I, I wish he had not been executed in the climate he was: no account was given for what he had achieved in Africa, and all those who supported and respected him were hushed into a conspiratorial homophobia. And so it was that I learned, as I read Sebald's moving chapter in the bus shelter in Fiji, that the presiding judge who put on the black cap for Roger Casement and uttered those terrifying words that I can hardly bear to write—"You will be taken hence to a lawful prison and thence to a place of execution and will be there hanged by the neck until you be dead . . ."—was my great, great uncle Sir Rufus Isaacs." (Dean 2003, 128).

managing director. Rufus Isaacs, a member of parliament, and his brother were accused of profiting from knowing about the government's plan to build wireless stations in the British Empire, and accusations against the brothers acquired antisemitic overtones. Dean's essay ends with a description of a painting depicting Roger Casement, "*High Treason, Court of Criminal Appeal 1916: The Trial of Roger Casement*." Sebald's writings echo at the background throughout Dean's essay, and the description of the painting evokes Sebald's description of Rembrandt.

Although the emphasis on coincidences and analogies in Dean's essay creates allegorical and mystifying overtones, her detailed historical account is also likely to keep readers' attention in the historical material. What her focus on coincidence does is to emphasize that Sebald's poetics of juxtaposition can prompt readers to ask questions about readers' own position in postgenocidal, postimperial culture, something that Michael Rothberg holds central in effects of traumatic realism (Rothberg 2000, 103). The specific significance of this in postimperial reading contexts is that it dissimilates rather than assimilates Sebald's readership. In an interview that forms a part of Grant Gee's essay film *Patience: After Sebald*, Dean explains that Sebald's texts prompt reception in terms of what she calls "objective chance." This expression was used by surrealists about a process in which "external circumstances act [...] in response to the unspoken desires and demands of the human psyche" (see Hayes 2008, 28). Dean emphasizes that she is not interested in objective chance simply as a process of recognizing oneself in an artwork but as a method of forging unusual connections (Ibid). Her description of objective chance recalls Sebald's and

Ryan's use of the word fulguration, as she talks about "shocks of coincidence." However, while Ryan, as I demonstrated above, has the tendency to understand the fulgurations in terms of a narrative telos, ultimate resolution or fundamental illumination, Dean describes these shocks as smaller-scale impulses of Sebald's readers that make them change their direction (Gee 2012). She points out that while objective chance depends on dream-like associations that might not mean anything for anyone else because they are based on individual biographies, they may still produce something that links them to others. Hence, Dean's notion of objective chance creates a different interpretation of how Sebald's use of surrealist strategies relates to his historical narration. Not as melancholic logic of longing for an impossible illumination, but rather as a work of articulating unarticulated historical processes and entanglements across gaps. Although objective chance also evokes the uncanny and the mysterious, it could also point readers to after-effects of historical traumas beyond established discourses.

I will illustrate this with passages in which Sebald lists city names and uses untranslated fragments of different languages in the German text. In a passage in *Austerlitz*, in which the narrator visits Jacques Austerlitz's apartment for the first time. He sees Austerlitz's old-fashioned radio, which has names of various cities written on it.

Auf der runden Leuchtscheibe erschienen die Namen der Städte und Stationen, mit denen ich in meiner Kindheit die ausländischsten Vorstellungen verband - Monte Ceneri, Roma, Ljubljana, Stockholm, Beromünster, Hilversum, Prag und andere mehr. Ich stellte den Ton sehr leise, horchte auf eine in großer Ferne in den Äther gestreute, mir unverständliche Sprache, eine weibliche Stimme, die manchmal unterging zwischen den Wellen, dann wieder auftauchte und sich überkreuzte mit dem Spiel zweier behutsamer Hände, die sich an einem mir unbekanntem Ort über die Tastatur eines Bösendorfers Oder eines Pleyel bewegten und gewisse, weit in den Schlaf hinein mich begleitende Klangsätze hervorbrachten, ich glaube, aus dem Wohltemperierten Klavier. Wie ich am Morgen erwachte, kam aus dem engmaschigen

Messinggitter des Lautsprechers nur noch ein schwaches Rauschen und Scharren. Bald darauf, beim Frühstück, als ich auf das geheimnisvolle Radio zu sprechen kam, sagte Austerlitz, er sei von jeher der Auffassung gewesen, daß die Stimmen, die ab dem Anbruch der Dunkelheit die Luft durchschwärmten und von denen wir nur die wenigsten einfangen könnten, wie die Fledermäuse ihr eigenes, die Taghelle scheuendes Leben hätten. Oft in den langen schlaflosen Nächten der letzten Jahre sah ich sie, wenn ich den Ansagerinnen in Budapest, Helsinki oder La Coruna lauschte, weit draußen ihre zackigen Bahnen ziehen und wünschte mir, ich wäre bereits in ihrer Gesellschaft. Doch um zurückzukommen auf meine Geschichte... Es war nach dem Gang durch den Schönborngarten, daß mir Vera, als wir wieder in ihrer Wohnung beisammen saßen, das erstmal ausführlicher von meinen Eltern erzählte, von ihrer Herkunft, soviel sie davon wußte, von ihrem Lebensweg und von der innerhalb weniger Jahre erfolgten Vernichtung ihrer Existenz. (*Austerlitz* 242-243.)

First of all, it is clear that these cities have a different effect on readers according to their own geographic imaginary. Readers bring into play "heres" different from those of Austerlitz or the narrator. This would be a trivial claim if postgenocidal and postimperial reading would not pose the question of location in a specific manner, especially in the case of a narrative that suggests that comparability of specific historical experiences is important for its project. While the narrator does not connect any specific meaning with the voices of the distant announcers, Austerlitz begins to evoke a connection between these voices and voices of the deceased. Through a formulation that underlines the need to force the narrative back to its main course ("Doch um zurückzukommen auf meine Geschichte..."), Austerlitz directs the narrative back to the story about his parents' death (*Austerlitz* 243). Since Austerlitz directs the ensuing conversation to his parents' fate, the list of cities whose radio programs Austerlitz listens to can be read as an allusion to the fact that the prisoners in concentration camps came from all over Europe. At the same time, Jacques Austerlitz demonstrates here a generalizing tendency by connecting the voices with "darkness." Austerlitz suggests a reading method that moves from the specificity of the city names first to the specific history of the Holocaust and then to a generalizing transhistorical evocation. Interestingly, this resonates with Joseph Conrad's "rhetoric of

darkness" in *Heart of Darkness* and with Conrad's implied reading method that moves from sign to symbol.

Rebecca Walkowitz reads Sebald's frequent use of lists of this sort not as a generalizing device that points to "universality of suffering" but as a device that emphasizes difference and variety (Walkowitz 2006, 160). Her reading implies that what these lists produce is not only the search for the common denominator between these cities but also the potential of these names to have a different effect on different readers. As I have pointed out, Walkowitz not only identifies a poetics of juxtaposition in Sebald but also fills it with significance as she places it in the tradition of critical cosmopolitanism in twentieth-century British fiction. Her reading suggests that a comparatively inclined reader whose reading identifies more than one "here" in Sebald's text is more likely to read the text in a rehistoricizing fashion rather than treating places and details as allegories of a melancholic whole. While the melancholic reading responds to imperial narratives of progress with a transhistorical counternarrative of entropy, a postimperial dissimulation, as I contend, implies active engagements with gaps in existing historical narratives of imperialism and genocide.

The practice of including several untranslated languages in a single text is one concretization of Sebald's paratactic poetics of juxtaposition. Sebald uses untranslated language citations almost as he uses any other details in his texts: anecdotes, photographs, buildings, and places. If we analyze Sebald's writing with Naoki Sakai's concept of monolingual address, we can contend that while a writer like Conrad addresses a nationally distinct (British) audience, Sebald's

writing can be seen as lacking an overt monolingual address (see Sakai 1997, 6). However, it is more difficult to answer the question whether Sebald in turn employs a poetics that creates a heterolingual address. While it is clear that Sebald's use of several languages such as German, English, French, Czech and Dutch will have a different effect on readers according to their own linguistic background and while this might be intended by the implied author, Sebald's texts operate at least to some extent in the logic of what Yasemin Yıldız calls monolingual paradigm, a notion that sees national languages as distinct, essential entities and imagines their link to native speakers and their identity as unproblematic (Yıldız 2006, 2-8, 248-249). Although Sebald collects together several languages and portrays characters who cross linguistic borders, the categories of distinct languages are not questioned by Sebald's multilingualism. This might have to do with the melancholic identification, which is compatible with monadic entities and the binary between singular and the universal. I would argue that although Sebald may prompt multidirectional memory between imperialism and genocide, Sebald's reader has to break with the melancholic identification and its movement from sign to symbol for rehistoricizing comparative reading positions to become possible. This suggests that although Sebald writes extensively about (and against) imperial violence, he has not wholly broken out of the legacy of imperial comparison.

4. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have sought to articulate several reading positions that respond to Sebald's poetics of juxtaposition. Sebald's texts can be read as melancholic reflections on relatedness in history that may encourage conflating historical and structural trauma or as narratives about specific historical traumas in the mode of traumatic realism. They may also be seen as potential contact narratives of collective historical traumas that are often discussed separately, and narratives of "objective chance" that intensify interweaving of literary text and historical experiences outside the text. There is an uneasy coexistence of all these impulses in Sebald's texts.

The juxtaposition of W. G. Sebald and Peter Weiss in my study reveals important differences in the function of historical analogies in their respective poetics. While Weiss's poetics outlines a dimension of futurity, Sebald's juxtapositions and networks are more easily relatable to a traumatized center. Sebald's lost futures are lost threads of history that did not write a grand narrative. Nonetheless, Weiss's and Sebald's projects also have something in common: they both reach back to early twentieth-century poetic experiments of the historical avant-garde and literary modernism to create a poetic mode capable of responding to challenges to historical narration in their respective postwar contexts.

My reading of Sebald introduces new critical perspectives to the study of this much-discussed author. First, I show that the standard focus on melancholy does

not sufficiently recognize the medial dimension of Sebald's poetics: the way in which it also implies active modes of reading. Second, I also urge caution in dealing with claims that have been made about Sebald's writing as an especially ethical engagement with historical trauma or as an inherently critical engagement with history. Such readings do not recognize the openness and ambiguity of Sebald's poetics of analogy, or the complexity and context-specificity of processes of working through and historical imagination. Third, my analysis draws attention to how Sebald's narratives retain a possibility of "fulgurations" in a much more modest guise than in terms of an overarching redemptive telos: as a potential to spark new resonances in postimperial, transnational readerships. My chapter on Conrad also supports this claim: my comparative investigation of different postimperial reading contexts of Conrad was prompted by Sebald's gesture of weak analogy. Fourth, Sebald's increasingly transnational readership creates an analytical situation in which the context of reading Sebald cannot be thought in terms of a unified horizon of expectation. But what emerges in transnational reading contexts is that Sebald's untimely narrative mode not only represents the protagonists' experience of traumatic temporality but can also be productive when confronted with a noncontemporaneous reading context in which different historical orientations coexist. I would emphasize that nothing in Sebald's texts guarantees a salutary response in terms of working through historical traumas or the creation of new historical perspectives, since this potential openness of Sebald's narrative mode depends on active readers. Either the Sebald novels discussed here could ossify or de-ossify historical discourses. However, the rehistoricizing mode of reading opens the possibility to approach Sebald's oeuvre as an archive of potential

comparative perspectives to history that can provide openings beyond national or otherwise insular discussions on imperialism and historical trauma. Sebald's works might provide points of contact between the more established discourse of the Holocaust and other instances of historical trauma not conceptualized as rigorously. Sebald might encourage historical perspectives beyond national discussions of imperial violence, which obscure minority perspectives to traumatic histories and entangled aspects of the history of imperialism.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study grew from a perception that current critical tools for analyzing text-context relationships tend to obscure important ways in which literary texts relate to concrete historical phenomena. The above analyses of texts by Joseph Conrad, Peter Weiss, and W. G. Sebald have shown that literary studies need new analytical tools to account for heterogeneous and noncontemporaneous contexts that genocidal histories and the transnational historical phenomenon of imperialism have created and that continue to influence the effect of these authors' texts on readers. One of the most important insights of this dissertation is that the analysis of the implied reader also has to take into account other relationships to literary texts than those of unimpeded dialogue, on which the traditional hermeneutic category of the implied reader is based. Furthermore, I show that analysis of situated reading should not rely on constructivist notions of reading, which make it difficult to grasp aesthetic relationships between literature and history. I propose instead that an investigation of implied and unimplied reading positions in Conrad's, Weiss's, and Sebald's texts opens up critical analysis to elusive yet materialized relationships between literary texts and historical contexts through the twentieth century.

All three chapters reframe existing critical approaches to the individual authors. My reading of Peter Weiss highlights the transnational and comparative dimension of Weiss's novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, hitherto unacknowledged in Weiss scholarship. First, my reading shows how Weiss's experimentation with transmedial narration relates to his project of the aesthetics

of resistance. I articulate how historical reference of Weiss's documentary novel should be thought beyond linear time and punctual relationship to context. Weiss's excessive concern with sensory representations creates a narrative mode that emphasizes specific effects on embodied, situated readers. The intensification of sensory experience promotes precise forms of reading that go beyond direct reference and even beyond ekphrasis as such. In my argument Weiss's intensification of sensory experience encourages readers to relate the text to specific meanings that are significant in readers' own contexts, thus making reading into a potential tool for emancipation. Second, while previous research has read the untimely temporality of the novel either in terms of a utopian narrative or a narrative of trauma, I emphasize how Weiss's concern with historical trauma poses no contradiction to his project of an aesthetic of resistance. Third, I argue that Weiss's attention to linking different specific histories of oppression, through a literary text concerned with oppositional reading, is interesting for twenty-first-century comparatists, who seek increasingly refined critical tools for relating alternative modernities and projects of postcolonial emancipation.

While Peter Weiss's reading construction implies that different kinds of situated readers are equally valid for the novel to achieve its intended effects, Joseph Conrad's texts operate with an imperial teleological notion of civilization that places different situated readers in a strongly hierarchical relationship with respect to each other. Conrad's texts also have a long reception history, which makes it possible to study the relationship between imperial reading constructions and changing frames of historical understanding. My reading of

Conrad brings together aspects of Conrad's reception that have conventionally not been linked to each other: the postcolonial discourse on Conrad and approaches to the significance of the "erased" Polish context in Conrad's texts. First, the chapter articulates how the postcolonial reception has read Conrad's analogical and impressionist narratives as outlines for articulating their position beyond the implied address of Conrad's texts. Second, I show that while the postcolonial reception has read Conrad from a position of an unwelcome reader, the mainstream Polish reception has imagined a second, implied address to Conrad's Polish readers. Third, I propose that Conrad's oeuvre now emerges as a site that could prompt fruitful contact between postcolonial discourse that tends to focus on non-European literatures and readers, and the Central European context that has not pursued a decolonization of analytical categories used in transnational literary studies.

The chapter on W. G. Sebald studies the benefits and limits of an analogical poetics in the context of postgenocidal and postimperial writing. While much of Sebald scholarship has focused on Sebald's approach to melancholy as well as his approach to representing the Holocaust, my reading proposes that Sebald's transnational mode of historical narration should receive more critical attention. Sebald's poetics implies a reading mode characterized by identification with a melancholic perspective on history, but Sebald's narratives also suggest active modes of reading that counteract any generalized notion of history as trauma. Although melancholic tendency to generalize on the basis of historical instances of violence can be seen as an implied reading position of Sebald's texts, the heterogeneous postimperial reading context amplifies the potential of Sebald's

texts to prompt ungeneralizable responses that rethink how to narrate entangled histories of imperialism. I argue that the effect of Sebald's analogical poetics cannot be determined detached from concrete readers with differing perspectives to the history of imperialism.

In all three chapters I investigate the stylistics and stakes of weak analogies in reference to historical phenomena as ambiguous textual passages mobilizing readers in ways that serve rehistoricization. The specific modes of mobilization analyzed throughout this dissertation make visible heterogeneous, unimplied reading positions as well as contact points between historical discourses that are otherwise often thought of as separate. When I speak of situated reading and various specific reading contexts, my own primary context for establishing this study's constellation of readings is the contemporary discipline of comparative literature. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the discipline confronts the challenge to rethink comparison in the prolonged aftermath of imperialism and the historical divisions of the Cold War. The noncontemporaneity and incommensurability of different reading contexts give rise to new analytical problems with special force in the current historical moment, when historical experiences previously discussed by comparative literature in more circumscribed frameworks undergo new and proliferating forms of contact. I have chosen texts that help us investigate more variegated relations between postcolonial critique and transnational analysis of European literatures. My study thus proposes new critical directions for comparative literary studies beyond a traditional focus on Western European canonical literatures and hermeneutics, and beyond the putative binary between West and non-West.

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