

## W G Sebald's *Austerlitz* as a Form of Literary Commemoration

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W G Sebald's literary career, which was largely dedicated to exposing and attempting to work through the complexities of Germany's National Socialist past, ended with the publication of his 2001 novel, *Austerlitz*.<sup>1</sup> Sebald's literary oeuvre, which includes biographical, autobiographical, historical and fictional elements, is difficult to categorise into any particular genre. Yet he is probably best known for his thorough and thought-provoking lamentation of Jewish suffering and trauma, in particular, his focus on the forgotten aspects of this past. These elements are present not only in *Austerlitz*, but also in his earlier work, *Die Ausgewanderten*.<sup>2</sup>

W G Sebald's *Austerlitz* is certainly an ambitious memory text. Its unique aesthetic ability to act as a literary means of commemoration can be observed in the fact that it does not simply aim to provide a homogeneous well worn insight into a distant past. Instead, Sebald's reliance on alternative memory sources combined with an imaginative narrative, serves to question the very substance of belated historical representations. *Austerlitz*'s complex textual structure – which consists of a mixture of fictional, mnemonic, intertextual and theoretical sources – will be analysed in order to form the core argument of this article. Namely, that memory texts such as *Austerlitz* serve the dual function of not only recounting individual or collective experiences, but, more importantly, they significantly contribute to the establishment of alternative literary means of memory retrieval and construction. Emphasis will also be placed on literature's

intrinsic ability to add further imaginative dimensions of understanding to an otherwise abstract past. In this sense, this paper will investigate whether *Austerlitz* allows for a multi-faceted reconstruction of the past to emerge and whether as an aesthetic text it is successful in assisting subsequent post-war generations in their attempt to not only commemorate but more importantly discover and delineate traumatic memories. By focusing on W G Sebald's pioneering methods of recreating lost memories as a means of vicarious commemoration, the importance of how these memories come to be communicated into the wider cultural imagination is also of utmost importance to this investigation. Creating and recreating lost memories is a decisive aspect of the manner in which literature can truly serve to provide a deeper, more comprehensive insight into past suffering.

Set over a period of approximately twenty years, *Austerlitz* involves a complex dialogue between the novel's main protagonist, Jacques Austerlitz, and a Sebaldian alter-ego narrator. The dialogue delves deep into Austerlitz's attempt to relocate traces of his painful past, spawned by the unexpected return of his repressed childhood memories, language, family, home and – most importantly – identity. *Austerlitz* is a seminal example of literary commemoration, which aims to communicate sensitive war-time memories without trivialising victim suffering, or, in other words, without de-sanctifying the Holocaust. Sebald's technique of incorporating several media forms – such as film, art and photography – combined with a wealth of intertextual references, questions the very reliability of conventional historical representations of the past.<sup>3</sup> Distorting the division between fiction and documentary material, Sebald's *Austerlitz* serves as both a medium of cultural recall and as an aesthetic counterbalance to traditional historical representations' colonizing effects on memory. Examining *Austerlitz*'s unique makeup as a collage of various media forms and *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) the text provides a seminal example of literary commemoration whereby a new kind of remembrance can develop. The German narrator's role of bearing witness to the belated emergence of the main protagonist's traumatic past, coupled with the text's reliance on alternative media forms and intertextual references,<sup>4</sup> serves as a unique starting point for the emergence of a more complex and critical form of literary remembrance. This is most evident in the German narrator's primary role as being a witness to the annihilation of the main character's Jewish identity and his ultimate psychological demise. While the German narrator never claims the Jewish experience as his own, the incorporation of memory sources – sometimes external to the main narrative – allows the narrator to serve as an objective memory collector, thereby avoiding negative self-identification with victim suffering, which can be seen to

insensitively blur the victim-perpetrator distinction. By relaying Austerlitz's story in the third person (for instance: "said Austerlitz", "said Vera"), Sebald skilfully reminds the reader that it is not possible to claim victims' stories as our own.<sup>5</sup> This versatile approach encourages second and third post-war generations to not only critically understand and commemorate known memories, but also to come to explore the unknown by searching for hidden memory traces in order to develop a more thorough picture of a past which is notoriously synonymous with its very inaccessibility and forgetting.

Sebald's *Austerlitz* renders a picture of a traumatic past comparable to "marks of pain which ... trace countless fine lines through history."<sup>6</sup> History's heavy burden on the present is particularly problematic for contemporary German memory discourse because past events – those that were repressed or forgotten – could not, ultimately, evolve into sufficient memory traces.<sup>7</sup> The issue of how a past riddled with such gaps can come to be reconfigured in a way that allows second and third post-war generations to recover its presence is wrought with uncertainties. Post-war generations that did not directly experience the horrors of National Socialism must rely on representation. Contemporary interpretations of collective violence must not only consider this lack of "accessible memory,"<sup>8</sup> but also discover an innovative means of expression to communicate the substance of memory in light of the vagueness, incomprehensibility and ubiquity of mass genocide. The use of partly fictionalised narrative recollections of the Second World War by authors of the second and third post-war generations allows for traditional objective generalisations of the past (such as historical documents, statistics and still photographs) to be countered through the innovative aesthetics of art.<sup>9</sup> However, only when memories of traumatic experiences – comparable to fragmented images or, as Judith Herman writes, a "series of still snapshots"<sup>10</sup> – are linked is it possible to construct an intelligible narrative. By bearing witness and allowing testimony to evolve, the secondary witness may become somewhat traumatised, thereby gaining a more valuable insight into victim suffering. The formation of a narrative based on testimony implies that some of the so-called blind spots in contemporary memory discourse may begin to be filled: this can only occur by encouraging secondary witnessing.<sup>11</sup> In *Austerlitz*, this notion is set into play when Austerlitz is reunited with the narrator, following a twenty year period of separation:

Oddly enough, said Austerlitz, as he stood in front of this attractive motif ... that afternoon he had been thinking about our encounters in Belgium, so long ago now, and telling himself he must find someone

to whom he could relate his own story, a story which he had learned only in the last few years and for which he needed the kind of listener I had once been.<sup>12</sup>

Cathy Caruth argues that traumatic experiences can only be experienced after a term of latency and only ever come to light after their initial forgetting.<sup>13</sup> Thus the period of time necessary for Austerlitz to confront his traumatic past is highlighted with this twenty year gap: his friendship with the narrator had to endure before the two would finally meet again. However, as the narrator notes, he rarely thought of Austerlitz during this period and, when he did, "I always forgot him again the next moment."<sup>14</sup> The technique of highlighting Austerlitz's traumatic past's ability to resurface in 1996, six years after the official year of German reunification, is a stark reminder of traumatic memories' dynamic ability to transcend chronological time. One major theme which is addressed by literature published in the post-1989 setting is the inevitable shift from the "communicative memory" (such as private family recollections) to the more public, so-called "cultural memory."<sup>15</sup> This transition, accompanied by the rapidly disintegrating visible and accessible "environments of memory,"<sup>16</sup> demonstrates not only the urgency in preserving these individual war-time memories, but also the need to discover and explore alternative literary methods necessary for the creation of a more socially comprehensive image of the past. Reunification has certainly contributed to a "memory boom"<sup>17</sup> in the new Federal Republic of Germany. However, this proliferation can be viewed as a response to a "memory crisis,"<sup>18</sup> spawned by decades of national division and repression. Offering an explanation for Germany's almost feverish return to memory, Aleida Assmann explains that, until recently, "[these] memories did not ... have a chance to be communicated in their human dimension and [therefore become] shared with empathy in the public scene."<sup>19</sup>

As a memory text which incorporates a vast array of contemporary memory theories – particularly those that are of a more psychoanalytic nature – *Austerlitz* attempts to piece together the main character's repressed past. Contrasting Austerlitz's inability to remember or find traces of his lost past with the example of architecture as a metaphor for psychological memory repression, "[visiting Germany, Austerlitz] was troubled to realise that ... [he] could not see a crooked line anywhere, not at the corners of the houses or on the gables ... nor was there any other trace of past history,"<sup>20</sup> the author does not simply highlight the problems facing individual (communicative memory) and collective (cultural memory) memory recall, but rather poses the question of whether the memory texts which have emerged since unification can in fact integrate what precious

personal war-time memories remain into the realms of a larger public imagination. More importantly one could ask whether these memory texts become seminal in the recreation of unknown or lost pasts. Sebald's almost obsessive archaeological (re)locating of memory amongst the dust and ruins of history is also central to the way in which modern society observes the effects of cultural and collective trauma. According to Sebald, this sort of memory work attempts to emphasise personal memories and experiences by taking "the big events ... [as] true ... while [expanding] the detail [as if] ... invented to give the effect of the real."<sup>21</sup> This method is evident in Sebald's comparison of the narrator's and Austerlitz's differing contextual perspectives. Considering, for instance, Austerlitz's murdered mother Agáta: it can be argued that, for the unwitting narrator and subsequent audiences, she exists purely as a historical figure, whereas for the main character, she embodies the source of longing for his lost identity and personal suffering.<sup>22</sup> Using the account of his former nursemaid Věra, Austerlitz provides us with a depressing insight into his mother's final despair: "I can see her now pacing up and down ... I can see her striking her forehead with the flat of her hand, and crying out, chanting the syllables one by one: I do not un der stand it! I do not un der stand it! I shall ne ver un der stand it".<sup>23</sup> In this sense, the identification of personal histories grants victims of collective violence an individual identity which may otherwise never have eventuated.

Austerlitz's fixation with varying mnemonic sources accentuates an innovative approach to capturing past memories which "flit by."<sup>24</sup> This is best reflected through Austerlitz's interest in the relationship between photography and the obscure workings of memory: "I was always especially entranced ... by the moment when the shadows of reality ... emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them."<sup>25</sup> As memory is intrinsically linked to the construction of individual and collective identities, it is not the well-established historical consensus of a traumatic past which threatens to undermine an identity's very construction. Instead, it is the precarious nature and omission of these memories that menace both the individual and collective psychic processes.<sup>26</sup> Capturing and giving meaning to these memories is of great importance to psychological recovery as they establish a basis upon which the trauma of the experiencing generation can be translated into culturally signifiable memory realms.

Sebald's awareness of the complex manner in which traumatic memories function is likened to the architectural complexity of the grandiose "Palace of Justice" in Brussels. This metaphor suggests that

relating memory to history is comparable to a labyrinth of passages, “where no one would ever set foot, empty spaces surrounded by walls ... representing the innermost secret of all sanctioned authority.”<sup>27</sup> The description of empty spaces, held up by walls and surrounded by rooms without doors, demonstrates that the unlocking of a traumatic past requires more than just an abstract, detached representation of traumatic memory. To challenge the “innermost secret of all sanctioned authority” evident in the alienating metaphor of institutionalised remembrance in the “Palace of Justice” in Brussels, it is important to recognise that memory is not localizable to any one conventional source and, as Sebald suggests, these metaphorical empty spaces of institutionalised remembrance can in fact be supplemented utilising alternative methods of remembrance. Firstly, however, in order for lost memories to be exhumed and commemorated, they must be compassionately absorbed into a country’s cultural memory. If *Austerlitz*, as a text, were to be taken as a historical novel, expressing a “certain period of history ... convey[ing] the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact,”<sup>28</sup> the author would simply initiate the remembrance of the known. What makes *Austerlitz* unique as a memory text is not so much the simple imaginative recreation of the known past but, rather, the author’s uncanny ability to capitalise on trauma’s ability to rise beyond chronological time and thereby not simply recount the past but instead create a multi-dimensional literary event. The mixture of past, present and future not only implicates the narrator as a witness and collector of history, but takes one step further, bequeathing to us, the collective, what was “bequeathed to ... [the narrator].”<sup>29</sup> Unlike pure historiography, which is reliant on the construction of a historical narrative, the aesthetic ability of *Austerlitz* – Sebald’s constant recycling and building upon fragmented and sparse traumatic memories – acts as a medium through which postmemory<sup>30</sup> can exist in the time dividing an event and its future narrative construction.

If memory, as Pierre Nora has argued, establishes itself in many representational forms, including “in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects,”<sup>31</sup> then we must pose the question: do these traces of what once existed have the potential to assist the search for lost or hidden traces of memory? Alternative sites of memory play a crucial role for Sebald in his expression of the extent of the protagonist’s personal psychological recovery of memory. If memory attaches itself to sites, then these sites can ultimately become stimuli essential for the reconstruction or piecing together of a fragmented past. As Marianne Hirsch explains, sites of memory, whether they are revealed in architecture, photographs or film, have an important function: in Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, they are points for

retrieving the unknown from the past, while simultaneously creating a future for these previously unknown memories. For Austerlitz, architecture<sup>32</sup> plays a vital role as a "mnemonic space"<sup>33</sup> in his quest to rediscover his lost past – a past which he had repressed: "[a]s far as I was concerned the world ended in the late nineteenth century."<sup>34</sup> The mnemonic space confronted by Austerlitz is Liverpool Street Station. The station, which was once a site of forgetting, becomes an involuntary site of memory. For the unwitting protagonist, led to the scene through repetitive night wanderings in order to "escape the insomnia which increasingly tormented ... [him],"<sup>35</sup> the return of his repressed memories is skilfully demonstrated through his epiphany within the soon-to-be-demolished ladies waiting room at the Liverpool street station:

[I]n the gloomy light of the waiting-room, I also saw two middle-aged people dressed in the style of the thirties ... I also saw the boy they had come to meet. He was sitting by himself on a bench over to one side ... and but for the small rucksack he was holding on his lap I don't think I would have known him ... As it was, I recognised him by that rucksack of his, and for the first time in as far back as I could remember I recollected myself as a small child, at the moment when I realised that it must have been to this same waiting-room I had come on my arrival in England over half a century ago.<sup>36</sup>

If, as Pierre Nora maintains, a primary function of *lieux de mémoire* is to freeze time and "to immortalise death [and] to materialise the immaterial,"<sup>37</sup> then one can assume that depictions of the Holocaust and the Second World War are "ahistorical": as any attempt to represent such trauma will only ever result in a "discursive space which implies the outside or beyond" of historiography's representative capacity.<sup>38</sup> That is, although abstract historical accounts are central to our understanding of the past, they fall short of illustrating trauma in a manner that is humanly comprehensible. In *Austerlitz*, Sebald further defies literary convention by assigning life-like characteristics to inanimate objects. In this way, he offers alternative literary methods of remembrance. The main protagonist is perplexed by "the idea, ridiculous in itself, that this cast-iron column ... might remember ... [him] and was ... a witness to what ... [he] could no longer recollect."<sup>39</sup> By not focusing exclusively on history as merely being the past but as a continuing process,<sup>40</sup> Sebald bypasses traditional historiographical restraints, thus permitting the reader to search even the most uncertain niches of memory. By encouraging the reader to be responsible for his or her own presence and surroundings, Sebald presents a refreshing methodological approach to retrieving the past. At the same

time, he subtly exhibits the means by which we are all able to take possession of and understand our own collective and individual histories. Sebald does, however, transmit a dire warning about the sometimes deceptive nature of sites of memory. If coming to understand oneself in the present involves remaining in contact with items of familiarity and personal importance,<sup>41</sup> one must be careful not to be thrown off track by potential 'red herrings'. While sites of memory can depict a seemingly realistic view of history, they by no means offer a direct link to the memories they have captured. In *Austerlitz*, this contradiction is a reminder to the reader of the importance of self-reflection, as well as the inherent dangers that non-critical assumptions pose to memory work. For example, the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris is presented as an antithesis of what a library should technically represent: culture and history, a "treasure-house of our entire literary heritage."<sup>42</sup> Ironically, however, as Austerlitz searches fruitlessly through the historical and literary collections of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* for traces of his traumatic past, it is evident that remnants and traces of murdered Parisian Jews lay buried deep beneath; "for the fact is ... the whole affair is buried in the most literal sense beneath the foundations of our pharaonic President's Grande Bibliothèque."<sup>43</sup> In this case, the actual physical construction of the library assumes more relevance to Austerlitz's memory search than its contents: "I for my part, said Austerlitz, found that this gigantic new library ... proved useless in my search for any traces of my father."<sup>44</sup> Even though Austerlitz's search for traces of his father in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* offered little hope for redemption, it is clear that the text does not fully aim to restore the past, but rather, take account of the full extent of infinite loss.<sup>45</sup> The sense of futility endowed upon the reader through Austerlitz's despair, is in fact a focal point for the empowerment of the audience to seek alternative measures to create their own metatext and further contribute to memory reconstruction and conservation.

Emphasising the sometimes restrictive nature of cultural memory storage systems (archives) and official sites of commemoration (monuments) as all encompassing *loci* of memory recall, *Austerlitz*, as a memory text, by no means hides the ever-expanding alternatives available to contemporary memory work. The placement of other forms of *lieux de mémoire* throughout the text, such as un-captioned photographs (these are not related to the primary narrative), force the reader to independently analyse the "phantom traces"<sup>46</sup> and arrive at his or her own personal conclusion. In doing so, Sebald stimulates a bond between the "narrated, narrator, and reader," thus instigating "a much more complex and ethical dynamic of postmemory that resists a colonizing impulse."<sup>47</sup> By looking beyond pre-formed images of the past, the reader is, as Austerlitz explains,



able to discover lost or forgotten memories which lay buried waiting to be found:

All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces which have already been staged often enough by others. We try to reproduce the reality, but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves upon us: the fallen drummer boy, the infantry man shown in the act of stabbing another ... a moment frozen still amidst the turmoil of battle. Our concern with history ... is a concern with pre-formed images already imprinted on our brains, images at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered.<sup>48</sup>

The past which "spread[s] its legs and offer[s] itself to fornication"<sup>49</sup> contributes nothing original to contemporary memory discourse. Instead, as Sebald demonstrates, the past which is missing, unmapped and withheld still requires signification within our cultural imagination. Focusing on the present as a document of both the past and the future, *Austerlitz* allows witnesses to speak and relive an event by relying on the paradox of their very inability to speak.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Sebald's desire to understand history as trauma<sup>51</sup> perhaps inadvertently leads to his portrayal of collective suffering as a shared universal circumstance caused by the devastating effects of modernity.<sup>52</sup> Rather than simply restricting his prose to the condition of the individual, Sebald explores and mourns the traumatic life of Austerlitz, thereby creating a medium through which the larger and more encompassing effects of trauma on civilisation in general can be investigated. Though the character of Austerlitz operates primarily as a symbol of Jewish suffering, Sebald's collection of contending memories within the text, including the discovery "at Broad Street station ... [of] over four hundred [English] skeletons underneath a taxi rank,"<sup>53</sup> creates a normative model through which competing memories can simultaneously be uncovered. As long as these memories exist heterogeneously, coexist equally and do not compete for the master narrative, each memory can effectively lay claim to recognition within a country's cultural remembrance.<sup>54</sup> If the purpose of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) is to regenerate the state of mental health in society, via the subrogation of repression with memory,<sup>55</sup> one must consider whether the enduring effects of trauma on the individual in fact mirror the persisting "effects of a national trauma in [the] collective consciousness."<sup>56</sup> In his influential study on whether trauma can in fact be translated into a collective sense, Kai Erikson defined cultural trauma as:

a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together ... the collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with trauma. But it is a form of shock all the same.<sup>57</sup>

For this reason, trauma of a collective nature consists not so much of the initial event itself, but of human representations thereof. Solidarity with the pain and suffering of others leads collectives to redefine their relationship in a way that allows trauma to be incorporated into a wider conception of the collective “we.”<sup>58</sup> If we assume that representations of traumatic incidents are primarily “broadcast” through what Max Weber and, subsequently, Jeffrey Alexander termed “carrier groups,”<sup>59</sup> then these groups, in their very nature, take on the role of “collective agents of the trauma process.”<sup>60</sup> For Sebald, to view something historically is to be conscious of the multi-factorial nature of the past. Capitalising on the observer’s distance from the initial traumatic event, Sebald invites us to consider the past from more than one perspective and, thereby – as Peter Novick writes – come to accept the “ambiguities, including moral ambiguities of the protagonist’s motives and behaviours.”<sup>61</sup> The conflicting nature of remembrance, which Sebald reflects on in *Austerlitz*, serves to return us, as readers, to our own history. He writes:

However, if I could not envisage the drudgery performed day after day ... at Breendonk and all the other main and branch camps ... I could well imagine the sight of the good fathers and dutiful sons from Vilsbiburg and Fuhlsbüttel, from the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps, sitting here when they came off duty to play cards or write letters to their loved ones at home. After all I had lived among them until my twentieth year.<sup>62</sup>

Sebald provides a literary core through which diverse traumatic memories can be understood concurrently. Contrasting individual memories within a collective framework, *Austerlitz* does not guide the reader towards forming predetermined judgments of either victim or perpetrator memories. Instead, the reader feels compelled to identify independently with every available detail of the past and make it part of his or her own sense of being. Locating delicate individual memories within a wider universal context not only establishes a platform on which joint suffering can be defined but also provides a wider, more encompassing view of the Holocaust as a terrifying result of the catastrophic forces of modernity. By establishing a wider normative framework for the exploration of history, Sebald encourages his audience to empower victims of

collective violence with a reinstated sense of “identity and worth” which may otherwise become engulfed by the vacuum of historicity.<sup>63</sup> By investing in innovative literary methods that contribute to the progression of memory work, Sebald does not simply lament a traumatic past, but instead leads the reader to create and invest in new ways of remembrance. In this sense, *Austerlitz* encourages the vicarious observer to understand that the “abnormal” events of the twentieth century in fact happened to real people, who are not so dissimilar to us.<sup>64</sup> By affording the reader access to visions of a past that is more comprehensible to humans, the novel highlights processes through which “emotional, institutional and symbolic reparation and reconstitution”<sup>65</sup> can be extended to the countless lives, families and communities which were destroyed without trace during the Second World War.

The retrieving and working through of repressed traumatic memories do not, however, guarantee “psychic liberation” of the mind or cultural redemption for both victims and perpetrators of collective violence.<sup>66</sup> This is most evident in the example of Austerlitz’s disappearance and subsequent suicide following his personal memory awakening: “It was nearly twelve o’clock when we took leave of each other ... and then he gave me the key to his house ... I could stay there whenever I liked ... and study the black and white photographs which, one day, would be all that was left of his life.”<sup>67</sup> Although the communicative function of the novel concludes with Austerlitz’s departure, Sebald by no means implies that these memories of wartime destruction are simply laid to rest. Instead, the author encourages post-war generations to continue to confront traumatic memories by passing on the photos which will, one day, be all that remain of Austerlitz’s life. In the context of the novel, these photos are passed on to the narrator, and then again to the reader. In doing so, Sebald reminds us that death does not signify that the act of accessing the past has come to an end. Rather, death demands that alternative methods of remembrance be explored in order to be able to commemorate and understand human suffering brought on by collective violence. The belated observer is thereby simultaneously compelled to understand the “structures, mechanisms and motivations” which led to National Socialism.<sup>68</sup> It is for this reason that Sebald’s text serves as a unique contribution to contemporary memory discourse: it not only recounts the past, but becomes, in its very essence, a site of memory “where subsequent generations can find a lost origin ... and learn about ... [a] time and place they will never see.”<sup>69</sup>

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Winfried Georg Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. A. Bell (London: Penguin Books, 2002).
- <sup>2</sup> Winfried Georg Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten: vier lange Erzählungen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1992).
- <sup>3</sup> See also Helmut Schmitz, *On Their Own Terms. The Legacy of National Socialism in Post-1990 Fiction* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004) 296.
- <sup>4</sup> For example some intertextual references in the text can be seen in Sebald's incorporation of Freudian trauma theory and Roland Barthes' concept of the photographic image (*Camera Lucida*).
- <sup>5</sup> Stuart Taberner, "German Nostalgia? Remembering German-Jewish Life in W G Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten* and *Austerlitz*", *The Germanic Review* 79:3 (2004) 198.
- <sup>6</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p.16.
- <sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive discussion regarding memory traces and their importance for memory reconstruction see Aleida Assmann, "Persönliche Erinnerung und Kollektives Gedächtnis in Deutschland nach 1945", *Erinnern Freiburger Literaturpsychologische Gespräche* 23 (2004) 84.
- <sup>8</sup> L. Kirmayer, "Landscapes of Memory. Trauma, Narrative and Dissociation" in *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, ed P. Antze & M. Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996) 174.
- <sup>9</sup> Gustav Seibt cited in Arthur Williams, "Das Korsakowsche Syndrom: Remembrance and Responsibility in W G Sebald", Helmut Schmitz, *On Their Own Terms. The Legacy of National Socialism in Post-1990 Fiction* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004) 72.
- <sup>10</sup> J. Herman cited in M. Surken, "Narratives of Recovery: Repressed Memory as Cultural Memory," *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed M. Bal, J. Crewe & L. Spitzer (Hannover & London: University Press of New England, 1999). 235.
- <sup>11</sup> Assmann, "Persönliche Erinnerung" 83.
- <sup>12</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 59-60.
- <sup>13</sup> C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History*, (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 17.
- <sup>14</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 46.
- <sup>15</sup> A. Assmann, "Persönliche Erinnerung" 81. "Persönliche Erinnerung steht hier für einen individuellen, privaten, informellen und unablässig verkörpertem Bezug zur Vergangenheit. Kollektives Gedächtnis für einen öffentlichen, offiziellen und generalisierten Vergangenheitsbezug andererseits."

- <sup>16</sup> N. Wood, *Vectors of Memory. Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe*, (Oxford: Berg, 1999) 21.
- <sup>17</sup> F. Eigler, "Engendering Cultural Memory in Selected Post-Wende Literary Texts of the 1990's", *The German Quarterly*, 74: 4 (2001) 393.
- <sup>18</sup> F. Eigler 392.
- <sup>19</sup> Aleida Assmann, "On the (In)Compatibility of Guilt and Suffering in German Memory", *German Life and Letters*, 59:2 (2006) 191.
- <sup>20</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 314.
- <sup>21</sup> W G Sebald cited in F. Restuccia, "Sebald's Punctum. Awakening to Holocaust Trauma in *Austerlitz*", *European Journal of English Studies*, 9:3 (2005) 318.
- <sup>22</sup> Williams 75.
- <sup>23</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 243-244.
- <sup>24</sup> W. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," In: *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, 1992. p. 247. See also J. Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes, or the Gothic Beauty of Catastrophic History in W G Sebald's *Air War and Literature*", *Criticism*, 46:3 (2004) 371.
- <sup>25</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 109.
- <sup>26</sup> P. Antze & M. Lambek: "Introduction", Antze & Lambek xvi.
- <sup>27</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 39.
- <sup>28</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, *Historical Novel*, retrieved 17th December 2006, <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9040597>>.
- <sup>29</sup> R. Crownshaw, "Reconsidering Postmemory, Photography, The Archive and Post-Holocaust Memory in W G Sebald's *Austerlitz*", *Mosaic*, 37: 4 (2004) 235.
- <sup>30</sup> See: M. Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14:1 (2001) 12. Postmemory in brief is partly established through the convergence with the experiences of another mediated through the act of expression and reception.
- <sup>31</sup> P. Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, 26 (1989) 7.
- <sup>32</sup> See Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 8. "Our Antwerp conversations ... turned primarily on architectural history, in accordance with his own astonishing professional expertise."
- <sup>33</sup> R. Kilbourn, "Architecture & Cinema: The Representation of Memory in W G Sebald's *Austerlitz*", J. Long & A. Whitehead, *W G Sebald a Critical Companion*, (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2004) 144.
- <sup>34</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 197.
- <sup>35</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 178.
- <sup>36</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 193.
- <sup>37</sup> Nora, p.19.
- <sup>38</sup> M. Cosgrove, "Melancholy Competitions W.G Sebald Reads Günter Grass and

Wolfgang Hildesheimer", *German Life and Letters*, 59:2, 2006) 218. See also Williams, 68. Sebald "is concerned with the retrieval of the past from the spaces uncharted by traditional historiography."

<sup>39</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 311. See also A. Eshel, "Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W G Sebald's *Austerlitz*", *New German Critique*, 88 (2003) 92.

<sup>40</sup> E. Runia, "Presence", *History and Theory*, 45 (2006) 8.

<sup>41</sup> Runia, "Presence" 5.

<sup>42</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 393.

<sup>43</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 403.

<sup>44</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 393.

<sup>45</sup> A. Pearson, "Remembrance...is Nothing More than a Quotation. The Intertextual Fictions of W G Sebald", *Comparative Literature*, 60:3 (2008) 274.

<sup>46</sup> A. Fuchs, "Phantomspuren: Zu W G Sebald's Poetik der Erinnerung in *Austerlitz*", *German Life and Letters*, 56:3 (2003) 281.

<sup>47</sup> Crownshaw 235.

<sup>48</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 101.

<sup>49</sup> Runia, "Presence" 8.

<sup>50</sup> See also G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*, trans. D. Roazen, (New York: Zone Books, 1999) 158.

<sup>51</sup> Cosgrove 218.

<sup>52</sup> Taberner, "German Nostalgia" 183.

<sup>53</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 184.

<sup>54</sup> Assmann, "On the (In)Compatibility of Guilt" 198.

<sup>55</sup> J. Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma", *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds J. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. Smelser & P. Sztompka, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 7.

<sup>56</sup> N. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma", *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds J. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. Smelser & P. Sztompka, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 41.

<sup>57</sup> K. Erikson cited in Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma" 4.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma" 1.

<sup>59</sup> Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma" 11.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma" 11.

<sup>61</sup> P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Mariner Books, Boston, 1999. pp.3-4. Also cited in L. Pfister, "The Suffering of the Perpetrators: Unleashing Collective Memory in German Literature of the Twenty-First Century", *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 41:2 (2005) 131.

<sup>62</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 29.



<sup>63</sup> Williams 74.

<sup>64</sup> W G Sebald cited in "Restuccia" 318.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma" 11.

<sup>66</sup> K. Hall, "Jewish Memory in Exile: The Relation of W.G. Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten* to the Tradition of the Yizkor Books", *German Monitor. Jews in German Literature Since 1945: German-Jewish Literature?*, 53 (2000) 160.

<sup>67</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* 408.

<sup>68</sup> G. Jackman, "Introduction to Special Number, The End of a Taboo? The Experience of Bombing and Expulsion in Contemporary German Gedächtniskultur," *German Life and Letters*, 57:4 (2004) 343.

<sup>69</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames* 246.