Working Paper 145/2015

Anselm Kiefer / Ingeborg Bachmann: Visual Translation of Poetic Figuration

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"I really believe in something, and I will call it 'a day shall come'…it won't come, and I believe in it anyway. For if I cannot believe in it anymore, I am also unable to go on writing."

[Ingeborg Bachmann; quoted in K. R. Achberger, *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann*, 1995]

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"I can recognize beauty. For me, the work is redemption. It's the only way I can live, the only possibility to create an illusion. It's still an illusion – but it's my illusion."

[Anselm Kiefer; quoted in Jackie Wullschlager, "The art of Anselm Kiefer rises from the ruins", *Financial Times*, 4/7/2009]

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Introduction[1]

Anselm Kiefer was born in Germany near the end of the Second World War, on 8 March 1945, ostensibly exempting him from the blame for the horrors of war in which the previous generation took part. In reality, however, the consequences of that war continued to leave their mark on the visual representation of the catastrophe in the years and decades which followed 1945. The collective memory and the guilty German conscience gradually came to serve as a political tool for the Allies who divided Germany among themselves, while at the same time an inter-generational gap developed within German society as a whole, being divided between two states as part of the Cold War: the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the east and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the west. This complex period saw a national post-war-narrative crisis and a representational crisis in the artistic realm.

Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the early 1990s, Kiefer left Germany for France. Nevertheless, those intermediate years of the Cold War, left their mark on his art, as he remains first and foremost a "German artist" and throughout his creative career has evoked his homeland many times. He repeatedly and obsessively reexamines images and themes that are identified with the Romantic tradition in Germany of the late 18th century to the mid-19th century and with the aesthetics and iconography that served the dark time of the National Socialist regime and its terror, using art as a space for expression. This persistent repetition enables a scrutinizing of the various layers which comprise the German artistic space and of the linkages between these layers to forms of visual representation. But Kiefer was not the only artist dealing with this past: others such as Joseph Beuys, Georg Baselitz, and Gerhard Richter, as well as artists like Markus Lüpertz, Raffael Rheinsberg and the German Zero Group – to name but a few – chose to do so as well. What then makes Kiefer unique and distinguishes him from other German artists?

Throughout this article I shall attempt to deal with that question while demonstrating the uniqueness of Kiefer: the central themes, recurring motifs, and visual language. However, while Kiefer can lay claim to the uniqueness and preeminence of breaking all the traditions for presentation in the visual medium, the Austrian poet and writer

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Ingeborg Bachmann, who confronted a fascist past as well as a tense present, preceded him in the literary medium. Bachmann, who was Kiefer's senior by more than a decade, also did not participate actively in the war. Still, unlike Kiefer, she was old enough to retain childhood memories that do not require mediation.

Kiefer greatly admired Bachmann's work and throughout his artistic career, especially during the late 1980s and the 1990s, made sure to leave traces of her poems in many of his works of art. In the common research, Kiefer's various declarations about Bachmann's influence on his work are often reduced solely to an examination between Kiefer's artwork and the specific poem the work is dedicated to. Furthermore, in the research, Bachmann's influence on Kiefer's work often appears not only through her poems but also through the artistic conversation which took place between Kiefer and the poet Paul Celan; this happens most likely since Bachmann herself had a complex relationship with Celan over the years.

Nevertheless, there are many points of contact which at times seem to be an almost direct visual translation or a conversation that Kiefer holds with Bachmann's ideas and her poetic figures. Therefore, despite the differing positions of the two artists, which I will address later on in the research, consideration of the body of Kiefer's work in terms of his attitude toward Bachmann's work offers further perspective on the depth of his visual text. However, in order to do so, one must return to the beginning of Kiefer's artistic career in the late 1960s and reexamine his attitude toward concepts such as time, space, topography, and identity in the context within which they were created.

In this paper I will refrain from dealing with those artworks that were directed to Bachmann, which have already been analyzed in detail in Andrea Lauterwein's book on this topic (2007).[2] Instead, I will try to portray how Kiefer embraced ideas stemming from the work of the Austrian poet by interpreting poetic figures into his own visual space. This is an attempt to demonstrate how the two artists share a unique language which links the homeland to its topography, even though the artistic scene in Austria is different from that of Germany and their homelands are not the same. I believe and hope that an examination of this shared attitude toward the concepts of homeland, the artistic space and the identity of the post-war-German artist during the Cold War, may

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[2] Andrea Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan: Myth, Mourning and Memory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

explain to the viewer the later choices in paintings which Kiefer dedicated specifically to Bachmann.

I must attribute a great deal of influence to the approach of Andreas Huyssen. Huyssen was one of the first scholars to challenge the theological interpretation and reception of Kiefer in America, which turned Kiefer into the figure of a 'healing artist for German society as a whole', while calling to place Kiefer within the historical context of the Cold War.[3] Therefore, throughout this essay, I will adopt an interdisciplinary approach – an approach that seeks to explore the visual intersections through reference to changes in historical, political, economic and social conditions, in order to present the complexity of the period in which Kiefer began to formulate his artistic language as a post-war-second-generation German artist. The choice to adopt this approach is primarily due to the belief that it would be naive to consider the works of Kiefer and Bachmann in a vacuum or only in the context of a war which ended in 1945, as the political tensions of the Cold War are no less important than past and historical events as the tensions which characterized the period serve both artists as raw material. I believe that reading Kiefer's critical enterprise in a broader context would enable a better and deeper understanding of his work and will clarify in retrospect the conversation between Kiefer's work and Bachmann's. However, the study draws its strength from the discipline of art and as such it will be based upon its methodology. Since Kiefer's work is the focus of this study, I will present few of his works as case studies by analyzing their visual language and their iconography.

In the first section I will review the triangular relationship of Celan-Bachmann-Kiefer in order to highlight the need for a separate independent study of the visual relationship between Kiefer's work and Bachmann without the reference to Celan. In the second section, I will deal with Kiefer's *Occupations* series, which represents the beginning of his artistic career. This series is the core of the research as it will serve as visual evidence for my central contention that Kiefer's emerging artistic language was influenced by both the reality and the social conditions of Germany in the 1960s. Therefore, his work should be read in the context of the Zeitgeist and not only that of the Second World War. At the same time, by analyzing this series I will attempt to

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[3] Andreas Huyssen, "Anselm Kiefer: The Terror of History, the Temptation of Myth", MIT Press, October, Vol. 48 (Spring 1989), pp. 25-45:
http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/778947?uid=3737864&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102626260963
(07/09/13)

reveal how his language is comprised of themes and motifs reminiscent of those found in Bachmann's works, most of which were also written during the 1960s – even if they were published later on. I will discuss the crisis in representation that played an important role in the German artistic sphere during the post-war years and the ways Kiefer dealt with it by discussing the goals he wished to "occupy" through his work and the links to Bachmann's work. This will lead to the third section, where I will address Kiefer's shift at the end of the 1960s from an art student to his career as a freelance artist at the beginning of the 1970s. The shift is apparent in that Kiefer began working with painting as a medium that would play a crucial part in the formulation of his evolving visual language. The ideas in this chapter will be discussed more briefly just to demonstrate how all goals set already as a student also continue to appear in Kiefer's adult life. I believe that by analyzing two of Kiefer's early oil paintings I will demonstrate my thesis regarding Kiefer's preoccupation with Bachmann's poetic figures visually, while also showing Kiefer's unique artistic path in the medium.

Finally, I will attempt to compare and illustrate points of contact between the aesthetic visual language and the verbal language of two important artists, whose works dealt with the crises afflicting post-1945 German society. Therefore, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the DAAD Center for German Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for enabling me to conduct this study. I would also like to thank Dr. Michal Ben-Horin for her warm support in the writing of this paper. Reading the visual and the poetic texts required an integration of different methods, which I could not have done without her help and patient and supportive guidance.

1. The Triangular Relationship: Celan-Bachmann-Kiefer

Ingeborg Bachmann's influence on the painter Anselm Kiefer is indicated by the fact that throughout his career he dedicated certain works directly to her. Most of these works, which all cite lines or fragments from her poems, were created during the late 1980s and 1990s in an impressive cycle depicting mostly large-scale landscapes. These landscapes include depictions of archaic or frozen spaces and fields dotted with flowers and red brambles – "blood flowers" ("Blutblumen"), as Kiefer would call them.[4]

Despite all this, the research predominantly presents Bachmann's influence on Kiefer's work through a narrow perspective that leaves Bachmann in the role of an intermediary in the artistic dialogue between Kiefer and the Holocaust survivor poet Paul Celan – and not even the analysis of these landscapes is an exception.[5] Therefore, in the following section I will discuss this unique trilateral relationship between Celan, Bachmann and Kiefer in order to emphasize the need for a separate research that will put Bachmann's work in the spot light without a connection to Celan.

Paul Celan was born in 1920 with the name Paul Antschel into a German-Jewish family in the city of Czernowitz, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While at home, Celan was taught about the German culture and language. With the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany in 1933 and the strengthening of its reign in Europe, his entire family was suddenly forced to assume a more Jewish than German identity. At that time, Jewish identity was not really defined as an identity in itself but rather as a counter-identity or anti-identity to that of the German Aryan.[6] Later on, in 1941, when the intention to deport the Jews from the area of his birth became clear, Celan became the first member of his family to escape but only to discover later that his parents were taken to a death camp the very next day, where they both eventually died. He himself was captured and transferred to the labor camps until 1944, when he managed to escape and start making his way to Vienna. He arrived there for the first time only in 1947, after the war had already ended.[7] The betrayal by Germany that Celan felt in the face of the atrocities, together with his disappointment with German culture, fostered an

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[4] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 181.
[5] As Lauterwein carries out in her book, for example.
[6] Ibid., p. 93.
[7] Kirsten Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories: Fairy Tale Beginnings and Holocaust Endings* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2002), pp. 110-111.

enormous emotional and intellectual crisis for him that continued to haunt him for many years, and which he always made a point of articulating in his works.

The first meeting between Celan, the Jewish Holocaust survivor, and Ingeborg Bachmann, the non-Jewish Austrian, occurred in Vienna in 1948. On May 16th of that year they both met in the apartment of the surrealist painter Edgar Jené and since that moment they embarked an on-and-off love affair which lasted until the late 1960s.[8] The two artists, who died in the early 1970s under somewhat mysterious circumstances,[9] maintained a complex relationship which that had its ups and downs during the years, but which yielded a rich artistic correspondence as well. However, while their correspondence has just recently become fully accessible to the public and the nature of their personal relationship remains somewhat unclear, the poetic dialogue that took place between the two is the subject of much research.[10] As such, it is difficult to separate the historical and biographical events, as both have left echoes in their works while one may find on many occasions an expression to a tension between the voices of the Holocaust-survivor on the one hand and the identity of the German-Austrian-Aryan woman with its guilty feelings on the other.

Over the years, Celan dedicated various poems to Bachmann.[11] Bachmann, for her part, reciprocated in many of her poems and literary works as well.[12] Kiefer, too, made

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[8] Ibid.

[9] While it is assumed that Celan committed suicide by jumping into the Seine River in May 1970, Bachmann met her death in September 1973 after fire broke out in her home as she fell asleep while smoking a cigarette.

[10] The correspondence was first published in 2008. The letters exchanged between Bachmann and Celan are divided between two locations: most of the letters Bachmann sent to Celan are located in the German Literature Archive in Marbach, Germany, while those Celan sent to her are located in the Handschriftenabteilung of the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

[11] When he personally delivered to her a copy of his collection *Poppy and Memory* (1952), he even signed a handwritten dedication on twenty-three of the poems (on the second edition). See: Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories*, p. 111; Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 198.

[12] The research is inconsistent on whether Celan himself was Bachmann's inspiration for the character of Franz Joseph Trotte in her novella "Three Paths to the Lake" [In the English edition this creation appears in *Simultan* (1972) whereas in the Hebrew edition it appears in the collection: *The Thirtieth Year* (Das dreißigste Jahr) (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2007)]. While researchers such as Lauterwein believe that the character is based on Celan [see Lauterwein, p. 180], other researchers, such as Krick-Aigner, argue that this is an erroneous assumption and that the character Trotte should actually be indentified with the Austrian writer Jean Améry – whom Bachmann never met personally [see: Krick-Aigner, p. 113].

On the other hand, there is hardly any disagreement about the literary tribute Bachmann made to Celan and his work in the fairytale "The Mysteries of the Princess of Kagran", set forth in her first published literary novel *Malina* (1971) – the novel which was intended to be part of her great, never-completed project *Todesarten-Projekt* (*Ways of Dying* or *Death Styles*) – that in its incomplete form, includes three fragments: *Malina*, "The Book of Franza" and "Requiem for Fanny Goldmann".

a point of conducting a one-sided, artistic dialogue with Celan's work. In the beginning of the 1980s, he alluded to Celan in numerous works, visually translating major themes of his poetry, as he chose to focus mainly on Celan's early period, especially works which appeared up until 1952 such as *Poppy and Memory* (1952) and his famous poem "Death Fugue" that had first been published in 1948.[13]

These translations sometimes manifested only in the employment of poetic fragments, a single line from a poem, the name of the entire collection or a direct text on the canvas, thus leaving the task of interpretation to the viewer. In fact, although some of Kiefer's works were already interpreted in light of Celan's poem, the first time Kiefer directly dedicated an inscription on a canvas to Celan was only in 1999.[14]

Actually, during the years Kiefer was influenced by or cited not only from Celan's work but many works from the realm of literature and philosophy. Among other things, in his works of art there are references to and various influences of German thinkers and artists such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Jean Genet, Richard Wagner, Robert Musil, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Jung, Martin Heidegger, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and of course: Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann.[15] Undoubtedly, though, the Celan-Bachmann-Kiefer triangle holds a place of honor in Kiefer's artistic creation.

However, while over the years the works of art which Kiefer dedicated to Celan have received many in-depth analyses in a wide variety of books and catalogs, the artworks he dedicated to Bachmann mostly remained in the shadow. Therefore, it is

interesting to note that even though Kiefer, throughout his works over the years, often resonates with the poetic works of both Bachmann and Celan, he has repeatedly stated that Bachmann herself was the greatest poet of the latter half of the last century.[16] Furthermore, Andréa Lauterwein, who has written one of the most comprehensive books in English in recent years about the artistic relationship between Kiefer and Celan (2007), not only argues that Kiefer regarded Bachmann as the most important poet but that he also found her language to be closer to his own than that of Celan[17] – nevertheless, even Lauterwein views Bachmann as merely a mediator and "the female alter-ego of Celan".[18]

Still, all three artists: Celan, Bachmann and Kiefer, attempted to create works of art in post-war Germany. They all encountered the difficulty of continuing to create and represent the recent events in the German language – their mother tongue, poetic as visual, which is the same language that was used before the catastrophe and during it – as the German language, became charged with the recent terror events. However, even though Celan, Bachmann and Kiefer all tried to deconstruct in their art the use of the language – one may find two fundamental differences in these artists' points of origin in relation to the catastrophe:

First of all, whereas Bachmann and Celan wrote, Kiefer painted. This difference requires making a distinction between the ways the visual and the poetic works deal differently with the German language. Second, there are important differences with respect to the position of the speaker and his/her identity, especially as it was understood during the National Socialist regime and the first postwar decades – the decades in which all three artists were creating. Despite the age differences between them, it is true that all three artists refer in their work to the relationship between perpetrators and victims (Täter und Opfer), expressed primarily through the destruction. However, "their Other" was not always identical, nor was there a way to deconstruct it so, as each artist had his or her own unique standpoint: Celan, a Holocaust survivor

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[16] As Kiefer was quoted: "[Bachmann was] the deepest, most comprehensive, most moving – simply put, the greatest poet in the second half of the 20th century": in Freda Uziyel, "Will, Feelings, and Intellect: The Three Elements of a Masterpiece – An Artistic Biography of Anselm Kiefer", in Mordechai Omer et al., *Anselm Kiefer – Shevirat Ha-Kelim (Breaking of the Vessels)*, Exh. Cat. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum, 2011), p. 146.

[17] As Lauterwein paraphrased Kiefer himself: "[Bachmann was] a 'monolith' who came even closer to his own preoccupation than Celan, who, he [Kiefer] feels, is sometimes too intellectual", see: Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 180.

[18] Ibid., pp. 179, 181.

whose Judaism was imposed upon him by the Nazis, and who was haunted by the exposure to the catastrophe, had to write from a different standpoint than that of Bachmann and Kiefer, who to some extent expressed the "German-speaking voice" through challenge and resistance.

Thus, even though the great interest of the Celan-Bachmann-Kiefer trinity and its role in Kiefer's work, the artistic conversation which takes place between Kiefer's visual language and Bachmann's poetic figures and themes independently of Celan's work is important as well. Observation of this crucial dimension, which Kiefer makes apparent throughout his works by referring to the textual space of Bachmann's prose, can allow a better understanding in hindsight of the complexity and richness of the relationship between the works of the two artists. However, since it is difficult to address the works that were dedicated to Bachmann without considering their affinity with Celan's poetry and the private relationship between them, in the next sections I will focus on Kiefer's early career so as to demonstrate how literary motifs and poetic figures from Bachman's works are already echoed as Kiefer begins attempting to formulate his private visual language. Hence, I will deal specifically with works that ostensibly do not relate to Bachmann in any way, and which the research, at least in English, also assumes to be unrelated either to her or to her work, and even to Celan's work – as I believe that this demonstration may help understand the later dedication to Bachmann.

2. Setting the Initial Goals for Occupation; the *Occupations* Series

2.1. Occupying the "Zero Hour"

During the summer and fall of 1969, at the age of twenty-four, Kiefer took several trips in Europe. As a young art student and in the spirit of the conceptual art of those years, he chronicled himself in various locations, most of which were previously under Nazi occupation. While the photographs themselves were taken in Switzerland (in Küsnacht and Bellinzona), Italy (in Rome, Paestum, and Pompeii), and France (in Montpellier, Arles, and Sére) – what they all have in common is self-documentation, with Kiefer posing in the infamous "Sieg heil" Nazi's salute as he is wearing a Nazi uniform.[19] All these moments were directed and eventually edited into one art-book that unites the visual images under the same title and theme, with an ostensibly autobiographical semi-narrative.[20]

The photographs, called *Occupations* (*Besetzungen*) (1969), **nos. 1-3**,[21] were submitted by Kiefer as part of his final thesis project for the Karlsruhe Art Academy. However, the entire series was unacceptable to his professors at the academy, who rejected the photos as a blatant expression of sympathy for fascism.[22] Even later, in 1975, when the photographs appeared in the avant-garde art magazine *Interfunktionen*, the public criticism of them did not abate.[23] It is here in fact, that Kiefer's artistic language and social criticism began to formulate in a unique and a revolutionary way that affected his later works. It was not only the pose, which immediately reminded the viewers of the 'not-so-distant-Nazi past' but also the title of the series: "Occupations", that could be considered as outrageous and radical. By using a term so loaded with meanings as the title, Kiefer challenged the viewer. This was made possible since the name simultaneously hints at a number of different actions with a variety of symbolic

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[19] Ibid., p. 31.
[20] Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, Exh. Cat. (Chicago and Philadelphia: Art Institute of Chicago and Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1988), p. 14.
[21] The works nos. 1-3 serve as three examples from the whole series and were given with the generous permission of the artist himself.
[22] Ursula Peters and Ronald Prügel, "The Legacy of Critical Realism in East and West", in Stephanie Barron et al., *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, Exh. Cat. (New York: H. N. Abrams and LAMCA – Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), p. 80.
[23] Ibid.

charges. On the one hand, the name announces the new career and profession, his artistic occupation, which is usually rewarded with wages that Kiefer as a young student desires for himself – while on the other hand, the term occupation has militaristic connotations while simultaneously implying resistance to consumerism, which was very common during the sixties. Kiefer, as a young artist occupied different spaces in his work and it is, therefore, no wonder that the provocative series instantly aroused harsh reactions.

Like Kiefer, Bachmann too had been criticized for her work during the 1960s. Yet unlike Kiefer, she had already managed to gain public recognition during the 1950s for her earlier work. In 1952, when she was only twenty-five, already with a PhD that dealt with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and with experience in writing radio plays for the Austrian Broadcast Corporation (Sender Rot-Weiss-Rot), she joined the Viennese group of poets and intellectuals, known as "Gruppe 47".[24] Barely a year later, in 1953, Bachmann had already received the group's first-place award and in 1954 she was featured in a huge and sympathetic cover story for the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*.

However, during the 1960s, Bachmann shifted for the first time from poetry to prose. With this transition, the social criticism in her work became sharper and more blatant while her reception completely changed. She began to draw mixed reactions and gradually lost her popularity among the critics.[25] It was mostly the introduction of her works into the academic research during the '80s and 90's that brought Bachmann's prose back into the discourse. This recognition, however, was specifically associated with the strengthening of Gender Discourse which had adopted her, not long after her death.[26]

Before turning back to the *Occupations* series, it is important to clarify why both Kiefer and Bachmann received such hostile criticism during those years and what did they do to earn it. But in order to receive a complete and coherent picture, this criticism should be explained in terms of the *Zeitgeist* which was prevalent in Germany during

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[24] Bachmann had already published the play "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen" (1952).

[25] It is important to note in this context, just as one example for the mixed reaction, that even though Bachmann's novel *Malina* (1971) quickly became a bestseller, the critics were divided and accused this work of lacking a political dimension. See: Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories*, p. 19.

[26] Reingard Nethersole, "Ingeborg Bachmann's Poetry: A Sense of Passing", in Gudrun Brokoph-Mauch (ed.), *Thunder Rumbling at My Heels: Tracing Ingeborg Bachmann* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), pp. 139-142.

those decades, when the Second World War ended and Germany was divided into the FRG and the GDR.

With the division, the Allies from both side attempted to produce 1945 as a new starting point for the German people and the German nation, a sort of zero hour (Stunde Null). Soon each side began to deal with public memorialization in a manner which matched its ideology. This was always accompanied by the imposition of gratitude by the Allies toward the new regimes as the Germans' "savior": in the East – the importance of the Soviet victory was emphasized and a fruitful discussion began concerning the formal dimension of art, in what was called the "Formalism Debate" (1948),[27] while in the same period in West Germany, the guilt and the need for democracy were emphasized.[28]

The fear of strengthening nationalism in the arts embodied the threat posed to the Allies by the rise of political and national identity as it was embodied during the Nazi period.[29] The use of figurativeness and the demand for art that will be clear for the masses (Volk) carried not only echoes of the prescriptions associated with the Nazi Reich but also that which took now place in the GDR. Hence, the figurative style, as a form, simplifies its identification with totalitarian dictatorship, propaganda and nationalism – none of which were welcome now in West Germany. The Western Allies thereby hoped to foster the identification of both the art under the Soviets and the art created during the Nazi period jointly as one "Other", meaning: as "non-Western". Thus, the Western effort to redesign the German artistic endeavor was intended to distance West Germany as much as possible from the political regime of Nazi Germany and the Soviets' GDR as well.[30]

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[27] For more on the subject, see: Claudia Mesch, *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germanys* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008).

[28] Ido de Haan, "War memories – memory wars [Kriegserinnerungen – Erinnerungskriege]", Gottfried Fischer, et al., *Unfinished Past: Coming to terms with the Second World War in the Visual Arts of Germany and the Netherlands [Unvollendete vergangenheit: Verarbeitung des Zweiten Weltkrieges in der Bildenden Kunst in Deutschland und den Niederlanden]*, Exh. Cat., (Amsterdam: Art and Society Foundation, 2000), pp. 45-46.

[29] If in the early 1950s a discussion on the formal and the figurative style in artworks took place in the East, in the West the debate focused on the "non-form" – the informal and the abstract of all kinds. See: Claudia Mesch, *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall*, pp. 21-29.

[30] Stefan Germer, "Intersecting Visions, Shifting Perspectives: An Overview of German-American Artistic Relations", Monique Beudert and Judith Severne ed., *German and American Art from Beuys and Warhol*, Exh. Cat., (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996) pp. 9-10.

Instead of nationalism, the main emphasis in the western field of art was on strengthening international contacts and encouraging collaboration between German and international artists – that were now reinforced primarily through the artistic institutions.[31] During those postwar decades the artistic focus was suddenly placed upon New York, which became "the next big thing" as it could represent a location far removed from the problematic history of Europe.[32]

However, the relationship between the German world of art and that of the Allies, and especially the Americans, during the post war years was not a symmetric one of cooperation but rather a one-sided dialogue from the American side to the West German side. The predominant style quickly became Abstract (American) Expressionism, and – despite the supposed sense of freedom – the abstract soon assumed a status of a dogma,[33] while West German artists, including Kiefer himself, were denied the possibility of dealing with social criticism that looks at the past crimes.[34]

But how is it possible to restart the arts and forget the past? At the core of this approach is a significant discrepancy: the desire of the Allies to give up on any debates regarding the German art during the Nazi era by promoting abstraction, while attempting to initialize the field of art and mark 1945 as a new, memory-free beginning, contradicted the will to impose "collective guilt" upon the German population based on past events. It prevented many images identified with Nazi iconography and with figurative language in general, which led to experiencing a crisis in representation and appearance of many visual taboos.

Therefore, despite the large number of catalogs and exhibitions that presented abstraction, observing the situation with critical eyes through the prism of zero hour reveals a split and not a homogeneous field of art – but could a zero hour really exist in Germany? As part of the search for a postwar national identity in the second half of

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[31] The Allies flooded the libraries and educational institutions with French and American art magazines and encouraged exhibitions and art fairs such as the documenta that exposed the German public to American abstract art. Later the Allies would reinforce, in the same manner, the Pop Art and Minimalism movements as well. Thus, the Allies' choice of abstraction art, led by the United States, should be understood as a political-ideological branding practice: while it gave rise to a binary artistic division between both West and East Germany and past and present – it also created a separation between different forms of regime.
See: Lucius Grisebach, "Collapse – Reorientation – Taboos", in Fischer, *Unfinished Past*, p. 27.
[32] Germer, "Intersecting Visions", p. 11.
[33] Andreas Huyssen, "Figure of Memory in the Course of Time", in Stephanie Barron, *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, p. 226.
[34] Germer, "Intersecting Visions", p. 13.

1945 (shortly after the end of the war), over thirty art exhibitions were held featuring mostly artists and artistic styles which had been censored and banned by the National Socialist regime.[35] In contrast, the older, prewar generation of artists, whether having been persecuted by the Nazi regime or supporters of it, experienced a disconnection with international developments. As a result, after 1945 the gap between the younger and the older generation of artists continued to widen and art movements, such as Zero Group, began to play an important role in the field.[36] Still, very few artworks managed to respond to the political practice of the Allies in the artistic field as the works of Bachmann and Kiefer do.

Both artists attempted in their works to shatter the myth of the obligation to "reset the memory" and erase the war, grappling with the efforts to impose a guilty conscience. Kiefer fought through the artistic medium to undermine the concept of a new start and Bachmann, for her part, did the same. She was among the few writers who in their poetic work challenged the concept of the zero hour. Even though the fragment *Requiem for Fanny Goldmann* (from *Todesarten*) was only published after Bachmann's death, she began working on it during the 1950s and 1960s. Toward the end of the fragment, while the identity of the "I" speaker (*ich*) is somewhat unclear, Bachmann as an artist who creates art post 1945, or the protagonist "I" itself, refers to the myth:

> When one says that the time after a war is the right time to start over again and change society, this is not necessarily wrong, but the urge to return to the time before the war always ends up the stronger. One has to realize that there is no consciousness of the present, otherwise the present wouldn't always be so completely bungled, as is this one, but instead would be relegated to the past.
>
> (*Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, pp. 209-210)[37]

Whoever the speaker in this paragraph may be – Bachmann or the fictional character – it is clear that Bachmann refers to the tension that exists within this contradictory approach: between the concept of 1945 as a starting point without memories, which were based upon the obligation to forget and the imposition of guilt for past crimes,

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[35] That same year twenty-eight public exhibitions and six private exhibitions were held, see: Sabine Eckmann, "Ruptures and Continuities: Modern German Art in between the Third Reich and the Cold War", in Stephanie Barron, *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, pp. 50-51.
[36] Nevertheless, Huyssen emphatically established that despite the circumstances, there was never a total Stunde Null in German art either in the West or the East. Huyssen, "Figure of Memory", p. 226.
[37] Bachmann, "Requiem for Fanny Goldmann: Ingeborg Bachmann", pp. 209-210.

which were based upon the obligation to remember. Moreover, a few sentences later in the same artwork, Bachmann not only echoes the tension but refers to it directly. She notes the feeling of uneasiness which resulted from the discord in the German and Austrian art scene at the time, using the term "zero hour" (or "Year Zero" as she would call it) in the artwork itself:

> […] yet how thoughts and ideas can become defunct after only seven years is still hard to understand. The biggest change in public matters involved a "currency reform" and thus those are the kinds of changes one speak of as part of a "Year Zero" in world history when referring to 1946 or 1949, which in fact is what those years are often called.[38]

In this text, Bachmann claims that the zero hour is a false concept, a disbelief in which people must believe so as to move on with their lives or to "could sleep well at night". Indeed, 1945 still haunts Bachmann as evidenced by her literary characters, and cannot be put to rest even with the currency reform (as part of the Marshall Plan).

Unlike Bachmann, who as a child witnessed the Nazis' entrance into Austria, Kiefer spent his childhood in the western part of Germany after the Allies had made their division. As such, he belongs to the younger generation that grew up in forced amnesia that was common post 1945, without personal experience of the war and with memory that was only through intermediaries.

As mentioned before, the practice of zero hour managed to exclude from the field of art and its discourse any art with nationalist, classical or figurative characteristics which were favored by either Hitler or Stalin. So during the years when Kiefer started to create, any artist in West Germany with even the slightest affinity for these styles was immediately suspected of sympathy for the values of fascism and terror,[39] exactly as it can be seen in Kiefer's case: Thus, by embracing the figurative and self-documentary techniques, he used a visual language which was everything but American abstraction.

The desire to protest against the zero hour led Kiefer to face the camera with a sober and direct gaze, wearing the Nazi uniform and making the Hitler salute. In this manner, by using figurative images of himself, standing in variety of locations in former-

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Stephanie Barron, "Blurred Boundaries: The Art of Two Germanys between Myth and History", in Stephanie Barron, *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, pp. 15-16.

occupied Europe, he actually forces the (German) viewer to confront this repressed period, the not so distant past which Western policies had attempt to abolish. With realistic photography, Kiefer distances himself from any reference to American Abstract (or Pop Art as well). On the contrary – Kiefer deliberately distinguishes himself from the Western common style as a harsh statement and a way to criticize the Western domination. With clear images that were identified with the terror actions of Nazi Germany, Kiefer is not only closely associated himself in Western eyes with the Nazi style of the *unfreiheit* (not free) but also with the supposedly documentary photography approach in black-and-white which was associated with East Germany as well, meaning: with the German field of art that was located "behind the Iron Curtain".[40] Hence, Kiefer shatters all Western conditioning, which expects him as a West German artist to "start from scratch". But here also essentially lies the reason for Kiefer's problematic rejection during those years by his professors.

More than two decades after Kiefer took the photos and almost four decades after 1945, in a manner very reminiscent of Bachmann's quote from her fragment, Kiefer himself referred ironically to the concept of zero hour and his attempts to "conquer" it:

> When I was a student, there was pop art. The Americans relieved us of our duty. They sent us **"care packages"** and democracy. The search for our own identity was postponed. In 1945, after the "accident", as we euphemistically call it today, we thought: now we start again from the beginning. Right up until today we talk of **zero hour**, although such a thing cannot exist, it's absurd. The past was made taboo, and anyone who brought it up met with denial and disgust.[41]

Against this background, it is almost impossible not to think on Bachmann's quote: like the "I" speaker in *Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, Kiefer too mentions the post-war economic changes and the attempt to understand 1945 as a new starting point, with its new post-war artistic narrative. Therefore, when Kiefer refers to the concept, it is a request to understand his decision to photograph himself in a documentary-realistic style as a conscious process and a deliberate choice to resist the Western Allies' cultural enforcement. This resistance reflects the refusal to become part of the mainstream common style of the (German/American) abstraction and at the same time indicates

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[40] Peters and Prügel, "Legacy of Critical Realism", p. 73.
For one example among many of photography as a medium associated with the East, see: Matthew Shaul ed., *Do Not Refreeze: Photography behind the Berlin Wall*, Exh. Cat. (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2007).
[41] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 223 (from note 19 in Lauterwein's book, emphasis added).

Kiefer's persistent search for an individual voice in the German art scene, which does not submit to the Western artistic dictates but rather intends to fantasy occupy it. Furthermore, as I demonstrated before – Kiefer occupies both the Western and the Eastern artistic narrative.

However, the Allies intended to influence not only the art scene but also the economic consumption system in the Western-controlled areas – meaning: the post-war artistic narrative cannot be separated from the political one. Hence, both Bachmann's and Kiefer's attempts to challenge the practice of zero hour and present it as an empty concept do not stop with questions of form and style, but connect this concept to the occupation of consumerism and its "care packages". This link was made since the Allies bolstered the supposed zero hour with the currency reforms as part of the Marshall Plan, or officially known as the European Recovery Program (ERP), which also both Bachmann and Kiefer referred to in their quotes.

2.2. Occupying the Consumer Society

Despite the fact that the work of Bachmann and Kiefer could be explained only within the context of the Second World War, I believe that the past events of the catastrophe could serve as a mere backdrop for raising additional questions related to the present political situation and the tension of the Cold War as well – the time when their works were created.

After the economic crisis that came in the wake of the war, the German market began to stabilize a bit with various recovery programs and the strengthening of consumer culture mostly led by the western Allies. As I demonstrated before, Bachmann herself, who was witness the economic boost, chose to mention the currency reform inside her work – giving her character the possibility to comment on it directly. This motive repeats in more works as Franza, Bachmann's heroine from the fragment *The Book of Franza*, expresses her anger at the growth of the market economy and the culture of consumerism. She criticizes the White hegemony that is carrying out an economic-colonialist conquest of the African continent. In the third chapter of the fragment, entitled "Chapter Three: The Egyptian Darkness", the consumer occupation is expressed primarily with the Coca-Cola bottle. It appears repeatedly throughout the chapter and is linked to the robbing of the pyramids which was carried out by Western archeologists. As the chapter developed, the Coca-Cola bottle becomes something of

an icon or an attribute of the Western consumerism culture, mostly in a bad connotation of colonialism.[42]

While in the novel, Africa represents the archaic landscape that it is so distant from that of Europe, Bachmann's decision to describe the German-speaking characters especially in Africa also depends on the political environment of the time in which she wrote: Africa became a source of tension during the Cold War not only between the Western and Eastern blocs but within the student movements that began to rise up against the "White imperialism" in the southern continent as a result of the new popularity of the postcolonial discourse during the 1960s.[43] Here it is worth noting Germany's role in the "Congo Conference" (Kongokonferenz) – or as it is better known: "The Berlin Conference", which took place toward the end of the 19th century and represents a crucial juncture in the history of modern imperialism to this day.

Like Bachmann, Kiefer could not ignore the political situation in Germany. The changes that appeared in the West German consumer society inspired him and can be traced in *Occupations*.[44] There, Kiefer not only ventured out to places that signified the Nazi occupation, but also to those places that had become popular tourist attractions in Europe during the 1960s.[45] While Pop Art, which had become quite popular in the art scene of West Germany of those years, may have either embraced or criticized consumerism, Kiefer found his own unique path to criticize it. Furthermore, Lauterwein emphasizes Kiefer's use of the name of the series in English: "Occupations". This term became very popular, one which was linked to the students' protest actions against the West German consumerism culture with the variety of occupation movements.[46]

It is no wonder that in addressing the concept of the zero hour, as quoted in the previous section, both Bachmann and Kiefer not only ironically emphasize the effect of the concept on the arts with its visual prohibitions but also its economic aspect and

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[42] Bachmann, *The Book of Franza & Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, Ch. 3, pp. 89-146.
[43] Ibid.
[44] One may even find a connection between the events of 1968 with the Student Revolution that occurred in West Germany and Kiefer's decision to switch from studying law, in which he first enrolled, to studying art.
As Lisa Saltzman suggests in *Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2.
Various sources, however, specify the year as 1966, as here, for example (in Hebrew): Uziyel, "Will, Feelings, and Intellect", p. 31.
[45] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 32.
[46] This term still remains relevant to this day, with the occupation movements that appeared in recent years, the most famous of which was of course "Occupy Wall Street".

the influence of this aspect on the creation of the concept. In their quotes, Bachmann and Kiefer characterize the "currency reform" and the "care packages", respectively, provided by the Allies to Austria and Germany as components of a rehabilitation program. As such, Kiefer's attempt to "occupy" the consumer culture as well must once again be understood within the socio-political context of the Cold War.

The choice to broaden the criticism and protest against the strengthening of the consumer culture and not just against Nazism, the GDR regime or the Western political ideology – intensifies the ironic dimension of the artworks. In this manner Kiefer does not let up in his criticism of either of the Germanys. He also adds to the past catastrophe an additional layer to his rich critical enterprise by turning against both the regime in East Germany, with its communist ideology and the one on the Western side as well. Thus, Kiefer succeeds in emphasizing exactly the sorts of tensions which characterized the Cold War and prevailed during the years in which the series was created.[47] Even without any direct dedication to Bachmann's work, as part of both Bachmann and Kiefer's attempts to deconstruct the concept of zero hour, they both decided to examine the forms that turned out to be part of the legitimate representations of the past catastrophe. Therefore, they both share the ambition to challenge the past and the present simultaneously: the guilt for past crimes and 1945 as a new memory-free starting point. This led both artists to "occupy" the non-representational aspects of the catastrophe, which became taboo while they tried to demonstrate the fascination aspect of the Nazi's iconography, as it can be find in the next section.

2.3. Occupying Fascination

The 1960s were a turning point in West German field of art, and in the following decades it grew clearer that the "lack of [the western] ideology became the supreme ideology" – as Ursula Peters and Roland Prügel called it.[48] These years saw many

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[47] Interestingly, the very same challenging visual language would represent for the non-German audience something else, and would also become the primary reason for Kiefer's warm reception in the United States and in Israel in the early 1970s.
Germer suggests that during those years, when the consumer culture intensified in the West, Kiefer's descent into so-called clichés made his American audience project onto him images they had about "Germanism", and in return they gave him glory. In fact, Kiefer provided them with precisely what America expected from art and had been lost to it in the 1970s with the emergence of Pop Art: the artist's approval in the form of the "painter-philosopher". It was this interpretation that buttressed the view of Kiefer as a restorative artist for German society as a whole.
See: Germer, "Intersecting Visions", pp. 29-30.
[48] Peters and Prügel, "Legacy of Critical Realism", p. 73.

changes in a variety of areas: new discourses entered the academic research such as the Postcolonial Discourse, the Postmodern Discourse or Gender Studies; the influence of the media and cinema on the public space intensified;[49] the Berlin Wall was built and the political tensions between the two Germanys increased in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis; the German economy had also stabilized somewhat and the consumer culture became stronger. But if until that time the German public was primarily concerned about nuclear war, the rearming of Germany and anticommunism – the extensive media coverage of the Eichmann Trial (1961) and the Auschwitz Trials (1963) brought the Holocaust into the public discourse for the first time.[50]

The broadcasting of the trials not only strengthened the collective sense of guilt, but also opened up for discussion the personal responsibility of those individuals who collaborated with the regime.[51] All of these developments brought the intergenerational tension between "the first generation" and "the second generation" in Germany to the surface. This led to the demand, especially by the younger generation, that the events of the war be revisited – a process which climaxed with the uprising of the student movement in 1968 and the emergence of terrorist cells such as the RAF. Thus, the main problem was that the student movement essentially presented no artistic alternative of any kind. Walter Grasskamp emphasizes that although a number of artists, Joseph Beuys being perhaps the most famous, acted together with the students in various happenings and performance-art events, in practice what those artists' work signified in the field of art was essentially the unbridgeable gap between the older generation that was present during the war and the younger generation, which lacked that experience and memory; and behind this gap lurked a huge cultural and aesthetic vacuum.[52]

Beuys, who may be considered one of the first German artists who began to challenge the social taboos prevalent in the field of art in the years following the Second World War, was attracted by many artists fans. His entire persona was based around a mythical figure who expresses his personal experience of redemption during the war. He embraces in his art the myth of the artist as a shaman while attempting to

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[49] The internet was taking its first steps as well, but it was sill limited to the fields of research and military institutions.
[50] Huyssen, "Figure of Memory", p. 232.
[51] Barron, "Blurred Boundaries", p. 21.
[52] Walter Grasskamp, "The De-Nazification of Nazi Art: Arno Breker and Albert Speer Today", in Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, et al. *The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich* (Winchester, UK: Winchester Press, 1990), p. 235.

demonstrate, with a variety of performance actions and alchemy, his power to heal the German post-1945 political entity.[53]

But Beuys' story is an accurate example of the complexity experienced in the western field of art due to his service during the war years – in 1938, Beuys was a member of the Hitler Youth movement, and in 1940 he joined the German air force, the *Luftwaffe*. At the height of the war, in 1941, he was promoted to a bomber pilot and was captured.[54]

The artists of the older generation, such as Beuys, who witnessed the horrors of the catastrophe and had actively, participated in the war effort at times continued, in fact, to preserve the conflict between past and present and the willingness to start from zero versus the past cooperation of individuals with the Nazi regime. As such, the field of art was still missing the question of the role of aesthetics in the Nazi period.

By the 1950s, an awareness of iconoclasm in art, carried out under the Third Reich, had been awakened. The first books published on this subject dealt primarily with the art that was excluded, persecuted, and banned.[55] The Nazi aesthetics and the art it promoted had not been studied, as it represented an iconography of terror. In a period in which the guilty conscience prevailed, these aesthetics and artworks were perceived as being, in Grasskamp's words: "guilty of collaboration".[56]

Kiefer and Bachmann, however, refused to compromise in their search for understanding the components of the field. With their works, they began a long journey in search of elements of fascination with Nazism as they tried to understand the iconography which served the terror, demonstrating both the attraction and power of this aesthetic as part of an ideological mechanism – while at the same time, resisting and criticizing it in their own special way.[57]

Even though we usually think that those decades "belong" to Abstract, mostly in paintings, the notion that the American Abstract completely dominated the art world in

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[53] In the research it is sometimes argued that Kiefer was Beuys's student and sometimes that he only visited his studio. In order to understand my arguments and for the sake of this study I believe that the accuracy of the information makes no difference.

[54] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, pp. 45-46.

[55] In 1962, an increase in such research was prompted by an exhibition curated by the artist Jürgen Claus under the outrageous name Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art), an ironic homage to the much-maligned exhibition organized by the Nazi regime in 1937 (to be addressed below); see ibid.

[56] Ibid., pp. 235-236.

[57] These elements were a significant component of the Nazi ideology, but also a component of fascist aesthetics in general.

the 1950s and 1960s is erroneous. Although stylistically it already dominated art – as in the case of artists such as Jackson Pollock or Gerhard Richter from the German side – and while it even entered quickly into the production line in the form of wallpapers and fabric samples,[58] in practice – fascist art had still won over public opinion in Germany and many Germans with a Nazi past still held key positions in society.[59] Interestingly, the first ones to challenge the fascination with fascism and expose it to public scrutiny were artists rather than historians and scholars.[60]

As a young student seeking his artistic path less than a year after the student revolt, Kiefer, who had been born shortly before the end of the war, set out on a journey to see what it would have felt like had he been born somewhat earlier, since theoretically he belonged to the side of the perpetrator and therefore bore the guilt for the crime.[61] For this reason – to begin his search for the "seductive effect", he had to wear a uniform and perform a salute.[62] Only through the costume, the use of his body and his own Aryan identity was he able to enter the symbolic dimension in order to understand the inherent power of fascist aesthetics and how it was able to claim so many followers among the masses.

However, Kiefer was certainly not the only artist who tried to challenge the taboos and social prohibitions which were prevalent at his time, some of which even remain relevant today. German artists from both the East and the West attempted to grapple with the German identity and the Nazi past. Among them were Gerhard Richter, Georg Baselitz, Markus Lüpertz, Jörg Immerdorf, Sigmar Polke, Olef Metzel, Eugen Schönebeck, and A. R. Penck. Yet, Kiefer was unique in that he directly confronted

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[58] Eckhart Gillen notes that abstraction had become part of the everyday life of consumer culture as well as gradually becoming a type of instrument for self-representation and a sense of freedom: "…as wallpapers and fabric pattern, and lamps and furniture design in people's living rooms. It no longer raised existential questions there but rather represented the liberal-democratic consumer society's feeling of modern life".
Eckhart Gillen, "Tabula Rasa and Inwardness: German Images before and after 1945", in Eckhart Gillen et al., *German Art from Beckmann to Richter: Images of a Divided Country*, Exh. Cat. (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997), pp. 18-19.
[59] Huyssen, "Figure of Memory", p. 229.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Kiefer: "I am one of the butchers, at least on a theoretical level, because I cannot know today what I would have done at the time.…"
See: Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 37.
[62] In addition, Lauterwein notes that Kiefer listened to many of the speeches made by Goebbels, Hitler, and the Allies, see: ibid., p. 34.

these taboos, which constituted important elements in building this aesthetic that had served the terror ideology, out of a desire to understand its spectacular power.

Near the very beginning of Kiefer's journey, in 1967, the German psychoanalyst couple Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich published their scandalous book in Germany which dealt with German society's inability to mourn (Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern). The Mitscherlichs had already then characterized the German involvement with the abstract style in painting as a significant component of the German society's inability to mourn and deal with the taboos that were a result of an unwillingness to explore and scrutinize past events. In their view, the German society was in a posttraumatic state which manifested itself as social amnesia and that the abstract style became an important visual expression of it.[63] But these authors did not find the Holocaust to be the main reason for Germans' inability to cope with the past, but rather the society's difficulty in thinking that Hitler, who was their main object of admiration, had ultimately "fallen so tragically".[64]

Lauterwein, in her book, highlights another significant source for the title of Kiefer's series – this time in the German language. The term "Besetzung" (cathexis), meaning: "occupation" in German, is taken from Freudian psychoanalysis and refers to the necessary investment in libidinous energy required for the patient to deal with loss.[65] Thus, in effect, by using Hitler as a metaphor – with the uniform, the haircut and the salute, Kiefer allows the patient, i.e. German society, to divert its energy to the object of its passion: not for the purpose of redemption but rather for the initial recognition of loss.[66]

As part of Nazi ideology, the majority of the Third Reich's events and festivities were performances on a vast scale that relied upon the power of the spectacle. In its Nazi incarnation, art-under-the-Reich was also supposed to rely upon those same principles. It was considered a tool to express morality for the "pure" German society and not just a decorative means or an individual voice. As such, aesthetic symbols and expressions harbored mass-psychological effects.[67] Therefore, the emphasis on

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[63] Barron, "Blurred Boundaries", p. 17.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 32.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Taylor and van der Will, "Aesthetics and National Socialism", in Taylor and van der Will, *The Nazification of Art: Art*, pp. 2-4.

fascination in *Occupation* also lays the blame on the German society itself, and was seen as contrary to the self-understanding of German society as a source for the "high culture" of poetry and literature – as it was branded before, during Romanticism and the Weimar Republic.

Yet, long before Kiefer, Bachmann began to deal with the power of fascination. On 5 April 1938, when she was only twelve years old, she was admitted to the hospital of her hometown, Klagenfurt, with a case of diphtheria. The very same day, following the entry of Nazi forces into Klagenfurt, Hitler spoke from the balcony of the city's Sandwirt Hotel. This event became one of the initial traumatic memories of her childhood and a crucial turning point in the shaping of her later artistic career, especially her prose, and specifically the *Todesarten* trilogy.[68]

This traumatic childhood experience was not based [or at least not exclusively] on atrocities and the catastrophe but rather on the nature of the shouting, singing, and marching spectacles from the side of the Austrian audience, as she later recounted:[69]

> There was one particular moment that destroyed my childhood. When Hitler's troops marched into Klagenfurt. It was something so awful that my memory begins with this day: because of a premature suffering, such as I would never again experience so strongly.… But this monstrous brutality that was felt, this shouting, singing and marching, that advent of my first mortal terror.[70]

Unlike the situation in the German art scene, the critical approach to guilt had already begun to develop in the early 1950s in the Austrian art scene.[71] However, Bachmann distinguishes herself from the rest of the members of "Gruppe 47" in how she shatters the image of the military hero, subverts the Austrian self-image, and reveals through her works the collaboration of the "parents' generation" and their fascination with the Nazi aesthetics. Hence she undermined the "myth of the German (Austrian) Anschluss" whereby Austrians typically see themselves as the "First Victims of the Third Reich" with the Germans' entry to Austria.[72] Thus, her traumatic childhood

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[68] Kirstin A. Krick, "Ingeborg Bachmann's Death Styles: A Narrative Historiography of Fascism and the Holocaust", in Brokoph-Mauch, *Thunder Rumbling at My Heels*, p. 106.

[69] Later documents clearly prove that thousands of Carinthian Nazis also greeted the arrival of German troops. See previous footnote.

[70] Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories*, pp. 100-101.

[71] Ibid., p. 102.

[72] Bachmann did so directly, in a manner that was almost never done in Austria until the dramatic emergence of the Kurt Waldheim Affair (which exposed his Nazi past) in the 1980s.

memory already manifested itself in the short-story collection *The Thirtieth Year* (*Das dreißigste Jahr*), which was first published in 1961 and was the turning point where Bachmann shifted from poetry to prose.

The story "Youth in Austrian Town" from this collection deals with the process of growing up in a small Austrian town. In the story the children in the town immediately begin to sense the impending danger, but the feeling intensifies when the adults march in line in the streets as they raise their voices, sing, and wave flags – an event that takes place in the story and ultimately renders the children mute.[73] Bachmann ends the story with the confession of the first-person spokeswoman, who admits that she was among the group of children.[74] This confessional moment blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality and between the character speaking in the text and the reading of the work as an autobiography. Bachmann thus not only adduces the Austrian culpability for Jewish victimization (or the Romany for that matter) but the Austrian fascination with the Nazi aesthetics and its role in exciting the crowd and transforming it into a collaborator.

Similarly to Kiefer, Bachmann creates a broader definition of victims and aggressors which cannot be separated from the Cold War context, in which the image of the killer-character is always hovering over the work. In Bachmann's work the killer is always walking about usually in the form of the man or the father-figure. Bachmann, who spent her childhood in Austria during the war, was the daughter of an educator who in 1932 joined the Nazi Party. However, as emphasized by Kirstin A. Krick, the character of the murderer is not just Bachmann's biological father but rather the murdering father-figure as "the-ever-present-father-figure".[75] Bachmann herself claimed that the father-character always represents the same murderer, simply in a different guise each time.[76] This suggests that the father-figure serves as a representation for some sort of symbolic father. Reading her works within the context of the space, the historical period and the uncanny element of the homeland, lead to the conclusion that the symbolic father represents the social order. In that case, who is the murder victim?

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73 Bachmann, "Youth in Austrian Town", in *The Thirtieth Year* (In Hebrew), pp. 28-29.
74 Ibid., p. 37.
75 Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories*, p. 97.
76 Ibid.

Similar to the perception of the literary space as an ambivalent place, she continues in the same direction: the murder victim and the murderer are strongly dependent on one another. Furthermore, the biggest loser from the murder is actually the murderer himself. She referred to the German-speaking Austrian society, specifically during the Cold War that symbolized a period of so-called peace, as a battlefield within which people are murdered all the time, not just in the physical sense. Analyzing the works in light of her statements such as "...war always exists. There is always violence here. It is external war"[77] and of her belief that the writer cannot create in a vacuum and a void space,[78] enables a deeper examination of the dimension of violence in the works. This aspect is always evident, and the doubt whether Bachmann's figures are ultimately murdered or choose to end their lives remains mostly dimmed. But even those who choose to end their own live, are in great distress as they were pushed toward that "solution". This theme stands out particularly in all three works in *Todesarten Projekt*. At the end of a long journey, Franza slams her head forcefully against the pyramid and thus she eventually finds her dead, and the character of the I-speaker in *Malina* ends her life through the crack in the wall – an event which undoubtedly signifies death in the most abstract sense of the word.

In this manner, Bachmann presents the perception that the murderer represents the boundaries of society and the repressive element within it, which consists of the social order of norms, conventions, and language, but essentially history, art, memory and myth are full of potential murderers as well. These are always projecting on the present of the Cold War, which continues to carry echoes from the past. All of them are essentially responsible for the crafting of identity, having pushed parts of identity into the category of the "Other". The murdering father has many "faces" in the works: he may be the representation of the parents' generation, who took part in the war and were fascinated by the aesthetics of fascism; but it could also be the "zero hour" that was imposed by the Allies in the exact same manner; or it could be the representation of a patriarchal hegemony which features prominently with Fanny Goldmann and in Franza; just as the murdering father figure can be used as a representation of Hitler, who was

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[77] Ibid. p. 14.
[78] Bachmann: "History is essential for a writer. One cannot write one does not see the entire socio-historical relation that has led to our present time".
See: ibid., p. 103.

originally born in Austria and serves as the spiritual father of Austrian society, or, of course, of Bachmann's own biological father.

Kiefer's biological father was also an educator who supported the Nazi regime, but in the same manner as Bachmann, Kiefer's murderer was not only his father or his generation. His multiple murderers are similar to those depicted by Bachmann, since Kiefer also came out against the parents' generation and the amnesia which was a significant part of German society in those years, while challenging both the image of Hitler as a spiritual father as well as the fascination with fascist aesthetics.

In this exact manner, Kiefer discovers his uniqueness in the West German art scene: not only regarding the collective sense of guilt or the attitude toward the past but also in examining the power of its aesthetics. No longer interested in mediation, he sets out on a personal investigation in *Occupations*. In a period in which the only permissible reference to art-under-the-Third-Reich is that which was assigned by the Nazi regime, Kiefer rehabilitates it. In this manner, he not only forces the adult German viewer to confront the shame, but also compels the second-generation viewer to suddenly deal with the question of "Am I a fascist?" for the first time – meaning: there is already the **potential** of being a collaborator.[79]

Unlike Bachmann, however, Kiefer goes one step further. He does not settle for a mere presentation or cultural criticism of the aesthetics that served the ideology but rather ridicules it with irony, parody and satire. In reality, there is no fascination in Kiefer's photographs. To bring this home, Kiefer makes a latter-day use of all those exact elements, symbols, and styles cultivated by the Nazis. At a time when performance art is blossoming in the West, he makes his own performative action: using the same iconography and iconology which served the Third Reich less than three decades before his series, while using a figurative documentary photography which was also associated with the GDR – Kiefer consistently divests this iconography and iconology of the aura they still had during the late 1960s. Thus, in this series he begins

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[79] As Kiefer said:

> I wanted to ask myself the question: Am I a fascist? It's very important, and one cannot give a swift answer. The authority, the spirit of competition, the feeling of superiority…these are aspects of me just as they are of each and every one of us. One must choose the right path. To say that I am one thing or another is too simple. I wanted to depict the experience before the response.

Quoted in Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 37.

to deconstruct and reshape a visual language which will become an important element in understanding his later work and his artistic relation with Bachmann.

Moreover, Kiefer undermines the cult and myth of the leader as an idea and as a metaphor for Hitler simultaneously. Lauterwein emphasizes Kiefer's sloppy appearance, with his curly hair and loose-hanging uniform. He is alone in a contemporary setting without adoring crowds, with no forest of flags and torches – just "one little Nazi", ridiculously small.[80] At first, most of the photographs give a sense of symmetry when he stands alone near the central axis of the picture. A second glance reveals, however, that Kiefer conveys a satirical dimension with his inaccuracy; he is mostly just near the center or bending his body toward one side. In addition, nothing in the photos points to the "genius" of Hitler or the power of the Third Reich, and despite the official pose, the salute and the uniform, the photos offer no documentation of formality.

The repeated use of irony in Kiefer's artworks is deliberate and often relies on the observer's prior knowledge. Through this mean of expression, he produces a dissonance between the way things are perceived by the previous generation and by the younger generation that followed it. He thus emphasizes the intergenerational gap, which opened between the "children's generation" – those who were born after the war – and the "parents' generation" – those who took an active part in the Nazi regime. The use of irony in Kiefer's artworks sharpens the criticism: the inability to understand how German citizens could have collaborated with that regime. But by ridiculing and criticizing Germany for becoming so enchanted and captivated by Hitler and the Nazi ideology, Kiefer protests any enchantment with fascist ideology of whatever form and any possible admiration for the image of the leader – whether it is the leader of the former Reich, the GDR's artistic dictates or the Western Allies' dictates who dominated in West Germany.

In many works of *Occupations*, Kiefer also hints at the aesthetics of the spectacle.[81] Albert Speer, whose name has practically become synonymous with Nazi architecture, often spoke in praise of ruins and expressed his fascination with their aesthetics and power, as the ruins could attest to the Nazi's immortality and it's aesthetic.[82] That

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[80] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[81] Such as one in which he photographed himself against the background of the Coliseum in Rome.
[82] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 151.

perception was also very popular in the Romantic period, which was loved by Hitler himself and was promoted by the Reich. Bachmann as well relates to the power of ruins, but she does it in an archaic sense of a world that no longer exists. A notable instance can be found in the journey of the protagonist Franza, in the fragment *The Book of Franza*, to the famous pyramids of Giza in Egypt and to the tombs of mummies, where she eventually dies when she slams her head repeatedly against the wall.[83]

Thus Franza, as a poetic figure, chooses deliberately to die amid ruins. These places that Franza visits in Egypt can be seen as attributes to the Wonders of the World and simultaneously as an evidence for an empire that did not survive. In this manner the pyramids of Giza in Egypt and to the tombs of mummies, the ruins, are also signifying the destructive power of this spectacle. But the use of ruins can also signify the need to deconstruct the poetic or literary text.

Hence, these multiple murderers lead to the questions of the victims: did art itself become the victim of those years, or was it the victim? And: can these young members of the second generation, Like Bachmann (in some ways) and Kiefer himself, who are supposedly blameless, be victims as well? Thus, both Bachmann and Kiefer create an ambivalent space that raises more questions than answers in order to deconstruct identity and the question of the victim, while not dismissing the "real" victims of the war at all but presenting a complex picture, full of contradictions and ambivalence.

The image of the victim in Kiefer's and Bachmann's works is dual and multilayered, but an important gap is apparent between their different starting points. While there is often a sense that Bachmann utilizes the image of the feminine victim in a way that encourages reading him (or her) through the gender aspect, Kiefer challenges the victim concept by his use of irony. This is the same irony that emerges from Kiefer's *Occupation* series, and which adds an element of ridicule to his social criticism. Thus Kiefer criticizes and challenges the binary division and offers a gray area within which there is room for different kinds of victims and murderers. While he often uses the specific terminology of the war, he searches for the source which is responsible for fascism everywhere. That leads him to investigate not only the object of representation

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The revival of ruins was a very popular trend in the 18th and 19th centuries, and one can even find evidence of it in Sans-Souci Palace (Schloss Sanssouci), the summer palace that was built for Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, in Potsdam, Germany.

[83] Bachmann, *Book of Franza*, pp. 137-142.

but also the artistic style and language which construct the post-war German artist as I will demonstrate in the following section.

However, as I have tried to demonstrate in this section, dealing with the power of aesthetics is a moral hazard undertaken by both Bachmann and Kiefer when it comes to the general public's reception of their work. Through the use of Nazi themes, they both attempt to expand the perspective on collective guilt and even risk crossing the lines: by reviving these places that symbolized the glory of a former empire, weather it is the Third Reich or the Egyptian Empire, both creators present the seductive power of the ruins that continues to echo in their own present, meaning: the phantom pain that is still part of the youngsters' present of their time. And even though this move can be interpreted as a look towards the past, it is also a deep look in to Bachmann and Kiefer's present as part of the reality during the Cold War.

Both artists examine in their works how fascist ideology is conveyed not only through verbal content but through the aesthetic dimension as well, aiming to shift the discourse to the responsibility of the individual within the collective and the role of art in a fascist regime. Kiefer himself stated that "Ruins are wonderful because they are the beginning of something new".[84] Whether Kiefer is here ironically criticizing the fascination from the aesthetic (as I personally assume) or implying the need for deconstruction, it is important once again to recall the political context regarding this quote: during the Cold War, many swaths of German territory were bombed and the devastation was still present almost everywhere in the streets during his adolescence – making it difficult to ignore Kiefer's ironic tone. That is the most likely reason that Kiefer does not present the fascist aesthetics as heroic, as he was criticized for doing at the time; instead – he challenges this aesthetic by using it as the Zeitgeist of the Cold War to examine its psychological-aesthetic impact and strip it of its power as a post-war German artist.

2.4. Occupying the Identity

The refusal of many artists to deal with questions of identity of the "post-war-German-artist" and their turn to various trends of abstraction is understandable given the abuse

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[84] This is just one example among many declarations; see, e.g., from an interview, see: Sue Hubbard, "Margarete (1981) by Anselm Kiefer (Saatchi Collection)",*The Independent*, October 24, 2008 (from the official Gagosian Gallery homepage):
http://gagosian.cdn.crvncms.com/__data/0174cfc6c93e3e5891dda2bd3e546acb.pdf (04/09/2013).

the artistic field with its images, as well as many artists themselves, suffered under the Third Reich – but also afterward under the Allies' auspices, as I pointed out in the previous sections. Bachmann and Kiefer's uniqueness, compared to other artists who persisted in confronting questions of identity, lies in their attitude toward the artist-self. In addition to the individual attributes and private memories of each of these two artists – their different genders, ages, homelands and so on – the artist's self also consists of different layers of social/cultural identity. It is not only that Bachmann and Kiefer belong to the haunted yet "guiltless" second generation and to the German culture and tradition; they also are post-war artists, with everything that implies: on the one hand is the trauma and the amnesia concerning the Nazi past and the war and on the other is the very fragile status quo of the Cold War that took place from 1945 to 1989 (lasting well after Bachmann's death in 1973).

Both artists assign importance to the homeland, its language and culture in the process of constructing and shaping one's perception of identity. As such, working not long after the end of the Second World War while the notion of the "zero hour" was still widespread, they present questions of a confused German-speaking generation. Unwilling to ignore both the physical and the symbolic terror that took place on their (different) homelands' soil, Bachmann and Kiefer assigned great importance also to the topographical setting. In the artistic careers of both, this soil came to represent the homeland and the tension it created between the individual person and the place as an evocative space of a social identity. Therefore, while constantly emphasizing the tension and ambivalence of historical events, both artists went on a fairly similar topographic journey, tracing the different types of terror that shape the contemporary German identity in their works.[85] The use Kiefer makes of his own body when he chronicles himself throughout Europe, a theme that will also reappear in his later work, he creates a complex relationship that characterizes Bachmann's work as well. While the characters of Bachmann's stories travel to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel (in *Todesarten*), Italy (in "The Thirteenth Year"), England and France (in "Three Paths to the Lake"), just as in Kiefer's Occupations – they are always haunted by their homeland.

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[85] Bachmann herself traveled extensively across Europe during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, including visits to France, Switzerland, and Italy. During the last years of her life, she also took a trip to mainland Asia.

Carrying one's homeland or characteristics identified with it everywhere one goes opens up the questions of whether or not the identity of the self is dependent on the homeland as a geographical space, and whether the land on which the atrocities occurred is merely a physical land. These questions lead to the understanding that by inserting the space of the homeland or echoes of it even when Bachmann's characters or Kiefer himself as visual images are going out on a journey far away from the homeland – both of them explore the experience of the modern immigrant – one who is torn from the homeland not only in a physical sense but on a symbolic level as well.

The individual who leaves voluntarily does so in the same manner but is also torn or expelled from the German-speaking language and culture in light of her last "betrayal", as many horrors were just recently executed using this same language – both the verbal and the symbolic representation of the German culture (and both in Germany and in Austria). Hence, even though they feel themselves as belonging to a nation – being disappointed with their homeland and its culture, these two artists created works that range along an axis: between hatred and love, desire and criticism, as evident in their relation to home and traditions, their *Heimat*. But, on this axis also lays the identification they felt with their (different) homeland as Bachmann's and Kiefer's art also challenges the possibility of remembering on the one hand, and the nostalgia and longing for what was lost, the naiveté and ability to sustain an identity without guilt on the other: *Das Heimweh*. This connection between past and present is expressed through topography.

This use both creators make of the topography constitutes an important physical component which shapes the perception of time. Using the space, Kiefer offers in his works a perception of time that deviates from the linear perception and is quite reminiscent of the perception displayed by Bachmann. Both of them suggest an alternate time dimension that is spiral, moving in parallel between past-present-future and between memory, representation and commemoration, without any contradiction of the historical linear development. The multiplicity of the paradoxical identity and the ambivalence in time and space is always reinforced by the topography, which creates the feeling of the Freudian uncanny, *Die unheimlich*, for the viewer.

Freud emphasizes that in the German language the Heimlich represents the domestic and familial, the familiar and comfortable, or in this case, the homeland. But it is not a definitive word since it always harbors within it the contrast, the hidden. By way of

negation, in using the prefix *un*, Freud adds the threatening and disconcerting dimension of what was supposed to be kept secret but was discovered, so that the familiar suddenly becomes strange.[86] He refers to the *unheimlich* as the gateway back to the individual's old homeland/Heimat, where everyone spent time once.[87] This ambivalent assumption appears throughout the works of Bachmann and Kiefer as they try to "(re)occupy" their identities.

The war catastrophe together with the (contemporary) suppression of identity and the various attempts to confront it form the main cause for turning the homeland into a stranger and are expressed through the motif of duality, a split, broken identity, the replacement of self − always in relation to the topographical space. The unbearable connection between the desired and the horrible, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the self and the Other is embodied for both artist and poet in the figure of the homeland.

In light of the historical events, Kiefer "uses" the war as a specific event that cannot be ignored along the timeline of German history, but also as a social prism through which one can attempt to challenge taboos that constitute (post-war) identity. By using the threatening dimensions of space, he carefully creates the tension between the specific and the universal and between the past and the contemporary reality. This tension is aimed at showing that the postwar crimes, i.e.: during the Cold War, were no less horrific than the war crimes (but of course, in a different manner). This not only means that German society had failed to confront its fascist past but also that it hid behind a "memory-free", vitiated history while avoiding any attempts to assemble a "new" post-war identity, which must have a connection also to its past and tradition. Hence, the "Western Allies' Zero Hour" is just a myth that prevents any attempt to deal properly with the trauma and cannot really occur in reality. Therefore, by confronting and criticizing not only the past events but also the supposedly peaceful present, both Bachmann and Kiefer actually criticize not only Germany but also the Western establishment and its social order.

Bachmann emphasized this concept many times, saying: "It is such a big mistake to believe that one is only murdered in a war or in a concentration camp − one is murdered in the middle of freedom."[88] She was careful to describe the overall concrete space in

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[86] Itzhak Benyamini, ed., *Sigmund Freud – Das Unheimlich* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012).
[87] Ibid., p. 77.
[88] Krick-Aigner, "Ingeborg Bachmann's Death Styles", p. 111.

her works, sometimes even by naming the streets where the stories take place.[89] Already in early works of prose, such as "The Thirtieth Year", there is an example of a topographic journey. The literary character wakes up one day in his thirties and decides to reexamine his life. This decision leads to a quest for his identity across Europe. However, when the protagonist immigrates to Rome, he repeatedly encounters people and events from his past and quickly realizes that he cannot actually get away from the homeland. At journey's end he decides to return to the Austrian homeland after all, but even there he can no longer find the sense of "home" which he craves so much. In doing so, Bachmann not only reflects the need/fact that he must carry his homeland with him, but also that the protagonist's feeling that the home, as we knew it, no longer exists.[90]

This theme appears in *Occupation*, almost in parallel. When Kiefer chooses to give his salute in Rome, in Switzerland, or in France, he continues to carry the "unheimlich homeland" with him as he brings with him the vestiges of its Nazi past and the horrific memories. This performed and documented action pushes the limits and threatens the (German-speaking) viewers of his works.

As part of the journey of the conquering of identity, the need to forget the national identity is of great importance. In the context of German art, psychoanalyst Gottfried Fischer uses the term "psychotraumatology" to refer to a dialogue or discourse on a psychic trauma, regarding the German art.[91] Fischer notes that amnesia, repression and dissociation are important starting points for understanding the mental process that occurred after Germans' exposure to war. For many people, the trauma of war fostered fractured notions of self and world that not even the second generation is guiltless of, so that the amnesic memories also have effects.[92] Since Kiefer was not really part of the Nazi past, when he decides to photograph himself he does not represent himself alone but rather "a multi-self". This introduces into the artwork three dimensions of time: (1) the haunted past (2) the contemporary present (3) the eternal image. Is Kiefer himself in the work, or just a symbol of the past? does he thereby represent himself, or perhaps the image of Hitler as an object of desire for German society? is he perhaps

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Bachmann herself repeatedly said: "…war always exists. There is always violence here. It is external war", quoted in Krick-Aigner, *Ingeborg Bachmann's Telling Stories*, p. 114.

[89] This is a recurrent theme in works such as "Youth in an Austrian Town", *Malina*, "Requiem for Fanny Goldmann", and others.

[90] Bachmann, "The Thirtieth Year", in *The Thirtieth Year* (In Hebrew).

[91] Based on the work of Freud and the psychoanalyst Pierre Janet.

[92] Fischer, "Psychotraumatology, Art and History [Psychotraumatologie, Kunst und Geschichte]", in Fischer, *Unfinished Past*, pp. 12-23.

challenging an older social perception in the form of the genius-messiah-shaman-Romanticist artist, which was reinforced by Hitler but was in fact deeply rooted in German culture?

In this context, the researcher Eckhart Gillen notes that the perception whereby German artists must fight for their "inner freedom" against foreign powers is deeply rooted in German culture.[93] He emphasizes that already in earlier times, before the War, German artists had understood themselves as more spiritual than their neighbors. These ideas were reinforced under the Nazi regime, especially through the glorification of the Gothic and Romantic periods.[94] Hitler himself was an artist who used to draw mostly in the historicist-classic and realistic style, but did not garner popularity in the art scene of his time. Gillen points out that Hitler understood himself as "artist-tyrant", summoned by Nietzsche as the "avatar" of the "Dictatorship of Genius" longed for by Richard Wagner.[95] Therefore, one can understand the image of Kiefer standing and saluting as relating to Hitler the ruler and the artist, while simultaneously serving as a replica of the character of the German artist and his search.

Against this backdrop, however, it is possible to read the message which passes through the topography at another level: in work **no. 3** Kiefer stands while contemplating the sea in a manner mimicking the painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) by Caspar David Friedrich. Friedrich, who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, was a German artist and a Romanticist, known for his paintings of nature scenes and ruins that display the insignificance of man against the power of God. Romanticist artists and Friedrich in particular were highly favored by Hitler, who recognized a decadent element in modern culture as he embraced nationalism and a return to the nation's nature and landscapes. In an act of appropriating "ghosts of the past" for the benefit of the present, Kiefer ridicules yet again the image of the reclusive Romantic artist,[96] as if trying to say that there is no longer a place in the current political-social situation of the Cold War for such an image of an artist who exists alone in nature, detached from the social conditions. Mark Rosenthal suggested that Kiefer

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[93] In his article, Gillen contends that the Germans were never able to achieve a true peace because of their nationalism and recourse to the mythical roots of their history. He illustrates his point by citing the Peasants' War in 1525, the uprising against Napoleon in 1813, and the revolutions of 1848 and 1918. See: Gillen, "Tabula Rasa and Inwardness", p. 17.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, pp. 14-15.

even allegedly tried to challenge the authority of nature.[97] But since the series also includes photographs of urban landscapes as well, one can see the landscape in the background as yet another expression of the ambivalent tension as expressed via the topography.

The concept whereby the identity of the artist is that of a genius or a type of lone savior serves as an intergenerational connecting link from Wagner through Hitler and up to Beuys, who was one of the most important contemporary artists in the years during which Kiefer had just begun his artistic career. He was famous for working with the concepts of the artist and art as sublime and by presenting himself as the shaman who can heal the wounded German society with his alchemy. Beuys is often seen as having won reception for German artists in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s and was one of the founders of the experimental Fluxus movement, achieving fame during his own lifetime. Kiefer himself attended his lectures in Düsseldorf in 1970 and continued to visit him in his studio until 1972.[98]

In his search for identity, Beuys made various attempts to challenge the social taboos of those years, especially through performance art and conceptual art. But it is doubtful whether Kiefer uses the artistic space just to pay homage to an artist he admired or whether he is simultaneously criticizing the concepts, which often characterized Beuy's work. Even if Kiefer was influenced by Beuys, when it came to the concept of the artist as a "witness" and an agent of history, Kiefer may have disagreed with his understanding of the artist's role. If so, it is possible to claim that Kiefer saw the beuysian understanding of the artist as savior and redeemer as a direct continuation of the myth of the "German artist" and a theological metaphor, but nothing more. If Beuys was interested in changing the political scene, Kiefer was interested in changing himself.[99] Therefore, while he often uses the "beuysian language", he mostly

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[97] Ibid.
[98] See reference no. 52.
[99] In addition, unlike Kiefer who was "guiltless" as he was born only in 1945, Beuys's case is much more complex. Beuys, who was born in 1921, was a young man during the war years. Around 1938 he took part in the Hitler Youth movement, and in 1940 he had already joined the Luftwaffe. In 1941, at the height of the war, he was even promoted to the position of fighter-bomber pilot. Then, he was apparently captured by the Russians.
According to Beuys, when he fell into enemy hands he was saved by nomadic Tatar tribesmen who wrapped his wounded body in animal fat and a bandage, feeding and caring for him until he had a mystical experience and experienced an illumination three days later. It is no coincidence that this myth is reminiscent of Christ's story of redemption and resurrection after the deposition from the cross, and it became an important component of the way Beuys's work is often viewed since he understood himself as a kind of a shaman healer for German society as a whole.

discharges and recharges it.[100] Kiefer refuses to fall into the theological aspect that views art as redemptive, yet just as we see in the protagonist's journey in Bachmann's "The Thirtieth Year", he remains ambivalent about it. In both cases redemption is wrapped up with irony. The role of art, according to both Bachmann and Kiefer, is to challenge stable identity-construct myths in order to deconstruct them.

Using the irony, Kiefer thereby transforms the heroic figure into the anti-hero and challenges the German viewer to confront fascination, which is now stripped of its halo. Thus, in the criticism and in the attempt to deconstruct the myth of the "German artist" who is on a mission of redemption, the viewer can even find a satirical challenge to the beuysian perception.[101]

The description of the character of the artist that challenges the artist as a savior-shaman also appears in Bachmann's work, since many of her heroes are writers just like her. Gradually and indirectly readers discover that the heroine behind the I-speaker (*ich*) in *Malina* is a writer, yet she is alone in her world and suffers from depression and a split self-image until the end of the novel, where she disappears through a hole in the wall without any redemption.[102] The death, loneliness, expulsion, or depression all experienced by the non-messianic artist within the physical space can be traced in the heroine Elizabeth in "Three Paths to the Lake" as well. Elizabeth works as a journalist-writer, but her loneliness accompanies her when she returns for a visit to the city of her childhood. She herself does not believe in her writing skills and it is precisely there, in the place that is supposed to signify "home", that the heroine encounters a sense of disorientation in the topographical space as she repeatedly tries to remember the right way to reach the lake.

The two artists, Bachmann and Kiefer, do not offer a coherent alternative post-war-identity and do not, as artists, serve as an external Other for their readers/viewers on the road to recovery from the catastrophe. Instead, they indicate the crisis experienced

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After the war, Beuys took care to conceal his Nazi past while reducing it to the specific case of falling captive and coming back to life. This story, his own resurrection, made him one of the most controversial myths in the art world.

[100] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 46.

[101] Both Lauterwein and Rosenthal refer in their books to several works from the series of Kiefer's in which he ridiculed the myth so there is doubt that he is not making a tribute to but criticizing the works of Beuys.

[102] During the course of the novel, *Ivan*, the male figure, gradually discovers notes with the names of the works or fragments which Bachmann herself writes in the present and future, Fraulin Jelinek comes to the home of I to type out for her a professional correspondence, and an interviewer from the magazine comes to interview her for a literary magazine.

by society by means of through space, without offering a utopian redemption. Fischer stresses that an artist's ability to express a coherent narrative and serve as an empathetic witness are early signs of recovery from the trauma.[103] But these two artists refuse to provide a supportive space for German society; instead they provide one which gazes steadily at the trauma and attempts to challenge it, so that they themselves are still patients, meaning: in their works they attempt to shatter and make a cliché of the myth of the German artist as an individual figure who fights the evils of the modern decadent society as an outsider relying on the "uniqueness" of the Aryan artist.

In conclusion, as I have attempted to demonstrate in each subsection, the post-1945 German art scene underwent an instrumentalism of the memory and a crisis on the question of representation, narrative and identity. If we add to this the taboos that prevailed during those years, the dogmas and social norms fostered by the Allies and their "zero hour", the censorship restrictions imposed by the Soviet regime in the East, and the amnesia and silence that resulted from the lack of an intergenerational dialogue – the picture that emerges is of an art scene that was haunted and bereft of images. The social situation, in light of historical events, gave rise to a complex discussion of "Representationalism", which gradually gained momentum in Germany and especially intensified during the middle of the Cold War.

In fact, for both Bachmann and Kiefer art serves as a neutral space within which they can return again and again, almost compulsively, to each of their homelands. But this homeland is not only a specific swath of land but also an inner place that one takes with one no matter where one goes. They both make use of this concept to confront the same problems and questions of past and present on various levels. And while the silence emerging from the inability to speak of the traumatic experience and the destruction of the language is manifested in Bachman's work, the "visual silence" is felt in Kiefer's. Thus, in the gap that formed between that which cannot be represented and that which can, within the ambivalent space of their work, these artists decided to tear down the tradition.

They sought new, alternative ways to represent the crisis itself that eventually led to the silence, a form of expression that will reflect upon their own failures as German artist who belong to the "perpetrators' sides", so that their work not continue the pre-

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[103] Fischer, "Psychotraumatology", p. 19.

war cultural traditions as well as those post-war trends/traditions. Instead, they wished to express a search specifically for the context which imbues the image with meaning and deliberately turn against it.

3. An Independent Artist: Deconstruction in Painting

Bachmann, who already won recognition in German-speaking countries in the 1950s, encountered a chillier critical reception in the 1960s with her transition from poetry to prose. But she later won the sympathy of the audience, if not of the critics. Most of her work, however, was not widely known to English-speaking audiences. As suggested by John Taylor, the lack of recognition among American audiences can be not due to any lack of translations of her works into English but because the translations fail to convey the wealth of images, double meanings and puns.[104] And it is here exactly that Kiefer is different: the use of fascist imagery in a visual format evoked a storm of emotions and vigorous opposition from the German audience, even though Kiefer himself may well have anticipated this criticism from the start. Throughout his extensive career, from *Occupations* until today, challenging taboos and the use of fascist trappings would continue to be a central component of his art. But Kiefer has always maintained a critical, ironic dimension that has sometimes been misunderstood. As this section shows, Kiefer continues to make use of topography to explore questions that engaged him as a German artist in the postwar years and during the Cold War. In the visual space, nature represents the landscape of the German homeland; at the same time, however, it is the landscape of "nowhere" and of "everywhere". In the post-Auschwitz period, which had renounced traditional Romantic representation, Kiefer sought artistic alternatives. Neither he nor Bachmann ever stopped searching for a sober alternative that counters, challenges and interweaves images of collective memory, history and myth. Despite the failure to achieve a utopian solution, they make ambivalence a central theme of their works. The canvas and the blank page as a neutral space enable the presentation of paradoxes and contradictions, whose rudiments could be found in the *Occupations* series and in Kiefer's initial work with the paint medium in the early 1970s when he was making his transition from young art student to "German artist".

While continuing to give an important role to topography and the goals already set in *Occupations*, during the years that followed his graduation, Kiefer began to paint many landscapes of ruined fields or snowy scenes. What all of these landscape paintings have in common is some sort of landscape prototype: this is a landscape that is not idealistic, that is almost desolate and empty or meager of images, divided by a

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[104] John Taylor, "Ingeborg Bachmann: Complex and Compelling", *Poetry Today* (*Antioch Review*, November 17, 2008), (pp. 758-765), p. 761.

horizontal vector between sky and earth. Few of the paintings include a vertical line that connects the "above" and "below" as well. In addition, as Gudron Inboden notes, already back in the 1980s any natural phenomenon that could possibly explain what was happening on a rational level is absent from the pieces.[105] Since the occurrences cannot be explained logically, the high line of the horizon which separates the sky from the earth creates a rift between them so that nothing is actually happening in the space. The viewer does not receive some organized narrative through the landscape piece, but more a sense of a claustrophobic and threatening situation, often in a huge format.

Two examples of early works from the beginning of the 1970s that feature such landscapes are *Malen=Verbrennen* (*Painting=Burning*) (1974) **(no. 4)** and *Malen* (*To Paint*) (1974) **(no. 5)**. These works will serve throughout this section as case studies for demonstrating the development of the previous themes that Kiefer often presents in his paintings. I have decided to examine these two paintings mainly because they were both created after graduation in a different medium and style than the photos taken in *Occupations*. As such they manifested Kiefer's transformation from an art student, as in *Occupations*, to an independent artist. In addition, I believe that understanding Kiefer's initial landscape can explain his later decision to dedicate artworks to Bachmann which contain landscapes.

The division using the high vector line of the horizon between earth and sky, the low vantage point of the viewer, and the huge size of the pieces together – create an intimidating sense of the viewer being swallowed up by the artwork. This feeling is further enhanced by the image of the burned field. While the soil occupies most of the canvas' surface, the sky is nearly pushed out of the canvas so that the sense of the sublime or the eternal sky which characterized the German Romantic landscape-painting tradition is not felt.[106] The destruction in the work heightens the apocalyptic touch so that, along with the elevated vector of the horizon and the lack of characters, Kiefer conveys the uncanny feeling in the sense of strangeness and alienation.

Using the topography as in *Occupations*, Kiefer levels ironic criticism at the German romantic concept of "blood and soil" ("Blut und Boden"). From these two

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[105] Gudrun Inboden, "Exodus: From Historical Time", in Paul Maenz and Gerd de Vries (eds.), *Anselm Kiefer Mit Einem Essay Von/With Essay by Gudrun Inboden*, Exh. Cat. (Cologne: Galerie Paul Maenz, 1986), p. 5.

[106] If anything, one can actually see the influence of the neo-Impressionist landscape paintings of Vincent van Gogh and particularly his painting Wheatfield with Crows (1890), which was also his last painting.

principles – of the blood, i.e. the *Volk*, and the soil or *die Heimat* – and the relationship between them, the ethnic concept of the German nation, cultivated by the Nazi regime, emerged. The familiar homeland that was supposed to serve as a stable place suddenly becomes unstable and alien. The romantic image of the German nation with its strong bond to the soil is undermined. However, the uncanny feeling and the destruction are not conveyed solely by the contents but through a number of stylistic choices as well.

One such choice is the use Kiefer makes of the monochromatic colors and the gray color. This colorfulness of the landscape paintings is characterized primarily by the *non-color* which takes up most of the surface. On the spectrum between the color black as a non-color and white as a non-color, Kiefer usually chooses the gray shading or ocher. Emptying the colored pigment brings to the piece an ominous, mystical dimension of fog and perpetual danger which hovers over the landscape, and simultaneously allows him to make use of ambivalence as a conceptual theme, as he already did in *Occupations*. In those landscapes, the gray represents doubt and the intermediate domain – the "gray area" between utopian redemption and apocalyptic annihilation or between the conscious and the unconscious. With the assistance of the color gray, Kiefer removes any binary division which is characteristic of the traumatic. Fischer emphasizes that within the therapeutic space, the gray has a very important role to play in the development of sensitivity to the suffering and injuries of the Other, and with its help, the division between the subject and the Other is neutralized.[107] Thus, the burned field is "stuck" between its terminal status as a field that will no longer yield anything organic, and a field whose soil has been redeemed for the purpose of a new beginning. With Kiefer, the power of the conflagration and the fire as an expression of alchemy is no longer conclusive in the beuysian sense of the word, but only as something having potential whose outcome has yet to be conclusively determined.[108]

Second, Kiefer conveys the sense of violence and threat by choosing to present the landscape in an expressionistic manner as is clearly apparent from the rough and brutal brush strokes, the broken lines and sharp angles. However, despite the initial similarities to American Expressionism, this is not the abstraction that was embraced by the Allies: first and foremost because color played an important role in American Expressionism.

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[107] Fischer, "Psychotraumatology", p. 21.
[108] Donald Kuspit, "The Spirit of Gray", *Artnet Online Magazine*, December 2002: http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit12-19-02.asp (07/09/13).
See also: Inboden, "Exodus", p. 8.

There is no doubt that the Expressionist style is an important component of Kiefer's visual language but opposing the concept of zero hour led Kiefer to formulate an artistic language with a hybrid style unique to him, which deconstructs the various styles and trends in that were accepted in the abstract art as it was common during the Cold War period.

But the expressionism was also deeply rooted in German culture. While the National Socialist regime rejected any "isms" of modernism in art, claiming that they were an expression of non-rationalism and were therefore un-German – the German Expressionism of the early 20th century became one of the more controversial movements.[109] Upon the Nazi regime's rise to power, from the summer of 1933 to the spring of 1934, a fruitful discussion was conducted in political circles and in the national press on the suitability of early-20th century German Expressionism to the spirit and ideology of the "new German nationalism".[110] The main issues concerned the problematic nature of the German Expressionist movements of that earlier period: Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter.[111] On the one hand, these movements always emphasized the alienation of modern urban society and its decadent element while espousing a return to nature, concepts which matched the Nazi ideology. On the other hand, working with broken lines, sharp angles, and primitivistic elements, the group members attempted to subvert the principle of *Einheit* (unity) which was so important to the Nazi regime that it was averse to any dissolution of form.[112]

Hitler himself refrained from giving a strong opinion on the subject until 1937-1938, during which the radicalization of the Nazi doctrine was already evident as it outlawed German Expressionism. The inclusion of Expressionist painters in the much-maligned Entartete Kunst exhibition (July 1937) signified the final replacement of their art with the pseudo-classical, heroic, official German style.[113] In the first years after the war, German artists attempted to return to abstraction not only as part of the political program of the Western Allies but also as part of a search for the "national style"

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[109] Christine Fischer-Defoy, "Artists and Art Institutions in Germany 1933-1945", in Taylor and van der Will, *The Nazification of Art*, pp. 91-92.
[110] The main clash was between Rosenberg's approach, who challenged it, and that of Goebbels, who supported it as a criticism of modern society that could serve as a kind of national style. For more on this subject, see Taylor and Van Der Will, "Aesthetics and National Socialism".
[111] As well as individual artists such as the Austrian Oskar Kokoschka.
[112] Dana Arieli-Horowitz, *Romanticism of Steel: Art and Politics in Germany* (Jerusalem: Magnes, The Hebrew University, 1999), p. 17.
[113] Fischer-Defoy, "Artists and Art Institutions", pp. 91-92.

through a return to pre-1933 German art.[114] The lack of conclusiveness regarding the Nazis' acceptance of Expressionism, along with the problems and the ambivalence arising from the imposition of the zero hour practice and the style, was understood as a "German phenomenon" in the European Art History narrative that matched the perceptions of Kiefer, who always took care to express contradictions and ambivalence about national identity, as in his use of gray.

Third, in his landscape paintings Kiefer embraced not only expressionism but the conceptual language as well. He assigns great importance to the names of the works, and in the present case – both names are related to the artist's activities. The verb "malen" (to paint) appears in both works written in the German infinitive tense. The choice to write the obvious and, moreover: to write it in the present tense, intensifies the irony and the ambivalence. Kiefer highlights the blurring of the time between devastation and redemption and ensures that the piece cannot be viewed through a historical context alone in relation to the past. But while in the artwork *Malen=Verbrennen* (**no. 5**) the verb "verbrennen" (to burn) appears in the right-hand third of the canvas also written in red as if to alert and warn the viewer, the verb "malen" creates symbolism: as a theme which characterizes most of Kiefer's landscape paintings, in many cases the verb which directly relates to the artist or to the concept of art is written as a symbolic mediator between two edges or dimensions. In the present cases, the verb written in *Malen=Verbrennen* (**no. 5**) is on the horizon in the "heaven" part, while in *Malen* (**no. 6**) it is in the form of the vertical linking the "above" and "below". Using this conceptual motif, Kiefer indicates that the role of the artist or of art itself is to act as an intermediary tool between two worlds that are eager to meet but unable to do so. Meanwhile, by using the written word on the canvas, he alludes to the act of interpreting the charging of the word and the visual language with meaning.[115]

Finally, Kiefer mixes the conceptual and the abstract together with the figurative when on top of the landscapes in the front-most plane appears the artist's palette. The palette is painted in two dimensions with a fragmented and broken outline upon the three-dimensional landscape. Actually, the palette gradually becomes another recurrent theme in Kiefer's works. Lauterwein believes it is signifying the tension Kiefer creates between: on the one hand – the echoes of the Romantic period, in which the palette was

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[114] Peters and Prügel, "Legacy of Critical Realism", p. 87.
[115] Inboden, "Exodus", p. 8.

considered a symbol of life-giving force and as representing an act of creation, while on the other – the cynical exploitation of art and the rigid laws that later emerged under the Nazi regime.[116] I would also like to add the possibility that the palette can be seen as a testament to Kiefer and Bachmann's shared struggle to represent art and image in the post-Auschwitz / Cold War context: a reference not only to what to remember, but also to how to do so.

Huyssen stresses that one could not expect post-war-art to present a neat and complete narrative but rather only fragments, symptoms, and various attempts to challenge social assumptions that resonate with violence and unacknowledged trauma.[117] In light of this, in a search for the "right" representation, Kiefer created a visual language which mixed the figurative, abstract, conceptual, and later on – even the ready-made style into a new hybrid language.

Bachmann, for her part, presented the same process of dismantling the coherent narrative in her various attempts to find new modes of expression. The recourse to fragments, one-sided phone calls, the world of myth and the legend and dream images, all appears throughout the novel *Malina*, as well as in other works. This stylistic richness challenges the intellect of the reader (or the viewer) and makes it difficult to label these artists as belonging to a single stylistic category or artistic movement.

The question of representation in Bachmann's verbal medium concerns primarily the crisis in post-war representation of the catastrophe, and in her case: the language. Unlike the silence that was a direct result of the lack of communication between the generation which took part in the war and those who had only been children during it or were born afterward, the silence that Bachmann conveys in her works is the silence of default. Its source is the destruction that was deliberately carried out. The German horror and trauma that still haunts her in the present regarding her obligation as a writer to keep creating in the German language, under the auspices of which many crimes were committed, led her to obsessively search within her works for the possibility of overcoming the trauma or finding other modes of expression. The German language as belonging on the one hand to the "German enemy" of the Austrian victims, but simultaneously to Austrians as enemies themselves, represents for her the law of language and culture in the sense of a symbolic order (in the Lacanian aspect): this is

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[116] Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan*, p. 125.
[117] Huyssen, "Figure of Memory", pp. 225-226.

the same symbolic order that is responsible for shaping the norms, dogmas and social structure that the speaking characters are eager to destroy. Or, as emphasized by Ingrid Stipa (who analyzes Bachmann's works using Lacanian concepts): for Bachmann, the I-speaker cannot be reduced under any circumstances to a subject confined to a single context but always represents the voice of humanity".[118]

Perhaps one of the best examples of the stubborn effort to renounce the socio-symbolic order appears in the story "Everything" ("Alles").[119] The story opens with a mood of silence and loneliness in the wake of mourning, and ends that way as well. In between, the male narrator describes his hopes for social change, which he is attempting to realize through his newborn son. As the first member of the new society, the child signifies potential and therefore the father encounters difficulties in naming him. For the father, the act of naming entails charging the verbal symbol with meaning.[120] The difficulty in doing so stems from the lack of imagery and the betrayal of the culture, a betrayal that is expressed, for Bachmann, in the verbal language. The naive hopes the father invests in the newborn become Bachmann's wishful thinking for all of humanity as a society as the father offers an alternative to the symbolic language; he uses the language of nature, which is devoid of rational logic and hence, constitutes the possibility of entering a realm which is rooted in physicality and in natural phenomena.[121]

Just like Kiefer's landscape paintings, the nature language that the father yearns for represents old romantic notions, which have already lost their validity in Bachmann's view. Unlike the dreaming father, she herself is already aware of society's limitations in adhering to the linguistic language; the father, for his part, gradually becomes disenchanted with his false hopes.[122] The son, Fipps, grows up to be a violent child as part of the social norm and will in fact be anything but a possibility for new beginning. The father eventually realizes that he does not have the power to change the world through the Other but only through self-change.[123]

[118] Ingrid Stipa, "Female Subjectivity and the Repression of the Feminine in Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*", in Brokoph-Mauch, *Thunder Rumbling at My Heels*, p. 162.
[119] Bachmann, "Everything" in *The Thirtieth Year* (in Hebrew)
[120] Ibid., p. 92.
[121] Stipa, "Female Subjectivity", pp. 162-163.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Kathleen Thorpe, "Monuments Looking Out upon Utopia: **The Thirtieth Year** by Ingeborg Bachmann – A Reading", in Brokoph-Mauch, *Thunder Rumbling at My Heels,* p. 195.

The failure of the father's hopes implies their inherent problematic nature and the disappointment with the previous generation, which took part in the war. Therefore, Bachmann emphasizes in her works that while continuing with the same language and social behavior, which were responsible for the atrocities, is no longer possible, there is also a duty to keep attempting to deviate from the existing tradition of representation – just as Kiefer attempts to deviate from it and shatter it visually. Through the son, Bachmann also alludes to the myth of the Savior, who fails to fulfill his role as society's redeemer so that salvation is delayed. This reflects both a religion and its theology but also the Allies, who saw their stay in the occupation zones (which were in Austria as well) as if they were on a mission to save Germany from itself. But by using this reference, Bachmann does not offer any concrete solution, just the obligation to keep trying.

Bachmann clings to nature and topography as an alternative, but at the same time she no longer holds onto the romantic hopes, just as Kiefer's landscape paintings are devoid of them. The alchemy fails, but the potential is there, and for that very reason, (I believe that) Kiefer never reaches full abstraction. He does not release the canvas from the image entirely and is always careful to leave the possibility of some basis in reality on it, unlike American Expressionism which attempts to eliminate the image.

The semi-figurative, semi-abstract palette motif appears repeatedly in Kiefer's paintings and symbolizes the naive romantic hopes as well as the disillusionment with them. Hence, the appearance of the artist's tools indicates the difficulty the German artist experienced in representing an image after the war. This ambivalence, between Bachmann's knowledge – that without a new verbal language change will not be possible – and the obligation to continue to create with the same tools – meaning: the German language – is analogous to Kiefer's relationship with the visual language and the palate as its apparatus. Therefore, Bachmann's need to present the silence and the language of nature instead of the verbal one, can be equivalent to Kiefer's need to paint the palette on top of the landscape. This move can be seen as an attempt to express the crises in post-1945 forms of representation and the difficulty to create as a German artist in the post-war present or Cold War. For both artists, the result is a paradoxical situation which compels them to return obsessively to options of representation when the objective is to break through the symbolic order by means of art.

Kiefer's choices of artistic style, which I analyzed above, are also supported by the subject itself. He would continue to develop ambivalence as a theme, using topography as an extension of the ideas and themes he had already presented in *Occupations*. Beyond the alchemical potential inherent in the materials, nature also constitutes for him a reinforcement of the perception of time in space. The cycle of the seasons and the concept of nature, both as the starting point of creation and the endpoint of the Apocalypse, emphasize the spiral-circular concept which conflicts with the linear historical timeline. Hence, the use of nature intensifies the dialectical dimension.

On another, deeper level, nature also serves Kiefer as living testimony, a firsthand eyewitness to the horrors that took place on the soil of the homeland. In the 1970s, the *Spurensicherung* – the promise of evidence to war actions as a concept in art – began to develop among many German artists.[124] Unlike artists such as Raffael Rheinsberg, who began to incorporate real evidences from the battlefield in his works as a kind of scientific facts, Kiefer takes nature as a silent eyewitness. This is the witness who saw the horrors and did not resist but also who saw the actions and remained speechless, who could not really give his testimony, which lives in the present just as he lived in the past. Furthermore, Kiefer would later in his career, especially from the 1980s onward, attach physical materials to his works such as straw, lead, hair and sand. He would continue to develop this method into huge works of art as well, works that would continue to undergo chemical processes of oxidation during their presentation in the gallery/museum space, so that the piece itself would be in a constant state of flux, exposed to the effects of time.

But Bachmann also used nature and topography for the same purpose. The lone tree is the witness for which the laws of the world do not apply and is already described in the prologue of her story "Youth in an Austrian Town".[125] That same tree reappears in the epilogue that ends the story.[126] This tree is an important component of the landscape of the small Austrian town in which events take place. But because it bore witness to the wartime atrocities during the war, and conversely, continues to exist in the present narrative – it becomes a memory trigger for the I-speaker that declares the appropriation

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[124] The term was initially coined as an artistic concept by the art historian Günter Metken in 1977 to describe an artistic phenomenon that had become popular among German artists who incorporated in their works objects from the battlefield, such as shoes. Lucius Grisebach, "Collapse – Reorientation – Taboos [Zusammenbruch – Bewältigung – Tabus]", in Fischer, *Unfinished Past*, p. 30.

[125] Bachmann, "Youth in an Austrian Town", p. 27.

[126] Ibid., p. 37.

and eternal seizure of nature.[127] It is no longer only a general description of nature as a "backdrop" for the scene, but rather a specific nature: the childhood landscape of the homeland that no longer represents any romantic hope.

With his nature-scene paintings, Kiefer presented the landscape of the homeland in the form of historical landscapes, at the same time that the landscape was both post-historical and pre-historical. Thus he directly links the violence of the Second World War with social violence and fascism in all their varieties as part of the sociopolitical conditions of the Cold War in a divided Germany. Throughout his work he has maintained duality in color, style, space, and time in a manner reminiscent of Bachman's coping with the crisis of language. By opening, however, the new transitional space and the very high line of the horizon, he indicates that restoration is possible only in one's own country and not in heaven, namely by understanding the topography and the numerous layers which compose it. In other words, he proposes deconstructing the tradition of representation and searching for a new construction instead.

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[127] Ibid.

4. Conclusions

In this study I have attempted to demonstrate some points of contact between Bachmann's verbal language and Kiefer's visual language, both of which were subjected to sharp social criticism. Kiefer used controversial visual language in order to break social taboos and force a reconsideration of the events of the war as a common trauma for German society. In his work, Kiefer does not just attempt to redeem and deal with the sense of guilt but also to take responsibility for the past and confront it. Although he returns to fascist and Romantic imagery that were prominent in German culture, his work should not be interpreted solely in light of the Nazi past and the horrors of history but also the reality of the Cold War. He formulates his artistic language within a reality of both social and representational crises and a confused German art scene. The silence and amnesia, imposed both by the Allies and by the "parents' generation" who took part in the war led him, like Bachmann, to search for an appropriate representation ranging from specific to terror as a universal practice.

The artistic choice of ambivalence and doubt, along with the observation of the past as an important aspect of understanding the present, transformed Kiefer into an exceptional case in the German field of visual art. But as I have tried to demonstrate throughout the paper, the challenging manner in which he coped with the question of post-war representation fostered characteristics similar to those of Bachmann's writings, and Kiefer indeed employed her poetry in his later works. Both artists understand the artistic space as a neutral place in which paradoxes and contradictions can exist in close proximity, creating the possibility of a historical-linear timeline existing in parallel to the spiral-circular-cyclical dimension. Kiefer and Bachmann reinforce this approach with images of the homeland and its topography which evoke memories and an identity. Only after recognizing the interdependence of the two time periods, past and present, can one think of the future. For this purpose – norms, taboos, perceptions and assumptions that construct society, must be challenged and deconstructed. Therefore, there is no wonder that in light of the language which Kiefer formulated in the late 1960s and early 1970s – with its substantial similarity between his visual language and Bachmann's verbal one – the paintings he decided to dedicate to Bachmann in the 1980s also deal with topography and landscapes.

To conclude, Kiefer requires the textual language of Bachmann to enrich his critical enterprise. Unlike Bachmann, however, he makes intense use of irony in his works. The fact that Kiefer has no direct memories of the war may make him less emotionally involved than Bachmann and can enable him to use irony as part of his visual language. This irony, as understood by German observers at the time, induced aversion towards or rejection of his work. Yet this same irony enabled the West to appreciate and embrace the criticism of fascism in his works while disregarding his criticism of the West German practice of zero hour.

Finally, during the years that followed those dealt with in the study, Kiefer developed additional artistic motifs and poetic figures as part of the visual language formed during his early years, which can be found already in *Occupations*. He turned to interiors associated with the National Socialist regime and with their favorite monumental neo-classical style, but also to motifs of stars, sunflowers, and books, just to name but a few. Therefore, this research raises the need for broader follow-up research that will explore Kiefer's later visual language and its elaboration of prominent poetic figures.

Illustrations

ANSELM KIEFER *Besetzungen (Montpellier),* 1969
Black and white photograph on cardboard
45 11/16 x 30 3/8 inches, (116 x 77.2 cm)

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

(1)

ANSELM KIEFER *Besetzungen (Arles),* 1969 Black and white photograph on cardboard
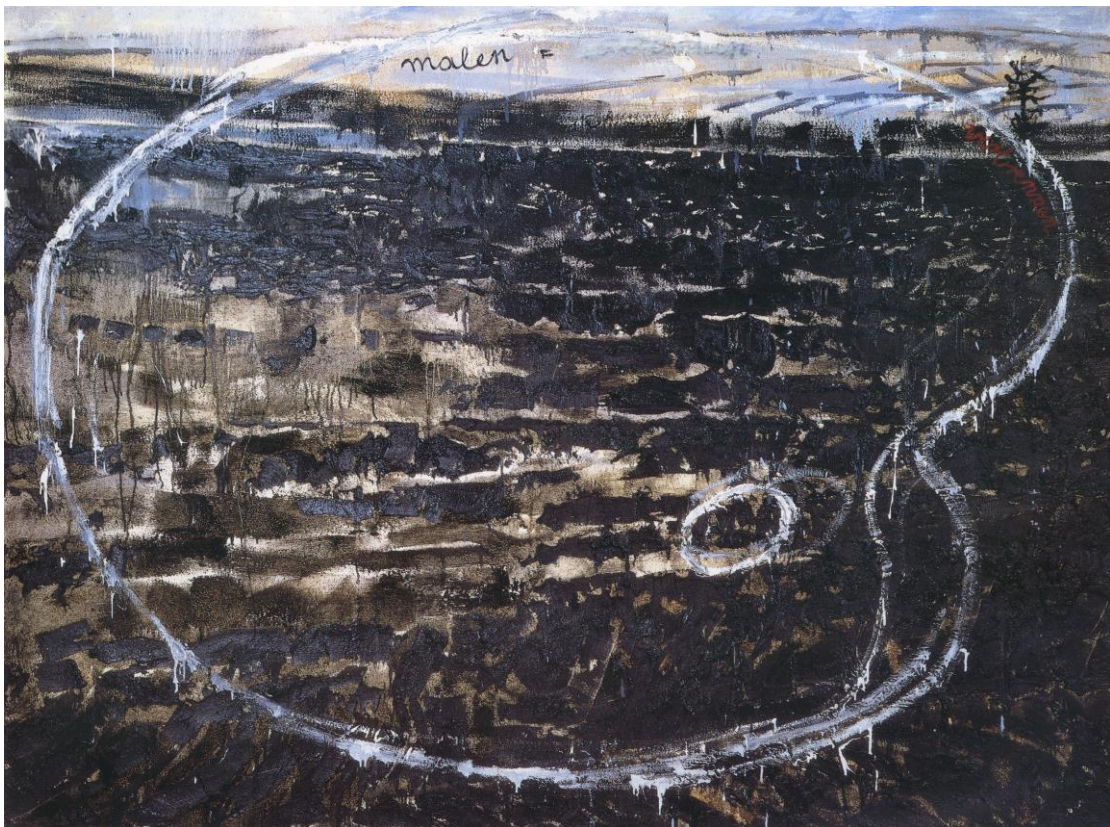21 9/16 x 33 1/8 inches, (54.8 x 84.1 cm)

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

(2)

54

ANSELM KIEFER *Besetzungen (Meer),* 1969 Black and white photograph on cardboard
31 9/16 x 46 1/8 inches, (80.1 x 117.2 cm)

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

(3)

(4)

（5）

List of Illustrations:

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Figure No. **1**:

Anselm Kiefer, **Besetzungen** (**Occupations)** - Montpellier, 1969, Black and White Photograph on Cardboard, 116x77.2 cm, Gagosian Gallery.

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Figure No. **2**:

Anselm Kiefer, **Besetzungen** (**Occupations)** - Arles, 1969, Black and White Photograph on Cardboard, 54.8x84.1 cm, Gagosian Gallery.

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Figure No. **3**:

Anselm Kiefer, **Besetzungen** (**Occupations)** - Meer, 1969, Black and White Photograph on Cardboard, 80.1x117.2 cm, Gagosian Gallery.

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Figure No. **4**:

Anselm Kiefer, **Malen = Verbrennen (Painting = Burning)**, 1974, Oil on Burlap, 220x300 cm, Collection of Jerry and Emily Spiegel, Kings Point, New York.

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Figure No. **5**:

Anselm Kiefer, **Malen (To Paint)**, 1974, Oil and Shellac on Burlap, 118x254 cm, Family H. de Groot Collection, Groningen, the Netherlands.

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