THE FACTS OF FICTION, OR THE FIGURE OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV IN W. G. SEBALD

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W. G. Sebald began his first creative work by invoking the tradition of artists placing portraits of other artists in their works. "Ja, es scheine," he wrote in *Nach der Natur* (1988) [*After Nature*], "als hätten im Kunstwerk / Die Männer einander verehrt wie Brüder, / Einander dort oft ein Denkmal gesetzt, / Wo ihre Wege sich kreuzten" [Indeed, it seems as though in such works of art men honored one another like brothers, placing monuments in each other's image there where their paths had crossed].[1] Given the place monumentalized artists take in the works to come, a more fitting beginning for Sebald's creative career would be difficult to imagine.

Sebald's next work, and his first of prose fiction, *Schwindel. Gefühle.* (1990) [*Vertigo*], weaves a web of uncertain coincidences around Franz Kafka. Sebald's subsequent book, *Die Ausgewanderten* (1992) [*The Emigrants*], continues in this vein, but in more subtle and deceptive fashion and it is in this work that we can best grasp Sebald's practice of literary monumentalization and the role it plays in his art.

The Emigrants recounts four stories and, as its title stresses, what they share is first and foremost emigration. The emigration at issue, however, is more than merely geographic. Besides the central emigrants of the four tales, a great many of those who play major and minor roles in those lives are also emigrants. What else links the four stories? Three of the four flights were precipitated by the rise of National Socialism; three of the four (not the same three) end in suicide. But Sebald's choice of presenting the stories together, and his favoring of subtle patterns in his fictions, suggests that there is something more which links them, a more carefully hidden tie that binds them together. The figure of Vladimir Nabokov as he appears in the

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different stories is such a concealed thread—one that brings the interlaced themes of the book into the starkest relief.

Few artists have been so often and so intensely honored by other artists of the last quarter century as Vladimir Nabokov. From Thomas Pynchon to John Updike, from Italo Calvino to Martin Amis, from Zadie Smith to Michael Chabon, contemporary writers have paid remarkable and remarkably diverse tribute to Nabokov. The following is an examination of the most singular of these tributes—that of W. G. Sebald and endeavors to trace the recurrent figure of Nabokov through his fictions. The argument made in the following pages is that Nabokov appears in Sebald's work not only as a fellow artist to be "monumentalized" at various points, and not only as a thematic thread linking the four stories in *The Emigrants,* but as the figure through whom Sebald poses his most fundamental questions about the facts of fiction and the fiction of facts.

Early on in *The Emigrants*, we find a photo of Vladimir Nabokov.[2] This is a large image taking up the better part of the page. It shows an aged yet spry Nabokov gazing into the Alpine distance wearing a cap, shorts, climbing boots, and with a butterfly net tucked under his arm. The ostensible reason the photo has been included by the narrator in his telling the story of Dr. Henry Selwyn is anecdotal. In the passage in question, Selwyn is showing the narrator and his companion slides taken years earlier on Crete. In some of them, he is outfitted for butterfly-hunting—as the narrator notes, "knielangen Shorts, mit Umhängetasche und Schmetterlingsnetz" (15) ["in knee-length shorts, with a shoulder bag and butterfly net" (26)]. The narrator then relates that "Eine der Aufnahmen glich bis in Einzelheiten einem in den Bergen oberhalb von Gstaad gemachten Foto von Nabokov, das ich ein paar Tage zuvor aus einer Schweizer Zeitschrift ausgeschnitten hatte" (15–16) ["one of the shots resembled, even in detail, a photograph of Nabokov in the mountains above Gstaad that I had clipped from a Swiss magazine a few days before" (26)].[3] It seems then that this, thus far self-effacing, narrator has included the photo as a stand-in for one he does not have—that of Selwyn. However, the task of imagining an old man in shorts and with a butterfly net is not so great as to necessitate an illustration. That the replacement image should be one of Nabokov rather than of some other aged butterfly-hunter in shorts might seem attributable to the simple fact that Vladimir Nabokov was the most photographed butterfly-hunter of Selwyn's generation (or, for that matter, of all time). What the image seems to illustrate is nothing more than a chance connection in the experience of the narrator without further consequence for his tale or those to follow.

In *The Emigrants*' second tale, that of the narrator's former grade-school teacher Paul Bereyter, something similar occurs. The narrator's chief source of information about Paul, a certain Mme Landau, tells the narrator of their first meeting. She recounts how she was sitting one day on a park bench in Salins-les-Bains reading "in der Autobiographie Nabokovs" ["Nabokov's autobiography"] when Paul, "nachdem er zweimal bereits an ihr vorübergegangen war, sie mit einer ans Extravagante grenzenden Höflichkeit auf diese ihre Lektüre hin angesprochen"(43) ["after walking by her twice, commented on her reading, with a courtesy bordering on the extravagant" (65)]. Her reading matter seems as incidental as the preceding reference to Nabokov. That Nabokov should be referred to in consecutive stories does not stretch the bounds of plausibility. He was a famous man, and many read his books and saw his picture. And yet, when we recall the unmentioned title of Nabokov's autobiography—*Speak, Memory*—we might begin to wonder whether this is mere chance. The imperative in Nabokov's title commands precisely of Bereyter, as well as the other emigrants in the book, what he can only do with the greatest difficulty and at the cost of a literally dangerous amount of suffering. *Speak, Memory* chronicles Nabokov's loss of his homeland and his years of longing for a home to which he could not return. But it also chronicles how Nabokov, despite intense mourning for his lost home, thrived under the difficult circumstances of multiple emigrations, and of how he wrote works and founded a family of which he was proud and which rendered him, to all appearances, exceptionally happy. In the shadow cast by Paul Bereyter, like those of the three emigrants at the center of the other tales, Madame Landau's reading seems to offer a cruelly withheld promise. After this pivotal meeting she will endeavor to help Paul make his muted memory speak—but this only defers his taking, as did Selwyn, his life.

In the third and longest of *The Emigrants*' tales the narrator's great-uncle Ambros Adelwarth passes through the Hôtel Eden in Montreux, Switzerland on his way from Germany to the New World. The hotel is not a fictional one, and this first stop in Ambros's emigration places him only a few steps away from the last station of Vladimir Nabokov's emigration, Montreux's Palace Hotel. The narrator does not mention this coincidence and there seems no reason for him to do so. As the story unfolds, we learn more and more about Ambros's charge and friend Cosmo Solomon (who, as his name would lead one to believe, is wealthy, wise, and cosmopolitan). After extensive travels with Ambros, Cosmo is committed to a sanatorium in Ithaca, New York, and it is there that he dies (98; 143). Years later, with not only Cosmo but Cosmo's father now dead, Ambros is a trusted retainer with little to do.

> Es war um jene Zeit, daß der Adelwarth-Onkel angefangen hat, mir die eine oder andere Begebenheit aus seinem zurückliegenden Leben mitzuteilen. Da selbst die geringfügigsten der von ihm sehr langsam aus seiner offenbar unauslotbaren Tiefe hervorgeholten Reminiszenzen von staunenswerter Genauigkeit waren, gelagnte ich beim Zuhören allmählich zu der Überzeugung, daß der Adelwarth-Onkel zwar ein untrügliches Gedächtnis besaß, aber kaum mehr eine mit diesem Gedächtnis ihn verbindende Erinnerungsfähigkeit. (100)
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> [That was when Uncle Adelwarth began, now and again, [the narrator's Aunt Fini tells the narrator,] to recount to me incidents from his past life. Even the least of his reminiscences, which he fetched up very slowly from depths that were evidently unfathomable, was of astounding precision, so that, listening to him, I gradually became convinced that Uncle Adelwarth had an infallible memory, but that, at the same time, he scarcely allowed himself access to it.] (146)

This leads the narrator's aunt to the chilling conclusion that "Das Erzählen ist darum für ihn eine Qual sowohl als ein Versuch der Selbstbefreiung gewesen, eine Art von Errettung und zugleich ein unbarmherziges Sich-zugrunde-Richten" (100) ["telling stories was as much a torment to him as an attempt at self-liberation. He was at once saving himself, in some way, and mercilessly destroying himself" (146)]. As a practical instrument, Ambros's memory was nearly flawless. But it is not something that can bring him happiness or anything other than a painful connection to his past. Some untold—and seemingly untellable—sorrow haunts that memory and makes the effort of making it speak intensely painful. In his efforts to speak of his past, Ambros walks the finest of lines between a talking cure and inoperable suffering.

Aunt Fini continues: "Jedenfalls ist der Adelwarth-Onkel, je mehr er erzählte, desto trostloser geworden. In der Nachweihnachtszeit des zweiundfünfziger Jahrs verfiel er dann in eine so abgrundtiefe Depression, daß er, trotz offenbar größtem Bedürfnis, weitererzählen zu können, nichts mehr herausbrachte, keinen Satz, kein Wort, kaum ein Laut" (102–103) ["the more desolate he became. After Christmas '52 he fell into such a deep depression that, although he plainly felt a great need to talk about his life, he could no longer shape a single sentence, nor utter a single word, or any sound at all" (149)]. At this point, it seems that the more painful elements of Ambros's past have prevailed, and this marks the end of his attempts at redemptive storytelling. One morning shortly thereafter, Ambros's niece Fini comes to

visit him and finds a visiting card with a brief parting message: "Have gone to Ithaca. Yours ever—Ambrose" (103; 150; in English in original). Like that of the most famous emigrant in Western literature, this return to Ithaca will mark the end of Ambros's journeys. But what awaits him there is anything but "a seaborne death soft as this hand of mist."[4]

This same Ithaca to which Ambros now retreats was where, a few years earlier, Nabokov, having recently emigrated to the US, revised the memoir that would become *Speak, Memory*. This fact is not without bearing on what *The Emigrants* goes on to tell. After some difficulty in figuring out what Ithaca Ambros is referring to—and where it is—Fini comes to visit Ambros in Ithaca, New York on a fine "Indian Summer morning" in 1953. As Fini and Ambros stand looking out over the trees and meadows, "ein Mann mittleren Alters auftauchte, der ein weißes Netz an einem Stecken vor sich hertrug und ab und zu seltsame Sprünge vollführte. Der Adelwarth-Onkel blickte starr voraus, registrierte aber nichtsdestoweniger meine Verwunderung und sagte: It's the butterfly man, you know. He comes round here quite often"(103–104) ["a middle-aged man appeared, holding a white net on a pole in front of him and occasionally taking curious jumps. Uncle Adelwarth stared straight ahead, but he registered my bewilderment all the same, and said: It's the butterfly man, you know. He comes round here quite often" (151)]. The butterfly man appears to be, at least for the reader, identifiable. The early fall of 1953 saw Nabokov in Ithaca, New York, teaching Russian and European literature at Cornell University and hunting butterflies in his spare time.

Fini's visits do not lead Ambros to renew his attempts to make his memory speak. Shortly thereafter, he willingly gives himself over to shock-treatment therapy whose goal, at least for his doctors involved, is to treat this unspoken pain. Ambros has, however, his own objective: to silence his memory. A doctor at the sanatorium later tells the narrator that Ambrose was one of the first patients to willingly undergo a series of extensive shock-therapy treatments, but that he thought this readiness was born of what he calls the desire for "einer möglichst gründlichen und unwiderruflichen Auslöschung seines Denk- und Erinnerungsvermögens" (114) ["an extinction as total and irreversible as possible of his capacity to think and remember" (167)].

On the day of his death, Ambros is, for the first time during his stay at the sanatorium, late for a shock-treatment session. He is found by his doctor standing at his window looking out over the marshlands stretching beyond the sanatorium's park. "Auf meine Frage, weshalb er nicht wie sonst zum vereinbarten Zeitpunkt sich eingefunden habe, erwiderte er—ich entsinne mich genau seines Wortlauts— It must have slipped my mind whilst I was waiting for the butterfly man. Ambrose hat sich nach dieser rätselhaften Bemerkung

sogleich mit mir . . . in den Behandlungsraum begeben" (115) ["When I asked why he had not appeared at the appointed time," one of the sanatorium's doctors (himself also an emigrant) later tells the narrator, Ambros "replied (I remember his words exactly): It must have slipped my mind whilst I was waiting for the butterfly man. After he had made this enigmatic remark, he accompanied me without delay" (170)].

The fourth and final emigrant, Max Ferber (Max Aurach in the original German edition), leaves Manchester a single time in his adult life. This happens in 1965 and leads him to retrace distant memories back to the Palace Hotel in Montreux, which he had visited with his father in 1936. Upon arriving, he is assailed by unnamed memories and a mounting anxiety. He pulls down the blinds and locks himself in his room. "Nach Ablauf von etwa einer Woche kam ich irgendwie auf den Gedanken, daß allein die Wirklichkeit draußen mich retten könne" (173) ["After about a week," he tells the narrator, "it somehow occurred to me that only the reality outside could save me" (258)]. He leaves his room at last and proceeds directly to climb the nearby Mount Grammont, and from there gazes out across Lake Geneva. "Diese ebenso nahe wie unerreichbar in die Ferne gerückte Welt, sagte Aurach, habe mit solcher Macht ihn angezogen, daß er befürchtete, sich in sie hineinstürzen zu müssen" ["That world, at once near and unattainably far, said Ferber," relates the narrator, "exerted so powerful an attraction on him that he was afraid he might leap down into it"]. We are told that he, "dies vielleicht tatsächlich getan hätte, wäre nicht auf einmal—like someone who's popped out of the bloody ground" (174) ["might really have done so had not a man of about sixty suddenly appeared before him—like someone who's popped out of the bloody ground" (259)]. This saving apparition with "einem großen Schmetterlingsnetz aus weißer Gaze vor ihm gestanden und hätte in einem geradeso vornehmen wie letztlich unidentifizierbaren Englisch gesagt, es sei jetzt an der Zeit, an den Absteig zu denken, wenn man in Montreux noch zum Nachtmahl zurechtkommen wolle" (174–175) ["was carrying a large white gauze butterfly net and said, in an English voice that was refined but quite unplaceable, that it was time to be thinking of going down if one were to be in Montreux for dinner" (259)].

As noted in connection to the preceding tale in *The Emigrants*, in 1965, Montreux's Palace Hotel housed Vladimir Nabokov and his wife (the couple had moved there in 1961 and were to remain there until Nabokov's death in 1977). One of the reasons Nabokov chose the locale was for ease of access to fine butterfly-hunting areas. In light of these facts we can do what Ferber cannot—place "the refined but quite unplaceable" English Ferber hears. The effect of this appearance is, however, not merely a saving one. The narrator relates:

> Er könne sich aber, sagte Aurach, nicht mehr erinnern, mit dem Schmetterlingsmenschen zusammen den Abstieg gemacht zu haben; überhaupt sei der Abstieg vom Grammont gänzlich aus seinem Gedächtnis verschwunden und ebenso die letzten Tage im *Palace* und die Rückreise nach England. Aus welchem Grund genau und wie weit die Lagunen der Erinnerungslosigkeit in ihm sich ausgebreitet habe, das sei ihm trotz angestrengtesten Nachdenkens darüber ein Rätsel geblieben. Wenn er versuche, sich in die fraglich Zeit zurückzuversetzen, so sehe er sich erst in seinen Studio wieder bei der mit geringen Unterbrechungen über nahezu ein Jahr sich hinziehenden schwere Arbeit an dem gesichtslosen Porträt. (174)

> [He (Ferber) had no recollection of having made the descent with the butterfly man, though, said Ferber; in fact the descent had disappeared entirely from his memory, as had his final days at the Palace and the return journey to England. Why exactly this lagoon of oblivion had spread in him, and how far it extended, had remained a mystery to him however hard he thought about it. If he tried to think back to the time in question, he could not see himself again till he was back in the studio, working at a painting which took him almost a full year, with minor interruptions—the faceless portrait "Man with a Butterfly Net."] (259–260)

This attempt to portray this figure proves harrowing. The narrator tells us of the painting that Ferber considered it, "eins seiner verfehltesten Werke halte, weil es, seines Erachtens, keinen auch annähernd nur zureichenden Begriff gebe von der Seltsamkeit der Erscheinung, auf die es sich beziehe" (174) ["one of his most unsatisfactory works,"] for the reason that, ["it conveyed not even the remotest impression of the strangeness of the apparition it referred to" (260)]. Continuing in the face of this failure

> Habe ihn ärger hergenommen als jede andere Arbeit zuvor, denn als er es nach Verfertigung zahlloser Vorstudien angegangen sei, habe er es nicht nur wieder und wieder übermalt, sondern er habe es, wenn die Leinwand der Beanspruchung durch das dauernde Herunterkratzen und Neuauftragen der Farbe nicht mehr standhielt, mehrmals völlig zerstört und verbrannt. Die bei Tag zur Genüge ihn plagende Verzweiflung über seine Unfähigkeit habe sich in zunehmendem Maße in seine immer schlafloser werdenden Nächte hineingezogen, so daß er vor Übermüdung bald nicht anders als unter Tränen habe arbeiten können. Zuletzt sei ihm gar nichts anderes übriggeblieben,

> als zu starken Betäubungsmitteln zu greifen, und infolgedessen habe er dann die furchtbarsten . . . Halluzinationen gehabt. (174–175)
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> [took more out of him than any previous painting, for when he started on it, after countless preliminary studies, he not only overlaid it time and again but also, whenever the canvas could no longer withstand the continual scratching-off and re-application of paint, he destroyed it and burnt it several times. The despair at his lack of ability which already tormented him quite enough during the day now invaded his increasingly sleepless nights, so that soon he wept with exhaustion as he worked. In the end he had no alternative but powerful sedatives, which in turn gave him the most horrific hallucinations.] (260)

The final part of Ferber's tale is told by his mother in the form of a memoir she composed shortly before her deportation by the Nazis in 1941, and which treats not of those terrifying times, but, instead, of her peaceful childhood in Bavaria. Ferber has given this memoir to the narrator who then reproduces it verbatim for the reader. Therein, Ferber's mother, Luisa Lanzburg, meets her first love (a French-horn player) in Bad Kissingen:

> Natürlich weiß ich heute nicht mehr, was wir damals alles geredet haben. Aber daß die Felder blühteten zu beiden Seiten des Weges und daß ich glücklich gewesen bin, das erinnere ich noch, und seltsamerweise auch, daß wir unweit des Ortsrands, dort, wo das Schild *Nach Bodenlaube* steht, zwei sehr vornehme russische Herren einholten, von denen der eine, der ein besonders majestätisches Ansehen hatte, gerade ein ernstes Wort sprach mit einem vielleicht zehnjährigen Knaben, der, mit der Schmetterlingsjagd beschäftigt, so weit zurückgeblieben war, daß man auf ihn hatte warten müssen. Die Mahnung verschlug aber wohl nicht viel, denn als wir uns gelegentlich wieder umwandten, sahen wir den Knaben genauso wie zuvor mit erhobenem Kescher weit abseits durch den Wiesengrund laufen. (213; Sebald's italics)
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> [Needless to say, I no longer remember what we talked about. But I do remember that the fields on either side of the path were full of flowers and that I was happy, and oddly enough I also recall that, not far out of town, just where the sign to Bodenlaube [*Nach Bodenlaube*] is, we overtook two very refined Russian gentlemen, one of whom (who looked particularly majestic) was speaking seriously to a boy of about ten who had been chasing butterflies and had lagged so far behind that they had had to wait for him. This warning can't have

> had much effect, though, because whenever we happened to look back we saw the boy running about the meadows with upraised net, exactly as before.] (319)

Her new love "behauptete später, in dem älteren der beiden distinguierten russischen Herren den derzeit in Kissingen sich aufhaltenden Präsidenten des ersten russischen Parlaments, Muromzew, erkannt zu haben" (213) ["later claimed that he had recognized the elder of the two distinguished Russian gentlemen as Muromtsev, the president of the first Russian parliament, who was then staying in Kissingen" (319; translation modified)].

In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov relates: "Near a sign NACH BODENLAUBE, at Bad Kissingen, Bavaria, just as I was about to join for a long walk my father and majestic old Muromtsev (who, four years before, in 1906, had been President of the first Russian Parliament), the latter turned his marble head toward me, a vulnerable boy of eleven, and said with his famous solemnity: 'Come with us by all means, but do not chase butterflies, child. It spoils the rhythm of the walk.'"[5] In Nabokov's memoir, the specific location of this episode serves little purpose beyond attesting to the precision with which Nabokov's memory still spoke to him a half-century later. Sebald's narrator, however, puts this factual detail to singular fictional purposes.

This subtle nod to readers familiar with Nabokov's work did not go unnoticed. In his *Understanding W. G. Sebald*, Mark McCulloh wrote that "something like the incident occurs in Nabokov's autobiography."[6] Six years earlier, however, Oliver Sill had already noted that what is at issue in this passage is more than a passing similarity and is made to dovetail with Nabokov's memoir.[7] (In an essay from 2007, Kilbourn also notes the exact coordinates at issue but does not directly refer to Sill's essay.)[8]

In the lines from *After Nature* with which I began, Sebald comments on how artists were known to "honor one another like brothers, placing monuments in each other's image there where their paths had crossed." Four years later, Sebald's narrator in *The Emigrants* seems to be doing precisely this at the point where his fiction crosses that of Nabokov's fact. In doing so, he invokes a theme central to Nabokov's art: the intertwining of fact and fiction. *The Emigrants* is indeed fiction, though the degree to which it is fiction is the last thing but immediately clear to its reader. Nothing egregiously fictional is to be found therein, and much that seems simply documentary is included in the telling of the four tales. It is in such details and at such crossroads that the careful reader must look to understand Sebald's conception of fiction and the role fact plays therein.

This is a point to which I will return shortly, but it should not be lost sight of for the moment that this is not the last we hear of the young butterfly

hunter in *The Emigrants*. Three years later, Ferber's mother's relationship with the young French horn player has advanced. "Wir saßen in die Anlagen der Saline" ["We were sitting by the salt-frames,"] she writes, "Fritz . . . auf einmal abbrach und mich ohne weiteren Umschweif fragte, ob ich vielleicht seine Frau werden wolle. Ich wußte nicht, was erwidern, nickte aber und sah dabei, obgleich alles um mich her sonst verschwamm, mit der größten Deutlichkeit den russischen Knaben, den ich längst vergessen gehabt hatte, mit seinem Schmetterlingsnetz durch die Wiesen springen als den wiederkehrenden Glücksboten jenes Sommertages" (214) ["when suddenly Fritz, in the middle of a carefully worked out reminiscence of our first outing to Bodenlaube, broke off and asked me . . . if I should like to marry him. I did not know what to reply, but I nodded, and, though everything else around me blurred, I saw that long-forgotten Russian boy as clearly as anything, as a messenger of joy [*Glücksbote*], returning from that distant summer day" (321)]. It seems, however, that she is cruelly mistaken, since Luisa's fiancé dies shortly thereafter of a stroke.

With this pattern of coincidence in mind, we might ask what this recurrent figure obscurely linking the disparate stories brought together in *The Emigrants* means for Sebald and his work. Why, to begin with, is it Nabokov rather than another emigrant author whom we find crossing paths with Sebald's characters? Was not, for instance, James Joyce an equally great artist of exile? Might not Samuel Beckett have better served as a figure of self-imposed emigration? And why was Nabokov chosen for this special mission over the emigrant writers who fascinate Sebald in other works, such as Conrad, so present in *The Rings of Saturn,* or Wittgenstein, so present in *Austerlitz*? A first answer to this question is that Nabokov allows Sebald to explore one of the book's central themes—that of memory's redemptive power.

Philip Roth writes of a victim in *Operation Shylock* that he was "someone whose whole life lies in the hands of the past," and this dark epithet might well apply to a number of figures in Sebald's work.[9] In an essay on Peter Weiss, Sebald singled out Nietzsche's remark that "Vielleicht ist nichts furchtbarer und unheimlicher an der ganzen Vorgeschichte des Menschen als seine Mnemotechnik. Man brennt etwas ein, damit es im Gedächtnis bleibt: nur was nicht aufhört, weh zu tun, bleibt im Gedächtnis" [Perhaps is nothing so terrifying and uncanny in the entire prehistory of mankind as the art of memory. We burn something into our memory so that it stays, but only what ceases hurting remains in our memory].[10] This painful model of memory is clearly one that is close to Sebald's heart and which is echoed in his critical writings as well as his creative ones. Carol Bere has astutely noted that "the

significant issue for Sebald is not memory in an overall generic sense," but, instead, "the point at which the cost of not remembering supersedes protective strategies for survival, the moment later in life when early, often horrific repressed knowledge or experience move center stage in a person's life."[11] Exploring the question in turn, Kilbourn writes that "Nabokov is . . . literally introduced into Sebald's narrative as a kind of personification of memory's ambivalently redemptive potential in terms of its centrality to his peculiar poetics (prosaics?) of mnemonic divestment."[12]

Luisa Lanzburg thinks she recognizes in the ten-year-old Nabokov a messenger of happiness. Given the loss which is soon to follow, he seems more a messenger of despair and death. And the book which allows us to recognize the young butterfly hunter in question, *Speak, Memory,* is an emigrant's tale that stands in such stark opposition to Sebald's that it seems at points an ironic commentary on it. A more articulate, artful, and elegant account of exile and emigration than *Speak, Memory* would be difficult to find, as would a more harmonious relation between a memoir writer and his memory. In *The Emigrants*, however, all the principal characters' attempts to make their memory speak only seem to worsen their state and to hasten their painful end. Sill aptly observes of the title of Nabokov's autobiography that "diese Aufforderung erscheint mit Blick auf die Ausgewanderten wie Hohn" [when placed alongside *The Emigrants* this incitement seems more like derision].[13] Nabokov's memoir is the last thing but free from sorrows and losses—to begin with the loss of his home and homeland through the Bolshevik Revolution—but it is above all the story of his overcoming, through the hoarded treasures of memory and the gifts of the present, all that is taken from him. What we find in Sebald's emigrant tales is, quite simply, the opposite.

Lisa Cohen has written that "one could almost say that *The Emigrants* is haunted as much by Nabokov as it is by the Holocaust."[14] This observation might be amended to say that the ghosts seem to work in tandem. What opened up the rifts in the lives of the principal figures in *The Emigrants* remains a mystery for the reader. Three of the four emigrants suffer permanently from the ravages of National Socialism. Nabokov evaded those ravages first in Berlin, and then in Paris, sailing safely to the New World where he was to make his fortune on a boat which was sunk by Nazi submarines on its very next crossing. The success of Nabokov's emigration, both in his finding, through not insignificant adversity, a place for himself and his family in more than one new world, and of the articulate art which he produced through and out of that emigration, seems, when placed alongside of Sebald's emigrants, almost unfathomably fortunate. Nabokov succeeded

where all of Sebald's emigrants did not—in confronting and overcoming his losses, in starting anew, in being happy—and Sebald's choice to send him as a special envoy into the world of his fiction is, thus, one that demands careful attention.

Related to this theme of the redemptive possibilities of memory is another theme equally central to Sebald's art: the relation of fact to fiction. McCulloh has written that "Sebald's art requires a reader who knows the distinction between fact and fiction is often spurious."[15] This is doubtless true, but it is equally true that this distinction is not simply and everywhere spurious, and that Sebald's art requires a reader who knows more than this. One way of approaching the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction in Sebald's work is, simply enough, through the form it takes, and the formal conventions it employs. The first thing Sebald's reader notices in this relation is that these conventions are many and mixed. Tess Lewis has written that Sebald has "effectively created a new genre by combining travelogue, biography, memoir, speculation, literary criticism, and erudite detail."[16] Whether his combining of genres has produced a new one or not, Sebald's mixing of factual and fictional modes often proves exceptionally difficult to follow and his dislike of conventional forms of fictional storytelling is readily apparent.

In an essay on Alfred Andersch, Sebald carefully enumerates the stale conventions that author employs and expresses his full contempt for those conventions in the process.[17] Paul Valéry famously remarked that whenever he opened a novel and found that it began with a novelistic formula of the order of "La marquise sortit à cinq heures" [the marquise went out at five], he immediately shut the book. Sebald seems to have shared such impatience. In an interview with James Wood, Sebald tellingly spoke of how much he preferred Stendhal's *La Vie de Henry Brulard* to *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Of the former he says, "I find there is a degree of realness in it with which I can calculate. Whereas with the novels, I find we are subjected to the rules and laws of fiction to a degree which I find tedious."[18] Sebald's surprising preference is matched by a surprising reason for it. For him, "the rules and laws of fiction" can easily grow tedious if too carefully adhered to—whereas calculating the degree of realness in a work is an exercise he finds engaging and rewarding. "I think that fiction writing," Sebald remarked elsewhere in that same interview, "which does not acknowledge the uncertainty of the narrator himself, is a form of imposture and which I find very, very difficult to take. Any form of authorial writing, where the narrator sets himself up as stagehand and director and judge and executor in a text, I find somehow unacceptable. I cannot bear to read books of this kind" (89). Whereas Sebald begins by objecting to the laws of fiction, he soon aims his objections at

the legislator. The idea of the narrator taking dictatorial control over the proceedings is one he finds "somehow unacceptable." And yet what Sebald is describing seems unavoidable in a novel—at least in a conventional one operating free from factual constraint.

In light of such striking remarks, it should come as no surprise that Sebald was not overeager to call his works "novels," remarking that, "mein Medium ist die Prosa, nicht der Roman" [my medium is not the novel but prose].[19] In this same vein, he designated his *Austerlitz* as a "Prosabuch unbestimmter Art" [a prose book of unspecified type].[20] Whatever term one chooses, the question of what degree of "calculability" Sebald is striving for in his own work remains. Asked precisely this in relation to the photographs he employs, he responded that, "a very large percentage of those photographs are what you would describe as authentic, i.e., they really did come out of the photo albums of the people described in those texts and are a direct testimony of the fact that these people did exist in that particular shape and form. A small number—I imagine it must be in the region of 10%—are pictures, photographs, postcards, travel documents, that kind of thing, which I had used from other sources" (Sebald and Wood, 87). In an interview with James Atlas from the following year, Sebald said more generally of his books and the difficulty of classifying them that "[f]acts are troublesome. The idea is to make it seem factual, though some of it might be invented."[21] Sebald's stated goal is thus maximum veracity and, for him, it can best be achieved through calculated falsification.

Given the prominence of this theme of the relation of fact to fiction in his work, and the frankness with which he has addressed the matter when questioned, it should come as no surprise that it has often interested Sebald's critics. Martin Swales has written that "Sebald's prose is . . . both true to, and a debate with, the complex legacy of German and European narrative fiction. At one level, art, for Sebald, can be prosaic to the point of documentary. He attends circumstantially to physical things, to places, to settings. Yet those places are supremely sites of human signification: the material entities bespeak spiritual entities."[22] For Swales, Sebald's attention to documentary detail serves the purpose of not only grounding the fiction in the material realm of fact, of specific times and specific places, but also in a hazy spiritual realm. Five years earlier James Wood had taken a similar starting point, noting how Sebald's work "protest[s] the good government of the conventional novel form and harass[es] realism into a state of self-examination."[23] The product of this self-examination is what Wood calls "fictional truth": "*The Emigrants* reads like fiction—and *is* fiction because of the care and patterning of Sebald's narration, because of its anguished interiority, and because Sebald so mixes established fact with unstable invention that the two categories copulate and produce a

kind of truth which lies just beyond verification: that is, fictional truth" (249). In Wood's reading, fiction is a means to a factual, and a more than factual end: truth. Though not often stated with such daring, this is an idea found frequently in criticism of Sebald's writing. Joanna Scott has asked: "If the recovery of memory through testimony is the best defense against a 'conspiracy of silence,' why write fiction instead of history? Why waste ambitious effort on unreal characters?"[24] For her, the answer to this question is that fiction focuses readers' attention on the lives of individuals—even if that focusing on the lives of real individuals is done through the intermediary of fictional ones. In short, it tells a truth through fiction that is not limited to it.

For his own part, Sebald stated, "what I'm trying, fairly consciously . . . is to point up that sense of uncertainty between fact and fiction" (Sebald & Wood, 89). And he gives a clear reason for doing so: "because I do think that we largely delude ourselves with the knowledge that we think we possess, that we make it up as we go along, that we make it fit our desires and anxieties and that we invent a straight line or a trail in order to calm ourselves down" (Sebald & Wood, 89). By his own account, Sebald aims to express uncertainties we all too often overlook. For him, the straight line of traditional novels and of realistic fiction is a reassuring, but ultimately misleading, one. Life moves more chaotically and it would seem that Sebald's intention is to faithfully reproduce the swerving of fact through the swerving of fiction.

But if we tend to "invent a straight line of a trail in order to calm ourselves down," and this is a tendency Sebald wishes to counter, what sort of line do his works follow? The figure of Vladimir Nabokov is of such importance in this connection since it offers a way of answering this question. To begin with the realm of fact, the unlikely presence of Nabokov in all four narratives does not immediately exclude the possibility of viewing them as documentary details without further significance. It is possible that all of *The Emigrants*' tales are perfectly veridical and that they simply share the curious coincidence of having something or other to do with the most gifted émigré writer of their time. Are there then other elements in *The Emigrants* which reinforce fiction's claim on it? In the third tale, the one richest in detail, we follow Ambros on a number of journeys. Where first Cosmo and, years later, Ambros end their days is in a sanatorium in a town with the unlikely but perfectly real name Ithaca, New York. The name of that sanatorium is Samaria. Samaria, like Ithaca, is a name from antiquity—all the less improbable for the fact that that region of upstate New York contains a startling number of town names borrowed from the books of classical learning. The

mental institution Samaria, however, does not exist—and never did—nor did an analogous institute in Ithaca or its environs. But the name and the place may have been displaced to protect the privacy of those concerned and might, of course, be true with some slight modification.

Within a year of *The Emigrants*' publication, an interviewer asked Sebald about the cloaked presence of Nabokov in the work. "Both in *The Emigrants* and in *Vertigo*," Sebald replied, "bei den Texten handelt es sich im Grunde um Realismus" [the question is one of realism].[25] "Ich glaube allerdings, daß Realismus nur dann wirklich funktioniert," Sebald continues, "wenn er stellenweise über sich selbst hinausgeht—das heißt, wenn der Text mysteriöse Facetten hat, die in einem realistischen Text eigentlich nichts zu suchen hätten" [I think that realism can only function when it, at least in places, goes beyond itself—that is, when there are mysterious facets contained in it which do not properly speaking belong in a realistic work].[26] A richer and more counterintuitive answer could hardly have been hoped for as Sebald speaks not of Nabokov but of what Nabokov represents in *The Emigrants.* Through the multiple forms he takes in *The Emigrants*, Nabokov supplies "mysterious facets" enlisted not to illustrate the playful and postmodern, but as part of the larger goal of creating "a realistic work."

In 1996, Sebald published an essay on *Speak, Memory*. Sebald writes therein of a device familiar to Nabokov's readers where the author seems to be winking from over the shoulders of his characters or narrators. Its effect, according to Sebald, is "ein Kunstgriff, der es Nabokov erlaubt, die Welt und sich selber in ihr von oben zu sehen" [an artistic device that allowed Nabokov to see the world and himself in it from on high].[27] This "die Welt im Auge des Kranichs" [bird's-eye view], as Sebald calls it, gives Nabokov's writing a clarity and an order which he finds compelling.[28] In the interview where he was first asked about the role Nabokov played in *The Emigrants,* and where he acknowledged the special task assigned to Nabokov therein, he also went a step farther: "Zudem glaube ich, daß der realistische Text sich ansatzweise in allegorisches Erzählen vorwagen darf, sich ansatzweise in Allegorien verdichten muß. Daher muß es solche half greifbaren, half abstraken Figuren geben (wie den Schmetterlingsfänger), die eine bestimmte, nicht ganz zu durchschauende Funktion haben" [I believe that the realist text may launch itself at points into allegorical storytelling, and that in such a case it must concentrate itself into a sort of allegory. Here there should be figures which are half-concrete and half-abstract (like the butterfly catcher), figures who have a distinct, but a not entirely transparent, function].[29] According to Sebald, the realist should employ the art of allegory.

In what only seems a paradox, the realist text must be ready, in the interest of realism, to grade into allegory.

On a related note, if the figure of Nabokov plays the allegorical role Sebald describes, we should attend both to its realist and its allegorical message. Beginning with the latter, what separate story does this figure introduce alongside of its ostensible one? Sebald once noted that "we think that by dwelling in or going over the past we can make things better, whereas we generally make them worse."[30] Is the allegorical message in question thus one concerning the false promises of memory? Or is the figure of Nabokov to be understood instead as an allegory of Emigration meant in some larger sense?

Sebald stresses that these "half abstract" figures, such as Nabokov's, play a "definite," but not entirely "transparent" role in the work. In other words, they play an allegorical role but do not bear a simple allegorical message. In one of his most personal late essays (and in which he prominently refers to Nabokov's book on Gogol) Sebald writes:

> Ich habe immer versucht, in meiner eigenen Arbeit denjenigen meine Achtung zu erweisen, von denen ich mich angezogen fühlte, gewissermaßen den Hut zu lüften vor ihnen, indem ich ein schönes Bild oder ein paar besondere Worte von ihnen entlehnte, doch ist es eine Sache, wenn man einem dahingegangenen Kollegen zum Andenken ein Zeichen setzt, und eine andere, wenn man das Gefühl nicht loswird, daß einem zugewinkt wird von der anderen Seite.
>
> [In my work I have always tried to testify to the respect I have felt for those I am drawn towards—to, in a certain sense, tip my hat by borrowing a lovely image or a few special words from them. It is one thing when one wishes to make a gesture in memory of a colleague. It is another thing entirely when one cannot shake the sense that one is being gestured to from the other side.][31]

It seems Sebald might well have had Nabokov in mind here. Sebald was the controller of the world of his work: it was he who traced the coincidences, the thematic threads and hidden patterns therein. To borrow Nabokov's terms, he "impersonated" an "anthropomorphic deity" therein.[32] But he was far from comfortable in doing so. He lacked Nabokov's aplomb in effecting this *Kunstgriff* [artifice] because the origin of coincidences was for him a question not of radiant wonder but of flickering anxiety.

Sebald's first work of creative prose is entitled *Schwindel. Gefühle*, or, in its English translation, *Vertigo*. What elicits the vertigo of that book is not homelessness, or melancholy, or the difficulty of translating feelings into words, but, instead, *coincidence*. It is a chain of coincidences which keeps the narrator near the edge of an overwhelming paranoia. The work that followed *The Emigrants*, *The Rings of Saturn*, is organized around a subtle series of recurrent patterns or themes, the most central of which is the fine fabric of silk and the worm (evocatively named *Bombyx mori*) which produces it. Therein, as in *Vertigo,* much of the narrator's unease stems from this same uncertainty as to whether another order is to be glimpsed behind the coincidences of this world. There was nothing that intrigued Sebald and his narrators like coincidence, but there was also nothing that rendered them more uneasy. To borrow an expression of Thomas Browne's which Sebald approvingly cites, what he fears is "making cables of cobwebs," *creating* rather than finding coincidence, seeing a fixed pattern in what is but a passing configuration.[33] What Sebald lacked in distinguishing the one from the other is that which we all lack: a fixed criterion for distinguishing chance from choice. Of the coincidences which linked, if only faintly, the life of Robert Walser with that of Sebald and his grandfather, Sebald asks: "Handelt es sich nur um Vexierbilder der Erinnerung, um Selbst- oder Sinnestäuschungen oder um die in das Chaos der menschlichen Beziehungen einprogrammierten, über Lebendige und Tote gleichermaßen sich erstreckenden Schemata einer uns unbegreiflichen Ordnung?" [Are these but rebuses of memory, deceptions of sense and self? Or are they the schemas of an inconceivable order programmed into the chaos of human relations and extended not simply to the living, but also to the dead?].[34] Neither here nor elsewhere is Sebald able to offer a definitive answer to this question, never can he be sure whether he is simply making, as he fears, cables of cobwebs.

The artificiality of the patterns which Nabokov wove into his creations were attempts to reproduce his vision of the world—a world where, for the very perceptive, there were signs and signals of a Creator beyond creation. While not in the service of the rules of realism, these elements of patterned artifice are *mimetic* in the sense that Nabokov attempts to faithfully reproduce his experience of the world through them. The question remains, however, as to whether things stand similarly for Sebald—and an answer to this question can be sought in the image with which I will end.

The Emigrants begins with a cemetery and what grows up in its midst—a photo of a magnificent, if strangely compacted, tree. It is a fitting emblem for the individual story it inaugurates, as well as for the three that are to follow it. In his interview with James Wood, Sebald said generally of the

images that figure so prominently in his work: "I think they do tell their own story within the prose narrative and do establish a second level of discourse that is mute. It would be an ambition of mine to produce the kind of prose which has a degree of mutedness about it. The photographs do, in a sense, help you along this route" (Sebald & Wood, 87). In that same interview Sebald refers to the "spectral" quality of old photos (Sebald & Wood, 90). The term "spectral" is to be taken with the utmost seriousness. In an essay on Kafka, Sebald wrote: "Was einen an fotografischen Bildern so rührt, das ist das eigenartig jenseitige, das uns manchmal anweht aus ihnen" [what is so moving in photographic images is a peculiar beyond that seems to move in and out of them].[35] In his discussion of Nabokov, Sebald places special emphasis on a text by Nabokov that prominently employs photos—*Speak, Memory*—and dwells at unusual length on their spectral quality. But it is in the posthumous text *Campo Santo* that Sebald offers his most categorical statement on the spectral quality of photographs, as well as something he gives nowhere else in his work: a definition of photography. He calls it "im Grunde nichts anderes . . . als die Materialisierung gespenstischer Erscheinungen vermittels einer sehr fragwürdigen Zauberkunst" [ultimately nothing other than the materialization of spectral appearances through the medium of a dubiously magical art].[36]

Just as *The Emigrants* begins with a photo so too does it end with one—but one of a much different sort. The book ends with Sebald describing figures he finds in a photo from the ghetto in Polish Litzmannstadt, "polski Manczester" (236) ["the polish Manchester" (352)], from 1940. He stares into the photo—a photo that, this time, we are *not* shown: "Hinter einem lotrechten Webrahmen sitzen drei junge, vielleicht zwanzigjährige Frauen. . . Wer die junge Frauen sind, das weiß ich nicht. Wegen des Gegenlichts, das einfällt durch das Fenster im Hintergrund, kann ich ihre Augen genau nicht erkennen, aber ich spüre, daß sie alle drei herschauen zu mir" (237) ["Behind the perpendicular frame of a loom sit three young women, perhaps aged twenty. . . . Who the young women are I do not know. The light falls on them from the window in the background, so I cannot make out their eyes clearly, but I sense that all three of them are looking across at me" (355)]. He continues: "Die mittlere der drei jungen Frauen hat hellblondes Haar und gleicht irgendwie einer Braut. Die Weberin zu ihrer Linken hält den Kopf ein wenig seitwärts geneigt, während die auf der rechten Seite so unverwandt und unerbittlich mich ansieht, daß ich es nicht lange auszuhalten vermag" (237) ["The young woman in the middle is blond and has the air of a bride about her. The weaver to her left has inclined her head a little to one side, whilst the woman on the right is looking at me with so steady and relentless a gaze that I cannot meet it for long" (355)]. The

narrator wonders whether the three girls might have had the lovely, flowering, and melancholy names "Roza, Luisa und Lea oder Nona, Decuma und Morta, die Töchter der Nacht, mit Spindel, Faden und Schere" (237) ["Roza, Luisa and Lea, or Nona, Decuma and Morta, the daughters of night, with spindle, scissors and thread" (355)].

In this photo of three girls who in all probability met early and cruel ends, the narrator suggests for the first time another meaning, another image, and other faces to be seen through the "scrupulousness," as he calls it, of his writing. Those faces are those of the Fates. It is not difficult to understand why Cynthia Ozick, despite her praise for the work as a whole, so harshly criticizes this passage, referring to the absent photo as, "the only false image in this ruthlessly moving and profoundly honest work."[37] The falsity stems from the implication that the Jewish women depicted might be identified with a controlling Fate or Fates.[38] These are the faces of the goddesses who control human lives—the *Moerae* or *Moirai*: Clotho, who spun the thread of life; Lachesis, who measured its length; and Atropos, who cut it. Yet these are not the names we find. The names the narrator suggests are the names of those Greek goddesses in their first emigration—their Roman ones. Nona, Decima, and Morta are the names of the Roman goddesses of fate, the *Parcae*. According to Varro, *Parca* comes from *partus* (birth), and the *Parcae* are thought to have developed from the syncretic interweaving of the Greek Fates with an earlier Roman cult—one of birth. Nona and Decima owe their names to this earlier cult and refer to favorable times for birth, births likely to be healthy and which take place in the ninth (*Nona*) or tenth (*Decima*) month of pregnancy. The final sister, Morta, according to some, such as Livius Andronicus, got her name in a derivation from the Greek *Moira* for Fate. For others, it denotes a different birth and comes from *mors* (death)—responsible for the line of life cut (as in a stillbirth).

Sebald's narrator sees the *Parcae* because it is they whom he sees as spinning, measuring, and cutting the coincidences of which he writes. Nabokov was eager to assume responsibility for the fates he meted out, and while he may be the genius of emigration in Sebald's work, his "allegorical" function involves something more. The anthropomorphic deity Nabokov impersonated in his works was an all-powerful, all-seeing one—one who saw, as Sebald noted in his essay on Nabokov, everything from an ideal, bird's-eye view. As Sebald remarked to James Wood, "any form of authorial writing, where the narrator sets himself up as stagehand and director and judge and executor in a text, I find somehow unacceptable" (89). Sebald was uninclined to write from the height he saw Nabokov writing from, and, correspondingly, the deities he sees and sets in his creations are different ones. Like the strange wandering

Fates, watching closely over life at its mysterious inception, Sebald's deities are not in a secure empyrean, but on a lower level, in a darkening room of this darkening world: "The young woman in the middle is blond and has the air of a bride about her. The weaver to her left has inclined her head a little to one side, whilst the woman on the right is looking at me with so steady and relentless a gaze that I cannot meet it for long" (op. cit.). The third sister's name is Morta. It is said of the Roman Morta that she also dispensed the gift of prophecy. She not only cut life at its end, she pronounced on life from its beginning. The three sisters are called "the daughters of the night" not simply because of the darkness that awaits them but because of the darkness of their origins and the darkness of their designs. Sebald's narrator may be able to watch the first two sisters spin and measure, but, as for the third, the designs of her gaze are ones he can never hold.

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Notes

1. W. G. Sebald, *Nach der Natur. Ein Elementargedicht* (1988; Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 8; trans. Michael Hamburger, *After Nature* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 6. Translation modified. Further citations in text will provide the page number of the original text followed by that of the translation.

2. W. G. Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten. Vier lange Erzählungen* (1992; Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 27; trans. Michael Hulse, *The Emigrants* (New York: New Directions, 1996), 16. Further citations in text will provide the page number of the original text followed by that of the translation.

3. Kilbourn notes an anachronism here, as the scene in question is set in April 1971 while the photo of Nabokov was not taken until August of that year. R. J. A. Kilbourn, "Kafka, Nabokov . . . Sebald: Intertextuality and Narratives of Redemption in *Vertigo* and *The Emigrants,*" in *W. G. Sebald: History—Memory—Trauma,* ed. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 55.

4. Homer, *The Odyssey,* trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 11:137.

5. Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (1967; New York: Vintage International, 1989), 130.

6. Mark R. McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald* (Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P, 2003), 49.

7. Oliver Sill, "'Aus dem Jäger ist ein Schmetterling geworden.' Textbeziehungen zwischen Werken von W. G. Sebald, Franz Kafka und Vladimir Nabokov." *Poetica. Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München) 29.1–2 (1997): 616.

8. See Kilbourn, "Kafka, Nabokov," 57–59.

9. Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 18.

10. W. G. Sebald. *Campo Santo,* ed. Sven Meyer (München und Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003), 140. If not otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

11. Carol Bere, "The Book of Memory: W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* and *Austerlitz*," *The Literary Review* 46.1 (2002): 184–185.

12. Kilbourn, "Kafka, Nabokov," 54.

13. Sill, "'Aus dem Jäger," 621.

14. Lisa Cohen, "Prose: *The Emigrants* by W. G. Sebald," *Boston Review* 22 (1997): 45.
15. McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald*, 26.
16. Tess Lewis, "W. G. Sebald: The Past is Another Country," *The New Criterion* (2001): 87.
17. W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002), 134.
18. W. G. Sebald and James Wood, "An Interview with W. G. Sebald," *Brick* (1998): 90. Further citations in text.
19. Sebald, *Campo Santo*, 263.
20. Thomas Wirtz, "Schwarze Zuckerwatte: Anmerkungen zu W. G. Sebald," *Merkur* 55 (2001): 530–534; 530. Cf. Thomas Steinfeld, "W. G. Sebald," *Akzente* (2003): 82.
21. Cited in Stefanie Harris, "The Return of the Dead: Memory and Photography in W. G. Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten*," *The German Quarterly* 74.4 (2001): 379.
22. Martin Swales, "Theoretical Reflections on the Work of W. G. Sebald," in *W. G. Sebald—A Critical Companion*, ed. J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Seattle: U of Washington P, 2004), 28.
23. James Wood. *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 248. Further citations in text.
24. Joanna Scott, "Sebald Crawling," *Salmagundi* 135–136 (2002): 251.
25. Sven Boedecker, "Menschen auf der anderen Seite. Gespräch mit W. G. Sebald," *Rheinische Post*, October 9, 1993, 15.
26. Ibid.
27. *Campo Santo*, 188.
28. Ibid.
29. Boedecker, "Menschen," 15.
30. Sarah Kafatou, "An Interview with W. G. Sebald," *Harvard Review* 15 (1998): 31.
31. W. G. Sebald, *Logis in einem Landhaus. Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere* (1998; Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000), 139.
32. Vladimir Nabokov, *Bend Sinister* (1949; New York: Vintage, 1990), xviii.
33. W. G. Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn: eine englische Wallfahrt* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1995), 21; trans. Michael Hulse, *Rings of Saturn* (New York: New Directions, 1999), 32.
34. Sebald, *Logis in einem Landhaus*, 138.
35. *Campo Santo*, 198.
36. *Campo Santo*, 28. On the question of whether Sebald is attacking history or historicism through his use of photography, as some have argued, see Mark M. Anderson, "The Edge of Darkness: On W. G. Sebald" *October* 106 (2003): 108, and Mark M. Anderson, "Loin, mais loin d'où: Sur W. G. Sebald" *Critique* 8 (2002): 259.
37. Cynthia Ozick, "The Posthumous Sublime," *New Republic*, December 16, 1996, 33–38, 34.
38. On this point cf. McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald*, 54.