ANSELM KIEFER:
REMEMBERING, REPEATING, AND
WORKING THROUGH THE PAST

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts
of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

by
Scott B. Kline
August, 2013
Thesis written by

Scott B. Kline

B.A., Hiram College, 2001

B.A., Kent State University, 2004

M.A., Kent State University, 2013

Approved by

__________________________
Navjotika Kumar, Advisor

__________________________
Christine Havice, Director, School of Art

__________________________
John R. Crawford, Dean, College of the Arts
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAGES</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Anselm Kiefer, <em>For Genet</em>, 1969</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Caspar David Friedrich, <em>Wanderer above a Sea of Mist</em>, 1818</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Andre Masson, <em>Figure</em>, 1926-27</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. Anselm Kiefer, *Varus* (Detail)
23. Anselm Kiefer, *To the Unknown Painter*, 1983
33. Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981
34. Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981
35. Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981
40. Wilhelm Kreis. *Funeral Hall for the Great German Soldiers*. c. 1939
42. Anselm Kiefer, from *The Heavens, Albert Speer’s Cathedral of Light*. 1969
44. Anselm Kiefer, *Emanation*, 1984-86 .......................................................... 123
46. *Sefiroth* Tree of Life .................................................................................. 123
51. Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XV Medea Jason (Detail)*, 1988 ... 124
52. Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XXIV The Argonauts (Detail)*, 1988 125
56. Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, X Sefiroth (Detail)*, 1988 ............... 126
58. Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, Emanation (Detail)*, 1988 ............. 126
63. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Sefiroth (Detail)*, 2004-05 ... 128
64. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Sefiroth (Detail)*, 2004-05 ... 128
65. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia*, 2004-05 ......... 129
66. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia*, (Detail), 2004-05.....................129
67. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia* (Detail), 2004-05.....................129
68. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Ararat*, 2004-05........................................130
69. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Ararat*, (Detail), 2004-05............................130
70. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Magnetic Field Lines*, 2004-05.....................131
71. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Magnetic Field Lines*, (Detail), 2004-05............131
73. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, JH&WH* (Detail), 2004-05..............................132
74. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Falling Pictures*, 2004-05..............................133
75. Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Falling Pictures*, (Detail), 2004-05.................133
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This epic writing adventure would not have been possible without the help of numerous people. I want to give the most thanks to my advisor, Dr. Navjotika Kumar, who has been a mentor to me since the inception of this process. Your always helpful advice allowed me to make sense of my random thoughts and put them in the proper order on paper. You have not only made me a better writer, but you have provided me with a model for what a true art historian should be. Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Diane Scillia, for always being the calm during the storm when I was having issues. Also, thank you to the rest of the Kent State University Art History Department, Dr. Fred Smith, Dr. Gustav Medicus, and Dr. Carol Salus. Not only have you made me feel welcome in the department, but answered all of my questions and offered wonderful advice throughout my time in the program. Also to Professor Albert Reischuck for igniting my interest in modern art. Finally, thank you to my wife, Colleen, for providing me with love and moral support while I pursue my goals.
INTRODUCTION

Anselm Kiefer is a German artist who has been producing artworks since the late 1960s. Born in Germany in 1945, Kiefer is heavily influenced by the events surrounding World War II and how these events affected the course of history in his home country. One of Kiefer’s early teachers, Joseph Beuys, created works of art based on his firsthand experience of the war. Kiefer employs these themes of the war, but from the viewpoint of a generation following the catastrophe. He creates images in an attempt to help the German people come to terms with the past, work through the actions of their forefathers, and begin a process of genuine healing. In his works, Kiefer deals directly with the issue of a nation in denial, and hopes the memories of World War II will reemerge, so they can be dealt with properly. Anselm Kiefer became the artist that would create works to help people with the process of acceptance.

In Chapter one, I consider the German artists of the past that influenced Kiefer. One early influence upon Kiefer and other twentieth century German artists is Albrecht Dürer, one of the most well known northern artists during the Renaissance. He was essential in helping define German art in the 1500s. Because of historical events, Germany had a difficult time establishing an artistic identity strictly its own after Dürer. It was not until the early twentieth-century that the Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter movements came to be, followed by the Dada movement in Berlin and Cologne. This was the first time since the 1500s that Germans could claim an art movement as their own. However, World War I affected the growth of these movements and, with the exception of the Bauhaus, Expressionism, and the New Objectivity or Neue Sachlichkeit, the events leading up to World War II, including the rise of Adolf Hitler, stunted German artists’ growth once again.
Immediately following the Second World War, the Germans, as a defeated nation, tended to follow the popular movements throughout Europe and the United States, which were primarily abstract in nature.

Joseph Beuys was one of the early artists to emerge in the post-War decades with a strictly German style, which was influenced by Dada and the first to deal with the subject of the Holocaust. Due to the Nazi attack on the styles of expressionism and abstraction, a new wave of German artists eventually began working in a new style called Neo-expressionism. This new movement arose due to the art market desire and need for a fresh, new style. Neo-expressionism showed the influence of the Abstract Expressionists, while at times including figures similar to that of New Objectivity artists such as Georg Grosz and Otto Dix. These emerging German artists also worked within the theme of World War II and the effect it had on Germany and its people. Among these artists were Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorf, Markus Lüpertz, A.R. Penck and Anselm Kiefer. These artists dealt primarily with the atrocities of World War II and the general dismissal by Germans of the events that took place. The style was influenced by the expressive brushwork of Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists, as well as the thematic elements of Beuys. They also returned to figurative works and paintings on canvas instead of the Minimalist and Conceptual works of the 1960s and 1970s. Due to this shift in medium and subject matter, the Neo-expressionists made it possible for the art market to once again purchase and sell contemporary art, unlike the majority of the art produced by their predecessors working in the Minimalist and Conceptual styles.

Kiefer would emerge as one of the most prolific and controversial artists within this movement. His Occupations series of the late 1960s and early 1970s dealt directly with the
Nazis within Germany. He was hoping to get others to recall the past by posing as a German soldier holding the Nazi salute at different locations within photographs and paintings. Kiefer was not trying to relive the past, but rather remind the German people of what it had been and how far they have come since then. Although he met much opposition and criticism, he was one of the featured artists in the 1980 Venice Biennale along with Georg Baselitz. The German people heavily criticized the Biennale, but it allowed Kiefer to gain exposure to the larger art world outside of Germany. In time, the Germans would reluctantly accept Kiefer and his works because of his warm reception in the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Israel. Through referencing past artists and art movements in his work, Kiefer attempts to expand, combine, and update the German art historical past, while also referring to Germany’s Nazi past.

Early in his career, Kiefer used a lot of figurative imagery and photography. As his career progressed, he began to move toward more symbolic images and expressionist brushwork. Although the thematic elements of his works throughout his career tend to lean toward exposing the German psyche and the horrors in World War II, his later works become subtler in their approach when dealing with these issues. Kiefer even used stories from mythology, Christianity, and the Kabbalah to make reference to Germany and its past. Along with the various themes of Kiefer’s works, he also tended to use a lot of non-traditional media on his canvases. Some of the most widely used items include straw, sand, shellac, and lead. These materials each have significance for Kiefer, meanings that relate to German history as well as the history of art. The straw and sand make reference to agriculture in the German landscape. Straw is sometimes used to represent the yellow hair of the ideal German female, Margarete. Sand makes reference to the substance in which the
dead are buried and from which new life can once again grow. Kiefer liked the warm glow and the brittleness of shellac and its ability to transform throughout the art making process. However, lead was and continues to be the most important material to Kiefer. It has been used extensively throughout his career and holds multiple references and meanings. By using lead, Kiefer explores alchemical concepts and, as will be seen further on, connects his works to the planet and the mythical god, Saturn. By using these various materials, Kiefer is able to establish multiple layers of meaning for each of his works.

In chapter two, I discuss the connection between the themes in Kiefer’s artwork and the writings of Sigmund Freud, in particular Freud’s *Repression, Mourning and Melancholia*, and *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through*. Kiefer dealt with a German society that had lost its artistic, as well as cultural identity after World War II. The people of Germany repressed memories of the atrocities of the war and attempted to live in denial of the past. Kiefer, through his art, tried to address memories that had been repressed and to make them conscious. According to Freud, once the memories have been pulled from the subconscious, the act of mourning may begin. Not only is Kiefer attempting to help a nation work through its melancholia, but also trying to deal with his own as a German artist and citizen. Although his *Occupations* series was considered a bit too brash in its representation of the past, Kiefer began to produce works that subtly referenced the Nazis and attempted to help the German people through their melancholy. He created numerous canvases of desolate, expressionist landscapes of various locations that are recognizable to ordinary Germans. The element of fire became a common theme among his works during this time as well. Sometimes, various items are burned with fire, while in other instances Kiefer painted flames on canvas. The fire was not necessarily about destruction, but more
about redemption. One must rise from the ashes created by the fire in order to begin one’s rebirth and gain redemption. Another element Kiefer used in his work was referred to as a “screen.” Many times in his works, some sort of text is written over the top of the image. Sometimes it is the title of the work, while at others times it may be the names of certain people involved in the story being referenced. Whatever the case may be, the writing on the canvas blocks the viewer from getting too involved with the image and allows them to connect the image to the words they are reading. Therefore, this “screen” lessens the emotional connection of the viewer to the landscape and allows for various levels of interpretation.

As Kiefer continued to deal with issues of melancholia or melancholy, he made direct reference to Dürer and his work *Melancholia I*, from 1514. He was able to connect this image to the melancholia of Germany and to the theme of Saturn as melancholic, which will be discussed in chapter one. Kiefer also referred to one of the four temperaments, black bile, and how it is connected to the melancholic temperament as well. Through all of these subtle references in his artwork, he was able to transition into mourning. While in mourning, the German people began to recognize their loss of identity and recall the events of the war. There was a bit of reluctance for the older generation, especially those who were directly related to the Nazi regime, to connect to Kiefer’s works because they felt they were responsible for the embarrassment that cast upon Germany. However, the goal of the mourning process was to accept what had happened and learn from the past. Only then could the nation begin to work through its issues. Through the constant repetition of imagery and references to the past, Kiefer began the process of remembering and working through the traumas of the past. Once the people of Germany made their repressed
memories conscious after being in a melancholic state, and then entering the process of
mourning, they could then begin working through and finally accept the events. Step by
step, Kiefer walks people through this process with his art.

Chapter three is dedicated to Kiefer's works based on the poetry of Paul Celan.
Celan was forced into a Nazi labor camp as a young man. Many of his poems refer to his
experience at the camp and his responses to the war. Like Kiefer, Celan used various
references in his poetry to make his art more acceptable to his audience. Early in his
career, Celan dealt with the medieval epic of the Nibelungs, which Kiefer also used in
several works. The Nibelungs and their blind loyalty toward their own race allowed Celan
to connect them to the Nazi party in a subtle manner. Arguably Celan's most famous poem,
*Death Fugue*, provided Kiefer with a new resource with which to create art. These works
primarily dealt with the subjects of Margarete, the golden-haired German, and Shulamith,
the ashen-haired Jew. Margarete was derived from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*,
while Shulamith was from the *Song of Songs* from the Old Testament. Both Celan and
Kiefer, paired these women together within their works. This became an idealized
situation where two women, one German and one Jewish, reflected a divided nation that
was once unified. It gave hope to both sides in the Holocaust that they would again be able
to coexist.

Kiefer used straw to represent Margarete in his works, while black streaks of paint,
many times mimicking the actions of the straw, represented Shulamith. In many of the
works, a receding landscape acted as the background, while the focus was on the items
representing the women in the foreground. At times, Kiefer created works that dealt with
the women individually and their cultural roles. In the case of Shulamith, Kiefer showed
several figurative representations of the ashen-haired Jew, while at the same time used Nazi architecture to represent the same woman. The theme of the Jewish woman continued in Celan’s poetry, therefore Kiefer followed suit. The images created began to focus on the role of Jewish women during the Nazi period and the challenges they faced. Eventually, the hair became detached from the person and took on a life of its own. Through the pairing of these women in his works, Kiefer continued his attempt to help the German people work through their trauma.

Throughout his career, Kiefer incorporated religious themes into his works. Chapter four addresses the various thematic shifts in his religious imagery. Early in his career, Kiefer dealt with the notion of Heaven and how each individual has his or her own idea of what it is like. He created books of art depicting his views and continued to make reference to the heinous views of Fascism and the loneliness of its followers in modern times. He continued to create images of desolate landscapes that, however, promote growth and hope for the future. By the mid-1980s, Kiefer began to explore the writings of the Kabbalah. Since there was no established imagery for the Kabbalah, Kiefer was free to create his own interpretations of the various stories. Many of his works that refer to the Kabbalah are large-scale sculptural works. Some are individual, while others are large installations that consist of numerous pieces. Although the subject matter is religious, Kiefer continually makes references to Jewish and German culture. Themes of resurrection and redemption are seen throughout Kiefer’s religious works. He attempts to resurrect the memories of the past, so German people may seek forgiveness and redemption.

Through my discussion, I hope to show that art can aid in the healing process of a nation. Throughout his career, Anselm Kiefer has produced works based on the cultural
and artistic past of Germany, in order to help his countrymen better understand their own heritage. Although their nation's history has not always been positive and has left the people of Germany questioning their identity, Kiefer has attempted to help them understand what happened. Through this process, he has been able to work through and unearth repressed memories, so they can finally be dealt with. He has helped German people out of their melancholic state and provided them awareness during their mourning period. Finally, through his repetition of imagery and storytelling based on memories from the past, Kiefer has assisted Germans in finally understanding what happened during their country’s darkest time.
CHAPTER I

The German philosopher, a leading figure at the Frankfurt School of critical theory and musicologist, and sociologist Theodor Adorno once wrote, "After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric."¹ According to Adorno’s statement, poets, as well as artists, were presented with the task of figuring out what kind of writing and imagery would be considered appropriate in post World War II Germany. In what style should they be working? What subject matter can be represented? Should art be purely abstract, non-representational, and non-objective? And how does one even begin to discuss the atrocities of what happened? In order to answer these questions, I will briefly discuss Joseph Beuys and then the Neo-expressionists and Anselm Kiefer. However, I feel it is necessary to discuss certain points of German art history in order to better understand the current climate.

German writer, curator, and professor at the Künstakademie in Düsseldorf, Siegfried Gohr, acknowledged, “Germany has always had to cope with a specific difficulty. In Germany, not only has new art had to struggle for public acceptance but art itself, true art, has had to struggle against the dominance of a rigid artistic mediocrity. And this is as true today as it was in the past.”² This acceptance was evident during the time of Albrecht Dürer and Mathias Grünewald. Both artists were forced to split their artistic endeavors into both public and private entities. Grünewald took an active part in the Peasants’ War and the Reformation, while Dürer was less engaged and carried out his works in private.

By giving his *Four Apostles* to the city of Nuremburg, Dürer hoped to support the city council’s decision to protect the city and its citizens from the Peasants’ War. Grünewald’s non-conformist attitude toward current events and Dürer’s more reluctant one, displayed a wide span of responses by German artists at an early date. This is a trait that continued with German artists into and through the twentieth century. Throughout the Baroque period, many German artists were inspired by the Italian masters and were unable to establish independent cultural identity. Rococo and Neo-Classicism were derived from the French and were never strong enough to be considered a strictly German genre. Even Romantic paintings were reduced to primarily landscapes, devoid of all storytelling.³ Eventually, Impressionism would rise out of Paris and begin exhibiting in Berlin, but it was not until the turn of the century that German art began to have a separate identity. *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* would be the first major art movements in the twentieth century that Germany could claim as its own, followed by Dada in Berlin and Cologne. Unfortunately, these were short lived due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

After World War I, most surviving artists picked up where they left off, or returned to realism or participated in the Bauhaus, New Objectivity, or in Post-War Expressionism, although Gohr claims the latter did not have as much of an impact in the German art world as recent art historians have led one to believe.⁴ Even before the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, Degenerate Art had been condemned and the Third Reich embraced the heroic style of Neo-Classicism. Immediately following the end of the war, many artists in the western half of Germany chose to follow the trends of the United States and much of the rest of Europe and work in a non-objective abstract style, while in East Germany, artists

---

were working towards Social Realism based on Soviet models. Dealing with the atrocities of the Nazis was taboo, and mentioning the events of World War II was not even a consideration in the artistic world. The shift in styles after 1945 was to eliminate, in effect, the memory of the art of the Nazi regime. Abstract Expressionism in the United States was a movement that allowed artists to create works with a freedom of thought and style. This allowed artists to express themselves on the surface of the canvas through physical gestures, using a wide range of themes, and an expanded color palette. Jackson Pollock was able to practice this style in its purest form. Germany had previously worked with expressionism, much of which was figurative as opposed to the completely abstract wave now coming from the Americas. The new German artists of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Jörg Immendorf, Markus Lüpertz, and A.R. Penck among others, were not rooted in German history. German artists adopted this approach because it was what the time demanded as an official style. Unlike their earlier predecessors’ innovative art movements and styles, like Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter, German artists now wanted to normalize and become integrated with European society. They did not want to be ostracized because of their own actions in World War II. Therefore, German artists began working in the non-representational and non-objective abstract style of the Europeans and Americans of the 1960s, which allowed the art market to have concrete works of art to buy and sell as opposed to the conceptual and minimalist works that came before. Major accomplishments in German art, such as early German Expressionism and Dada, have historically grown out of opposition of this forced adoption of a popular style of the time.5

5 Ibid, 27.
One of the first artists to recount the war in Germany during the early 1940s is Joseph Beuys. He was a German fighter pilot during World War II and was shot down while in combat on the Russian front. It was this trauma that Beuys would often reference in his work during the 1960s. It is said he was shot down over the Russian steppes beyond enemy lines. After the crash, Beuys was near death, but a nomadic group of Tartars wrapped his body in fabric and felt and nursed him back to health. That experience became “the foundational event in an artistic career at least in part defined by a shamanistic belief in the powers of transformation and healing, in the therapeutic powers of art and artist in society.”

Beuys would begin to explore his memories of the war and reference the wounds he received in his works and performances. He reacted negatively to the aftermath of World War II akin to the way the Dadaists handled World War I. Beuys dealt with the idea of an open wound, not only his own, but that of German society, in a work titled Bathtub from 1960 (Figure 1). He presented a bathtub from the early 1900s. This was not an immaculate porcelain specimen like Duchamp’s Fountain, but rather it was shown as a “battered and vulnerable” object, held together with bandages. This was the first attempt by a German artist to address directly the wounds of World War II. Although Beuys did not make a direct statement about the Holocaust and chose to make it more of a personal and societal statement, he opened the door for artists to begin their exploration of what happened during that time. Beuys became a teacher and inspiration to a new group of artists who began opening old wounds in German society and forced the people of

---

6 Lisa Saltzman, Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 84.
8 Ibid, 84
Germany to deal with and confront their past. Several of these artists emerged as the leaders of a new art movement called Neo-Expressionism.

The Neo-expressionists sought to deal with a phenomenon in Germany known as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with the past. This was not meant to be a retelling of the past, but rather dealing with what had happened through alternate images, text, and stories in order to better understand and accept the reality of Hitler’s Germany and World War II. Included in this movement were Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorf, Markus Lüpertz, A.R. Penck and Anselm Kiefer among others. This style of art was met with extreme disapproval from Germans, as well as American Art critics, not just because of the subject matter, but also due to the handling of the artistic material. Critics stated that this form of painting “regressed not merely to expressionism (a decadent style) but to painting (an obsolete convention).” These artists were also using paint, which according to critics, was an outdated material that was being replaced by performance art and various sculptural materials. Neo-expressionism was the polar opposite of the Minimalist and Conceptual art of the 1960s. It seemed as though the artists of this group were in a state of regression when compared to the current art scene. Not only were they incorporating the violent brushstrokes of Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists, but they were also using paint, which was in contrast to the Conceptual and Post-Minimal art of many European and American artists at this time. Their goal was to bring the figurative back into art, while incorporating the abstractness of the Modern era and the brutal

---

physicality of the early expressionists. They also incorporated the social issues presented to them by Beuys and together with the German traditions of the romantic landscape, the element of the sublime and the roots of German expressionism. These artists disfigured and contorted the human body, while simultaneously maintaining its naturalness. The body rendered a symbolic representation of twentieth century German society and shows their ability to combine the figurative and abstract. These artists also used the figure to represent fictional and mythological characters, while referencing the German historical past. By representing the figure as a fictional and abstract form, they redefined the photographic image by distorting reality, while telling a story, like that of a photograph.

One of the most prolific and controversial artists of the Neo-expressionist movement was Anselm Kiefer. He was born in 1945 in the German town of Donaueschingen, which lies near the two source tributaries of the Danube River. In the mid-1960s, Kiefer began to study law and French at the University of Freiburg. By the end of the 1960s, he abandoned his law degree and started painting with Peter Dreher in Freiburg and later in Karlsruhe with Horst Antes. However, it was not until the early 1970s that he began studying with his most influential teacher, Joseph Beuys.

By the late 1960s, Kiefer was finally ready to re-open the German wounds of World War II and present them with the most brazen images of that time, forcing Germans to directly confront their past. His Occupations, a series in 1969, was published in the pages of interfunktionen, a popular German art magazine, which led to boycotts of the publication

---

because of the offensive nature of his images (Figure 2)\textsuperscript{12}. During the late 1960s, Kiefer produced several series of works, \textit{Heroic Symbols}, \textit{For Genet}, and \textit{Occupations} attempting to re-awaken the German past. Each of these series is composed of images of Kiefer performing the official Nazi Salute, or \textit{Sieg Heil}. \textit{For Genet} and \textit{Occupations} are photographic series, while \textit{Heroic Symbols} includes photographs and watercolors. This was the first time an artist had confronted the German Nazi past so blatantly. Other Neo-expressionists, had commented on the German past, but through symbols, metaphor, and abstraction. Kiefer explained why he used the well known, but often-repressed gesture of the Third Reich by stating, “I do not identify with Nero or Hitler, but I have to reenact what they did just a little bit in order to understand their madness.”\textsuperscript{14}

In Kiefer’s \textit{Heroic Symbols}, he photographs himself clothed in what seems to be a military jacket, performing the Nazi salute in various European locations (Figure 3)\textsuperscript{15}. Some of the photographs are taken outdoors, near various bodies of water, or in mountainous terrain, while others are taken inside his studio. This series also includes several watercolor paintings of a man performing the salute in different outdoor locations as well (Figure 4)\textsuperscript{16}. The figures in \textit{Heroic Symbols} are always shown by themselves either in nature or indoors. There is a sense of isolation and loneliness in each depiction. I feel this suggests there is no longer support for the Nazi Party in 1960s Germany and that the

\textsuperscript{14} Lopez-Pedraza, \textit{The Psychology of "After the Catastrophe,"} 16.
former supporters and followers of Hitler are now alone in the post World War II era.

Rafael Lopez-Pedraza sees this lone figure as a:

Poor little man (that) reveals the demise of the horrifying inflation of the Nazi millennium – the ‘Thousand Year Reich’ – and conveys a new consciousness concerning National Socialism. In an indirect way, Kiefer leads us into considering a millennium in which humankind would have had to make a Nazi salute incessantly and compulsively; in so doing he touches a psychology that has not been explored: that of unparalleled dementia.17

I think Lopez-Pedraza’s idea of an incessant and compulsive Nazi salute during the “Thousand Year Reich” is the primary reason for the repetition in Kiefer’s early series involving the Nazi salute. Kiefer does not do this in order to cause terror in Germans and bring up the past in a negative way, but rather as a reminder of what it could have been like if the results of The war were different. Kiefer has found a way to confront the past in a positive way. He uses a gesture of madness and death to remind Germans what their lives may have been like if the end result of the war had been different, but at the same time, makes them thankful for what they have become.

For Genet, from 1969, features more photographs of Kiefer performing the Nazi salute (Figure 5)18. The title makes reference to Jean Genet, a prominent and controversial French novelist, playwright, poet, essayist, and political activist. During the 1930s and 1940s, Genet was in poverty and wandered throughout Europe stealing and prostituting for money to men and women. Due to his behavior, Genet spent a lot of time in prisons.19 The various vagrants and criminals he met during his travels became primary characters in his books, the majority of which were written behind bars. Once released from prison,

17 Ibid, 17.
Genet would experience rapid success with his writings and plays. During the late 1960s, Genet became a more outspoken radical when it came to his political views. He traveled to the United States in 1968 and agreed to collaborate with the Black Panthers. He chose to work with minority groups that "originally had considered themselves unjustly treated" and whose "revolts were condemned by liberal public opinion for their terrorist methods."20

In this photographic series, Kiefer appears in odd clothing and primarily indoors. The dress Kiefer wears may reference the homosexual tendencies of Genet during his early years as a prostitute. The indoor setting allows the viewer to possibly see a more intimate side of the artist, but could also be making reference to Genet’s prison cell. In this series, the salute begins to take on a new meaning. The artist appears to be a bit more reluctant to give the salute. It is almost as if Kiefer is pained by the gesture, while contemplating its meaning. In this series, there are several images where he stands quite stoic with arms crossed, defiant to succumb to the outside forces insisting he perform the salute. The denial of the salute could be associated with Genet’s political views, therefore siding with the Jewish people because of how they were wronged during the war. However, it is possible Kiefer could be speaking to the former Nazis and their need to isolate themselves from the public for fear of retaliation from anti-Nazi groups. The former soldiers were aware they could only show their allegiance indoors, away from the gaze of the public, and were depressed by their defeat. On the other hand, Kiefer could also be showing the fear a former soldier may have if he were exposed to the public, therefore keeping his secrets inside, while the somber photographs show the remorse of their actions during the war.

20 ibid, 6.
One of the photographs in *For Genet* depicts Kiefer standing on the water in a bathtub presenting the viewer with the same Nazi salute (Figure 6).21 Lopez-Pedraza describes it as “an image that displays the most inflated side of the Christian legacy, that madness in which magic, the savior, and the hero meet.”22 I feel Kiefer has chosen to connect the Nazis megalomania and Christ being able to walk on water. The Christian belief is that Christ can walk on water, while we know that if a Nazi were to attempt to take a step into the bathtub, he would immediately fall into the water. However, the irony of the image is that Kiefer needs assistance in order to stand on the water, therefore showing the fallacy of the idea that the Nazis are similar to Christ. Therefore, this idea that the Nazi party and its leaders were God-like is nullified. References to Christianity and other religions become an integral part of Kiefer’s work later in his career.

*Occupations* is Kiefer’s most extensive study into the use of the Nazi salute and the impact it had on the 1960s German psyche (Figure 7).23 This series included numerous photos of Kiefer employing his salute, which had been outlawed in Germany since 1945, throughout Europe. Andreas Huyssen has observed:

In almost all the photos the Sieg Heil figure is miniscule, dwarfed by the surroundings; the shots are taken from afar. . . . There are no jubilant masses, marching soldiers, nor any other emblems of power and imperialism that we know from historical footage from the Nazi era. The artist does not identify with the gesture of Nazi occupation, he ridicules it, satirizes it.24

---


22 Ibid, 23.


Huyssen makes note that the idea of the lone gentleman in the photograph shows how far the Third Reich has fallen. The soldier no longer has his followers and is meant to wander the continent alone. The various locations seem to be places Hitler wanted to conquer such as Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal, but that he never had the opportunity to. This makes it more ironic that this lone soldier is attempting to occupy these lands by himself. Ian Alteveer from the Metropolitan Museum of Art discussed one of Kiefer’s photographs that has a body of water as the backdrop and is taken from behind, therefore only seeing the silhouette of the figure. Alteveer likens this figure to the Romantic wanderer in Caspar David Friedrich’s painting entitled Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (Figure 8). Based on the Nazi salute and the time the photograph was taken, he feels Kiefer manages to combine three histories in a single photograph: early nineteenth century Romanticism, the Fascist climate of the 1930s and the current art of the 1960s. This shows Kiefer’s multi-layered approach to his works. He is attempting to shock the German population into recognizing what happened in their recent past, while making references to German art history, which he will continue to do throughout his career. Albert P. Albano notes that the artworks had been misinterpreted by many who did not understand the irony Kiefer’s observation that, “Nazism’s idea of permanence was an illusion.” This was a major issue that Kiefer was trying to get across, but very few saw it this way. The isolation of the figure and the fact that no one else was located within the frame shows that

the Third Reich and the Nazi regime have gone away. However, the mere fact that the soldier still exists may point toward the belief that fascist ideology remains in today’s society. Although fascism remains hidden behind closed doors, it has the potential to reignite if these individuals were to come together. If they remain individuals, they become so insignificant that they are left as the lone follower trying to reestablish his dominance throughout Europe without success. The idea of the Nazi millennium is far gone in the minds of Germans, and Kiefer is showing the irony of the last soldier trying his best to reignite the flames of Nazi power once again.

Kiefer’s first exposure to the international public would take place in the German Pavilion of the 1980 Venice Biennale. Klaus Gallwitz presented the work of two up and coming artists from Germany, Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer. The theme of the Biennale was “Art in the ‘70s.” This theme would make it appropriate for Gallwitz to display these two artists due to the rise in popularity of Neo-expressionism and the return of a more painterly and figurative approach to art throughout the 1970s. The German Pavilion consisted of three rooms. The introductory room greeted visitors with a roughly carved wooden sculpture by Baselitz, surrounded by his paintings. Baselitz’s work, Model for a Sculpture, was a seated, wood figure with a stiff, outstretched right arm similar to that of a Nazi salute (Figure 9). The figure appeared to have somewhat of a Hitler-esque mustache, not to mention that it was painted with red, black, and white paint, colors that relate to Nazi power.

The other two rooms housed large-scale paintings and books by Kiefer. His works dealt with the same subject matter as Baselitz, however only a few of Kiefer’s were as

blatant as Baselitz’s sculpture. Kiefer chose to use disguised symbolism and mythical references in order to create his messages. Needless to say, the imagery upon entering the Pavilion, as well as the other rooms, was not well received by German critics.\textsuperscript{29} One German critic asked, “Is this neo-Nazi Blood-and-Soil art, a relapse into the glorious past?”\textsuperscript{30} Not only did critics accuse Baselitz and Kiefer of being neo-Nazis, but they were also concerned about how the international spectators would perceive the work of these artists. Baselitz and Kiefer did not outright condemn fascism, but rather used irony and symbolism that needed to be further examined by the viewer. As noted by Bonnie Roos, this led to an outcry by the German art world:

Kiefer’s work is made precarious not only because he takes up the same Romantic painters that the Nazis used for their propaganda, but also because the epic, heroic, and Romantic qualities he exploits in his works are key elements of narratives that have historically perpetuated the oppression of marginalized peoples: they enable the illusion that there are clear delineations between good and evil, self and other, violent masculinity and subservient femininity, German and Jew.\textsuperscript{31}

The Romantic qualities and narratives within Kiefer’s work that Roos discussed tend to be hidden to the viewer at first glance. Only after extended observation does the deeper meaning and dichotomy within Kiefer’s \textit{Occupations} come to fruition, therefore he was left to the initial reaction of the German critics. They did not see his works as ironic, much less as a way to bring repressed memories to the surface in order to deal with the past.

\textsuperscript{29} Saltzman, \textit{Art after Auschwitz}, 106-107.
Kiefer’s intentional theme of Vergangenheitsbewältigung was being misinterpreted as reliving and reviving the past, as opposed to coming to terms with it. Some critics went so far as to believe Baselitz and Kiefer were celebrating the past’s “fear, brutality and injury.” Although most critics commented on the themes of the works, some chose to attack Kiefer for his rough brushwork, multi-layered canvases, and use of sand, straw and lead. The application of paint, combined with the use of non-traditional materials, were points of concern. His technique was described as a “game of extermination/destruction in the studio.” 32

Of course, with this comment, the focus was on the word “extermination” and the weight this word holds in terms of the German past. Despite the German critics’ reaction to the Biennale and the Germans’ fears of international critique, most non-Germans, Americans in particular, praised Baselitz and Kiefer for their courageous effort in presenting works to aid Germans to come to terms with their past. Several New York gallery owners view the 1980 Biennale as an eye-opening event in terms of the art of the Neo-expressionists and their recurring theme of Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Much to the chagrin of Germany, Kiefer’s popularity began to rise throughout the United States, as well as France, the Netherlands, and Israel. Lisa Saltzman stated that Kiefer’s career “rose to heights that German critics never dared imagine, or perhaps more appropriately, never would have wanted to think imaginable. Moreover, with the American acceptance of Kiefer and his compatriots came a gradual readjustment of German critical position.”33 It appeared as though the Germans’ worst fears were never realized. Some in the art communities of New York City and Paris hailed Kiefer as a revolutionary for the way he

33 ibid, 114.
approached his subject matter. Arnds felt the acceptance in the United States was “clearly due to the earlier openness of discourse on the Holocaust in the United States and this country’s appropriation of the Holocaust as a cultural icon.”34 I feel this is the case in America because of our indirect connection to the Holocaust. Americans, were not losing or extinguishing people in these death camps. Instead they were seen as their liberators, and so it is easier for our culture to digest, especially when it happened an ocean away and not on our own soil. Although most of the German critics changed their tune about the widespread acceptance of Kiefer, there will always be a bit of reluctance about accepting his work in the country.

However, not all critics were as eager to accept Kiefer and the Neo-expressionists. Critics such as Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh expressed opposition throughout the 1980s to the work of the Neo-expressionists. In an article from 1981 Buchloh noted the references that Neo-expressionists made to the art of the past: it “is not so much because they [Neo-expressionist works] actually derive from particular precedents, but because their attempt to re-establish forlorn aesthetic positions immediately situates them in historical secondariness.”35 According to Buchloh, Kiefer and his peers’ use of past references fell short, making the movement unsuccessful as a whole. Along the same line, Foster felt that Neo-expressionism was as inauthentic and ironic as media art. The Neo-expressionists were simply copying artists that had come before them just as media art fails to have original ideas. He felt that “institutional supporters may enwrap these artists

---

34 Arnds, On the Awful German Fairytale, 424.
in a rhetoric of authenticity and originality – but this too is ironic.”36 Foster saw the Neo-
Expressionists as frauds. These artists “only seem to prise open history (a necessary
disruption that frees it from mere continuity) to redeem specific moments; in fact, they
only give us hallucinations of the historical, masks of these moments.”37 Foster did not
think the artists were giving their audience an accurate depiction of the past and were only
revisiting it for the sake of making their art relatable to the present citizen. He thought the
Neo-expressionists were a fallacy because of their attempt to make their art relevant
through the employment of certain elements of historical art. Due to their attempts to
simulate the qualities of “great art” of the past by using a “huge canvas, heavy frame, grand
style, and very heavy thematics,”38 made the Neo-expressionists suspect for Foster. I can
see why Buchloh and Foster were reluctant to accept the Neo-Expressionists and their art.
Each artist does present their own views of the past, some of which may be skewed in
order to relate to the audience. Even though this may be the case, I feel that as long as the
artist forms some sort of relationship to the viewer or creates some sort of controversy
with in the art world, he or she has accomplished the goal of getting people to discuss art.
Whether positive or negative, art becomes a topic of discussion, therefore constantly
placing it in the public realm and gaining exposure.

One of the more subtle critiques of Kiefer’s work concerned his use of various
materials. Although Kiefer started his career in the field of photography during the late
1960s with his *Occupations* series, his style would evolve throughout the late 1970s and
1980s. His use of various materials would become vital to the interpretation and meaning

---

37 *ibid*, 76.
38 *ibid*, 76.
of his works. Kiefer also developed a more subtle way of dealing with German history through symbolism and metaphor. Anna Brailovsky sees Kiefer’s work during the 1970s as, “a pictorial form of [Brechtian] theater, and that the true object of the paintings’ critique is not Nazism, but rather the contemporary German viewer’s relationship to Germany’s Nazi past.”

Because Kiefer is one generation removed from World War II, he is able to establish a historical distance between himself and the events of the 1940s in order to create his art from a different point of view as opposed to an artist, such as Beuys, who was a veteran of the war and employs his firsthand experience within his works. This space allows Kiefer the freedom to express himself as a German citizen dealing with the past, as opposed to speaking from firsthand experience as a German pilot, which would lead to prejudice in his image making.

Charles Molesworth felt, “from time to time, art historical schemes return back to the histories of society and politics from which they spring, somewhat as a prodigal child returns...Kiefer’s work occurs at a time when art history is back among the historical constructs offered on the larger canvases of society and politics.” Kiefer not only references Germany’s art historical past in his works, but he wants to remind Germany of its social and political past as well. Kiefer feels as though Germany is ready to deal with these issues, as it is one generation removed from the catastrophe by the late 1960s. Kiefer takes this opportunity to recognize similarities between the German past and the present. By referencing past artists and art movements, Kiefer allows himself to expand, combine, and update the German art historical past, while referencing Germany’s Nazi past. I have found the style in which he works and the type of artist he presents himself as hard to

classify. Kiefer does have certain formalist qualities when it comes to applying paint to a canvas, especially when presenting us with a recognizable interior or landscape. However, many times his landscapes can be described as romantic in relation to the sublime elements they portray, not just visually, but symbolically. Many of them use a dramatic perspective system deemed regressive or a return to Renaissance conventions of picture making, while using dark, brooding colors filled with emotion and mystery. Within the landscapes, though, he sometimes tends to employ the brushstrokes of the Abstract Expressionists. This is what makes Kiefer so hard to identify. He employs several historical styles on the same canvas, making his art have the ability to communicate messages that a broad audience can relate to. John Hallmark Neff stated, “Kiefer’s work reminds us of another age, of the art of the unitary world of the Middle Ages, in which we perceive a balance between what one could strictly see and what one had to know. This union of perception, knowledge, and intuition gave meaning to the ensemble as it revealed the significance of each part.”

Throughout the 1970s, Kiefer slowly moved away from the photographic image and small-scale watercolor paintings. Instead, he gravitated toward large-scale works composed of oil and acrylic paints, lead, straw, sand, shellac, and other non-traditional materials. The human figures that were once displayed gave way to symbolic objects such

---

as snakes, swords, and fire, just to name a few (Figure 10)\textsuperscript{41}. Some works were devoid of anything figurative whatsoever, displaying empty interiors or landscapes. Kiefer also chose to include script in his works. Whether it was the title of the work or some other passage or poem, the text was included to make the viewer aware of the two-dimensionality of the canvas, therefore not allowing the viewer to get too wrapped up with interpreting the visual image by itself. By using this strategy, Brailovsky notes that Kiefer separates his picture into three distinct spheres:

1) figurative representation, in deep perspective, of objects and sites that have some connection to the Third Reich and its foundational myths; 2) modernist surface presence, which at times overwhelsms and obscures the representation, and which offers resistance to the eye’s propensity to follow lines of perspective and text and abstract pictorial elements placed literally on top of all other paint to form what I have referred to as a ‘screen’ between the viewer and the first two spheres of the painting. The result is a kind of collection of disparate elements that can be examined separately and brought together by the unifying action of the screen.\textsuperscript{42}

By using this strategy, the screen is meant to “block the viewer’s access to the representation so that nostalgic identification ceases to be an easily sustainable response.”\textsuperscript{43} This makes the image more palpable to contemporary German citizens, allowing them to establish a connection between the words on the canvas and the image, as opposed to forming their own opinions and emotional attachment to strictly the lone image on the canvas. One would not want the German viewer to initiate an interpretation of images related to the Third Reich and have an immediately negative reaction to the work. This is why Kiefer not only creates the “screen” with the text, but paints the surface in a modernist fashion and uses foreign materials to obscure the connection of the image to the

\textsuperscript{42} Brailovsky, The Epic Tableau, 132.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 132.
Third Reich and the viewer even further (Figure 11)\textsuperscript{44}. Although the connection between the image and Third Reich may not initially be obvious, the writing on the work connects the image with the historical reference, bringing unity to the work.

Because of these multiple elements in Kiefer’s work, Molesworth feels Kiefer’s art engages several issues and can be grouped into at least three headings: “social and emotional content, visual pleasure, and technical abilities.”\textsuperscript{45} In the 1970s, Kiefer chose several different avenues to represent this content that includes mythology, Christianity, and the Kabbalah, which will be discussed at length later on. I believe it is his technical proficiency that allows Kiefer to achieve the visual pleasure in his art. The technical abilities are not limited to the paintbrush, but include alchemy and the manipulation of lead, as well as the use of ephemeral materials and their presentation on a piece that must withstand the effects of time.

As previously mentioned, Kiefer uses many non-traditional items in his works. “He chose materials, he said, that contain and/or would give off energy when they were used.”\textsuperscript{46} One of these materials was lead. Although Kiefer was not the first artist to utilize lead in his works, he employed it in a different manner than Richard Serra or even his teacher, Joseph Beuys. Kiefer is not interested in the physical properties alone, but rather the transformational and symbolic meanings as well. The fact that lead is mined in the mountains of Germany also creates a geographical significance to the works. The primary

\textsuperscript{45} Charles Molesworth, “Anselm Kiefer and the Shapes of Time,” Salmagundi (Skidmore College), no. 82/83 (Spring-Summer 1989), 80.
\textsuperscript{46} Albano, Reflections on Painting, 352.
kinds of industrial lead he uses include smooth sheets in rolls and coarse slabs. Through his manipulation of the material, Kiefer’s lead surfaces can give the illusion of watercolors, photographs, or even steel, therefore transforming the immediate interpretation of the material (Figure 12). Kiefer has a fascination with lead and the way it changed from one physical state to another. This transformation may also refer to the emotional change he hopes to invoke in Germany and its coming to terms with the past. During an alchemical transformation, he saw the color of gold. Not the metallic gold, but the symbolic gold sought by the alchemists. Alchemical concepts associated with numbers were important to Kiefer. Although many numbers held different meanings, he felt the number 12 was the most significant. The number 12 represented the number of stages or operations in the course of the alchemical process of material transformation, which Kiefer also associated with the 12 apostles. This is just one of the underlying meanings Kiefer chose to associate with lead. Later, the connection to lead and the planet and the mythological god, Saturn, will be discussed. However, continuing in the area of alchemy, Kiefer’s representation of different states of lead can be interpreted in his works thus:

The black, the nigredo, is seen as initial state of the first matter, a confused and broken one due to cultural schizophrenia, that of Nazi putrefaction; this is followed by the albedo, purification and ablution in the white and snowy, which entails the dyeing of the earth and the unification of the body sacrificed to the dead landscape; and in the end comes the rubedo and its solar state. And the purified material stems from the liquefaction of the body that torments history, which has thus become the athanor or ‘furnace’ of the artist’s immortality.

47 Neff, Reading Kiefer, 8.
49 Albano, Reflections on Painting, 352.
50 Ibid, 359.
These three alchemical states of lead instantly provide deeper meaning to Kiefer’s works. When it comes to interpreting Kiefer’s art, it seems as though there are two or more sides to every piece. I question whether the Nazi putrefaction refers to the rotting and disintegration of the bodies they executed or the breakdown of the Nazi regime itself. The *albedo* could possibly reference the Nazis’ attempt to “purify” Germany or perhaps present day Germany’s attempt to wash its hands of past events. And the *rubedo* could be dealing with the furnace in which the Nazis burned dead bodies or the fire within the soul of Kiefer igniting as he creates these works.

Some other materials Kiefer preferred using were straw, sand and shellac. Several times straw is used in his works to represent the blonde hair of Margarete, the ideal personification of German women (Figure 13)\(^{52}\). However, Kiefer sometimes paints the straw, therefore it becomes the hair of Shulamite, the Jewish female protagonist\(^{53}\) (Figure 14)\(^{54}\). I will delve into both these works later when discussing Kiefer and his connection to the poetry of Paul Celan. Kiefer has a strong connection to straw. He once stated:

> I like straw. I am really a farmer. It is a material from the earth which is also golden and gives off energy, heat, and warmth when it is transformed through burning, leaving the earth clean again and ready to begin anew. From the earth life generates, and, then, like shit, which was warm, another form of energy going back into the earth.\(^{55}\)

Once again, Kiefer makes reference to the material and the energy it holds. He also references alchemy and the chemical transformation of the material by way of fire. Kiefer

---


is constantly able to connect the message of his works through the use of material; one such instance is Nigredo from 1984 (Figure 15). It is composed of a large-scale landscape that recedes into the distance with the horizon line near the top of the canvas. The ground appears to have been charred, making reference to the first step in the alchemical process, which is nigredo, or burning, or possibly referring to the charred bodies that once filled the German landscape. Only after the burning is it possible for the lead to eventually become gold in the alchemical process. Hints of gold appear to be emerging from the landscape, showing the passage of time in the process. This passage of time that creates the gold is equivalent to the amount of time that must pass in order for Germans to accept and work through their past. The whole idea of the materials being transformed or being cleansed through burning and coming back anew coincides with his theme of Germans coming to terms with their past. The German people need to address their repressed memories, deal with their melancholy, and begin to work through their issues. Only then can they cleanse themselves of the past through critical understanding acceptance.

Another material Kiefer enjoyed using was shellac. His feelings about this material were similar to that of lead in terms of the color possibilities and the energy it possessed. He would work in a variety of yellow shellacs, sometimes mixing up to ten different shades in order to achieve the one that best fit his purpose, while also using clear shellac from time to time. “He liked shellac’s warmth and glow and it’s hard, brittle quality, even the cracks that develop as the material transforms and hardens. He gave the example of its use by furniture makers as a material that, while rubbed and polished, takes on energy and

becomes warm to the touch.” The theme of warmth and transformation appears once again in discussions of Kiefer’s use of materials. I believe this warmth is representative of the fire concept that appears in his works. The fire he speaks of is what creates the ash, from which rebirth can take place. This becomes a thematic cycle of rebirth through the ashes that were a direct result of the death of the Jews by the fire of incinerators represented directly in his works, or the fire he uses to manipulate the various materials.

One other material that shows up frequently within Kiefer’s work is sand. The use of sand reminds me of the automatism of André Masson, the Surrealist whose work was condemned before World War II and deemed Degenerate Art (Figure 16). I feel Kiefer is using sand as a way to remind the viewer of this time in history when this was an unacceptable material in art during a tumultuous political climate. It seems as though there is always some sort of connection in Kiefer’s work between the art historical past of Germany or the lost memories of the Nazi regime. His use of sand is able to establish a connection to both of these categories. *March Sand V* is one major work in which Kiefer used sand (Figure 17). The work shows photographs of a landscape with sand glued to the surface. Charles Molesworth finds the literalness of this work comical:

as if he [Kiefer] were trying to plow up the image. As it turns out, the title refers to a patriotic tune used for inspirational effect by Hitler, and, further back, the area depicted is a locale in Brandenburg that figures importantly as a battleground in Prussian history. The thematics of plowing and regeneration would seem to suggest the possibility of a new start, but they could just as well suggest, with typical equivocality, the penchant to plow under unpleasant episodes.

---

58 Ibid, 352
59 Wahoo Art. “Figure, 1927.” http://en.wahooart.com/@/@/6WHJWP-Andr%C3%A9-Aim%C3%A9-Ren%C3%A9-Masson-Figure-%281927%29 (accessed July 23, 2013).
60 Photograph. Rosenthal, Kiefer, 46.
61 Molesworth, *Shapes of Time*, 84.
Once again, we are presented with multiple interpretations of a single work. On the surface the viewer gets the sense that the plowing deals with a new start. A farmer plows a field before he plants his crops for the year. Is Kiefer’s plowing suggesting a new start or is he trying to cover up the past? At least that would be the question at the first level of interpretation. Upon further investigation, the work begins to have negative undertones of Hitler and war, which any German would most likely want to “plow” under the surface. Kiefer allows viewers the right to interpret his work based on their knowledge and prior experiences of German culture. This idea of multiple interpretations based on the viewers’ personal experiences becomes a recurring theme within the works of Kiefer.
CHAPTER II

In this chapter I will discuss the connection between Anselm Kiefer, his art, and the writings of Sigmund Freud, in particular *Repression* (1915), *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), and *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through* (1914). My focus will be how Freud's writings are related to Kiefer as an artist and more specifically the themes within Kiefer's works, as well as the association with the German sociological climate in the post World War II era. Although Freud was writing his essays based on specific case studies, I feel a connection can be made to an entire group of people (the Germans), while also being representative of an artist and his message.

I think it is best to begin by defining and noting the differences between mourning and melancholia. Saltzman describes mourning as “a continual process of repetition, of remembering, repeating, and working through. Thus, the possibility of triumphantly completing the work of mourning.”62 I chose to use the definition of mourning offered by Saltzman in order to immediately establish a connection between two of Freud’s essays. The two must be used in conjunction so that one will help resolve the issues of the other. On the other hand, Saltzman describes melancholia as “a blocked mourning” that she felt described “a postwar German nation 'unable,’ or perhaps more accurately, unwilling, to mourn.”63 The unwillingness to mourn Saltzman described fits perfectly with Freud’s definition of repression as “a preliminary phase of condemnation.”64 Germans have condemned or ineffectively worked through the memories of World War II and thus have a

---

63 Ibid, 76.
melancholic relation to them. Therefore, Germans must overcome their melancholia and
transfer repressed memories from their unconscious into their conscious mind in order to
begin the mourning phase. Once this happens, they will be able to remember through the
repetition of images and then be able to work through and accept the catastrophe. Kiefer’s
art is the catalyst in this process of enabling Germans to accept what happened before and
during World War II and to begin dealing with the emotions associated with it. Huyssen
states, “Kiefer’s painting – in its forms, its materials, and its subject matter – is emphatically
about memory, not about forgetting.” 65 Kiefer must use his images and themes in order to
transition the German psyche from repression to mourning and melancholia or pull the
repressed and blocked memories from the unconscious so, finally, they can begin mourning
and working through them.

In order for Kiefer to help Germans with their transition, he needs to confront the
trauma of the German artist losing his identity after the war, while simultaneously coping
with his identity as a German citizen. As previously mentioned, German artists were
conforming to the new art movements that were spreading throughout Europe and the
United States. Nobody wanted to discuss the past, politics, or the current social climate
within the country. Germany was in what seemed to be a deep state of repression and
possibly denial.

The first step in dealing with the recent German past is to devise a plan that will
release Germans from this repression. Freud sees repression as a means for avoiding pain.
It “is not a defense-mechanism present from the very beginning, and cannot occur until a
sharp distinction has been established between what is conscious and what is unconscious:

65 Huyssen, The Terror of History, the Temptation of Myth, 26.
that the essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of the consciousness."\textsuperscript{66} As a result of this repression, the memories of the Nazi period and of World War II are locked in the subconscious of German society. After reading Freud, I think this reaction by the Germans dealt with the notion that “as soon as an idea is fundamentally offensive it exceeds a certain degree of strength, the conflict takes on actuality, and it is precisely activation of the idea that leads to its repression.”\textsuperscript{67}

Obviously the offensive idea I am referring to is the Holocaust. The act of genocide and numerous related atrocities were so heinous, that Germans wanted to immediately repress the event and block any memory of it. Many Germans were ashamed of the actions of their countrymen. The massive execution of people because of their Jewish blood and heritage was an unbearable atrocity. Once the war ended, the general population of Germany was forced to deal with the events that happened during the war and forced to react as a nation. They were aware of what happened, but the majority of the nation chose to repress their memories. Germans chose to ignore feelings of embarrassment, guilt, and grief due to their actions in the war. You may liken German society to an ostrich with its head in the sand. They ignored the historical truth for decades. Freud also discussed the fact that “repression demands a constant expenditure of energy, and if this were discontinued the success of the repression would be jeopardized, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary.”\textsuperscript{68}

Trying to forget something as horrendous as the Holocaust is not easy. It takes effort in order to constantly keep these memories repressed within the subconscious. I

\textsuperscript{66} Freud, Repression, 89
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, 92.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 92.
think Kiefer attacked this repression with his *Occupations* series as a gesture to bring into the open what had happened and expose those involved. Unfortunately, the fresh act of repression Freud mentioned was provided by the critics and people of Germany shutting down *interfunktionen*, the magazine that publicly printed *Occupations*, and later condemning the German Pavilion of the 1980 Venice Biennale. Although Kiefer made an attempt to unlock these memories, I believe he was too forceful in his attempt, therefore leading to widespread condemnation of his imagery.

Kiefer’s attempt to bring the memories of World War II to the surface failed. Therefore, the repression of the memories continued. Freud closes his essay by stating, “The rejection of the idea from consciousness is obstinately maintained, because it assures abstention from action.” Kiefer’s initial attempt to unrepres these memories by way of *Occupations* was too direct in its presentation. He needed to find a better way to represent the happenings of World War II. As an artist, Kiefer needed to deploy certain devices to draw out repressed memories through images, metaphors, and materials in an indirect way. Once they have been retrieved and made conscious, Kiefer can only hope another act of repression does not occur.

I feel American critics were able to interfere with the repression by means of the positive reception he received in the United States. According to Saltzman, “non-Germans, particularly Americans, found in his work a courageous effort to come to terms with the German past.” This allowed German society to realize it was not looked upon in such a harsh light by outsiders and could slowly begin transferring the memories of the atrocities

---

69 Ibid, 96-97.
of World War II into the conscious mind. once made conscious, German society could deal with its melancholia and begin the process of mourning.

The features of melancholia, as described by Freud, “are a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.” In terms of German society, I think the melancholia felt concerned the feared consequences of its actions were it to admit its responsibility for the horrible events of World War II. German society did not want to be reprimanded for its actions like its forefathers during the Nuremburg Trials of World War II, where Nazis were tried and convicted of crimes against humanity. Therefore, they kept to themselves as a culture and held the delusional expectation of punishment for their forefathers’ actions. This definition can also hold true for the melancholic German artist, such as Kiefer. The dejection can be seen in his works when dealing with not just subject matter, but lack of color and the emptiness of the spaces he creates. The loss of interest in the outside world can be compared to Kiefer’s reclusive studio environment and lack of media contact through interviews and gallery shows. Likewise his numerous works that have been ongoing, but not completed and have lain stagnant for decades would point to an inhibition of activity. His self-reproach and self-reviling were justified if he firmly believed the critical judgments of his works from the German art world.

Kiefer responded to this widespread melancholy through his paintings, one of which is *Nero Paints* from 1974 (Figure 18)\(^2\). He abandoned the use of himself as subject, like in *Occupations, For Genet*, and *Heroic Symbols*, and now used an artist’s palette as his symbol. *Nero Paints* presents the viewer with an image of a palette with four paintbrushes protruding from it. The brushes’ tips have been replaced with flames, resembling torches. The palette sits in front of a crudely rendered, scorched landscape that recedes into one-point perspective with trees and flaming houses on the horizon line. Saltzman mentions that this is a Russian landscape and “the flaming Russian village and the almost cauterized looking surface allude quite evocatively to the scorched earth campaigns of the Nazi military in the East.”\(^3\)

Normally the burning of an object and the resulting ash denotes the end of the object. According to Hutchinson however, “the Kieferian emptiness – burned field, wastelands, clay pits – is a beginning, not an end.”\(^4\) Even though the initial reference to fire may be interpreted in the direction of Nazi campaigns, Kiefer alludes to the theory that one should rise from the ashes of Germany’s scorched history. He is trying to subtly note that by slowly progressing from repression to melancholia one can begin to mourn and become a re-born German citizen. As opposed to his photographic series of works, which placed Kiefer in regions throughout Europe, he began here to bring the subject matter closer to home for Germans by presenting a natural landscape from their history. Although Kiefer does not directly confront the idea of Nazism in the title, “his identity is still merged


\(^3\) Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 63.

with that of the historically tainted paternal signifier, even if displaced into the symbolic realm as well. In *Nero Paints*, he wears that history much as he wore Nazi regalia.”75 He relates himself to Nero, the persecutor of Christians who set Rome ablaze, which can then translate into Hitler, the persecutor of Jews who set Europe on fire. In the end Kiefer still manages to bring forth memories of World War II through historical references located within his work.

In 1977, Kiefer’s *Palette on a Rope* was no longer a palette symbolizing power, but rather it was in danger of being destroyed (Figure 19)76. In this work, Kiefer shows a palette that is centered on the canvas, suspended by two pieces of rope outstretched to the sides. The ropes, holding onto the palette like a set of arms, are on fire. The palette loses its power due to the impending fall to earth after the rope breaks. Not only will the power be gone, but also Kiefer’s palette will lose its ability to create.77

After its fall from grace, Kiefer’s palette is given a set of wings and is resurrected from the ashes in *Icarus – March Sand* from 1981 (Figure 20)78. The winged palette, or artist, is flying over a Prussian landscape that is set on fire. By creating a landscape similar to that of Prussia, Kiefer is slowly bringing the visual imagery closer to home. There is still a historical reference being employed, but it is more modern than the *Nero Paints* landscape and theme. Huyssen likens Kiefer’s image of Icarus to the Modern painter. He feels, “Icarus has become an allegory of painting . . . and he crashes not because of the sun’s heat above, but because of the fires burning beneath him in the Prussian landscape.”

---

75 Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 64.
77 Ibid, 64.
again, the fires are indicative of the Nazi scorched earth campaigns. Huyssen continues, “It is history, German history, that stunts the painterly flight toward transcendence. Painting crashes, redemption through painting is no longer possible.”

Despite the rebirth of the palette, soaring high above the landscape, it cannot escape the same fate as *Palette on a Rope*. Both will have crashed back to earth, leaving Kiefer to find another way to deal with this widespread melancholy through his art. Saltzman recognized that Kiefer began “destroying as a process of creating, [started] creating works as wounded beings, as ruins, inflicting upon his work the masochistic and self-destructive impulse of the melancholic.” Here is an artist as melancholic, who is making an attempt to break free of his melancholia through his artistic process, while simultaneously helping German society through its crisis.

The palettes he depicted in his works were his wounded beings. Kiefer represented himself as the palette; in doing so, he continued with his style of non-figurative representation. Freud referred to a delusional expectation of punishment. Therefore if Kiefer likens himself to Icarus, this makes him the doomed son of Germany. He is unable to extinguish the flames of history in order to transcend the cultural restrictions of current German artistic tastes.

Kiefer had previously dealt with the Prussian landscape in his work, *Varus* from 1976 (Figure 21). This work does not show the broad landscape of the previously mentioned works. Instead, Kiefer places the viewer in a dense, wooded area with a narrow path receding into the distance. There is an obvious employment of one-point perspective

---

80 Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 80.
to suggest a dramatic depth within the frame. The snow-covered path and tree limbs stand out against the brooding darkness of the forest. There are several splotches of red paint on the canvas that resemble bullet wounds. The red paint does not fall on the canvas as though it has been spread along the path, but rather it appears as its own separate entity, removed from the landscape.

Writing also appears in black and white paint in various locations on the canvas. The writing, along with the red paint, establishes the “screen” that I had discussed earlier. This allows the viewer to not look too deep into the interpretation of the landscape itself, but rather try to establish a connection between the words and the image. The words, *Varus, Hermann, and Tusnelda* are the most notable, written across the entrance to the path\(^\text{82}\) (Figure 22)\(^\text{83}\). These words are not only blocking access to the path, but also blocking a direct interpretation of the forest by itself. Saltzman notes that the landscape is “an image commemorating, or at least referencing, the founding historical battle of the German nation, waged between the troops of the Germanic leader Arminius (Hermann) and the Roman soldier Quintilius Varus, history leaves an eternal pattern of blood stains on the Teutoburg Forest floor.”\(^\text{84}\)

Kiefer’s idea of representing the fascist era through historical references is once again evident. Brailovsky believes “Varus comes closest in spirit to a history painting. Its mood of expectation, of an infinitely suspended moment in which we can perceive a hint of what came before, and of what is yet to come, reopens the possibility that painting can be a

\(^{82}\) Brailovsky, *The Epic Tableau*, 126.
\(^{84}\) Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 81.
forum for the representation of heroic human action.”85 Not only is Kiefer attempting to
resurrect memories of the war, but also trying to re-establish painting as a useful and
relevant form of art in Germany. If one were to examine this work as a history painting, it
would most definitely tell a story.

The names of the players are given on the canvas, which would then lead to the
discovery of the location based on the names. Through this discovery, the specific
historical location and point in time would be found, which allows the viewer to establish a
definite meaning of the work. I believe that the detachment of the writing from the image
through the use of the screen allows for different interpretations of this work. Brailovsky
mentioned the perception of “what came before and what is yet to come.” This is a chance
for the viewer to realize what came before by focusing on the historical aspect of the forest
and realizing this battle was an important one in establishing Germany. However, it can
also be looked at in terms of the contemporary German psyche unearthing the memories of
Fascism.

On the other hand, what is yet to come can also be looked at from two different
angles. It can again reference the Nazis if we were looking ahead from the time of Varus.
However, if we are to look at it from the perspective of modern day Germany, the looking
ahead could reference the point after one has come to terms with the past and the path
they shall take from there. Was Kiefer trying to create a path to German redemption in
Varus or was it simply a historical reference to the beginnings of the Germanic people?
This constant questioning raised by Kiefer’s works is what makes it so intriguing. In this
regard, the use of Roman figures as subjects and titles is noteworthy as well. Nero and

85 Brailovsky, The Epic Tableau, 127.
Varus were both powerful Roman leaders who were defeated within their lifetime, as was Hitler. Just as the Holy Roman Empire spread throughout Europe, Hitler was attempting to re-create the Roman Empire. Another interpretation of the forest in *Varus* could be that the forest is where the Jewish people hid from the Nazis. Meanwhile, the blood on the ground references the Jews after they were hunted down by the Nazis. Kiefer is able to indirectly refer to the Nazi regime thematically, and the Jews pictorially, through his landscape and written screen. This allows the German viewer to slowly address these repressed memories. Therefore, by revisiting the Prussian landscape from *Icarus – March Sand*, Kiefer makes reference in *Varus* to the path the artist must walk down along with the German people.

In 1983, Kiefer continued to use his palette as the subject, but in *To the Unknown Painter* he placed it within recognizable Nazi architecture (Figure 23)\(^86\). Saltzman notes that the palette “mounted upon a pedestal and enshrined within the deeply recessional spaces of Speer’s Mosaic Room of the Reich’s Chancellery, becomes a memorial to Kiefer’s own sense of victimhood, his painterly response to his own sense of a threatened, eroded, or untenable identity.”\(^87\) Just like the historical fires that were not allowing painting to flourish, Kiefer symbolically placed the artist within an actual building that was directly involved in the catastrophe. He did not use the Prussian landscape or other locations around Europe, but instead used the site and imagery that would be identified immediately by the German viewer. Huyssen finds Kiefer’s use of fascist architectural structures to “exude an overwhelming statism, a monumental melancholy, and an intense aesthetic

---


\(^{87}\) Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 67-68.
appeal of color, texture, and layering of painterly materials that can induce a deeply meditative, if not paralyzing state in the viewer.” By placing the palette in the center of the structure within *To the Unknown Painter*, with no noticeable means of escape, Kiefer displays the anxiety one feels when confined. He is letting viewers know that he, too, knows how it feels to be confined by the memories of fascism. This structure becomes a representation of a tomb, not just of the artist and his ideas, but also of the Germans’ memories of the past. Kiefer shows his palette rising up on a pedestal, through the ground, out of the ashes. It seems he wants the German people to rise with him. Through his art, he endeavors to enable Germans to free their memories from the fascist tomb so they may begin mourning together.

Huyssen also noted three stages the viewer goes through when experiencing Kiefer’s work. The first stage is fascination. It primarily deals with the “fascination with the visual pleasure Kiefer brings to the subject matter of fascist architecture.” The structures appear to simultaneously be presented as intact, while also in ruins. The second stage Huyssen describes as “a pervasive feeling of having been had, having been lured into that fascinating fascism, having fallen for an aestheticization of fascism which today complements fascism’s own strategies.” Huyssen now has conflicting feelings. He feels certain nostalgia for ruins and the past, but he also recalls the ruins left by fascism and the destruction World War II left behind. Huyssen’s third stage deals with “the aesthetic lure of fascism for the present and thus forcing us to confront the possibility that we ourselves are

---

89 Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 69.
90 *ibid*, 38.
91 *ibid*, 38.
not immune to what we so rationally condemn and dismiss.”

This third stage deals with the Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholy. Huyssen finally sees the dilemma as “whether to read these paintings as a melancholy fixation of the dreamlike ruins of fascism that locks the viewer into complicity, or, instead, as a critique of the spectator, who is caught up in a complex web of melancholy, fascination, and repression.”

In dealing with the artist as melancholic, Kiefer produced Fallen Pictures in 1986 (Figure 24). The work contains a photograph, attached to a slab of lead, of an abandoned studio space with empty picture frames scattered throughout the space. The frames are representations of the images locked away in the German subconscious, the ones that cannot be seen. The artist seeks to be the means by which the Germans can eventually contend with their repressed, melancholic images of the past. Once the artist has found his own repressed memories, then he can present them to the public. Kiefer not only has to work through his own melancholia, but must also symbolically help Germany deal with this issue.

The most literal, in terms of title, of Kiefer’s works to address the melancholic artist was Melancholia from 1988 (Figure 25). Once again, Kiefer presents us with a photograph mounted on lead displaying a studio space with empty frames thrown about. In the middle of the piece lies a three-dimensional rendering of a polyhedron with an image of fire erupting overhead. This time it seems as though the fire has escaped the Prussian landscape and instead, now sits within the artist. The polyhedron that is shown can be

---

92 ibid, 39.
93 ibid, 39.
found in Albrecht Dürer’s etching, *Melancholia I* from 1514 (Figure 26). Dürer’s work consists of an angel-winged figure that sits with her head upon her hand, appearing to be deep thought. She is surrounded by many intellectual tools and objects that are likely associated with mathematics and physics. Saltzman interprets this figure as “representing a triad of Saturn, Melancholy, and Geometry, of scholastic activity and melancholic inactivity fused into one symbolic figure.”

I believe Kiefer presents the polyhedron in his work as the symbolic figure from Dürer’s engraving to represent the melancholic. This is Kiefer’s non-figurative representation of his melancholy. In the background, Dürer includes a blazing sun to add warmth and provide a primary light source to his image. Kiefer’s light source is a large photographic image of a roaring fire. Saltzman sees these light sources as significantly different because “in Kiefer’s work, it is not the rays of the sun, of reason that rise above the polyhedron, bathing it in a glow of enlightened illumination, but, instead, the fires of history and post enlightenment doubt and skepticism that threaten to consume the polyhedron and its attendant human subjectivity.” Again, the concept of fire becomes the vehicle that eliminates the artist’s expressive nature and thematic vision. This again, references the historical fire that brought down the Icarus palette and continues to bring down Kiefer in his quest to produce images to aid Germany in the process of mourning.

However, it is the underlying meaning in the title, *Melancholia*, and the materials Kiefer used that truly defines this work. When discussing Dürer’s *Melancholia I*, referring

---


98 Saltzman, *Art after Auschwitz*, 79

99 Ibid, 80.
to a possible connection with the Four Temperaments, or four bodily fluids by which each person is defined, is essential. Black bile, “a cold and dry bodily fluid originating in the spleen,” happens to be the fluid associated with melancholy. Therefore, considered cold and dry, “melancholy was long feared as the worst temperament.”\(^\text{100}\) However, black bile can be translated in other ways. If the bile is in a well-tempered middle position, it is said that it is capable of extreme intellectual achievements, therefore being associated with geniuses.

Dürer was the first to associate the ingenious melancholic with the sign of Saturn, therefore negating the original interpretation of it being a negative temperament. In Platonic thought, black bile is linked to Saturn, a cold, dry, slow moving, lethargic planet.\(^\text{101}\) The correlation between all of these items is not a coincidence. I feel Kiefer knew this information and wanted to establish multiple layers of meaning in his work. He establishes a connection to German art of the past, while addressing the melancholia throughout present day Germany. His use of dark and heavy lead as well as the color black intensifies the connection to Saturn within his works. Peter-Klaus Schuster continues to describe Saturn:

> The planet of misfortune and destruction and also as the heavenly body of pensiveness and gloom, Saturn is now elevated to the patron of a modernity, whose images are characterized by all kinds of fragmentations, such as collage, montage, fragments and ruin and whose relationship with the world is largely affected by hermetic darkness and melancholy.\(^\text{102}\)

Kiefer can be regarded as a child of Saturn. He embodies all of the characteristics of the ideal Saturnine melancholic. His art consists of fragmented images put together by means

---

\(^{100}\) Schuster, *Saturnine Painting*, 147.  
^{101} Ibid, 147-148.  
^{102} Ibid, 148.
of collage and montage. As an artist, he is in perpetual hermetic darkness in reference to his isolated studio and rarely seen public persona. I feel that Kiefer recognized this association and chose to become the artist that would help people out of this state of repression and melancholy and begin dealing with the past. According to Freud’s theories, I feel Kiefer needs to:

Listen patiently to the many and various self-accusations of the melancholic, one cannot in the end avoid the impression that often the most violent of them are hardly at all applicable to the patient himself, but that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, some person whom the patient loves, has loved or ought to love.\(^{103}\)

I feel the “patient” Freud is referring to could be related to the German people, while Germany, as a country, could possibly be the “someone” that the people have loved and ought to love. Germans have lost the sense of where they came from and are scarred by this fact. I think Kiefer can aid in the return of the Germans love of country. He attempts to open old wounds and cleanse them through a combination of myth, allegory, and art.

However, since Kiefer continuously deals with the past, is he forgetting to address contemporary German culture and society? Foster believes Kiefer is only providing his audience with a partial history. He feels Kiefer is only using the parts of history that are relevant to his work and leaving out the rest in order to deliver his message. It is possible that he is too focused on the past in order to properly address the issues of World War II in relation to modern day Germany in the 1980s.

In continuing to deal with Kiefer’s connection to Saturn, one must understand that melancholy and Saturn are almost interchangeable. One represents the other and vice versa. Therefore, the other items that are associated with Saturn, whether it be the planet

\(^{103}\) Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 130.
or god, are also meant to symbolize melancholy and in turn, Kiefer. I have already associated Saturn with black bile, lead, and melancholy, and described it as a dark, cold and dry planet. But Saturn is also, “god of the crops and of time, causer of decay and destruction, of disease, affliction and misfortune.”¹⁰⁴ This corresponds to Kiefer’s works when dealing with his use of sand and straw. These elements are connected to crops, while the straw, once adhered to his works, becomes an element of decay. He continually presents the viewer with reminders of the destruction that once happened on their soil. The widespread melancholy becomes the country’s affliction and misfortune. Kiefer is trying to “attain the spheres of wisdom that Saturn promises the melancholic is through the arts and sciences.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, by applying alchemical processes to the lead in his work, Kiefer gains Saturn’s wisdom through his combination of elements. In doing this, Kiefer is at the beginning stages of working through the melancholic process.

In order to be able to help a melancholic Germany, Kiefer needs to be aware of its feelings “of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favor, or disappointed, which can import opposite feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence.”¹⁰⁶ The Nazis would end up being the cause of an overwhelming national tragedy and be the wound that scarred the country. The confusion facing post-War German society is that they want to love their country and have a sense of pride, but cannot because of what happened. Most Germans just want to forget their fascist past. Huyssen stated the German people just “want to normalize; Kiefer does not. The issue, in other words, is not whether to forget or remember, but rather how to remember and how to handle

¹⁰⁴ Schuster, Saturnine Painting, 150.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 152.
¹⁰⁶ Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, 132.
representations of the remembered past.” He continues, “It is in the working through of this problem, aesthetically and politically, that I see Kiefer’s strength, a strength that simultaneously and unavoidably must make him controversial and deeply problematic.”

This is Kiefer’s way of demanding that Germans get past melancholy and begin to mourn. This path begins by “taking revenge by the circuitous path of self-punishment, on the original objects and in tormenting them by means of illness, having developed the latter so as to avoid the necessity of openly expressing their hostility against the loved ones.”

This was an open invitation for artists to begin their production of images related to the Holocaust in order to remember. They must create images referencing the past in order to begin dealing with what had happened. Through art, melancholic Germany and its people can begin the process of transitioning into mourning.

Mourning, similar to melancholy, is described by Freud as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on.” Although the reactions to mourning are comparable to melancholy, the person is aware of the loss they have suffered and begins their preparation in order to deal with it. The closest type of mourning to melancholy is pathological mourning. “Consequently when there is a disposition to obsessional neurosis the conflict of ambivalence casts a pathological shade on the grief, forcing it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches, to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of a loved one.” This is the reason it may be harder for the older generation of Germans to accept Kiefer and his works. They see themselves as the ones to blame for the loss of

---

107 Huyssen, Terror of History, Temptation of Myth, 30.
108 Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, 132-133.
109 Ibid, 125.
110 Ibid, 132.
national pride and for the embarrassment that has been cast upon Germany, especially those who were directly related to the Nazi regime.

However, in the process of mourning, or in this case remembering, Freud spoke of forgetting. He stated, “forgetting is mostly restricted to dissolving thought-connections, failing to draw the right conclusions and isolating memories.”\footnote{Sigmund Freud, Remembering, Repeating and Working Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis) (1914), Vols. 12 (1911-1913), in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Case of Schreber Papers on Technique and Other Works, ed. James} This apparently was what most of Germany had done when referencing the time surrounding World War II - isolate memories and forget them. Kiefer refused to let this happen. I will once again reference his Occupations series as a vehicle for acceptance through repetition. Freud said, “The patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it.”\footnote{Ibid, 150} The acting out of the Nazi salute was Kiefer’s way of repeating the forgotten and repressed memories without productively working through them. Through this repetition, the mistaken hope was that Germans would have an awakening and begin to conjure images of the past.

Freud went on to discuss how the “compulsion to repeat” replaced the “impulsion to remember.” This constant repetition will be a laborious task, but will eventually be replaced by remembering what was once forgotten. Again, Kiefer manages to play psychologist to all of Germany and summons repressed memories in order to deal with them in the present. Once these memories emerge, Freud felt it was important that one “not forget that it is in fact only through his own experience and mishaps that a person
learns sense." As the mental images of World War II began to emerge, the Germans, as a society, should learn from the atrocities of Hitler and the Nazis. They must realize it was wrong and vow never to duplicate such actions. This acceptance and learning from their mistakes is another step toward working through these issues. Eventually, Freud finds that through this repetition “we are led along the familiar paths to the awakening of the memories, which appear without difficulty, as it were, after the resistance has been overcome.” Through his images, Kiefer is able to break down the barriers of the German subconscious, allowing the images of World War II to emerge and be accepted.

---

CHAPTER III

In terms of the theme of melancholy and mourning, Kiefer created numerous works based on the poetry of Paul Celan, most notably his poem *Death Fugue* from 1948. Kiefer moved away from the recognizable architecture and landscape of Germany and transitioned toward more mythic and symbolic images to once again help Germany through its period of mourning. His imagery references Celan’s poetry, while maintaining the foundations of a pure, Kieferesque work through the use of materials and Germanic themes.

I feel in order to understand the relationship between the work of Paul Celan and Kiefer it is important to discuss the personal history of Celan as well as the subject matter and characters in his poetry. Paul Celan was born in 1920 in Czernowitz, the capital of Bukovina, which was under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918, after which, the region would be incorporated into Rumania. This area identified with German culture and had a positive, long-standing Judeo-German relationship. German was even the official language at the University of Czernowitz. This was a very ethnic region comprised of Rumanians, Poles, Jews, and Germans among others. However, Jews made up over half the population. For his bar mitzvah, Celan received a copy of Goethe’s *Faust*, which would be of significance when writing his poem *Death Fugue*. He admired the works of many German philosophers, especially that of Nietzsche. After deciding to study literature, he learned Greek, Latin, and French.

---

In 1939, Bukovina was invaded by the Russians and Communism was forced upon the residents, which included Celan and his family. In May of 1941, the Russians began deporting citizens to Siberia, deeming them “unreliable.” Of the four thousand people removed from Bukovina, three quarters were Jews. Shortly after this massive human expulsion, Hitler’s forces attacked Russia. By July 1941, the Nazis had entered Czernowitz killing anyone who had associated with the Russians. The next day, they received orders to exterminate all Jews. Lopez-Pedraza recalls, “The synagogue was burned on July 7 and Jews were declared to be beyond the law for seventy-two hours, during which time 682 Jews were exterminated and, according to a report sent to Berlin by S.S. Brigadier General Ohlendorf, there were three thousand more by the end of August.”

Celan went into hiding and suggested his parents do the same. They failed to listen and were removed from their home and sent to a death camp. Celan came to find out later that his father had died of typhoid and his mother was shot in the camp. The Nazis eventually caught up with Celan, but he was sentenced to forced labor as opposed to the death camp. He would spend the next several years shoveling stones and digging roads for the Germans. After Celan survived the Nazi labor camp, Andrea Lauterwein noted, “his pre-war emotional and intellectual world had been completely destroyed.” Consequently, he wrestled with the question, “how was he to remain at ease with the German language?” Lauterwein felt “the only way out was to approach this language and its poetic traditions as it were from the rear, and to track down, without the protection of the passage of time, all those elements that had been conducive to preparing minds for persecution and

---

117 Lopez-Pedraza, *The Psychology of “After the Catastrophe,”* 64.
118 *Ibid,* 64.
slaughter.” This meant that Celan must conduct himself in a similar manner to Kiefer, only thirty years prior. Celan must ignore Adorno and embrace historic poetic traditions and help people with what had just happened. It was possible, indeed necessary to write poetry immediately following the Holocaust and Celan was willing to share his experiences through his writing. His poetry would become a large part of the healing process through his use of the medieval epic of the Nibelungs and the German and Jewish characters, Margarete and Shulamith, which Kiefer would revisit over thirty years after Celan’s initial writings.

One of Celan’s early writings referenced the medieval epic of the Nibelungs. They were composed of stories of valkyries, heroes, and giants who were half-man and half-god. These would become the underlying foundations of Nazi ideology in terms of the establishment of German loyalty evoked in the tales. Chancellor von Bülow referred to the loyalty of the Nibelungs during the Bosnian Crisis of 1909 to describe Austria-Hungary’s loyalty to Hitler and the Reich. However, “in 1921 Hitler wrote an essay attacking the Austrian multi-ethnicity, he stated categorically that There can be a loyalty of the Nibelungs only toward one’s own race, and the expression became a watchword in relation to racial purity.”

Therefore, because of the connection between Hitler and Nibelung loyalty, Celan chose to use the epic of the Nibelungs to describe contemporary events. He used certain characters and themes within the myth, notably the Nibelungs’ kingdom, in order to link Germany to countries in Eastern Europe, where, according to the epic, “the final ‘great

---

119 Lauterwein, Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan, 17.
120 Ibid, 58.
murder’ is to take place.” Celan uses myth to reference history and the war, as well as mentions the ‘great murder’ as a direct reference to the Holocaust.

Kiefer references the Nibelungs as well in a 1972 painting titled, *The Misery of the Nibelungs* (Figure 27). The painting is of a wooded interior, very similar to an attic. The immediate reference is to the attics in which Jews would have to hide from the Nazis. Among the floorboards, numerous names are scrolled about in black charcoal with splashes of red paint throughout. “Kiefer has written the names of the heroes in the second part of the 12th-century saga [of the Nibelungs]. They all died in a massacre which left not a single survivor.” The similarities of the medieval epic and the actual history of Germany are uncanny. Kiefer is able to use this story combined with recognizable imagery in order to communicate his story. Celan was a pioneer when it came to dealing with issues of this nature. The non-confrontational manner in which he presents his poetry seemed to influence Kiefer throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He allowed Kiefer to realize that items referring to the Holocaust and World War II did not have to be direct references and that the people of Germany and their Jewish counterparts would recognize the connection between myth and history and be able to translate the story being told.

---

121 Ibid, 58.
http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/168443/Kiefer-Anselm-b.1945/The-Sorrow-of-the-Nibelungen-Der-Nibelungen-Leid?search_context=%2Fsearch.aspx%3Fkey%3D%2520Dunn%2520Peter%252020th%2520Century%26page%3D1%26thumb%3Dx150%26num%3D15%26lang%3Dde%26page_num%3D1%22%22filter%22%3A%22filter_searchoption_id%22%3A%22filter_assets_id%22%3A%22filter_text%22%3A%22Dunn+Peter+20th+Century%22%22filter_prev_text%22%3A%22Dunn+Peter+20th+Century%22%22filter_sort_order%22%3A%22relevance%22%22filter_search_type%22%3A%22search_assets%22%22filter_item_index%22%3A80} (accessed July 23, 2013).
123 Ibid, 63.
I believe Celan’s poetry caused a significant shift in Kiefer’s representation of the past. There was a shift away from startling images such as his *Occupations* series. Kiefer began to produce more palpable imagery based on Celan’s poetry like *Misery of the Nibelungs* as well as Margarete (or Margarethe) and Shulamith (or Sulamith) from the poem *Death Fugue*.

Although Kiefer was presenting his material in a manner similar to that of Celan, it was not until *Death Fugue* that Kiefer referenced Celan directly. The poem was written “in May 1945, after Auschwitz had been liberated by the Red Army. The genesis of the poem therefore coincided with the end of Nazi Germany, whose armies surrendered on 8 May 1945.”124 This was also the same year that Kiefer was born. Huyssen stated the poem “captures the horror of Auschwitz in a sequence of highly structured mythic images.”125 The idea of creating images through words allows Celan to make indirect references to the Holocaust without having to mention it by name, just as Kiefer does in his artworks. Nicole Fugmann notes, “The poem revolves around the fate of Jewish concentration camp prisoners, and, more specifically, around the dual imagery of two female figures, the German Margarethe and the Jewish Shulamite.”126

Through these characters, Celan was able to represent the two sides of the Holocaust, the blonde haired German and the dark haired Jew, while being able to show his suffering in the labor camp in the poem *Death Fugue*:

*Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown*
*we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night*

---

124 Ibid, 87.
126 Nicole Fugmann, ”The Gestalt Change of Postmodern Critique: Anselm Kiefer’s Spatial Historiography,” *New German Critique* (New German Critique), no. 75 (Autumn 1998), 106.
we drink and we drink it
we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are flashing he whistles his
pack out
he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a grave
he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the morning at noon we drink you at sundown
we drink and we drink you
A man lives in the house he plays with serpents he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies
unconfined.

He calls out jab deeper into the earth you lot you others sing now and play
he grabs at the iron in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
jab deeper you lot with your spades you others play on for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon in the morning we drink you at sundown
we drink you and we drink you
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents
He calls out more sweetly play death death is a master form Germany
he calls out more darkly now stroke your strings then as smoke you will rise
into the air
then a grave you will have in the clouds there one lies unconfined
Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at sundown and in the morning we drink and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eyes are blue
he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his pack on to us he grants us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and daydreams death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

Similar to Kiefer’s *Occupations* series, this was Celan’s most blatant poem referencing Germany and the Holocaust. Saltzman points out that *Death Fugue* “was a means of translating into language, into poetic form, the reported horrors of the death camps, transforming trauma into lyric, history into poetics, atrocity into aesthetics.” The same could be said about Kiefer in terms of his artistic production. However, through their art, these men make it possible to approach a horrible subject and give it a certain beauty. In an era where photography and motion pictures played a major role in capturing everyday life, much of the atrocities of World War II were recording using these devices. Many of these images were very difficult for the general public to comprehend. Artists also had difficulty when rendering these images in their art. Kiefer found a way through symbols and myth to approach these issues without using the horrible imagery of war and the Holocaust.

---

Celan’s lyrical translation and Kiefer’s visual representation of the atrocities of World War II allow their audiences an easier approach to dealing with what had happened. The subtle references in their works take away the initial response of terror one may have when dealing with this subject matter. Lopez-Pedraza observes that “the opening words of the poem, ‘black milk of daybreak,’ express a suffering without parallel, and the lines ‘he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a grave / he commands us strike up for the dance’ is an image of evil made into poetry.”

The poem, itself, has many references to Celan’s experience in the labor camps. Roos writes, “Celan’s poem documents actual death camp practices in which orchestras comprised of Jewish prisoners were forced to play music, while the others dug graves that anticipated the imminent execution of prisoners, and sometimes the orchestra players themselves.”

Celan was able to portray these practices through such eloquent language that it made it more comprehensible and easier to cope with for the reader. He dealt with the cremation of the dead as well when he said, “as smoke you will rise into the air.” The most obvious reference to the Nazis and their terror was in the lines “death is a master from Germany his eyes are blue / he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true.” He was able to depict such heinous acts through the use of poetry that it made it easier for the reader to understand the horrors, just as Kiefer was to do in his paintings. While Kiefer is dealing with a melancholic Germany years after the war, according to Roos, “Celan’s poem has also given rise to ethical and biographical debates about Jewish forgiveness or, conversely, a Jewish inability to reconcile with the horrors of the Holocaust and the German present.”

130 Roos, Anselm Kiefer and the Art of Illusion, 30.
131 Ibid, 28.
Celan seemed to be dealing with the melancholy and mourning of the Jews. The main difference I see between Celan and Kiefer is that Celan is confronting the issues while they are still relevant and in the minds of the people and from a primarily Jewish perspective. Celan makes direct reference to the situation and deals with the issues in the present. Kiefer has the problem of dealing with World War II a generation after it happened and from a German point of view. Celan has not allowed repression to happen within the Jewish community, therefore they must come to terms with the issues at once. This will either allow the Jews to forgive and move on or to bring to light even more horrors of the Holocaust, forcing them to form a deeper hatred for Germans. Kiefer has the task of evoking memories of the war for Germans and getting them to genuinely understand and accept what happened. Both artists deal with the same issues, but from different perspectives and points in time.

The names of two women are mentioned in Death Fugue, Margarete and Shulamith. Lauterwein feels these women “are not protagonists,” but rather “interrupt the action of the poem, often without syntactical link, in order to denote an idealized dimension within the process that is underway. Margarete and Shulamith might therefore be considered as parts of the argument, giving it an historical and psychological setting.” By interrupting the action of the poem, it allows the reader a break from the terrible actions that are happening within the poem. When Celan paired the women together, separated from the body of the poem, he created a bond between them. Ideally, these women, one German, one Jewish, would be seen as united. In the historical context of World War II, this would be an impossible pairing.

---

132 Lauterwein, Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan, 90-91.
The golden-haired Margarete is derived from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust*. Lauterwein sees her as “a cliché of the submissive woman – ‘a model which all women shall surpass’ and a projection of ‘godlike form.’” On the other hand Mark Rosenthal sees her as a “manifestation of the German image of womanhood.” In *Faust*, Margarete, also known as Gretchen, shows a true love of Faust. She has ethical views on life and religion along with a natural innocence. However, her love of Faust leads her to deceive her mother and eventually kill her baby. Meanwhile, Faust kills Margarete’s brother and their once seemingly perfect life is ruined by their destructive love. She is eventually redeemed and her suffering ends. “Goethe depicts women as the sacred preservers of moral values, who are undone and destroyed by the male ‘us,’ but still can be redeemed and subsequently save ‘us.” I agree with Rosenthal’s interpretation of Margarete. Lauterwein gives the reader a goal, letting them know they will no longer be submissive and will one day surpass this state of being. I feel Rosenthal better represents the tone of the poem by representing Margarete as, what I deem, a German citizen. Akin to Margarete loving Faust, the German citizen and/or soldier has a love of country. This love portrayed by the Germans eventually leads to the death of Jews and subsequently the death of any positive German history.

Continuing with Rosenthal’s interpretation, it is the Germans who have destroyed the Jews and their own history, but they are also the ones that must be active in their own redemption in the eyes of the world and of their own society. Celan and Kiefer are the Germans who are attempting to redeem the German citizen. Celan is letting them know that there is a possibility for redemption, despite what happened. However, they have to

---

come to terms with it and be able to apologize. Kiefer, one generation removed, continues to try and rescue the lost morals of the German people and gain forgiveness and acceptance for what they had done.

Shulamith, the ashen-haired woman Celan refers to, is said to be “the ideal, purple-haired (not black-haired) spouse from the Song of Songs.” The story comes from the Old Testament and deals with King Solomon. Shulamith, one of the most beautiful women among the King’s harem, also becomes his favorite wife. After a disagreement between the couple, they reconcile in a garden of earthly delight. The story becomes a message of forgiveness and of how love can overcome differences of race, religion, and social status. I believe Celan was using Shulamith as a symbol of forgiveness to help repair the relationship between Germans and Jews. However, the only direct reference Celan makes to Shulamith in the poem is about her hair. Celan fails to mention the purple hair, or even black hair. He refers to Shulamith’s hair as “ashen,” which suggests Celan is evoking the ashes of the cremated Jews. Roos makes the point that “in reference to Goethe’s Faust, Celan summons Germany through its most celebrated Romantic writer. Sulamith, less discussed, is a Jewish biblical reference.” Therefore, “the women thus represent the two halves of German ethnicity.” Even though the two represent the two sides of Germany, Celan has managed to bring them together in harmony. Saltzman feels that Shulamith is “forever transformed by Celan’s verses into an ashen symbol of the destruction of European Jewry.” As mentioned earlier, Celan pairs the women together, separate from the body of the poem, and thus connects them. On the one hand, Margarete appears to be a

136 Lauterwein, Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan, 91.
137 Roos, Anselm Kiefer and the Art of Illusion, 33.
139 Saltzman, Art after Auschwitz, 29.
figure seeking to once again live among the Jews in peace and harmony. On the other hand, the ashen hair of Shulamith seems to represent death and destruction or the Jews rising from the ashes to reclaim their home within Germany and forgiving their former enemies.

I will now address Paul Celan’s treatment of Margarete and Shulamith in his poem *Death Fugue* and their relationship to Kiefer and his artworks. At times, I will reference several other Celan poems in order to further the relationship between the poet and artist. Saltzman thinks Kiefer’s works “might well be considered a painterly translation, transcription, transposition, transformation, transcendence, if not transgression, of Celan’s poem.” In other words, Kiefer approaches *Death Fugue* from many angles pictorially and thematically. Lopez-Pedraza noted, “with the two lines ‘your golden hair Margarete / your ashen hair Shulamith,’ we can imagine that, in a flash of intuition, he [Kiefer] saw a picture of the whole historical tragedy of the Germans and the Jews.” As much as it was a horrible tragedy for the Jews, it was a tragedy for any German who was not part of the Nazi party as well as for future generations of Germans who would have to live with their forefathers’ actions. In many of his works in this series, Kiefer attempts to represent each female in relation to her cultural stereotype; Margarete as the blonde-haired German and Shulamith as the ashen-haired Jew. The hair color becomes the primary representation of each figure in the majority of his works in this series.

In the Margarete works, Kiefer employed a desolate landscape receding into the distance through one-point perspective with a relatively elevated horizon line. Eric Kligerman felt these landscapes “de-mystify the mythic landscapes of the 1970s as they

---

now contain historical resemblances to the tracks of deportation.”\textsuperscript{142} Kligerman is referring to the deportation of the Jews by the Germans. This would be an appropriate assumption given that Celan saw many of the people from his town sent away – a fact that Kiefer appears most likely to be referencing. On top of the landscape rests the golden hair of Margarete, which is usually represented by straw affixed to the canvas (Figure 28)\textsuperscript{143}. Straw is generally associated with Margarete because it resembles the hair color of the ideal German Nazi. Rosenthal offers other interpretations as to what the straw may represent. From the viewpoint of the racial purist who glorifies Margarete, she “symbolizes the old German’s love of land, a spiritual philosophy that assumes a link between itself and Eastern thinking.”\textsuperscript{144} However, in the story of \textit{Faust}, the idea of the straw takes on a different meaning. In it, Margarete lay on a bed of straw while in jail for killing her baby.\textsuperscript{145} Therefore, the straw could also be alluding to Margarete as a prisoner or killer. Germans have become prisoners within their own country and must be forced to deal with the consequences of the war, while they were the killers during World War II. The most logical allusion seems to be to the ideal German due to the relationship between the often referenced blonde hair of Margarete and the actual color of the straw, unless Kiefer sought to represent her as a prisoner or killer, which in some cases he may have.

In \textit{Your Golden Hair, Margarete} from 1981, Kiefer presents us with a receding landscape that bears a resemblance to a cornfield (Figure 29)\textsuperscript{146}. The wooded and burning

\textsuperscript{144} Rosenthal, \textit{Anselm Kiefer}, 96.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid}, 99.
\textsuperscript{146} Gustave et Cie. “Fugue de Mort, Paul Celan.” http://lewebpedagogique.com/
Prussian landscapes from the 1970s have now become a wasteland of rotting crops. The crops are growing where a forest once stood, but they will never grow as high as the trees that once populated this area. Lauterwein thinks “the idealistic aspirations symbolized by the ‘forest’ are contrasted with the anthropomorphic qualities of the ‘corn’, which represent a subservient, weak-willed collectivity, regenerating itself like man from his own seed – even if it has been transformed again into a battlefield and reduced to nothing.”¹⁴⁷ I see this interpretation as the corn being the Jews, which will continue to regenerate and rise again through the ashes. Within the rows in the field, white and gray outlines of heads and bodies can be seen partially buried in the landscape. A bundle of straw rises vertically through the center of the canvas as the top portion slumps over. Immediately to the left of the straw is a thick black line mimicking its path on the canvas. The black streak represents Shulamith. Just as in Celan’s poem, they are together, isolated from the rest of the body of work. In one of the open rows of the field Kiefer writes, Dein goldenes Haar, Margarethe (Your golden Hair Margarete). In this series, Kiefer tends to place the title of his works within each piece in order to emphasize the primary focus of the work.

A similar painting from 1981 is entitled, Your Golden Hair, Margarete (Figure 30)¹⁴⁸. This time the landscape pulls back swiftly into the upper left hand corner of the canvas. A few houses can be seen on the horizon, but it is unclear whether they belong to friend or foe. A similar, arching bundle of straw is suspended in the middle of the canvas accompanied by the same black line mimicking its movement. However, this time there is another black line, quite noticeable, to the right of the straw. Kiefer may have wanted to

¹⁴⁷ Lauterwein, Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan, 109.
stress the presence of Shulamith in this work. Lauterwein notes that there are other black marks as well. She thinks they could offer several interpretations. The presence of another black line could possibly be threatening the straw by surrounding it. Together, she feels the two black lines “recall a barbed wire fence, like the electric fences that surrounded the concentration camps.” On the other hand, she sees the black mark on the right as “very reminiscent of a sword stuck into the ground.”149 Along with some red around the area where it pierces the ground, the sword could be referencing the heroes from the epic medieval tales of the Nibelungs, which would make the image about loyalty to the Nazi party and the extinguishing of a single race (Figure 31).150 If one were to use both of Lauterwein’s interpretations, they both point to the execution of Jewish people. This would qualify as a painting that would be aimed at bringing repressed memories to the surface for Germans. Again, the title is within the work, only this time it arcs above the straw and its ashen counterpart. Kiefer presents us with another painting containing representations of both women. Just as they are together in the poem, he places them together within the work. Rosenthal noticed that “in Kiefer’s view, Germany maimed itself and its civilization by destroying its Jewish members and so, by frequently alluding to both figures, he attempts to make Germany whole again.”151 By repeating the images of the two women together, Kiefer is attempting to repair the relationship between Germany and the Jews. He continues his act of repeating and working through that was prevalent in the 1970s.

---

149 Ibid, 110.
151 Rosenthal, Anselm Kiefer, 96.
Another work from 1981, simply titled *Margarete*, shows numerous stalks of straw rising up from the ground line of the canvas (Figure 32)\(^{152}\). In this work, Kiefer has opted for a neutral gray background and a very low horizon line. The background is primarily composed of straw and black and white paint. On the far right of the canvas, the shadow-like representation of Shulamith is depicted next to a couple of the straw bundles. The title, also in black, is once again written on the canvas, and this time it is centered and painted on the background as well as the straw. Kiefer also chose to place a single painted flame atop each stalk of straw. Rosenthal sees the stalks as “flourishing plant life.” He feels “this rendering exudes the confident, ever exultant, albeit ignorant, outlook for the noble Margarete (Germany).” He continues, “Margarete is pure and her vision is, apparently, clear. In this depiction, Germany is not so threatening; it is a land of high moral value and purpose, the ‘old’ Germany in Kiefer’s view.”\(^{153}\) The idea of old Germany being depicted would coincide with the ignorance that Rosenthal refers to. Hitler was ignorant to the fact that he was destroying a nation. The flames may be there to burn down the old Germany once it became uncontrollable, therefore allowing the new generation of Germans to rise from the ashes of their predecessors allowing them to work through their unfortunate past. However, it may also reference the burning of the Jews by the Nazi regime.

In 1981, Kiefer briefly returns to figurative representation in three works all titled, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*. Similar to his *Heroic Symbols* series, Kiefer presents his figures in various colors and media. This is much different than the straw representation of Margarete. One of the works is done in watercolor and in it Shulamith is depicted as a


seated nude with her back to the viewer (Figure 33)\textsuperscript{154}. Her long, black hair cascades down her back. Her curvaceous figure looks out upon a cityscape in the background. In the left hand corner Kiefer scribbles the title, \textit{Dein aschenes Haar, Sulamith (Your ashen Hair, Shulamith)}. Margarete is absent among the landscape, making Shulamith the sole focus of this painting.

Another of the works in the series was completed in oil, acrylic and emulsion (Figure 34)\textsuperscript{155}. This time Shulamith is seated in three-quarters pose. She is once again nude and with a cityscape in the background. Her hair drapes over her face, falling toward the bottom of the canvas. The title of the work is written along the contour of her flowing hair. She represents the faceless victim of the Nazis, the dark-haired Jew. Her German counterpart, Margarete is once again absent from the scene.

The last of three figurative works of Shulamith was done in oil (Figure 35)\textsuperscript{156}. Kiefer presents us with a profile view of a seated nude woman with a cityscape in the background once again. The title of the work extends along the curvature of her spine to the top of her head and Margarete continues to be absent. Her hair covers her face again as it flows like a waterfall along the right edge of the canvas. Shulamith’s ashen hair appears to be growing as the series progresses and takes over more of the frame. Lauterwein observed, “according to one Jewish tradition, the close relatives of the deceased do not shave or cut

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{ibid.} (accessed July 23, 2013).
their hair throughout the shivah (the seven-day period of mourning), as a manifestation of their withdrawal from society.”\textsuperscript{157}

The continuously growing hair of Shulamith may propose the idea of a never-ending state of mourning in the Jewish community. The shivah may also be the reason Shulamith sits alone in these works. She has withdrawn herself from society leaving the city behind her. The city depicted in the background has been referred to as New York City. New York became “the western home of Judaism after the Holocaust, and he [Kiefer] endows it with negative connotations by presenting the city as the cause of the nakedness and isolation of Shulamith.”\textsuperscript{158} The city becomes a forest of skyscrapers in which the lonely Shulamith is seated. In showing a city and modern high-rise apartments, Kiefer “shows the re-appearance of that which was forgotten in the present. The instance of trauma is now brought into a modern setting.”\textsuperscript{159} By bringing the trauma into the modern day, Kiefer is attempting to bring the past and the present together.

This painting is different than the others in that it carries much more of a somber tone. The figure is neither ignoring the viewer nor posing for the viewer as in the previous two works. Her body curls into itself with her head resting in her hands. The pose is again reminiscent of Dürer’s woman in \textit{Melancholia I}, which not only allows Kiefer to pay homage to the German art historical past, but also gives a melancholic tone to the work. Along with the obvious signs of melancholia, there seems to be a bit of embarrassment to the character as well. The embarrassment of the nakedness could be referencing the Jews being stripped

\textsuperscript{157} Lauterwein, \textit{Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan}, 100.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid}, 101.
\textsuperscript{159} Kligerman, \textit{Scenes of Witnessing}, 242.
of their clothes, culture, and identity within the Nazi death camps. She is realizing what happened and attempting to come to terms with the death of her people.

After Kiefer explored the figurative representation of Shulamith, he returns to his non-figurative representation in 1981 with another work titled *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith* (Figure 36). The extreme diagonal of the landscape being pulled back into the upper left hand corner of the canvas is similar to the *Margarete* paintings. This landscape, however, is completely blackened and charred from the scorching of the earth. Several houses sit upon the horizon line. These are recognizable as extermination chambers given the ash that covers the earth. The title is scrolled across the very top of the canvas, stretching from one side to the other. Different from the figurative works of Shulamith, Margarete is represented in this work by an abundance of straw toward the lower left hand corner. The scorched earth, extermination houses, and the presence of the German Margarete, suggest Kiefer’s attempt to represent more of the horrors of the Holocaust to induce Germany to mourn.

The representation of the ashen hair of Shulamith is not only an ongoing theme for Kiefer, but also for Celan. Lauterwein notes that Celan’s poem *Aspen Tree* “introduces the subject of hair that will never whiten. Unlike the leaves that age, die and are reborn, hair is cut off from the vital source that feeds its metamorphosis.” I see *Aspen Tree* as a noticeable homage to his mother and dealing with her horrible death.

*ASPEN TREE your leaves glance white into the dark.*

*My mother’s hair was never white.*

---

162 Ibid, 103.
Dandelion, so green is the Ukraine.
My yellow-haired mother did not come home.

Rain cloud, above the well do you hover?
My quiet mother weeps for everyone.

Round star, you wind the golden loop.
My Mother’s heart was ripped by lead.

Oaken door, who lifted you off the hinges?
My gentle mother cannot return.\textsuperscript{163}

The reason his mother’s hair was never white was due to the fact that she was murdered before she had the chance to grow old. He refers to his yellow-haired mother, which is reasonable because although she was Jewish, she was of German descent. The round star makes reference to the Star of David and the winding of the golden loop alludes to the blonde hair of the Germans. His mother’s heart getting ripped by lead describes the Nazi bullet that shot her dead. Celan even portrays the brutal way she was taken from her home. Earlier in the poem, his mother was quiet, most likely hiding from the Nazis. She appeared to be hidden and crying for everyone they had taken, until they broke down the large oak door and took his mother off to the death camp where she would meet her demise. The combination of the blonde and dark hair could be a representation of the German-born Jew.

Celan continues to reference hair in poems such as \textit{Mandorla} and \textit{Your Hand}. In \textit{Mandorla}, the line “Jew’s curl, you’ll not turn grey,”\textsuperscript{164} Celan revisits the theme of the Jewish

\textsuperscript{163} Hamburger, \textit{Paul Celan}, 33.
hair not turning gray, similar to Aspen Tree. This time he discusses the textural aspect of the hair along with the color. Celan could still be referring to the shortened life span of the Jewish people, never seeing the age when their hair would turn gray. Another of Celan’s reference to hair appeared in Your Hand. The lines, “So you lifted it slightly on to the scales of grief; it weighed more than I” and “I weep: Your hair is not brown, they offer brine from the sea and you give them curls.”<sup>165</sup> Celan begins to detach the hair from the person, so that it takes on a life of its own. The hair becomes the embodiment of the Jewish people. Celan appears to be angry that the hair is not brown. If the hair is blonde, then guilt is placed on the Germans and what they did to the Jews. Celan also places guilt onto Jewish people that do not hold true the brown and curly qualities of “typical” Jewish hair. The color and qualities of hair seem to define each culture in Celan’s poetry.

Kiefer employs the detached hair as representation of the Jewish people in a series from 1990. He created works that consisted of lead books with locks of real hair attached to them. The hair was dark and had a curl to it, just as Celan described. There are conflicting interpretations of Kiefer’s Shulamith works of 1990 (Figure 37)<sup>166</sup>. Lauterwein sees the locks of hair as coming from the Christian tradition. She feels “such locks of hair are associated with the life force, and sometimes even with the seat of the soul, and they maintain close ties with the dead person.”<sup>167</sup> She also notes that hair has been used in works by women artists of the modern era to denounce sex and racial discrimination. A good example would be Lorna Simpson’s work, Wigs, from 1990. Her installation

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 157.
<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 31.
<sup>167</sup> Lauterwein, Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan, 106.
consisting of drawings on felt refers to “to the identity of African Americans and how they conform to, or rebel against, prevailing white standards of beauty by braiding, dying, weaving, and processing their hair.” Also, in many cultures women’s hair may be cut or at least maintained as a form of control over women and censorship. “The cutting of the hair is therefore often accompanied by oppression, and in this sense is a kind of substitute for the sacrifice of the female body.” The hair that is presented on Kiefer’s lead books is the symbolic representation of the hair of the Jewish women that were shaved upon their arrival to the concentration camps, stripped of their personal and cultural identity. Lopez-Pedraza feels the same about the works referencing the death camps. However, he thinks the combination of the hair and lead activate our sense of smell and “we can ‘smell’ the concentration camp and the ovens. In creating this effect, Kiefer makes an important psychological connection. Hell is imagined through the sense of smell in Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises.*” He continues to talk about how Ignatius’s ideas were supported through medieval alchemical thought that suggested hell would smell like sulphur. Therefore, Kiefer’s corroding lead pages have a certain sulphuric aspect that would support the connection to concentration camps being hell on earth. The corrosive aspect of the pages along with the ashen hair can also be representative of the burning bodies within the camps.

The last Shulamith work I want to discuss does not directly reference the hair of Shulamith, but builds upon Kiefer’s works depicting German architecture. *Shulamith* from

---

170 Lopez-Pedraza, *The Psychology of ’After the Catastrophe,’* 73.
171 *Ibid*, 73.
1983, is described by Huyssen as “the most powerful painting in the series inspired by Paul Celan”172 (Figure 38)173. Kiefer presents us with a large, arching brick interior space. It is dimly lit, with no windows or obvious exit. A long, dark corridor rendered in low-level one-point perspective leads to a set of flames in the distance. The flames appear to be that of a candelabra, or menorah. The ceiling of the great brick hall is covered in dark soot, indicating something has burned and the smoke cannot escape. In the upper left corner Kiefer writes the title, Sulamith, in white as he has on all of his canvases from this series (Figure 39)174.

According to Saltzman, the name being represented on the outermost edge of the building shows that Shulamith is not represented in the work, although “one might make the claim that the ashen surface of the canvas is indeed her metonymic representation.”175 Saltzman makes a valid point considering Margarete and Shulamith are continuously represented in each work that bears their names. The building is based on Wilhelm Kreis’s design for the Funeral Hall for the Great German Soldiers in the Berlin Hall of Soldiers (Figure 40)176. Huyssen sees the building as a “cavernous space, blackened by the fires of cremation, clearly reminding us of a gigantic brick oven.”177 Although there is no evidence of dead and dying bodies, the ashen ceiling displays the presence of the dead bodies through their absence. Rosenthal noticed “Kiefer has subverted the building’s original,
public function and revealed the indecent secrets of the society that first built this monument.” Kiefer reverses the meaning of the building and renders it a memorial for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

The Margarete and Shulamith series of works shifted Kiefer’s focus to that of the German and Jewish relationship as opposed to the strictly Germanic themes prior to this series. Saltzman felt once Kiefer was:

engaged with the particular issue of the Holocaust, and more specifically, the Germans and the Jews, certainly came at an opportune time. German society was primed for an engagement with its history, and the Margarethe and Sulamith canvases allowed German audiences in the 1980s to participate in yet another dimension of Trauerarbeit, the work of mourning.

Kiefer continues to be the artist creating images to help Germany come to terms with its past and work through its historical trauma.

---

179 Saltzman, Art after Auschwitz, 118.
CHAPTER IV

Anselm Kiefer has incorporated themes of religion in his work for decades. Some of his early works such as *The Heavens* and *Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven* deal with how individuals visualize their own personal heaven. These works contain references to Germany’s Nazi past through images of soldiers clad in Nazi uniforms giving their token salute. They also offer assistance in working through what had happened by bringing up repressed memories of World War II. Kiefer abandoned direct religious content in his works through most of the 1970s and 1980s, though certain aspects of working through the trauma almost always remain. Midway through the 1980s, Kiefer began to create works without obvious Germanic themes, but with references to Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah. He began this thematic shift with *Emanation* from 1984-1986 and then *Breaking of the Vessels* from 1989-1990. He also incorporated the Heavenly Palaces of the Kabbalah in several works in the following decades.

Some of Kiefer’s earliest works question the very nature of religion and its association with intellectual and political life. In 1969, he created a book with the title, *The Heavens* (Figure 41)\(^{180}\). The cover of the book appears to be that of a child’s scrapbook. It consists of a manila colored piece of fabric or paper with the title, *Die Himmel*, written in cursive in black ink across the top and the artist’s name in the lower right. Two pieces of fabric extend horizontally across the cover. These act as the binding that keeps the book together. Many of the pages consist of collages made from magazine cut outs of clouds and sky. Michael Auping describes Kiefer’s book as “insightful modesty with dark ironies,

indicating that the road to paradise is invariably warped. His use of image fragments reflects a belief that heaven cannot be summarized into a single image or place, but it is better symbolized by a series of glimpses, each convincing; and unconvincing from different viewpoints.”¹⁸¹ Thus, Auping suggests that no one has a single view of what heaven may look like, or that it consists of various aspects of our lives and is different for each individual.

The most notable difference is between the views of heaven expressed by Germans and Jews around World War II. The German view may be what Auping is referring to as “warped.” By combining multiple images in collage form to create his heavens, Kiefer is showing his audience that there is not one finite image or interpretation regarding what heaven may be. He allows the individual to create his or her own heaven. One of the pages shows the Cathedral of Light, which was a building designed by the Nazi architect Albert Speer (Figure 42)¹⁸². The Cathedral of Light was a large structure that projected numerous beams of light into the air to light up the sky in order to expose and shoot down enemy aircraft.¹⁸³ By presenting this image within the pages of The Heavens, Kiefer compares Speer’s light creation, which was projected upward, to the light of God shining down on His people and that illuminates the interiors of cathedrals dedicated to Him. Kiefer is comparing the fascist government to the kingdom of heaven. In this comparison, however, he emphasizes that the Nazis felt they were practicing their own religion within their cathedral. The fact the Nazi’s light emanates upwards as opposed to God’s downward rays,

¹⁸³ Ibid, 191.
displays the backwardness of fascist logic. Therefore, Kiefer’s irony is evident simply through the direction of Speer’s light, which is contrary to God’s light. Therefore, Speer’s light is seen as the opposite of heavenly. Throughout this book, Kiefer shows his tendency towards “exposing the shadowy wrinkles of any utopian fabric” and states that “religion can pretend to be pure. History cannot.” Kiefer manages to display serene views of what heaven could be and whether true or not, produces positive images of heaven. Moreover, Kiefer also uncovers the many flaws of the utopian society the Nazis intended to create.

The following year, Kiefer created a small watercolor called Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven (Figure 43). This work has a similar theme as The Heavens in which Kiefer juxtaposes the symbolism of religion and fascism. In this work, a blue dome with a figure inside is presented against a vast landscape that recedes deeply into the background. The blue dome can be seen as “a transparent hemisphere that is suggestive of restriction and a need for expansion,” or quite possibly “the dome of a church or the cockpit of a German bomber is transformed into a child’s snow globe.” All seem to be valid interpretations of the dome.

The restriction and expansion theory can be looked at in two ways. If it is the artist beneath the dome, then he feels restricted in his image making and must expand his thematic and visual elements in order to make his point. If the figure, dressed in what appears to be a green military uniform, stands inside the dome with his right arm extended giving the token Nazi salute is in fact a soldier, then one must see the dome as a symbol of

---

184 Ibid, 191.
187 Auping, Heaven and Earth, 191.
the fallen Nazi party and its need for expansion once again. Suzanne Smith sees his salute as “directed at no one in particular, since he is utterly isolated.”188 This may once again refer to the fall of the Nazi regime and the lone soldier who is left without any followers. If you take the title into account, this may be the lone soldier’s own dome of heaven, in which one day Fascism will rise again. Conversely, the dome may represent Hitler’s attempt to cover Germany and Europe within his own dome of Fascist heaven.

Auping’s idea that the dome is similar to one that may be found on a church would make sense, considering in his early work, Kiefer tended to make references to religion. I am unsure of the cockpit being transformed into a snow globe theory, but it seems to have validity. Obviously the vision of a German cockpit and the soldier within it correlate with one another. The juvenile nature of the construction of The Heavens book would allow for the child’s snow globe idea, but I feel it’s too simple in its meaning and does not work in terms of Kiefer’s deeper level of emotional, historical, and religious exploration in his works. Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven has the same controversial imagery of Kiefer’s Occupations series, but now incorporates religion, leaving the audience to question their own views of heaven and what path they must take to get there. Kiefer’s target audience for this questioning is the German people who he hopes will have an awakening in terms of religion, morality, and history.

The landscape in Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven appears to be a plowed field in the wintertime as snow is evident on the ground and the crops have decayed into the earth. The decay may be referencing the dead bodies throughout

Germany after the war. But if one were to see the decay as ash, then the notion of a rise from the ashes can be made once again.

Smith wrote about the emptiness of the landscape and the possibility of what it once was: “we can only infer the existence of other people here from the evidence of their past actions . . . The human figure is spared from conflict (for which he is, nonetheless, outfitted should it arise) in being cut off from mutual human love and deprived of community.”

Therefore the existence of other people is present through their absence, a theme that Kiefer continues to visit within his landscapes. There is evidence they once existed, but have since perished into the earth, most likely at the hands of the Nazis. The figure now becomes saved under the dome, but in return gives up love and a sense of community. This interpretation seems to be sympathetic toward former Nazi soldiers who can no longer reveal their true identity.

Kiefer is allowing them safety from the outside world and the ability to work through the issues under their own domes. Smith also notes that Kiefer offers a different perspective on his work. He sees that “each man has his own dome, his own perceptions, his own theories. There is no one god for all. Each man has his own [worldview].” This leads me to believe the figure underneath the dome is Kiefer and he is within his own Germanic artist’s utopia - one that will grow from the foundations set forth by his predecessors and flourish in the future. This isolated figure as artist may have been a precursor to the hermetic lifestyle Kiefer would resort to several years later. He chose to isolate himself within his studio, which became his own dome of heaven where he was free to worship whomever he chose and to create art freely in his own space and time.

---

189 Ibid, 2.
190 Ibid, 3.
By the mid-1980s, Kiefer had nearly abandoned all figurative representation in his works. He began to shift his focus away from references to Germany and its past through direct quotations and myth. Kiefer chose to build upon *Margarete* and *Shulamith* and create works about Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah. This new thematic element was evident in Kiefer’s work throughout the 1980s, 1990s and into the twenty-first century.

One of Kiefer’s early works that dealt with the Kabbalah was *Emanation* from 1984-1986 (Figure 44)\(^{191}\). Although much of the Kabbalah teachings and writings are obscure, one of the primary notions that followers of the religion uphold is “that everything emanates from God; there is no ‘creation’ in the common sense of the term.”\(^{192}\) This connects the title of the work directly to the ideas of the Kabbalah. Kiefer presents us with a low horizon landscape, as opposed to his traditional elevated horizon line, but stays true to his quickly receding ground lines. A kind of “emanation” rises from the ground upward through the center of the work. The low horizon line allows more of a dramatic approach to the emanation ascending toward the heavens. It allows the viewer to fully experience its gradual climb into the stratosphere. Hutchinson sees the emanation as “vanity and illusion, which arises and disappears like a passing shadow.”\(^{193}\) This would explain the gray color and the apparent frailty of the emanation. If it is just vanity and illusion, then it should not hold much weight and seem as though it will disappear just like the passing shadow Hutchinson refers to. *Emanation* appears to be a work about creation, while reminding us


\(^{192}\) Hutchinson, *Wager*, 71-72.

\(^{193}\) *Ibid*, 72
that our time on earth is short. Just as we are created from the earth, we will one day be
gone and become part of the earth once again.

Kiefer continues his exploration of the Kabbalah in the monumental sculpture
*Breaking of the Vessels* from 1989-1990 (Figure 45). The work consists of a large, three-tiered bookcase filled with lead books. Above the bookcase is a piece of glass in the shape of a half-circle. It is reminiscent of the upper section of Medieval and Renaissance altarpieces, which immediately gives the work a religious connotation. Surrounding the bookcase on the floor are pieces of shattered glass. They appear to be arranged in a semi-circle as well, possibly mimicking the shape of the upper piece of glass. Charles W. Haxthausen notes:

The title refers to a Kabbalistic doctrine concerning the creation, developed in the circle of the sixteenth-century Rabbi, Isaac Luria. At the creation, as the divine light flowing from *Ein-Sof* (the hidden, unknowable, infinite Godhead) flooded into the primeval space that had opened up, it gradually formed into hierarchical structures or spheres of light, the ten *Sefiroth*, or emanations. Each *Sefiroth* had a corresponding vessel, itself made of a lower, denser mixture of light, to receive and preserve this divine light, but only the vessels of the three highest were strong enough to contain it; six vessels shattered from its sudden, powerful impact and the tenth was fractured, whereupon most of the divine light withdrew back into *Ein-Sof*. The broken shards became the source of gross matter and out of them evil arose.195

The theme of emanation and creation are repeated in this work, only this time it
does not literally appear. Once the general back-story is given, one may conclude that the
piece of glass above the bookcase like structure refers to *Ein-Sof* and the divine light, just as
Medieval and Renaissance altarpieces would use similar iconography to represent their
highest beings or Godhead. This information can also allow one to conclude that the

195 Charles W. Haxthausen, ”The World, the Book, and Anselm Kiefer,” *The Burlington
shattered glass below represents the six shattered vessels that were unable to contain the divine light. Therefore if the shattered glass becomes the broken vessels, then it also represents the place where evil arose.

Huyssen sees the broken glass as having multiple references, "from the custom of breaking glass at wedding ceremonies (both in the Jewish and Christian traditions) to the Kristallnacht pogroms, from the notion of shattered transparency to that of the ultimate fragmentation of knowledge." Kiefer continually opens his work to multiple interpretations, which allows different viewers to interpret his works for themselves based on their individual backgrounds and history.

It is interesting that Kiefer chose to represent divine light with lead books. The heaviness and denseness of lead would be the last material that most would think of when referring to light. However, since there is no pictorial tradition within the Kabbalah, contrary to Christianity, Kiefer employed his artistic freedoms when choosing a medium for his representations. Doreet LeVitte Harten noted:

The books in the work bear all the combinations of the letters, the Sefirot. Since they are made of lead, they are two aspects of the idea of prima material, thus representing stages in comprehension as well as being the matter that mobilizes or emanates from it. Since the books are separate entities of what was previously whole they point toward the first Shvira, the first break from the knowledge that was whole. They stand for knowledge that has already been categorized.

By this reasoning, the idea of using a bookcase filled with books as a primary image makes sense. While information and knowledge are often categorized within books, the use of lead is interesting. Kiefer may be revisiting the ideas of alchemy by using lead and

---

197 Haxthausen, *The World, the Book*, 850.
representing its transformation into gold. Haxthausen felt this transition referred to “a process interpreted as a mystical drama of the suffering, death, and resurrection of matter to immortality, ‘equivalent . . . in Christian terminology, to its redemption’. Lead, as Kiefer has observed, always pointed to ‘another, more spiritual plane’.”199 This idea of spirituality connects the use of lead to Kabbalah and Christian traditions. One may also take into account the idea of crucifixion with resurrection. Along with the visual image of the glass hung above the bookcase resembling an altarpiece, the outstretched arms of the bookcase could symbolize a scene of crucifixion. This theory would allow for a stronger connection between the Kabbalah and Christian tradition.

A connection to German society should be noted in this work as well. The ideas of resurrection and working through the catastrophe for Germans point to the underlying themes of Kiefer’s previous work. In support of this idea, Hutchinson has noted that, “Kiefer is attempting to mend a ‘Broken Vessel’ by reconstituting the fragmented elements of German history. He mourns the Holocaust . . ., but he simultaneously celebrates the resurrection of Jewishness.”200 Therefore, it could be a symbol of the resurrected memories of the Holocaust, of the German people after they have worked through the catastrophe and found their new cultural identity, or of the rebirth of the Jewish people as a part of German society.

Upon the bookcase, Kiefer has inscribed the names of each of the ten Sefiroth that were to hold the divine light from Ein-Sof. They are written on crumpled strips of lead and attached throughout the work in positions similar to their positions on the Sefiroth tree of

199 Haxthausen, The World, the Book, 851.
200 Hutchinson, Wager, 72.
life (Figure 46). They are connected to one another by copper wire, which could signify branches within the tree of life. Haxthausen explains the meanings and locations of several strips of lead:

The highest, Keter (crown), is attached to the glass; six project laterally from the sides of the bookcase; the fifth, Tefereth (mercy, also known as splendour or beauty), and the ninth, Yesod (the foundation), are symmetrically mounted to the two lower shelves; the tenth, Makkath (God’s royal rule, or kingdom), the medium through which all of the forces of the previous nine Sefiroth flow into creation, lies amid the shattered glass on the floor.

The idea of the Keter, or crown, being at the top of the piece corresponds well with the glass and its representations of altarpieces. I see a correlation between the crown of the Kabbalah and the kingdom of heaven in Catholicism. The foundation of Sefiroth is located toward the bottom, or foundation of the bookcase, which alludes to the structural integrity of the work. The idea that God’s kingdom is on the floor, not to mention on Earth, may allude to the notion that the kingdom has fallen and thus needs resurrection. However, if one were to look at the kingdom as Germany, then Kiefer could be referencing the need for Germany to resurrect its historical past to critically and constructively redeem it.

While Kiefer was referencing Kabbalah in his work, he continued to revisit the notion of the Heavenly Palaces from 1988-2005. According to Fabrizio Tramontano, there are the following seven heavenly palaces:

described in the ancient (fourth- to fifth-century AD) treatise of the Sefer Hechalot (the book of palaces/sanctuaries), together with the complex architecture of the Heavens and the direct experience of the presence of God, the main focus of mystical literature as a whole. Before reaching the presence of God enthroned, the Yored – in other words, he who wishes to ascend the staircase of the merkaba – must pass through the Seven Heavens and therefore visit the Seven Heavenly Rooms/Palaces. Only by means of magical symbols, words, and hymns is it

---

201 The Sacred Tree of Life. “Ideas in Time: Sephiroth.”

202 Haxthausen, The World, the Book, 850.
possible to cross the threshold and avoid the vigilance of the angels that guard them. 

Kiefer approaches this idea through three different forms of representation. In 1988, he created an installation in a building in Munich that involved twenty-six different sculptures titled *Heavenly Palaces*, which deal with myth and origin. Kiefer chose to deal with the literary aspect of the Kabbalah in 1990 by creating a book of photographs and collages titled *The Heavenly Palaces: Merkabah*. His most recent work involving the Heavenly Palaces was an installation in a warehouse in Italy called *The Seven Heavenly Palaces*, where he represents each of the seven palaces on a monumental scale.

In his sculptural installation, *Heavenly Palaces*, from 1988, Kiefer not only creates sculptures based on Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah, and its creation, but he also makes references to the Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts. Heiner Bastian notes, “All these sculptures are concerned with a principle that we encounter repeatedly over the years in Anselm Kiefer’s works; that is, the invisible and the intrinsically impossible image.” He is referring to the notion that Kiefer continuously takes on themes that do not have established imagery, such as the Kabbalah. Rather than discuss all twenty-six sculptures, I have selected several that will continue to build upon the themes and dialogue that have been previously established.

Sculpture VII in the *Heavenly Palaces* series is titled *Lilith* (Figure 47). Huysen defines Lilith as “Adam’s legendary first wife, the non-Eve, whose identity has always been coded as demonic and insubordinate and whose independence was rooted in the fact that

---

she was not formed from Adam’s rib. The old story of Lilith meeting the demon in the ruins merges with visions of cities in ruins, urban decay, the haze of pollution.”206 The sculpture is enclosed in a glass case, as most of the works in this installation are, that holds a dress suspended from the top. The dress is gray and wrinkled as it hovers over a red and gray cracked landscape. The landscape below corresponds well with the city in ruins and the urban decay that Huyssen mentioned. The dress makes reference to the haze of pollution hovering over the destroyed city. Harten sees the representation of ashen dresses that Kiefer uses to refer to Lilith as “remnants of something that was once alive, gifts of death to life. They are magical implements used in the process of reviving something that has been forgotten, instruments of transmutation.”207

Kiefer may be telling the story of Lilith and the struggles throughout her life if one were to approach the interpretation of this sculpture strictly based on the visual elements. I believe Kiefer is still holding on to the possibility of helping Germany out of its state of melancholy. He is attempting to revive the memories of the past. The scorched earth of Germany lies below the ashen dress of a Jewish female. This is directly related to his Shulamith works of the same time. In this regard, also notable is the gold streak that extends vertically down the gray dress of Lilith (Figure 48)208. The gold references the idea of alchemy and lead’s transformation and by extension, evokes Germany’s transformation over time. Although Lilith does not directly deal with Germany and the installation refers to Kabbalah, it was displayed in Germany, which suggests that Kiefer chose not to eliminate all references to Germany given his goal of remembering, repeating and working through.

206 Huyssen, Kiefer in Berlin, 91.
207 Harten, Canticle, 15.
208 Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 33.
Two of the sculptures dealing with Greek mythology are XV, *Medea Jason*, and XXIV, *The Argonauts* (Figures 49 and 50). These refer to the hero, Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece. Helping him on his quest was his wife, Medea, and his group of followers, the Argonauts. *Medea Jason* is cased in glass and displays a suspended gray dress, similar to that of *Lilith*. Gold can also be found on the dress, this time in more of a random fashion, but now referencing the Golden Fleece (Figure 51). A ladder hangs from the bottom of the dress, while a much smaller, white dress is attached roughly halfway down. Bastian wrote the “fragile skeletons of cardboard and wood hold it all together – the Heavenly Ladders, to which the clothes of allegory cleave.” The tiny white dress is the metaphoric clothing that is cutting off the ladder to heaven. The ladder represents the object that one must climb in order to reach the Heavenly Palaces. Kiefer may be implying that Medea will not see heaven given her betrayal and murder of Jason with poison and her stealing of the Golden Fleece. Another scorched earth landscape lies below. The names within the title are written on the glass case in white so that *Medea* is on the upper half and *Jason* on the lower half.

The other sculpture, *The Argonauts*, deals with the same story. This time the sculpture is arranged horizontally. It shows the dress of Medea, on the ground, presumably after her fall to earth when the Heavenly ladder broke. Upon the landscape near the bottom of the dress are teeth, “referring to the teeth of the dragon that, seeded, produced the warriors Jason had to fight.” A small plane is also shown with the name *Jason* written on the tail. Lead ribbons hang off the plane’s wings with the names of the Argonauts

---

contained on each one (Figure 52). Bastian noted, “The airplane must fail. But in the failure it pulls the world, which shelters all shadows and indeed summons to poetic forms of the creative. The artist is the seeker and the tempter, the one out of whom what is tempting in the abyss of temptation speaks. Increasing images of the self; and as well, an expansion of the identity of the artist.” If one were to look at this work as a reference to the artist and Germany, it could possibly refer to the idea that Kiefer feels he and Germany have failed in the past, but as they become more aware of these failures, they will be able to establish a renewed image and identity. Indeed, Kiefer continues to regain German identity throughout his career and so to associate it with this work is possible.

The most notable sculptures that deal directly with the Kabbalah are X and XVI, both titled The Sefiroth and XXVI called Emanation (Figures 53, 54 and 55). Both of The Sefiroth sculptures are enclosed in glass. Both of the sculptures display the names of the ten Sefiroth attached to their proper locations among a skeleton of the Sefiroth tree of life. Each Sefiroth is individually numbered on a piece of notebook paper (Figure 56). The paper on Sefiroth sculpture X appears to be torn with rough edges, while in XVI, the labels are much more pristine and hard-edged. Both are obvious references to the structure of the tree of life with little variation. The framework is made of wood in both works and appears to be attached to some sort of rock or lead base. The only major difference between the two is Sefiroth XVI contains the same half-circle shape at the top of the tree that was in Breaking of the Vessels (Figure 57). Kiefer may be indirectly making

---

213 Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 85.
214 Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 98
215 Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 42, 64 and 88.
216 Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 42.
217 Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, Heavenly Palaces, 65.
reference to this work or simply repeating the motif as they were both created around the same time period.

Another work dealing directly with the Kabbalah is sculpture XXVI, *Emanation*. This appears to be a sculptural representation of the painting *Emanation* from 1984-1986. The emanation is hung from the top of the enclosed case (Figure 58)\(^{218}\). A scorched earth lies below as the emanation rises into the air. The rough edges of the emanation give it the illusionistic appeal that was shown in the previous work. It seems that if were one to walk around the glass case, the emanation would disappear once in line with its edge. Therefore, it would appear as though the emanation “arises and disappears like a passing shadow”\(^{219}\) as you circumnavigate the glass case. Kiefer is able create the physical action of the emanation through this sculptural piece.

In 1990, Kiefer continued to work with the Kabbalah, this time in the form of a book titled, *The Heavenly Palaces: Merkabah* (Figure 59)\(^ {220}\). The cover of the book presents the viewer with a black and white photograph of an empty, spacious interior. The floor is made of brick and undulates, as if it were warped by time. The way the bricks recede into the background on a diagonal is reminiscent of his landscapes. White acrylic paint rises from the floor in seven distinct lines, while the top of the photograph is covered in ash. Each of the white lines is numbered, which implies that they represent the seven heavenly palaces. The title, *Die Himmelspalaste, Heavenly Palaces*, is written in cursive at the top of the cover in black. Near the bottom of the cover the second part of the title, *Merkaba*, which means

\(^{218}\) Scanned Image from, Heiner Bastian, *Heavenly Palaces*, 89.

\(^{219}\) Hutchinson, *Wager*, 72.

chariot, is written in black as well.\textsuperscript{221} The dark, interior space coincides with another of his works based on the Jewish woman, \textit{Sulamith}. However, similar in emptiness, the cover of \textit{Heavenly Palaces} does not seem to hold the cultural significance of \textit{Sulamith}. Saltzman sees this space bereft of memories of the past. As the space remains empty, it begins to fill with meaning as the pages are turned. She likens the progression of the cellar image throughout the book to “a cinematic storyboard, the format of the book allows the introduction of narrative, traditionally either condensed or absent from the pictorial arts.” She continues to discuss the functionality of the individual pages within the book as, “a coherently conceived image, and at the same time, the drive of pulson created by the simple act of sequentially turning the pages sets the stage for a visual story to emerge from the penumbral depths of the represented cellar space.”\textsuperscript{222} Therefore, just as in a storybook with words, Kiefer manages to communicate his story through images alone.

Throughout this book, Kiefer is attempting to create images for the imageless mysticism of the Kabbalah. There is no defined set of visual imagery associated with this religion, therefore Kiefer is creating abstract and figurative imagery that can be associated with the stories of the Kabbalah. Kiefer continues to present the viewer with photographs of the interior space with increased clarity. Once the space clearly appears, the next page finds the room covered in black paint and ash. Within the paint and ash, the silhouette of a woman appears with an emanation spewing upward from her mouth\textsuperscript{223} (Figure 60)\textsuperscript{224}. On this page, the woman is now in photographic form. She is presented in black and white,

\textsuperscript{221} Saltzman, \textit{Art after Auschwitz}, 38.
\textsuperscript{222} \textit{Ibid}, 38.
\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Ibid}, 40.
with low contrast and brightness. Her nude torso is visible as she looks toward the sky with her mouth wide open. Is it a scream of horror or ecstasy? It is hard to tell in this image, but there does not seem to be a struggle. The figure’s arms are held behind her head, as the emanation spews from her mouth. This emanation appears to be the same one that Kiefer presented in 1984-1986 and then again in sculptural form in 1988. It would seem that the emanation is spewing from her body, but I would argue that she is accepting the emanation into her body as she is being created. This may not be a physical creation, but a spiritual one. I find it interesting that Kiefer returns briefly to the figurative form in this book. This may be his way of making the Jewish females that he has previously represented into concrete objects. It is possible to think this figure could be a physical representation of Sulamith and Lilith. “In the final page sets that follow, the substance disperses once again into arrested flows of matter, completing the tale of form and matter, figuration and abstraction.”225 Through this book, Kiefer attempted to provide the viewer with abstract and figurative images of the Kabbalah, while continuing to employ his characteristic use of paint and ash.

From 2004-2005, Kiefer presents his most literal translation of the Kabbalah in his monumental installation The Seven Heavenly Palaces (Figure 61)226. He constructed seven towers in the Hangar Bicocca located in Milan, Italy. The seven towers are made of 85 load bearing walls, each weighing six tons. 42 slabs are used to separate the various levels of each tower, which weigh about two and a half tons each. There is also an assortment of 160 books and 90 lead wedges, which are placed at the bottom of the towers as well as within

225 Ibid, 42.
the different levels. Each fully completed tower weighs in at roughly ninety tons. The top of each tower is adorned with decoration and certain structural elements that are associated with the title and subject matter of that specific tower. These towers, or palaces, are the seven that one must pass through before reaching the presence of God. This is meant to be a “symbolic path of spiritual initiation.”

The names of The Seven Heavenly Palaces are: Sefiroth, Melancholia, Ararat, Magnetic Field Lines, JH&WH, and Falling Pictures. Sefiroth is the first tower one encounters upon arrival in the hangar (Figure 62). Since it is near the entrance, which has a lower ceiling, it is the only tower made of five levels. Hanging in neon lights from the various levels are the names of the ten Sefiroth, similar to their appearance in Breaking of the Vessels (Figure 63). They are arranged according to their order on the Sefiroth tree of life. There are seven lead books located at the top of the tower (Figure 64). Although there are ten Sefiroth, they are separated into two distinct groups, three higher ones and seven lower ones, that were unable to hold the light similar to Breaking of the Vessels. “Generally speaking, the three higher ones have no real influence on our physical world. They are above and outside the confines of our cosmic neighborhood. The seven lower Sefiroth, however, influence our world directly. In fact, the number seven has the cosmological significance of ‘generating matter’ in Gnostic philosophy.” Therefore, Kiefer chooses to focus on the number seven in order to show the relationship of his work to the physical world of the Kabbalah and the cosmological world of Gnostic philosophy.

---

227 Tramontano, The Installation, 117.
228 Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 106.
229 Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 92.
230 Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 98.
231 Ibid, 118.
Melancholia is a six-tiered tower, with the final level consisting of an L-shaped wall (Figure 65)\textsuperscript{232}. On the very top, Kiefer once again employs the use of Dürer's polyhedron from his print of the same name (Figure 66)\textsuperscript{233}. The polyhedron continues to be a universal symbol used within Kiefer's work. In the case of the towers, Melancholia is also translated as Falling Stars. This explains the falling stars that are evident throughout the tower and its surrounding area. The stars were made by “sticking the numerical classifications of the stars of modern astronomy on a sheet of glass, in accordance with their distance, color, and mass. Hence there arises an inevitable association with the numbers tattooed on the arms of prisoners in concentration camps”\textsuperscript{234} (Figure 67)\textsuperscript{235}. It is possible that Kiefer makes this reference in order to honor the Jewish people who died in the concentration camps. He wants to represent them along their path to heaven and possibly to allow the families of the victims closure that their loved ones made it to the kingdom of heaven.

The next tower is Ararat, named after the mountain in Armenia where Noah’s Ark came to rest\textsuperscript{236} (Figure 68)\textsuperscript{237}. This six-tiered tower also has an L-shaped wall at the top with a small lead battleship appearing on the roof. The battleship may represent a modern day Noah’s Ark (Figure 69)\textsuperscript{238}. If one were to attempt to recreate Noah’s act, there is bound to be opposition in today’s society. Either people would claim that he a religious zealot for believing there will be an epic flood or if the flood was imminent, everyone would attempt to board the vessel. This appears to be the most simple and least decorated of the towers.

\textsuperscript{232} Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 107.
\textsuperscript{233} Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 99.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid, 118.
\textsuperscript{235} Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 66.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid, 118.
\textsuperscript{237} Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 101.
\textsuperscript{238} Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 98.
*Magnetic Field Lines* is the tallest structure of the group, standing seven stories (Figure 70)\(^{239}\). The top level holds an L-shaped wall similar to the others, but nothing rests upon its roof. It appears to be the most unstable of the group, showing a noticeable sway within the walls as the tower grows higher. On the tower itself, “Kiefer has stretched strips of lead on which photographic sequences of clouds and rocks are stuck. In this case, a movie camera is placed at the bottom of the tower, for use with the lead film strip – lead being the only material that cannot be penetrated by light or even rays.”\(^{240}\) Kiefer literally formulates a series of “Magnetic Field Lines” out of lead (Figure 71)\(^{241}\). The use of lead continues in Kiefer’s work and establishes a connection with the *Melancholia* tower through his earlier works dealing with these themes.

Next on the path is a set of towers, *JH&WH* (Figures 72)\(^{242}\). The two towers rest on a common slab. The top of each tower contains a similar L-shaped wall with a slab on top. The openings of the walls face each other, signifying their relationship to one another. Atop each tower is a stack of nine books. Rising out of the books like a flag on a pole are the names of each tower written in neon lighting (Figure 73)\(^{243}\). This establishes a connection to the *Sefiroth* tower that used the same signage. Another connection between the two is the story of the broken vessels. After the vessels were broken and the *Sefiroth* could no longer hold the light, the mythical idea of *Tikkum* must be put in to effect. *Tikkum* is the reconstruction of the original bowls. According to Hutchinson, “*Tikkum* will restore the unity of God’s name, which was destroyed when the vessels were shattered.”

\(^{240}\) *Ibid*, 119.
\(^{241}\) Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, *Merkaba*, 79.
\(^{242}\) Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, *Merkaba*, 72.
mediaeval Kabbalist, Isaac Luria, speaks of the letters ‘JH’ being torn from ‘WH’ in the name JHWH, or Jahweh).”244 This explains Kiefer’s separation of the two towers and also the way they turn toward each other, striving to be united once again.

The final tower, Falling Pictures, is a similar six-tiered tower with an L-shaped wall at the top245 (Figure 74)246. A smaller stack of books rests upon its roof while lead picture frames filled with panes of glass hang from the edges and collect in a pile along the base of the tower (Figure 75)247. Kiefer once again uses the empty picture frames just as he did on Fallen Pictures from 1986 and Melancholia from 1988. As a result, this thematically connects the tower to Melancholia and Magnetic Field Lines. Throughout the installation, Kiefer manages to incorporate his artistic and Germanic melancholia with the spiritual pathway to heaven. Could this be a subtle way of establishing a path of forgiveness and acceptance for Germans or is it strictly a Kabbalistic work?

Throughout his career, Kiefer continuously incorporates religion into his works. He dealt with Christianity and spirituality in Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven and The Heavens. He also combined stories from the Bible and the Kaballah in his Heavenly Palaces installation. Whether he is dealing with the individual’s views of Heaven or various aspects of the Kabbalah, Kiefer produces figurative and abstract imagery that is meant to tell a story. It is up to the viewer to translate these stories and interpret the works. Through subtle and literal imagery within his work, Kiefer sends a message of hope that the Germans will one day come to terms with their past.

244 Hutchinson, Kiefer’s Wager, 72.
245 Tramontano, The Installation, 119.
246 Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 94.
247 Scanned Image from Anselm Kiefer, Merkaba, 73.
CONCLUSION

Throughout my research, I had the opportunity to learn about the career of Anselm Kiefer. His works have made a major impact in aiding contemporary German society to come to terms with its troubled past. Although the visual subject matter of his work varies from direct references of World War II to mythology to religions such as Christianity and the Kabbalah, Kiefer’s theme of coming to terms with the past remains consistent. The exploration of different materials such as lead and fire in his works made me realize Kiefer’s fondness for the ancient science of alchemy. Through his use of materials, subject matter and consistent thematic interests, Kiefer helped Germans work through their difficult past.

One of my discoveries dealt with the writings of Sigmund Freud, most notably, his essay Repression. Most researchers discuss his essays, Mourning and Melancholia, and Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through when relating Freud to Kiefer. However, I was curious about the repression of the memories of World War II before Germans began productively engaging in mourning. After reading Freud’s first two essays, Mourning and Melancholia, and Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through, I concluded that the initial memories of the events of the war had to be dormant somewhere before Kiefer began addressing them. Although Joseph Beuys dealt with the issues of the war immediately following, Kiefer was dealing with the next generation of Germans. I did not believe that the new generation of Germans just started to mourn the events of World War II after suppressing the knowledge of the catastrophe for over twenty years. There needed to be another step in this process, a beginning. Once I discovered and read Freud’s essay, Repression, I realized what initially happened to these memories. When people witness
such a horrific event, they often tend to repress the memory or act as if the event never happened. This was the case for at least a generation of Germans when dealing with the Holocaust. Germans did not want to accept that something that atrocious had occurred in their country and thus their repression of this event. According to Freud’s essay, there needs to be some sort of action taken in order to bring these kinds of memories out of repression and into the conscious mind. I believe Kiefer may have had knowledge of Freud’s writings when he produced his *Occupations* series of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These initial works of apparently a Nazi soldier performing the Hitler salute appeared only in the first few years of his career. Kiefer needed to shock Germany with his images in order for the country to contend with its repressed memories of the Nazis and the Holocaust. While most researchers chose to focus on *Mourning and Melancholia*, I knew there had to be a previous action in order to get to this stage. After his *Occupations* series, much of Kiefer’s work became subtler in its approach to addressing the memories and reminders of Fascism. The reason for this more subtle approach was that those memories, after the *Occupations* series, were rendered conscious for Germans and thereafter the process of mourning could commence. This is the point where most researchers start when dealing with Kiefer and Germany. They feel he helped the people of Germany mourn the events of World War II and deal with their melancholia, whereas I felt that something needed to happen before this step, which led me to more fully address the question of repression.

Another idea I encountered concerned the change in Kiefer’s imagery in sync with the Germans transition from repression to mourning. I have addressed how the poetry of Paul Celan aided in this shift. Celan was writing poetry after losing his family in the
Holocaust and based on his experiences within a Nazi labor camp and losing his family in the Holocaust. His poems represented the viewpoint of a Jewish man during one of the worst times in recent history, and his negative view of Fascism was disguised within his writing. Although Celan was one of the early writers to deal with this subject matter, he approached it in a way that could be accepted by a broad audience. The non-confrontational manner in which he presents his poetry seemed to influence Kiefer throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Once Kiefer had brought the repressed memories of World War II to the surface, there was no longer a need for such a direct approach in his works. I believe Celan’s poetry caused a significant shift in Kiefer’s representation of the past. There was a shift away from startling images such as his Occupations series. Since Germany was in a state of mourning, Kiefer had to adjust his imagery accordingly. He began to create works based on mythology and religion. It was through these that Kiefer was able to make connections to Germany’s past. Kiefer still used images of Nazi architecture as a subtle reference to the past, just as Celan used certain terms to refer to Nazi soldiers, but no longer made any blatant, direct mention of Hitler and the Nazis. The combination of Celan’s lyrical translation and Kiefer’s visual representation of the atrocities of World War II allowed for an easier approach to dealing with what had happened. Then, eventually through the repetition of images, Germans hopefully came to accept and understand what had happened during the Second World War.

Although I have researched the life and work of Anselm Kiefer, many questions remain. Throughout my research, I read numerous articles and books written by art historians and critics concerning Kiefer’s work. There was rarely mention of how German
society reacted to his work. Obviously the response to the Venice Biennale of 1983 was prolifically addressed, but besides that not much was written about contemporary Germans reaction to Kiefer’s work. Much of what I have written about was based upon my assumption and hope that one man’s art can make a difference. Art historians and critics can only provide you with a certain viewpoint and I would be interested to know if the everyday German was impacted at all by Kiefer’s work during throughout his career or if it only impacted the art community.

I would also like to continue my exploration of the Kabbalah and its connection to Kiefer’s work. In his numerous Heavenly Palaces works, Kiefer deals with the Kabbalah, but he reuses imagery from earlier on in his career. Therefore, there always seems to be a connection in his art to the Holocaust, regardless of what the initial title may suggest. I think further investigation of the constant repetition of symbols and imagery within Kiefer’s work throughout his career is warranted.

Overall, my research allowed me to explore certain aspects of art that I have not focused on in the past. I enjoyed connecting Kiefer’s work to the writings of Sigmund Freud and the poetry of Paul Celan. I got to learn more about religion through researching Kiefer’s most recent works and gained a thorough appreciation of Anselm Kiefer and the broad range of subject matter and materials his art encompasses.
FIGURES

Figure 1: Joseph Beuys, *Bathtub*, 1960.

Figure 2: Anselm Kiefer, *Occupations*, 1969. Photograph.

Figure 3: Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbols*, 1969. Photograph.

Figure 4: Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbols*, 1969. Photograph, postcards, and watercolor on paper.
Figure 5: Anselm Kiefer, *For Genet*, 1969. Photograph.

Figure 6: Anselm Kiefer, *For Genet*, 1969. Photograph.
Figure 7: Anselm Kiefer, *Occupations*, 1969. Photograph.

Figure 8: Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818. Oil on canvas. 29 1/4” x 37 1/4”.

Figure 10: Anselm Kiefer, *Midgard*, 1980-85. Oil and emulsion on canvas. 11’ 10” x 19’ 11 3/4”.

Figure 11: Anselm Kiefer, *Varus*, 1976. Oil and acrylic on burlap. 6’ 6 3/4” x 8’ 10 1/4”.
Figure 12: Anselm Kiefer, *The Sky Palace*, 2002. Oil, emulsion, acrylic and lead objects on lead and canvas, 20’ 8” x 17’ 8 1/2”.

Figure 13: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Golden Hair, Margarete*, 1981. Oil, emulsion and straw on canvas. 51 1/4” x 67”. 
Figure 14: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair Shulamith*, 1981. Oil, acrylic, emulsion, and straw on canvas. 51 1/8” x 66 1/8”

Figure 15: Anselm Kiefer, *Nigredo*, 1984. Oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac, and straw on photograph and woodcut, mounted on canvas. 10’ 10” x 18’ 2 1/2”
Figure 16: Andre Masson, *Figure*, 1926-27. Oil and sand on canvas. 18 1/8” x 10 1/2”

Figure 17: Anselm Kiefer, *March Sand V*, 1977. Photograph with sand, oil, and glue mounted on cardboard and bound. 24 3/8” x 16 5/8”.
Figure 18: Anselm Kiefer, *Nero Paints*, 1974. Oil on canvas. 7’ 2 5/8” x 9’ 10 1/8”.

Figure 19: Anselm Kiefer, *Palette on a Rope*, 1977. Oil, emulsion, and shellac on canvas. 51 1/8” x 63”.
Figure 20: Anselm Kiefer, *Icarus-March Sand*, 1981. Oil, emulsion, shellac, and sand on photograph, mounted on canvas. 9’ 6 3/16” x 11’ 9 3/4”. 
Figure 21: Anselm Kiefer, *Varus*, 1976. Oil and acrylic on burlap. 6’ 6 3/4” x 8’ 10 1/4”.

Figure 22: Anselm Kiefer, *Varus* (Detail), Oil and acrylic on burlap.
Figure 23: Anselm Kiefer, *To the Unknown Painter*, 1983. Oil, aquatec, latex, emulsion, shellac, and straw on canvas. 6' 9 7/8" x 12' 6".

Figure 24: Anselm Kiefer, *Fallen Pictures*, 1986. Emulsion and photograph on cardboard, mounted on lead. 40 13/16" x 55 1/2".
Figure 25: Anselm Kiefer, *Melancholia*, 1988. Ash on photographs on acid-treated lead in a glazed steel frame. 66 7/8" x 90 1/2"

Figure 26: Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I*, 1514. Engraving. 9 1/2" x 7 5/16".
Figure 27: Anselm Kiefer, *The Misery of the Nibelungs*, 1972. Oil and charcoal on burlap. 9’ 10 1/8” x 14’ 5 1/4”.

Figure 28: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Golden Hair, Margarete*, 1981. Oil, straw, and emulsion on burlap. 67” x 74 3/4”.
Figure 29: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Golden Hair, Margarete*, 1981. Oil, emulsion, charcoal, and straw on canvas. 51 1/8” x 66 7/8”.

Figure 30: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Golden Hair, Margarete*, 1981. Oil, emulsion, and straw on canvas. 51 3/16” x 67”.
Figure 31: Anselm Kiefer, *Nothung*, 1973. Oil and charcoal on burlap, with oil and charcoal on cardboard. 9’ 10 1/8” x 14’ 2”.

Figure 32: Anselm Kiefer, *Margarete*, 1981. Oil and straw on canvas. 9’ 2” x 12’ 5 5/8”.
Figure 33: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981. Watercolor gouache, and charcoal on paper. 18” x 22”.

Figure 34: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981. Oil, acrylic, and emulsion on canvas. 66 7/8” x 51 1/8”.
Figure 35: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981. Oil on canvas. 66 7/8" x 51 1/8".

Figure 36: Anselm Kiefer, *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith*, 1981. Oil, acrylic, emulsion, and straw on canvas. 51 1/8" x 66 7/8".
Figure 37: Anselm Kiefer, *Shulamith*, 1990. Soldered lead, human hair, and ashes. 64 pages. 39 1/4” x 24 3/4” x 4 1/8”.

Figure 38: Anselm Kiefer, *Shulamith*, 1983. Oil, emulsion, woodcuts, shellac, acrylic, and straw on canvas. 9’ 6 1/8” x 12’ 1 1/4”.
Figure 39: Anselm Kiefer, *Shulamith* (Detail), 1983.

Figure 40: Wilhelm Kreis. *Funeral Hall for the Great German Soldiers, in the Hall of Soldiers*. c. 1939.

Figure 42: Anselm Kiefer, from *The Heavens, Albert Speer’s Cathedral of Light*. 1969. Photograph.

Figure 43: Anselm Kiefer, *Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven*, 1970. Watercolor, gouache, and graphite pencil on joined paper. 15 3/4" x 18 7/8".
Figure 44: Anselm Kiefer, *Emanation*, 1984-86. Oil, acrylic, emulsion, on canvas with lead. 13’ 5 3/8” x 9’ 2 1/4”.

Figure 45: Anselm Kiefer, *Breaking of the Vessels*, 1989-90. Lead, iron, copper wire, charcoal, and aquatec. 16’ x 6’ x 4’ 6”.

Figure 46: *Sefiroth* Tree of Life.

Figure 47: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, VII Lilith*, 1988. 39 3/4” x 19 7/8” x 19 7/8”.
Figure 48: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, VII Lilith* (Detail), 1988.

Figure 49: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XV Medea Jason*, 1988. 35 5/8" x 15 3/4" x 15 3/4".


Figure 51: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XV Medea Jason* (Detail), 1988.
Figure 52: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XXIV The Argonauts* (Detail), 1988.

Figure 53: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, X Sefiroth*, 1988. 35 5/8" x 15 5/8" x 15 3/4".

Figure 54: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XVI Sefiroth*, 1988. 35 5/8" x 15 3/4" x 15 3/4".

Figure 55: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, XXVI Emanation*, 1988. 31 3/4" x 15 3/4" x 16 1/8".
Figure 56: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces*, X Sefiroth (Detail), 1988.

Figure 57: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces*, XVI Sefiroth (Detail), 1988.

Figure 58: Anselm Kiefer, *Heavenly Palaces, Emanation* (Detail), 1988.

Figure 59: Anselm Kiefer, *The Heavenly Palaces: Merkabah*, Cover, 1990. Ashes and acrylic on photographs, mounted on board. 42 1/2" x 28".
Figure 60: Anselm Kiefer, *The Heavenly Palaces: Merkabah*, Page 6, 1990. Ashes and acrylic on photographs, mounted on board. 42 1/2” x 28”.

Figure 61: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces*, 2004-05. Hangar Bicocca. Milan, Italy.
Figure 62: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Sefiroth*. 2004-05.

Figure 63: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Sefiroth (Detail)*, 2004-05.

Figure 64: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Sefiroth (Detail)*, 2004-05.
Figure 65: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia*, 2004-05.

Figure 66: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia* (Detail), 2004-05.

Figure 67: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Melancholia* (Detail), 2004-05.
Figure 68: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Ararat*, 2004-05.

Figure 69: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Ararat*, (Detail), 2004-05.
Figure 70: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Magnetic Field Lines*, 2004-05.

Figure 71: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Magnetic Field Lines*, (Detail), 2004-05.
Figure 72: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, JH&WH*, 2004-05.

Figure 73: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, JH&WH* (Detail), 2004-05.
Figure 74: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Falling Pictures*, 2004-05.

Figure 75: Anselm Kiefer, *Seven Heavenly Palaces, Falling Pictures*, (Detail), 2004-05.
REFERENCES


