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BETWEEN ALLEGORY AND MODERN MONTAGE

The Images in W.G. Sebald's Vertigo

ABSTRACT: The paper focuses on the images in W.G. Sebald's *Vertigo*, based on an iconographic interest. Absence in those images doesn't come as abstraction, but by way of ostensive figuration. The deceased appear both allegorically and in person in their landscapes of death. The story of *Vertigo* follows Stendahl, Kafka and the narrator himself on their journeys through upper Italy. In Limone, the narrator tells his landlady that he is writing, as it appears to him more and more, a detective story. By coincidence, and against his will, he becomes involved: in Verona he meets a person named Carlo Cadavero, and on three occasions sees a scene with two men carrying a corpse on a stretcher, before the reader learns that it is Kafka's Hunter Gracchus on his aimless and endless voyage through the deeper regions of death. After this disclosure the reader meets the restless hunter twice again in Wertach of all scenes, a tiny village in the Allgäu and—as part of the book's third chapter – the narrator's place of birth. At first glance, the images function as devices of the stories, in which they appear. When looked at again, they can alter and seem to go through various transitions; they are both a riddle and a disguise, somewhere in a precarious state between objectness and rupture: a hidden reference to Leonardo Sciascia's multi-layered detective stories hints at their strategy of montage. Intermediality here is more than a mix of genres; the images have their own critical impact, while the story meanders around them—seemingly untouched by their resistance—in long laconic sentences.

KEYWORDS: W.G. Sebald, *Vertigo*, Iconography, Allegory, Emblem, Death and Montage, Franz Kafka, Leonardo Sciascia.

Introduction: Death Motifs and Death Practices

In the first of W.G. Sebald's four novels, *Schwindel. Gefühle* (English *Vertigo*) the first-person-narrator follows Stendhal and Kafka on their journeys through upper Italy. The narration follows Beyle's experience of war places in upper Italy, and Kafka's thoughts about death at Lake Garda, scenes of sadness and loss. It bequeaths to the reader visual and textual reminiscences of these places. My paper firstly connects the author's intentions regarding the Baroque image concepts of allegory and emblem. In a second step it shows how the somewhat absurd representations of killing and crime in the book are false leads, as their images refer to modern image concepts of cutting, clipping and pictorial

montage. The book's iconographic program thus accords with Italian concepts of modernity: two novels by Leonardo Sciascia, an exhibition curated by Arturo Schwarz and a film directed by Francesco Rosi.

As an introduction, a clipping of Lejeune's painting *The Battle of Marengo*, integrated into Beyle's story, is an example of the alteration between the allegorical and the surrealist approach (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 22-23; *Vertigo* 18-19).¹ A scene with a tiny figure falling in the battle was cut out as a long vertical stripe from a reproduction of the painting. Above the figure—on the horizon like a raised index finger—there is a church tower, and beneath it on the ground, a collapsed horse with a broken wagon. On the first level the image's iconology and form suggest a Napoleonic column or Obelisk. On another level it is all a matter of technique: the image was cut out and clipped into the book in the way of modern montage. Its motif of the nondescript falling body is similarly truncated; the lower part of the man disappears into the dust of the battlefield—a material *border of the visible*. Modern montage corresponds with de-montage and thus transforms the triumphal column—whose motifs lead upwards to the emperor at its top—into an anti-war-memorial. Its vertical order goes all the way down into dust and the ground. What was a heroic battle scene before now becomes an allegory of death. In the German edition we read the word "Gedenksäule" in the first line of the page symmetrically above the illustration and the words "wie ein Untergehender", 'like someone who is drowning', below it (cf. *ibid.*). The narrow motif's few materializations inside "the vast field of the dead", as the text describes it, rest on each other in a way that Benjamin postulated by means of the *German Tragic Drama* (cf. Benjamin 1977 [1928]). As will be shown, in this technique Sebald follows Benjamin's approach of an interface between baroque allegory and modern montage, as Susan Sontag summarises it:

Fidelity lies in accumulating things—which appear, mostly, in the form of fragments or ruins. ('It is common practice in baroque literature to pile up fragments incessantly,' Benjamin writes.) Both the baroque and Surrealism, sensibilities with which Benjamin felt a strong affinity, see reality as things. (Sontag 1981, 120).

1. Baroque Allegory: Figurations of Absence

The concept of Baroque allegory in *Vertigo* is one of the instruments used to represent absence. The reader finds the most obvious allegorical motifs, such as

¹ Sebald's prose is quoted using abbreviated titles. Image-references are given, in the form of double pages, for both the German and the English edition, for reasons of their original layout and for comparison.

the *ex libris* plate of “one Dr Hermann Samson, who [...] had chosen the pyramids, monuments of death, as his insignia” (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 153, *Vertigo* 136-137). The plate shows two plains of a model pyramid in front of an open window, outside a sun over a landscape with dark mountains, maybe again pyramids. An illustration in a prayer book from the late seventeenth century gives another glimpse into a landscape of death under a sun and dark clouds: a three-storey tower with arcades, internal flames and devils, some souls falling off, some climbing up in torment, to the region of the angels on the upper floor. The emblem’s epigram says: “Für die abgestorbenen Seelen im Fegfeuer”, “for the dead souls in the purgatory” (Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle* 245; *Vertigo* 225).

Allegory and emblem combine text and image. They relate to ambivalence and riddle. They hint at death, or rather from the region of death back into life. In this I follow Benjamin’s thesis of baroque allegory, of emblem and of Rebus, again in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (cf. Benjamin 1977 and 1991a). Benjamin’s concept is the main input for Sebald’s use of images, in *The Rings of Saturn* (esp. Chapters 1 and 8; cf. Breidbach 2017, 129-169) as well as in *Vertigo*. Two short passages from Benjamin can serve as a methodical tool with which to understand the iconographic programs in Sebald’s *Vertigo*: Benjamin states enigmatically that all history is a reconstruction from death back into a respective life: “From the viewpoint of death, life is the production of corpses” (Benjamin 1977, 218). Historical reflection begins with the residuals of catastrophe (Benjamin 1969, 1991b). Corpses and rubble are embodied, visual/material representations. Another of Benjamin’s sentences about the allegorical image refers to its ambiguous visual meaning, distinguishing it from the sign or symbol, which instead suggest distinction:

[...] allegory isn’t free from a corresponding dialectic, and the contemplative calm, with which it immerses itself into the depths which separate visual being from meaning has none of the disinterested self-sufficiency which is present in the apparently related intention of the sign (Engl. Benjamin 1977, 164-165; Germ. Benjamin 1991a, 342).

Another important source for understanding Sebald’s use of baroque allegory is Monika Kaup’s notion of “Sebald’s recourse to [Sir Thomas] Browne and baroque melancholy, as well as to Walter Benjamin’s neobaroque rearticulation of melancholy and allegory” (Kaup 2013, 693). Kaup localises Sebald’s prose in the frame of a neobaroque rather than a poststructuralist, philosophy. She thus stands against formalism, and supports a critical-material form of modernity:

In short, *The Rings of Saturn* illustrates that, unlike the postmodern, the neobaroque is a contemporary expression that is both critical-deconstructive and reconstructive. In a first

step, it lays bare the discontinuities and ruptures wrought by modernity in general and capitalist exploitation in particular. Yet it refuses to uncritically celebrate such breaks, as does Jean-François Lyotard with his claim of the delegitimation of master narratives, or to simply mirror them at the level of form. (*Ibid.* 689).²

1.1. *Carlo Cadavero*

In Limone, while the narrator is writing his text, he answers his landlady's question about what he thinks he is working on, by saying that he has "a growing suspicion that it might turn into a crime story, set in upper Italy, in Venice, Verona and Riva" (Sebald *Vertigo*, 94-95). By coincidence and against his will, he was already involved. In short scenes connected to crimes—scenes that vanish as quickly as they were evoked—corpses are occasionally carried from here to there. Funnily enough, the Topos of the Corpse appears as protagonist: in 1980, the narrator sits in a pizzeria in Verona (also named "Pizzeria Verona") and reads a newspaper article about a series of murders in upper Italy in the last three years. He finds out that the name of the innkeeper who waits on him is *Carlo Cadavero* (Italian for "corpse"), and thus fears that he might become the next victim. The reader sees proof of this meal in the pizzeria in the form of an inserted bill with the innkeeper's name printed on it and marked by the author as a found object with a hand-drawn line around it (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 90-91; *Vertigo* 78-79). *Cadavero* has written the bill by hand, while his colleague, Vittorio Patierno (the second owner, whose name is printed on the bill) has, so the story tells us, allegedly gone hunting: the motifs of corpse and hunter inserted here touch on the leading motif of the book, which reappears several times, before its riddle will finally be solved.

1.2. Days and Places of the Dead

'Riva' in Italian signifies 'the shore'. While the narrator follows the journeys of Beyle and Kafka between life and death, he himself dwells on respective allegorical *borders of the visible*: one of the metaphorical connotations of *riva*, the shore, is of course the classical motif of Charon's ferry across the river Styx to the other side, which is the afterlife. In Venice the narrator lingers in "a bar on the Riva degli Schiavoni between the Danieli and Santa Maria della Visitazione, in other words, near the Doge's Palace, [on] the very last day of October [...]." (Sebald *Vertigo*, 59-60). There, he falls "into conversation with a Venetian with the name of Malachio" (from Mal'ach, Hebrew for Angel). The man thus transcended—a former Cambridge student of astrophysics, who now,

² Other than the formal sign, the material allegorical image involves a certain resistance. For further reading about the political impact of Sebald's prose cf. M.M. Anderson 2003.

as we are told, often meditates about resurrection (*ibid.* 62)—will later confirm his Hebrew origin, by saying farewell as: *Ci vediamo a Gerusalemme*. Taking over the role of the boatman Charon, he takes the narrator—and with him the narration itself—over to the *Isola Giudecca* [either from middle-Italian *guide*, or from *giudicati*, meaning island for the Jews or island for the convicted]. They drive past the giant industrial monument of “the Stucky flower mill” (*ibid.*), today a hotel in the Hilton chain, whose name in this context again reminds of the River Styx, as if it were the journey’s coherent destination. The transfer into an allegorical landscape becomes further supported by the appearance of the *inceneritore comunale* (“communal incinerator”) on the “nameless island westward of the Giudecca. A deathly silent concrete shell beneath a white pall of smoke” (*ibid.* 61). It finally “leaves one wondering, whether it was only grain that was milled there” (*ibid.*). We are thus prompted to think, if not of grain, then of a bone mill, which triggers the image of the concentration camps.³

Two other Venetian scenes in the book correspond with this one. On the 21st May 1910, the mill’s founder Giovanni Stucky was murdered at the Santa Lucia Station, Venice, by one of his former employees, with a razor blade. Echoing this history, and introducing the nocturnal boat trip, our narrator began his visit at this same station, going “to the station barber’s for a shave” (*ibid.* 51-52). In German the act of shaving and its instrument, the razor, are etymologically related, so that the meaning here allows a connection to the later hidden reference to Stucky’s murder: “Nach einer scharfen Rasur beim Bahnhofsbarbier” (“after a sharp razor-cut at the station barber’s”). A later scene in the main station at Venice wittily escalates the supposed cut-throat scenario, when the narrator orders a coffee at a buffet, “surrounded by an infernal upheaval” (*ibid.* 66). After a long exhausting fight for his coffee, he feels that, behind the elevated marble counter “the people around [him] looked like a circle of severed heads” (*ibid.* 68). Here, the grave allegorical embodiment of the dead has already taken a turn towards the lightness of modern montage, where it is general practice with images to crop single body parts. The emblem of Stucky Mill, “the female figure of a reaper, holding a sheaf of wheat, a most disconcerting image in this landscape of water and stone” (*ibid.* 62) reappears later in the book as a childhood memory, of frescos by “the artist Hengge, [whose] murals, always in dark shades of brown, were to be seen on the walls of buildings all around W. and the surrounding area” (*ibid.* 205). The only art the child was able to see, is described as a fearful experience: “One especially, on the Raiffeisen bank, showing a tall reaper woman, sickle in hand, standing in front of a field at harvest time, always looked to me like a fearful battle scene,

³ Concerning Sebald’s theme of remembering Jewish life, and his right as a German author to do so, cf. Taberner 2006.

and frightened me so that whenever I passed, I had to avert my eyes” (*ibid.* 206-207).

After his boat trip to the otherworldly bank, the narrator comes to his hotel. Here other bodies emblematically appear as if they were already corpses. It is the night of the 31st October, the night before *All Saints Day*, and together with the following *All Souls Day*, the two dates in the Christian year commemorate the dead, while “[...] the night porter [...] was lying on a narrow bed in a kind of doorless den behind the reception desk, looking as if his body had been laid out” (*ibid.* 62). The narrator stays in bed during the whole following day, the 1st of November. He describes his increasing lack of movement, while slowly becoming colder and stiffer. When in the evening the waiter brings his supper, he reports in retrospect: “I felt as if I already had been interred or laid out for burial, silently grateful for the proffered libation, but no longer capable of consuming it” (*ibid.* 65). The alleged proof of this journey, also from life into the region of death, is again given as a material device, in the form of a calendar sheet, which shows, in a typography of its time, the numbers of the 40th to 44th weeks of October 1980, with handwritten entries: “Waterloo” (Saturday 18th to Monday 20th), “Wien” (Tuesday 21st to Wednesday 29th), “Venedig” (written over the printed entry “Reformationstag” on Friday the 31st) and in the next line: “R. d. Sch./M.” (probably for ‘Riva degli Schiavoni/Malachio’), written into the empty line beneath the month’s last day, as if into gap before the coming *All Saints day* on 1st November (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 68-69, *Vertigo* 60-61). Here the lower calendar edge was torn off, indicating time that has already been consumed.

A leading death motif is inserted strangely into Beyle’s story, from where it will be repeated in different contexts: two men carry a corpse on a litter under a cloth with flowered patterns from an old boat ashore. On their journey to *Riva*, Beyle and one of his lovers, Mme Gherardi, have allegedly come across this bizarre scene, after they themselves had crossed the lake in a skiff (*ibid.* 24-25). In German, *Bahre* (for litter) and *Barke* (for barge or skiff) are etymologically related and seem appropriate *vehicles* for the allegorical body as well as for its image.

In 1988, seven years after the narrator’s first visit to Verona, he walks back to the same restaurant, *Pizzeria Verona* (the reader barely recognises the name in the neon letters above) and finds it closed down, when the dark vision of the corpse on a litter comes back to him: “[...] two men in black silver-buttoned tunics, who were carrying out from a rear courtyard a bier on which lay, under a floral patterned drape, what was plainly a body of a human being.” (*ibid.* 140-142) With this vision of death, he walks over to a café nearby the *Arena di Verona* to meet with a journalist, named Salvatore (Engl. Saviour), whom he asks about a series of killings that have taken place in the region since the

eighties, since the narrator had left Verona in panic. Salvatore calls reading prose his medium of salvation, while holding a book in his hands. It is Leonardo Sciascia's *1912 + 1* (Sciascia 1986). The narrator learns about its story and that its enigmatic title refers to D'Annunzio's avoidance of the number 13, for reasons of superstition. Of course, it is a story of crime again.

1.3. Emblematic Angels

The allegorical boatman on the Venetian shore was Malachio, the angel. Other angels appear: Salvatore, after giving an account of these interconnected, organised assaults, quotes, in extracts, one line from Verdi's *Aida*: “[Vedi?...] Di morte l'angelo [radiante] a noi s'appressa”, in English: “[Do you see?...] Death's [radiant] angel hastens towards us” (*ibid.* 134). The illustration inserted here shows an angel in a quatrefoil, representing the border of visibility (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 150-151; *Vertigo* 134-135). His legs swathed in robes and naked feet float under wave-like clouds, the disguised upper body is at most only the vague contours of wings or a shield.

1912 + 1 equals 1913, the year of Kafka's journey to upper Italy, which began with his visit to the Prater in Vienna. Like Verdi's angel, here, in an oval cut out frame, a smiling Kafka and three friends show themselves in a state of levitation, in the cabin (actually a hole in the image) of a mock aeroplane appearing to be flying (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 160-161; *Vertigo* 144-145). The photograph is from Klaus Wagenbach's book *Franz Kafka. Bilder aus seinem Leben* (Wagenbach 2008, 184); it is referential of Kafka's predilection for early aviation and for its cinematographic display (for both cf. Zischler 2017; Sebald 2006). The analogy between the two illustrations is evident: two floating half bodies, with here the lower, there the upper part concealed. The elevated clipped figures in their emblematic cut-out frames—oval and quatrefoil—allow a comparison with baroque allegorical motifs. Some passages from Sebald's image-text-form thus closely resemble baroque emblem books, or rather, appear as emblem books themselves. In this sense the images do not at all come without captions, as often remarked.⁴ While the images have a primary function in Sebald's intermedial practice as non-linguistic allegories, the long meandering sentences around them are reminiscent of *motto* and *subscriptio*, in the three-part baroque form of the emblem.

The motif of the hastening angel of death recurs when Kafka later arrives in Trieste. Here, so it says, he is “aware that in the city there is an iron angel who kills travelers from the north, and he longs to go out” (Sebald *Vertigo*, 145).

⁴ Concerning Sebald's “release of the captive image” cf. Chaplin 2006.

1.4. Kafka's *Hunter Gracchus*

Later in the story of Kafka's journey, the repeated motif of the corpse, carried on a litter, finally reveals its literary source: "Behind the boatman, two figures in dark tunics with silver buttons carry a bier upon which lies [...] the body of a human being. [...] It is Gracchus the huntsman" (*ibid.* 164). The bark sailing over *Lake Garda* to Riva also finally comes together with its pictorial evidence (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 178-179; *Vertigo* 162-163), circumscribed by the following passage: "[...] lengthy shadows fell upon those autumn days at Riva, [...] and from these shadows there gradually emerged the silhouette of a barque with masts of an inconceivable height and sails, dark and hanging in folds. Three whole years it takes until the vessel, as if it were being borne across the waters, gently drifts into the little port of Riva" (Sebald *Vertigo*, 163-164). Kafka's fragmentary narrative *The Hunter Gracchus* is retold (Kafka 1995 [1933]). The same named journalist, reader of Sciascia, in the previous scene in Verona, was reminiscent of the major *Salvatore* in Kafka's narrative, who meets with the allegorical figure of the dead hunter and interviews him about his state between life and death.

The figure of the hunter finds only indirect pictorial references in the book: his description of having "...wild, tangled hair and a beard [...]" (*ibid.* 164), finds its figuration later in a photograph of a provincial stage performance of Schiller's *Die Räuber* in the narrator's childhood, showing an amateur actor, costumed in breeches and cloak (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 204-205; *Vertigo* 188). The dead hunter reappears twice again in the childhood story, his remembered embodied images there are supposed to be reminiscent of real hunters, who have lived and died in W., the narrator's birthplace. One of them refers to "Hans Schlag the huntsman", whose story is told loosely over ten pages towards the end of the book and of course ends with his death and transport on a wooden sledge, back to the village (Sebald *Vertigo*, 237-249). The other hunter appears as a tailor's dummy in an attic, a uniformed straw puppet, whose costume "must once have been grass green, and the buttons a golden yellow" (*ibid.* 226-227). The moment the boy touches the figure, "to his utter horror, his sleeves crumble into dust" (*ibid.*). The reference in this costumed figure to Kafka's *Hunter* strengthens when the boy later learns that the former member of the family who wore this uniform had belonged to the Tyrolean *chasseurs*, French for hunters, and had fallen in Napoleon's *Battle of Marengo*. *Marengo*, as a keyword, leads the narration circularly back to the beginning of the book, the story of Beyle and the related cut-out from Lejeune's painting, with the tiny figure drowning in the dust of the same named battlefield. Here, without knowing it yet, the reader had already met this Tyrolean hunter or, more allegorically, Kafka's *Hunter Gracchus* on his journey into the deeper regions of

death. The vast network of pictorial cross references and repercussions creates the feeling of *Vertigo* in the reader that became the book's title. The net stretches into all directions of the allegory, its figures and landscapes of death and into the form of baroque emblems.

2. Modern Montage: Figurations of Alteration

2.1. Leonardo Sciascia: *Il Contesto. Una parodia*

I return to one branch of the story, the encounter between the narrator and the journalist Salvatore in Verona. From here I follow a possible hidden theme, concealed and revealed by its quoted sister story *1912 + 1*, for part of its image practice leads into modernity: another of Sciascia's detective stories, *Il Contesto. Una parodia* (Sciascia 2006, English: *The Context. A Parody*) from 1971 and its film-adaptation by Francesco Rosi from 1976, titled *Cadaveri Eccellenti*, reverse the *topos* of the corpse from a tragic subject to a pictorial method. Neither the book nor the film are quoted in *Vertigo*, but the connection is evident: the whole plot of the book is built using *context* or rather *contextualisation*. The key to the alteration from pictorial motif to pictorial form is again the *topos* of the corpse, *Cadavero*. It returns, but it profoundly alters the heavy weight of allegorical meaning. Now the image and its manipulations are all that matters.

2.2. Sciascia and Francesco Rosi

Francesco Rosi's congenial adaptation of Sciascia probably quotes Arturo Schwarz' famous surrealist exhibition of the same year, in his gallery in Milan, entitled *Le Cadavre Exquis, Son Exaltation* (Breton 1975). In his preface, Schwarz explains the method in three languages, one of them English: "Exquisite Corpse. Game of folded leaflets consisting of having some people compose a sentence or a drawing, none of whom is allowed to make use of the previous cooperation. The example, which turned out as classic and gave its name to the game, comes from the first sentence created in this way: *The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine*" (*ibid.* 5-8). Accordingly Rosi's adaptation of Sciascia's political parody, with its ambiguous connotations of crime, is a story of montage. Not only are Inspector Rogas's observations created by building pictorial contexts (one of the scenes shows him in front of a pictorial montage showing the lives of the three judges: Varga, Sanza and Calamo). But he encounters serious issues with the body of evidence (another scene sets him in front of some fragmentary photographs, in which the person murdered is the person cut out of the picture). The surrealist method of *Cadavre Exquis* is

literally quoted using a criminological *phantom-image*—a face, later mounted from memory by victim or bystander from four stripes for hair, eyes, nose and mouth—and further hints are given regarding the mediated and combinatory quality of all evidence.

2.3. Cut Out and Cut Off. *Vertigo* and Arturo Schwarz' *Surrealist Exhibition 1975*

Pictorial analogies between Arturo Schwarz' Surrealist exhibition and Sebald's *Vertigo* can be observed as a result of these experiences. Here, cut off and collaged limbs are joint in fragmentary and mounted images with a different connotation, away from the dark topoi of crime and death.

Sebald mimics the surrealist method by inserting newspaper clippings⁵ into the text (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 134-135; *Vertigo* 118-120), but he goes much further.⁶ Metilde, another of Beyle's lovers, is portrayed by her cut off left hand—in fact its plaster model—held in a graceful gesture (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 24-25; *Vertigo* 20-21). This parody of the dissected hand shows similarities to a collaborative surrealist drawing by F. Hudečec, F. Gross and I. Chaluppecky, dated 1934: a thick bone leans against a pole, spare shadows and a horizon line indicate a landscape above which, in the free air, floats a similar surrealist body-object, a foot and a raised hand on two ends of one equally measured limb.⁷ Another of Sebald's illustrations repeats the pictorial technique of the dissected limb: the narrator goes for a walk with the poet Ernst Herbeck and notices that Herbeck holds his cap similarly to his grandfather, whose depicted left hand, while his head is cropped off, allows the same connection to modernist montage (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 46-47; *Vertigo* 38-39).

Coming back to the tiny figurine, who drowns in the battlefield of *Marengo* (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 22-23; *Vertigo* 18-19), it resembles another collaborative montage in Schwarz' catalogue, showing a man's upper body, megaphone in hand, with a rolling stool on three wheels as his legs.⁸ In *Vertigo*, Giotto's three levitated, winged angelic beings (taken from Giotto's fresco cycle, the scene *Lamentation of Christ*, in the *Scrovegni Chapel* in Padua) are put in a row, and clipped so that they are little more than a head, wings and hands, showing strong facial expressions and gestures (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 96-97; *Vertigo* 84-85).⁹ Their reduced bodies resemble a figurative element in

⁵ For the history of the newspaper cut-out, its materiality and its connection to Surrealism and Dada, cf. Te Heesen 2002, 175-223.

⁶ For Sebald's use of the surrealist method in Austerlitz, cf. Ryan 2007.

⁷ Pencil on paper, 30 x 21 cm. Breton 1975, number 23.

⁸ By Bartovsky, F. Hudečec, F. Gross and I. Chaluppecky, dated 1934. Pencil on paper, 19 x 15 cm. Breton 1975, number 24.

⁹ Concerning Sebald's pictorial quotation of Giotto's frescos in Padua, cf. Fuchs 2006, 175.

another surrealist group drawing, displaying something on a globe on a bottle on a table on an outstretched hand on a winged female head on crossed legs on stiletto-heeled pumps.¹⁰ The motif of the eye can at last build this bridge between Sebald's method and surrealist modernity (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 14-15, 86-87, 128-129; *Vertigo* 10-11, 74-77, 114-115). It is comparable to a surrealist game drawing, where an open eye and a feather rest on a lock, tagged with a feather on a rope (holding a ring with a smaller open eye in it) and a butterfly, all of which objects are held gracefully by a woman's hand with bracelet.¹¹

Conclusion: *Vertigo* (and Spoof), Labyrinth, Coincidence

Seen from the external reference of the surrealist method, the images in Sebald's *Vertigo* undergo a fundamental alteration, from allegory to montage and from gravity to spoof. Against the modern background, the narrator's repeated visions of the hunter's corpses have a completely different meaning. They appeal to the images themselves, become pictorial qualities of break and gap, riddle and joke. The corpse is both, the baroque allegorical body and the modern broken and interacting corpus of the image. In this modern context the narrator himself becomes another kind of hunter, on the prowl for new finds. His game of multilayered pictorial references offers several false leads. The German title *Schwindel* is therefore not only *Vertigo*, but also its other connotation, "flimflam". From a levitated position, the map of interconnected allegories allows something like a sublime birds-eye-view. In terms of modernity the map turns out to be a labyrinth, a general survey of its motifs is not possible. (Sebald *Schwindel. Gefühle* 122-123; *Vertigo* 106-109). Each of these two approaches is the reverse side of the other:

[...] I noticed on the front of the map's cardboard cover the black and white image of a labyrinth, and on the back an affirmation that must seem promising and indeed auspicious for anyone who knows what it is to err on one's way. (*ibid.*).

The labyrinth appears as illustration. For anyone who experiences *Schwindel*, the now following typographically designed affirmation can only be irony: "Una guida sicura per l'organizzazione del vostro lavoro. Pianta Generale Milano." ('A secure guide for the organisation of your work. General Map of Milan', *ibid.*) A factor in the vertiginous game of text-and image-making and a main motivation for the narrator's own journey is *coincidence*, half chance and half fate, and it

¹⁰ By V. Hugo, S. Dali, A. Breton, G. Dali, 1929-1934. Crayon on paper, 26.7 x 19.5 cm. Breton 1975, number 25.

¹¹ By V. Hugo, S. Dali, A. Breton, G. Dali, 1929-1934. Pencil on paper, 26.4 x 18.4 cm. Breton 1975, number 35.

harbours a risk. The moment when two criminals, reminiscent of the two coffin bearers, approach the narrator and try to carry himself, like the hunters of his narrations, across to the deeper regions of death is when the narrator becomes aware of this. Unseen by anyone else and after he has defended himself against them, they vanish like an afterimage:

LA PROSSIMA COINCIDENZA. I was [...] gazing up at this message, thinking it might possibly be meant for me [...]. LA PROSSIMA COINCIDENZA. None of the passers-by had taken any notice of the incident. I however watched my two assailants, jerking curiously as if they were out of an early motion picture, vanish in the half-light under the colonnades. (Sebald *Vertigo*, 108-109).

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