



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Black Flakes

**Citation for published version:**

Osborne, D 2011, 'Black Flakes: Archive Remains in the Work of Christoph Ransmayr', *Comparative Critical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2-3, pp. 221-33. <https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2011.0020>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.3366/ccs.2011.0020](https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2011.0020)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Published In:**

Comparative Critical Studies

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Osborne, D. (2011). Black Flakes: Archive Remains in the Work of Christoph Ransmayr. *Comparative Critical Studies*, 8(2-3), 221-33.

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## Black Flakes: Archival Remains in the Work of Christoph Ransmayr and Anselm Kiefer

DORA OSBORNE

By setting his narratives in remote or fictional times and places, the contemporary Austrian author Christoph Ransmayr seems to distance himself from recent local history. As Wolfgang Müller-Funk notes, Ransmayr's most recent novel, *Der fliegende Berg* (2006), is 'postmodern, genauer post-historisch' (postmodern, more specifically post-historical), and this description can certainly be applied to Ransmayr's earlier work.<sup>1</sup> He sets his project under the dual sign of '*Auf und davon!*' ('*Up and away!*') and 'aus der Welt schaffen' ('removing from the world'),<sup>2</sup> and this desire for distance finds expression in the author's passion for travel to extreme locations. Ransmayr describes himself as leading a semi-nomadic existence and, together with his mountaineering friend, Reinhold Messner, has journeyed to Nepal and Tibet.<sup>3</sup> His travels inform his writing: the Himalayas constitute one half of the dual backdrop of *Der fliegende Berg* and a remote part of Ireland – Ransmayr's home until a few years ago – the other.

Unsurprisingly, Ransmayr's physical and writerly movements have been understood as a form of escapism, that is, a desire to liberate himself from the burden of Austria's recent past. On the one hand, a proliferation of fragile substances such as sand, dust, snow and ash in his texts contributes to this effect of casting off and dispersing the weight of history; but, on the other hand, it is precisely the accumulation of such residual materials that ultimately returns his narratives to the violent history of the Second World War and the Holocaust. This return is underscored by links to the post-war poetry of Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann, and to the work of the German artist Anselm Kiefer, in particular to their use of such trace materials. By association, and in their

particular configuration, these residues evoke the last substances found in the desolation of the Nazi death camps.

Somewhat problematically, Ransmayr's narrative practice is one of transformation: it strives to change the weighty material of history into something light and transient that will disperse and, eventually, be forgotten. As single grains or particles, the almost weightless residues of sand, snow, dust and ash can scatter at any moment. They recall the melancholically burdened anti-materials of Celan's poetry, from *Der Sand aus den Urnen* (1948) to *Schneepart* (1971). While these precarious substances are threatened by oblivion, in their accumulation they have the potential to overwhelm the subject. Thus, Ransmayr's project also carries traces of the writing of Ingeborg Bachmann, whose protagonists are at once threatened and protected by the elements that engulf them – by sand, mud, dust and mist.<sup>4</sup> A primal scene for Bachmann's traumatic encounters with the self is the desert, and this is where Ransmayr's fictional writing begins: in the sand and dust of *Strahlender Untergang* (1982), the object of a scientific investigation disappears; in *Die Schrecken des Eises und der Finsternis* (1984), the anti-hero vanishes in the whiteness of the arctic wasteland; and in the desolate, dystopian settings of *Die letzte Welt* (1991) and *Morbus Kitahara* (1995), traces of destruction are found (but soon dispersed) in ash and rust.

Like many contemporary writers, Ransmayr evokes the past through archival material, but he does not emphasize the status of these things as fixed. Rather, particularly through his use of visual media such as photographs or computer-simulated images, he exposes their transient and precarious materiality: in *Die Schrecken des Eises und der Finsternis*, photographs are left nailed to a rock face, exposed to the arctic elements; in *Morbus Kitahara*, they are colonized by mould and enlarged beyond recognition. By describing how they are caught up in processes of decomposition and dispersal, Ransmayr uses archival materials as the medium for a desired liberation from history. Thus, their disintegration thwarts any attempt at reconstructing the past and relieves the protagonists of any need to do so. Where images are shown to be grainy, ghostly or shadowy, they bear similarities to fragile anti-materials. By changing archival material into anti-material, Ransmayr suggests a kind of post-Holocaust archive, or, to use Giorgio Agamben's terms, 'quel che resta di Auschwitz' (that which remains of Auschwitz).<sup>5</sup> Despite the repeated attempt to use such substances in a process of taking leave of history (Ransmayr's '*Auf und davon!*' and '*aus der Welt schaffen*'), these remains gather to form an irreducible reminder of the

very history from which he tries to free his narratives. This article will examine Ransmayr's use of fragile substances and consider how, in relay with Celan, Bachmann and Kiefer, they are made to function as archival anti-material in his texts. While many connections have been made between the work of Kiefer and Ransmayr, Kiefer and Celan (with Bachmann), Ransmayr and Celan, and Ransmayr and Bachmann, little attention has been given to how the practices shared by all four figures relate to their different attempts to remember, represent and archive the National Socialist past. Moreover, critics have focused primarily on their use of myth and catastrophe as universal tropes that challenge a historicizing perspective.<sup>6</sup> This article turns to questions of archival material, describing how Ransmayr's prose uses fragile substances to collect, disperse and recollect the traces of specifically National Socialist violence.

Archival material is indispensable to commemorative projects, both literary and artistic, that come after an immediate post-war phase. As the last survivors of the Second World War and the Holocaust reach the end of their lives, there is an inevitable epistemological shift from discourses of memory to those of the archive. Yet it becomes clear that archival material as it figures in attempted modes of representation 'after Auschwitz' can no longer have a simply authenticating function; rather, that material is compromised by the fact that it bears the marks of the catastrophic destruction that it should document. Indeed, after 1945, the function of the archive has changed radically; instead of housing evidence of great cultural achievement, it has come to house the residual material left following the attempted annihilation of such achievement, thereby questioning the status of its own contents.

In his short essay 'Meine Ortschaft' (1964), Peter Weiss draws attention to the loss signalled by what remains at Auschwitz. Visiting the concentration camp as a memorial site, he is struck by the haunting absence in the midst of a proliferation of material – the piles of hair, shoes, children's clothes, toothbrushes and dentures.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, he notes how the victims' ash is dispersed in the ground, but can evidence nothing more than their annihilation.<sup>8</sup> As Jacques Derrida indicates in *Feu la cendre* (1987) and *Mal d'archive* (1995), the trace of ash is ultimately all that can be held in the post-Holocaust archive and all that can be drawn upon for the representation of violence.<sup>9</sup> Derrida evokes the ashen remainders of genocidal violence in order to describe the all-consuming death drive which he finds in every archive and which undermines any attempt at preservation. Via the poetry of Paul Celan, ash has become

a privileged, but fraught, residual substance for thinking about the radically reduced remains of the Holocaust. It is the substance of the spectral, double inscriptions haunting Derrida's project more broadly; in deferred, derivative mode, it traces or retraces the very thing of which it is itself a trace. Moreover, for Derrida, the archive functions as a signature, copy or photograph – that is, as a trace or deposit that comes into being only through loss.<sup>10</sup> According to this logic, the archive requires supplement as much as memory. Indeed, when in *Mal d'archive* Derrida explains that the archive comes in place of memory, he precisely does not posit a material supplement for the insufficiency of memory, but exposes how the loss or lack marking memory is already found haunting the archive.<sup>11</sup>

In 2008, the visual artist Anselm Kiefer was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. The logic behind this unorthodox decision can be seen in Kiefer's production of a proliferating archive of books made of lead and in his persistent return to post-war literature. Only a year earlier, Kiefer had acknowledged his debt to poetry after Auschwitz by dedicating his large-scale Monumenta exhibition, *Sternenfall*, to Bachmann and Celan. However, it was less the blurring of medial boundaries that prompted criticism of the award than the manner in which Kiefer's work can be seen to promote peace.<sup>12</sup> By accumulating the residual materials of destruction in order to depict the aftermath of destruction, Kiefer produces literal and symbolic 'Schlachtfelder' (battlefields).<sup>13</sup> Yet the archival force of Kiefer's work resides precisely in the co-presence of destructive and preserving gestures. His work implies a violence which, to quote Derrida, is at once 'institutive et conservatrice. Révolutionnaire et traditionnelle' ('institutive and conservative. Revolutionary and traditional').<sup>14</sup> Emblematic in this respect is his grounded lead aeroplane bearing the name of Celan's early poetry collection *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952). With leaden books on its wings, and thereby bearing this post-war lyric document in symbolic form, it constitutes part of what Andreas Huyssen has described as Kiefer's 'archive in ruin'.<sup>15</sup> The vehicle of destruction that also carries traces of past devastation finds a counterpart in Kiefer's use of *Lager* – that is, sites of deposit and accumulation. The German word alerts us to a potential slippage where the archive as depot or warehouse comes problematically close to the *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp).<sup>16</sup> A key instance of this can be found in Kiefer's *Sternenlager* (1998) canvases. Paul Ardenne notes how these works suggest the

proximity of *Lager* as deposit with *Lager* as camp; the star deposit (Kiefer numbers each star with a kind of identification tag) becomes the camp of extinguished stars.<sup>17</sup> The same collapse is threatened by the even more monumental pieces produced by Kiefer at his Barjac studios. As Sophie Fiennes shows in her 2010 film, *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow*, Kiefer's now-abandoned complex in the South of France operates as an astonishing apparatus of production, destruction and accumulation. Disused factories and industrial containers have become Kiefer's preferred 'medium',<sup>18</sup> enabling him to place his earlier works in massive, but residual, spaces that are almost penal in nature. In producing new kinds of *Lager* that archive the traces both of his own work and of post-war memory work (the poems of Celan and Bachmann), Kiefer reminds us of that particular and radically other space of the *Lager* that in a certain sense defines the twentieth century.

Despite the unavoidable monumentality of Kiefer's books, planes and industrial apparatus of ruins, Ransmayr is struck by the material transformations that the artist effects. As a friend and colleague, he has spoken in support of the 2008 Peace Prize award, lauding Kiefer's ability to set the past in motion as 'flatternde, verfliegende Seiten aus Blei' (fluttering, fly-away pages of lead).<sup>19</sup> Thus, Ransmayr finds in Kiefer the physical manifestation of his own writerly practice: narrative changes the material of history until, even in its most residual form, it dissipates and is lost.<sup>20</sup> Like Kiefer, he remains preoccupied with this residue. His narratives oscillate between the desire to change the oppressive weight of history into something non-constraining and an attachment to the traces of the past. Ransmayr evokes massive, melancholic structures, only to describe weightless elements and liberated motion, an effect captured in the title *Der fliegende Berg* (The Flying Mountain) and echoed in his reference to Kiefer's fly-away pages of lead.

Via the poetry of Bachmann and Celan, Ransmayr reinscribes Kiefer's art into his narratives and reveals a shared ambivalent archival practice. He returns to scenes of catastrophe, desolation and isolation, and to the residual materials of snow, sand, dust and ash, thereby confronting his reader with the remainders of traumatic violence. However, he goes on to use such sites and anti-materials of destruction in order to transform them into his own form of *Geschichte*—that is, history as narrative. It is in this transformation that Ransmayr performs the ultimate postmodern gesture of his project, writing his protagonists out of history.<sup>21</sup> A trace of the past remains, however, in spite of the narrative manipulation of

material history. Following the iconography of Kiefer's leaden plane and vast deposits, that trace is to be found in the recurring tropes of *Luftkrieg* and *Lager*, aerial destruction and the camps. In what follows, I shall give some examples of images of destruction from Ransmayr's work and show how, in their focus on residual materials, these post-catastrophic scenarios recall the images of Kiefer and the poetry of Celan and Bachmann. On the one hand, these remnants are part of a process of disintegration and dispersal that might culminate in oblivion; on the other hand, they ask to be collected again and preserved. They configure an archive of sorts, one which, through its association with other post-war artists and writers, carries the traces of previous attempts to represent the violence of National Socialism.

In Ransmayr's best-known novel, *Die letzte Welt*, archival material undergoes various medial transformations.<sup>22</sup> The fictional author Naso, a postmodern incarnation of Ovid, burns his own manuscript before he is forced into exile by the Roman government. Thus, any documentary evidence that would attest to his status as an author has been consumed by fire and exists only as ash. As if to show the residual, anti-material form of his work, Ransmayr has his protagonists cite Naso's *Metamorphoses* through various media, all of which prove as insubstantial as the ash itself. Nevertheless, it is these ashen fragments and their derivative forms that are the very stuff of Ransmayr's elaborate narrative. Thus, ash operates in the text as it does for Kiefer: as a residue 'aus dem etwas entsteht' (from which something is produced).<sup>23</sup> The exile topography of Tomi is a desolate one, but life asserts itself once more, taking as its vital source precisely the remnants of catastrophic destruction: 'Erlosch ein Feuer, kroch blühendes Unkraut aus der Asche' ('When a fire went out, lush weeds crept from the ashes').<sup>24</sup> Here, Ransmayr's weeds from ashes echo the 'Aschekraut' (ashen weeds) in Celan's early poetry and the 'blühende[s] Nichts' (flourishing nothing) that one commentator has found in the ashen residue.<sup>25</sup> Those weeds also gesture towards the 'Aschenblume' (ashen flower) growing from blackness in the poem 'Ich bin allein' and which Kiefer uses in several canvases.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the ash of Naso's burnt manuscript is described as 'Ascheflocken' (flakes of ash) which cover the ground like snow.<sup>27</sup> The motif of ashen or charred snow recurs in Ransmayr's writing and repeats the radical overturning of binary categories announced in Celan's 'Todesfuge', where white milk has turned black.<sup>28</sup> It is to this poem that Kiefer most often alludes, not least in the use of ash and hair to evoke the Jewish victim, Sulamith.

Black snow returns through a more dispersed series of associations in the opening of *Morbus Kitahara*. In many ways, this text is Ransmayr's most explicit engagement with National Socialism, since it describes a scenario following the implementation of a deindustrialization programme, markedly like that proposed by Henry Morgenthau, and shows the suffering of those interned in what are recognizably the Mauthausen camps. Yet, by denying his reader geographically and historically specified coordinates, and by using a Brazilian counter-topography, Ransmayr's references both to the war and to the Holocaust remain oblique. The memorable first sentence announces a scene of catastrophic destruction viewed from a surveyor's plane: 'Zwei Tote lagen schwarz im Januar Brasiliens' ('Two bodies lay blackened in the Brazilian January').<sup>29</sup> The blackness of the charred bodies is intensified by the etymology of the name 'Brazil' – from the French 'bois de braise', meaning charcoal.<sup>30</sup> Unable to detect any sign of life, the pilot declares the island deserted.<sup>31</sup> The configuration of aerial perspective and the obliteration of human life in a demarcated, desolate space suggests the tropes of aerial destruction and the camps, and so indicates a compulsive return to violent scenes of recent German history. Ransmayr's use of 'schwarz im Januar' evokes the Holocaust violence circumscribed in the 'schwarze Milch' (black milk) of the poem 'Todesfuge'.<sup>32</sup> It also resonates with the date 20 January, which Celan finds written into every poem as a mode of commemorating the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>33</sup>

*Der fliegende Berg* tells the story of two Irish brothers who find archival evidence in the form of photographs of an uncharted mountain in the Himalayas and attempt an expedition there. The narrator brother, Pad, comes close to death following a rock-fall, but is nursed back to life by the other brother, Liam, who later dies in an avalanche. The few critical responses to the novel to date have shown how the author uses myth to express ideas of alterity.<sup>34</sup> However, it is also important to recognize that this recent work continues the trajectory of Ransmayr's broader project in another sense; despite the extremity of its location, it returns to the tropes of Second World War and Holocaust violence, and this return is made through links to Kiefer, Celan and Bachmann. *Der fliegende Berg* is striking for its use of so-called *Flattersatz*, that is, the division of the text into unrhymed stanzas of varying lengths. In typographical terms, *Flattersatz* refers to unjustified text, but here it describes the visual effect of this 'epopöetischer Roman' (epopoetic novel) on the page.<sup>35</sup> Ransmayr seems to return to the epic form, lending his text a monumental quality, but he also emphasizes the lightness of form, its

fluttering, fly-away quality: ‘Der Flattersatz – oder besser: *der fliegende Satz* – ist frei und gehört nicht allein den Dichtern’ (Fluttering lines – or rather, flying lines – are free and are not only the property of poets).<sup>36</sup> Notably, Ransmayr’s description of his chosen form is almost identical to his description of Kiefer’s impossibly light leaden pages quoted above: ‘flatternde, verfliegende Seiten aus Blei’ (fluttering, fly-away pages of lead). This indicates how his novel is constructed on Kiefer’s model, through the representation of history as both monumental and caught up in a process of disintegration and dispersal.

The opposition between stone and snow is a physical, topographical manifestation of the opposition announced in the title and operative throughout between heaviness and weightlessness, falling and flying. It shows how the narrative is implicated in the same ambivalent desire at once to remain bound to, and to be liberated from, history in both a personal and a collective sense. Accumulated in Liam’s ‘Sammelwut’ (collecting fury),<sup>37</sup> archival material is used in the ambivalent gestures of rescuing and removing, of reviving one brother in order to do away with the other. It fails to offer something concrete and irrefutable, mediating instead between an urgent, extreme reality and an intangible fantasy world. Photographs taken on the climb remain where Liam does not, and, as such, record the fact of their journey in his place. However, through its obliteration (Pad deletes Liam’s virtual archive and burns his letters), archival material provides the means for an act of definitive elimination of the brother.<sup>38</sup> Following the doublings and inversions that structure the narrative, the second, unexplored mountain emerges only as a sort of ghosting effect on a black-and-white aerial photograph. The image is taken by a Chinese bomber pilot when, following an attack on a monastery settlement, a storm forces him off course. The pilot disappears without trace, and so the photograph archives not only this geographical spectre, but also the fact of his last journey. Marked by the shadow of the plane’s wing, it figures an after-image of aerial destruction.<sup>39</sup>

While this personal history of two brothers is far removed, temporally, spatially and generationally, from the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust, it arguably performs the same kinds of displacement from that history which can be traced across Ransmayr’s oeuvre. The narrative takes place in an extreme location and its protagonists are inscribed, via their politically active father, with the traces of Irish conflict and terrorist violence. Yet it seems that the history from which Ransmayr tries to liberate himself in writing asserts itself nonetheless, particularly through the sorts of black-and-white inversions found in

Celan's residual, ashen poetry. Again, Ransmayr has recourse to Celan's black milk and snow in producing scenes of destruction and loss:

Ich lebte.  
 Es schneite.  
 Schwarzer Schnee?  
 Schwarzer Schnee:  
 Wie verkohltes,  
 von einem unsichtbaren Feuer zerrissenes Papier  
 taumelten schwarze Flocken  
 aus der Wolkenlosigkeit.  
 (I was alive.  
 It was snowing.  
 Black snow?  
 Black snow:  
 Black flakes tumbled  
 like charred paper  
 destroyed by an invisible fire  
 from the cloudlessness.)<sup>40</sup>

This image is intended to describe the fall of stones that almost kills the narrator, the black flakes remaining as a kind of after-image to indicate his survival. Their transformation from heavy material to weightless anti-material is made through the image of moths being caught in a thermal current and covered with a layer of ice, and moves towards the snow that will engulf the brother. Quoting visually, then literally, the title of Celan's poem 'Schwarze Flocken' – a poem that finds repeated inscription on Kiefer's canvases – Ransmayr has snow become ash.<sup>41</sup> The transformation is underpinned by the analogy of burnt paper – perhaps the last traces of the document consumed in *Die letzte Welt*. Indeed, what might be understood as a straightforward visual metaphor evokes both destruction and survival. For Celan, destruction is brought with the document: his poem describes the letter he receives from his mother telling of his father's death in the camps. This loss reverses the order of things for Celan; white snow does not just become black, it absorbs any light it might once have reflected: 'Schnee ist gefallen, lichtlos' (Snow has fallen, with no light).<sup>42</sup> These black flakes fall again in Bachmann's poem 'Dunkles zu sagen', and, in dialogue with Celan, speak of loss once more.<sup>43</sup> In this Orpheus song, the loss of the lover is signalled by the dark snow that covers his/her face:

der Finsternis schwarze Flocken  
 beschneiten dein Antlitz

(the black flakes of darkness  
 had snowed your face under)<sup>44</sup>

Black snow performs a burial gesture here, but at the end the lover's blue eye pierces Bachmann's poem, looking resolutely beyond death. In Ransmayr's novel, a black flake remains on the face of Pad's lover, the Tibetan nomad Nyema. After her interrogation by a Chinese soldier, she is left with a broken nose, which subsequently

ließ einen winzigen Schatten in ihrem Gesicht erscheinen,  
 ein schwarzes, wie aus der Nacht herabgetaumeltes  
 Flöckchen Finsternis, das schmolz und in einem Lächeln,  
 einem Ausdruck der Erleichterung über unsere,  
 über meine Rückkehr  
 verschwand.

(made a tiny shadow appear on her face,  
 as if fallen from the night, a black  
 flakelet of darkness that melted and, in a smile,  
 an expression of relief at our,  
 at my return  
 disappeared.)<sup>45</sup>

The black flake appears as an after-effect of violence that may disappear as Nyema forgets, looking upon happier things once more. However, the narrator, Pad, describes her expression of relief at the exclusion of an other: in the course of the novel, Pad writes his brother out of his story, in order to write Nyema into it. His modification of 'unsere Rückkehr' (our return) to 'meine Rückkehr' (my return) is one instance of this.

We have seen, then, that black flakes represent archival anti-material in Ransmayr's writing, which, via Kiefer, recalls the post-war poetry of Bachmann and Celan and the catastrophic violence they attempted to circumscribe in lyric mode. The dispersal and disappearance of these traces suggest the author's desire for liberation from history, but their persistence evidences the impossibility of doing away completely and definitively with the past. With his flying mountain, Ransmayr provides a strange monument to the fact that what vanishes does not disappear forever, but 'immer wiederkehrt' (always returns).<sup>46</sup> Ransmayr transforms the weight of material history, held in conventional archives and embodied in conventional archival material, into archival

anti-material, in order to liberate his narratives from the burden of the past. But the snow, sand, dust and ash that pervade his texts function as an irreducible residue of violent history. In his persistent use of anti-materials associated with the Holocaust and with post-Holocaust representation, Ransmayr does not attempt a direct reconstruction of the National Socialist past in whose shadow he grew up; rather, through secreted and dispersed references to the materials used by Kiefer, Celan and Bachmann, he archives literary and artistic responses to that violent history.

## NOTES

- 1 Wolfgang Müller-Funk, 'Räume in Bewegung. Narrative und Chronotopik in Christoph Ransmayrs Roman *Der fliegende Berg*', *Kakanien Revisited* (November 2008), 1–18, this quotation p. 1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
- 2 Christoph Ransmayr, *Geständnis eines Touristen. Ein Verhör* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004), p. 12; *Die Schrecken des Eises und der Finsternis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003), p. 11, translated by John E. Woods as *The Terrors of Ice and Darkness* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p. 3 (Ransmayr's emphasis; translation modified).
- 3 See 'Jede Flucht öffnet den Blick', interview with Christoph Ransmayr, *Der Spiegel* 30 (2001), 176–179, this quotation p. 178.
- 4 Heinz-Peter Preußner describes the significance of desolate, isolated topographies for the production of catastrophic images in both Ransmayr and Bachmann; see 'Reisen an das Ende der Welt: Bilder des Katastrophismus in der neueren österreichischen Literatur. Bachmann – Handke – Ransmayr', in *1945–1995. Fünfzig Jahre deutschsprachige Literatur in Aspekten*, edited by Gerhard P. Knapp and Gerd Laboisse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 369–407.
- 5 Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. L'archivio e il testimone* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998); translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen as *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Archive and the Witness* (New York: Zone, 2002).
- 6 See Fatima Naqvi, 'The Abandoned Victim: Cosmology and History in Christoph Ransmayr and Anselm Kiefer', *German Life and Letters* 57:2 (2004), 219–235; Scott G. Williams, 'The Deukalion and Pyrrha Myth in Paul Celan and Christoph Ransmayr', *German Life and Letters* 56:2 (2003), 142–155; Andrea Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer: Myth, Mourning and Memory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007); and Preußner, 'Reisen an das Ende der Welt'.
- 7 See Peter Weiss, 'Meine Ortschaft', in *Rapporte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), pp. 113–124.
- 8 See *ibid.*, p. 123.
- 9 See Jacques Derrida, *Feu la cendre* (Paris: Des femmes, 1987), translated by Ned Lukacher as *Cinders* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); and

- Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), translated by Eric Prenowitz as *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 10 See Jacques Derrida, *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography*, translated by Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 16–19.
  - 11 See Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, pp. 25–26; p. 11.
  - 12 See 'Mythologie des Schreckens', *Der Spiegel* 24 (2008), 164–166.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
  - 14 Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, p. 20; p. 7 (Derrida's emphasis).
  - 15 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 244.
  - 16 Christian Boltanski produced a similar effect at his Monumenta exhibition a year after Kiefer. *Personne* showed a deposit of textiles at various stages of sorting. Despite not specifying the provenance or significance of the materials, Boltanski used an industrial scale and an absence of human figures to suggest links to Nazi concentration camps.
  - 17 See Danièle Cohn, Anselm Kiefer, Andrea Lauterwein, José Alvarez et al., *Anselm Kiefer au Grand Palais. Sternenfall* (Paris: Édition du Regard, 2007), p. 155.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
  - 19 'Es gibt eine Schmerzgrenze', interview with Christoph Ransmayr, *Der Spiegel* 24 (2008), 167–168, this quotation p. 168. The links between author and artist precede the award: see Christoph Ransmayr, *Der Ungeborene, oder Die Himmelsareale des Anselm Kiefer* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002).
  - 20 See Ransmayr, *Geständnis*, p. 65.
  - 21 For a discussion of Ransmayr's practice of writing the subject out of history, see Caitríona Leahy, *Der wahre Historiker. Ingeborg Bachmann and the Problem of Witnessing History* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), pp. 111–138.
  - 22 Anita McChesney analyses the transformations in terms of their different media in 'On the Repeating History of Destruction: Media and the Observer in Sebald and Ransmayr', *Modern Language Notes* 121 (2006), 699–719.
  - 23 'Der Mensch ist böse', interview with Anselm Kiefer, [http://www.zeit.de/2005/10/Interv\\_AnselmKiefer](http://www.zeit.de/2005/10/Interv_AnselmKiefer) (accessed 16 August 2010).
  - 24 Christoph Ransmayr, *Die letzte Welt. Mit einem ovidischen Repertoire* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004), p. 276; translated by John E. Woods as *The Last World: A Novel with an Ovidian Repertory* (New York: Grove Press, 1990), p. 207.
  - 25 See William H. Rey, 'Paul Celan. Das blühende Nichts', *German Quarterly* 43:4 (1970), 749–769.
  - 26 Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Beda Allemann, Stefan Reichert and Rudolf Bücher, 3 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 1, p. 55.
  - 27 Ransmayr, *Die letzte Welt*, pp. 18–19; pp. 11–12.
  - 28 Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 41–42; translated by John Felstiner in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 30.
  - 29 Christoph Ransmayr, *Morbus Kitahara* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006), p. 7; translated by John E. Woods as *The Dog King* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 3.
  - 30 This link is made by, among others, Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 39; translated by John and Doreen Weightman as *Tristes Tropiques* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 38. It is taken up by W. G. Sebald in *Die Ringe*

- des Saturn. Eine englische Wallfahrt* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003); translated by Michael Hulse as *The Rings of Saturn* (London: Vintage, 2002). In Sebald's text, the reference to the etymology of 'Brazil' forms part of a longer reflection that culminates in the claim that 'Verbrennung ist das innerste Prinzip eines jeden von uns hergestellten Gegenstandes' ('Combustion is the hidden principle behind every artefact we create') (p. 202; p. 170).
- 31 Ransmayr, *Morbus Kitahara*, p. 8; p. 4.
- 32 Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 41–42; p. 30.
- 33 Celan, 'Der Meridian. Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises', in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 187–202; translated by John Felstiner as 'The Meridian: Speech on the Occasion of the Award of the Georg Büchner Prize', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, pp. 401–414. See also Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth. Pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); translated by Joshua Wilner as *Shibboleth: For Paul Celan*, in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, edited by Aris Fioretos (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 3–72.
- 34 See Carl Niekerk, 'Poetik der Metonymie. Alterität in Christoph Ransmayrs *Der fliegende Berg*', *Literatur für Leser* 31 (2008), 177–193.
- 35 Wolfgang Müller-Funk, 'Die unendliche Arbeit am Mythos. Anmerkungen zu Christoph Ransmayrs epopöetischen Roman *Der fliegende Berg*', *Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge* 17 (2008), 55–66.
- 36 Christoph Ransmayr, *Der fliegende Berg* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006), p. 6.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 357.
- 38 See *ibid.*, p. 285.
- 39 See *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
- 41 On the link between the 'schwarze Flocken' in Celan's and Bachmann's poems, see Bettina von Jagow, *Ästhetik des Mythischen. Poetologien des Erinnerens im Werk von Ingeborg Bachmann* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 47–48.
- 42 Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, p. 25; p. 15. Andrea Lauterwein notes how Kiefer takes up Celan's inversion of binary categories, particularly the loss of light to darkness, in his use of black seeds on a white sky, of 'inverted stars' as the artist calls them (Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer*, p. 167).
- 43 Bachmann speaks with Celan, who, in 'Corona', speaks of these 'dark things'. See von Jagow, *Ästhetik des Mythischen*, p. 45.
- 44 Ingeborg Bachmann, 'Dunkles zu sagen', in *Werke*, edited by Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum and Clemens Münster, 4 vols (Munich: Piper, 1978), vol. 1, p. 32; translated by Aaron Kramer and Siegfried Mandel as 'To Say Dark Things', *Denver Quarterly* 11 (1976), 29–31.
- 45 Ransmayr, *Der fliegende Berg*, p. 183.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 156.