

MISSSED ENCOUNTERS: STENDHAL, SEBALD AND THE RETURN OF WATERLOO

ABSTRACT

This article focusses on the representation of the Battle of Waterloo in Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) and W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). In doing so the article also considers broader questions about wartime experience and the persistence of traumatic memory in Stendhal's autobiographical writings, while reflecting on Sebald's sustained engagement with the unsettling effects of war in Stendhal's life and work in *Vertigo* (1990) and *Austerlitz* (2001). Drawing on Cathy Caruth's account of trauma as a "history that can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence", the article claims that what Stendhal and Sebald share in their unorthodox accounts of Waterloo and the Napoleonic wars is an interest in the potential of traumatic memory to disrupt narrative time and thus, via Lacan, to open up history to the return of the Real. Key to this reading is a focus on the disparity between official, commemorative accounts of Waterloo, and the interest displayed by Stendhal and Sebald alike in the ghastly, inert residue that remains when such accounts fail to capture the Real of war.

1. COMMEMORATING WATERLOO: 2015

On 15 June 2015 Reuters reported that "Kings and commoners" were to "gather at Waterloo this week to mark the battle's bicentenary in a show of European unity not seen for a major anniversary at the site since history changed course there on June 18, 1815". Proclamations of unity were belied, however, by reports that the French government had "blocked the Belgian issuance of a €2 coin commemorating Napoleon's defeat". The report went on to state that "[t]he French government was deeply discontented that the idea behind these coins would send a negative signal about the unity of Europe".¹ Whether motivated by wounded pride or embarrassment, the French objection to the Belgian coin rather misses the point that European unity was established as a direct result of Waterloo. Still further, what the French objection masks is the extent to which the European Union follows the example of the Holy Alliance in seeking to crush popular uprisings, albeit this time, as the sociologist Marco D'Eramo observes, with "fraternal bankers" rather than "fraternal armies". For D'Eramo, Waterloo thus serves as a symbol of the current state of the union, offering a precarious assertion of postwar unanimity while standing as a reminder of the oppressive character of an institution arrogating to itself "the right to intervene in the internal

¹ Alastair MACDONALD, "Europe Unites For Bicentenary of Battle That Made Napoleon History", in: *Reuters*, UK edition, 15 June 2015, [online], < <http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-waterloo-anniversary-idUKKBN0OV1QR20150615>>.

affairs of subject nations, in the name of humanitarian principles: 'Justice, Christian Charity and Peace'".²

On the opening night of the bicentenary events, the audience was treated to a lavish *son et lumière* display that worked hard to efface such contradictions; European unity was proudly proclaimed through the distracting media of music, dance and pyrotechnics - a so-called "Inferno" orchestrated by the Belgian designer Luc Petit. Earlier that evening, however, as guests assembled for Petit's "poetic interpretation", it was possible to survey some altogether stranger scenes: a troop of Dutch battle reenactors marching in formation to the bar of the Bivouac de l'Empereur as the jukebox played "I Will Survive"; bewildered tourists attempting to find a gap in the security fence blocking access to the Lion Mound; an archaeologist informing a party of academics assembled in front of the recently restored Hougoumont farmhouse that they were, in fact, standing on a mass grave.³ As trite or as telling as these scenes might appear, their contrast with the plangent insistence of the "Inferno" remains, for me, pronounced. In their mundanity, it is tempting to conclude that they provide a more authentic perspective on the commemoration of Waterloo than Petit's carefully calibrated display. Yet, I would caution, the bathetic charge of such scenes is no less fabricated than the strained sublimity of the "Inferno". For while the staging of the latter event is clearly informed by a long tradition of spectacular military entertainments, from the panoramas and dioramas of the nineteenth-century to the Edinburgh Tattoo and the activities of the Sealed Knot and other battle reenactment societies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the debunking effect of those other, contingent events is also conditioned by representational codes.

As this article proposes, an ironic, counter-hegemonic account of Waterloo may be found in a slender, yet rich seam of European fiction, initiated by Stendhal's account of the battle in *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839), and thereafter taken up in W.G. Sebald's critical engagements with Stendhal's life and work in *Schwindel. Gefühle* (1990; translated into English as *Vertigo* 1999), *Die Ringe des Saturn. Eine englische Wallfahrt* (1995; translated into English as *The Rings of Saturn* 1998), and *Austerlitz* (2001). What Stendhal and Sebald share in their unorthodox accounts of Waterloo and the Napoleonic wars is an interest in the potential of traumatic memory to bring about a "crisis of representation, of history and of truth, and of narrative time".⁴ In sum, if the bicentennial

² Marco D'ERAMO, "After Waterloo", in: *New Left Review*, 2015, 94, [online], <<https://newleftreview.org/II/94/marco-d-eramo-after-waterloo>>.

³ Quotation from 'Waterloo 2015' commemoration programme, 2015, [online], <<http://www.waterloo2015.org/en/programme>>.

⁴ Roger LUCKHURST, *The Trauma Question*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008, 5. Traumatic experience, according to Cathy Caruth, is paradoxical insofar as the violent event is directly encountered yet remains inaccessible to conscious memory. Thus trauma indicates a "history [that] can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence [...] its truth is bound up with its crisis of truth". See Cathy CARUTH, "Introduction to Psychoanalysis,

“Inferno” emblemizes the means by which history forges national consciousness, then the painful, absurd, and often bewildering memories presented by Stendhal and Sebald give voice to all that must be suppressed if national consciousness is to cohere.

2. SURVEYING WAR: READING STENDHAL AFTER SEBALD

On page 123 of the first Harvill Press edition of W.G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* (1998), right in the middle of a characteristically mordant reflection on the hidden and not so hidden filaments linking Joseph Conrad’s brief but formative tenure as an employee of the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo, the life and death of the Irish diplomat and human rights activist Roger Casement, and the sepulchral bombast of Brussels, a city “erected”, as Sebald notes, “over a hetacomb of black bodies”, the narrator pauses to recall a visit made to the field of Waterloo in the winter of 1964.⁵ Sebald’s account of the visit is prefaced by a grainy illustration of the Lion Mound, commissioned in 1820 by King William I of the Netherlands to commemorate the exact spot where his son, William Prince of Orange, was knocked from his horse after receiving a musket ball to the shoulder. Constructed from around 390,000 cubic metres of earth taken from the fields between La Haye Sainte farm and the sunken Ohain lane, and therefore composed of a portion of those tens of thousands of soldiers who lost their lives on the day of battle, the Lion Mound, denounced by Sebald as “the very definition of Belgian ugliness”, looms in *The Rings of Saturn* as a monument to the facile horror of the European myth of progress.⁶

Entering the village of Waterloo with its “cheap restaurants” and tawdry souvenir shops the narrator is struck first of all by the curious absence of visitors and then by the sudden appearance of a squad of figures dressed in Napoleonic garb, including soldiers in uniform “beating drums and blowing fifes” and a “slatternly, garishly made-up sutler woman pulling a curious handcart with a goose shut in a cage”. For a time the narrator watches as these “mummers, who seemed to be in perpetual motion” disappear and reappear “amongst the buildings”, their atavistic demeanour and mazy, repetitive march eerily indicative of scenes taking place, on the very spot, over a century and a half before.⁷ This being Sebald, of course, the reverie is sustained only momentarily and while, in one sense, we are meant to perceive these figures as in some way emblematic of the ghostly persistence of historical actuality, their close resemblance to characters encountered by Fabrice del Dongo in *La Chartreuse de Parme* serves as a cautionary reminder to the

Trauma and Culture I”, in: *American Imago*, 1991, 48, 1, 1-12 (7). See also Cathy CARUTH, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

⁵ W.G. SEBALD, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse, London, The Harvill Press, 1998, 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

reader of the extent to which the sense of the real is informed by codes derived from literary fiction.

From here the narrator proceeds to a large, domed rotunda, adjacent to the Lion Mound. Opened in 1912, the Waterloo Panorama promises viewers a “life-like” representation of the field of battle. Situated on a raised platform at the centre of the building the viewer looks out across a hideous simulacrum of “blood-stained sand [...] lifesize horses, and cut down infantrymen, hussars and chevaux-légers, eyes rolling in pain or already extinguished”. Across these exacting three-dimensional scenes, fashioned in wax, paint and “splendidly coloured” cloth, the viewer gazes at Louis Dumoulin’s 360 degree painting of the battle, displayed on the inner wall of the vast “circus-like structure”.⁸ “This then”, the narrator continues, “is the representation of history”:

It requires a falsification of perspective. We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was [...] Whatever became of the corpses and mortal remains? Are they buried under the memorial? Are we standing on a mountain of death? Is that our ultimate vantage point? [...] No clear picture emerged [...] Only when I had shut my eyes, I well recall, did I see a cannonball smash through a row of poplars at an angle, sending the green branches flying in tatters. And then I saw Fabrice, Stendhal’s young hero, wandering about the battlefield, pale but with his eyes aglow, and an unsaddled colonel getting to his feet and telling his sergeant: I can feel nothing but the old injury in my right hand.⁹

Stendhal, whose bewildered “young hero”, caught in the thick of the action at Waterloo, memorably enquires “is this a real battle?” (“mais ceci est-il une véritable bataille?”), is a frequent presence in Sebald’s writings.¹⁰ The opening chapter of *Vertigo*, Sebald’s first published work of prose fiction, consists of a digest of the life of Henri-Marie Beyle, focussing on his early years as a soldier in Napoleon’s army, his turbulent love life, and career as a writer. Drawing largely on Stendhal’s private journals, letters, and autobiographical writings Sebald foregrounds Beyle’s struggles to authenticate his own experience. This struggle is most readily illustrated by the opening paragraph of *Vie de Henri Brulard*, the unfinished autobiography abandoned by Stendhal in 1836 and that remained unpublished until 1890. Initiated by a sequence of meditations on the falsifying effects of perspective, the pointedly unreliable narrator opens his life-story with a description of

⁸ For further discussion of Waterloo panoramas see Sibylle ERLE’s article in this issue. See also Philip SHAW, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, chapter 2 “Exhibiting War: Battle Tours and Panoramas”, 67-82. In relation to Sebald’s depiction of Waterloo Robert Buch comments: “Sebald’s own writing can be viewed as an antidote against the ideal of transparency and against the pathos that characterize the panorama and its precursor, battle painting”, in: Robert BUCH, *The Pathos of the Real. On the Aesthetics of Violence in the Twentieth Century*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 57. See also the essays by Mary Cosgrove and Jonathan James Long in Anne FUCHS and Jonathan James LONG (eds.), *W.G. Sebald and the Writing of History*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2007, 91-110 and 111-20.

⁹ W.G. SEBALD, *The Rings of Saturn*, 124-126.

¹⁰ STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, trans. John Sturrock, London, Penguin, 2006, 48. French text taken from STENDHAL, Henri Martineau (ed.), *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Paris, Éditions Garnier Frères, 1957, 44.

Rome as seen from a vantage point on the Janiculum Hill, claiming that from here he “can see perfectly the white wall marking the most recent restorations” of the Villa Aldobrandini “made by Prince F[rançois] Borghese, the very same whom I saw at Wagram as a colonel in the cuirassiers on the day my friend, M. de Noue, had his leg taken off”.¹¹ A few pages later Stendhal informs the reader that he has told a lie; he was not a soldier at Wagram in 1809 but an “assistant in the War Commissariat”.¹² The general point that is made here concerning the dubiousness of that related restorative project, the work of autobiography, extends also, and more specifically, to Beyle’s uncertain recollections of his involvement in the Napoleonic wars.¹³

Towards the end of the *Life*, Stendhal writes of his time as a dragoon in a reserve regiment of the *Grande Armée*. It is May 1800 and the young soldier is following in the wake of Napoleon’s dramatic crossing of the St. Bernard Pass. The author describes himself then as a “complete cissy” with “the physique of a fourteen-year-old girl”, barely able to hold his sabre without his hand getting covered in blisters and with a head turned to mush by readings of Ariosto and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.¹⁴ Couched in terms of oppositions between youth and age, femininity and masculinity, soft and hard, epic enchantment, and comic disdain, Stendhal’s recollections of his time as a soldier lead inevitably to a recurring concern with the unreliability of memory as, following a detailed account of his descent from the pass and subsequent billeting in the Italian town of Ivrea, the author admits that his favourable impressions of the descent were most likely informed by an engraving that he saw nearly six years later, the beauties of which, he tells us, had “taken the place of the reality”.¹⁵

As readers of the *Life* are aware, Stendhal’s prose is supplemented by numerous rough sketches, diagrams and plans, seemingly dashed off, as it were, in attempt to determine in space that which remains undetermined in time. There is, of course, a connection here with Sebald’s thoughts on the portrayal of history and the falsification of perspective - and, indeed, with Sebald’s own practice of incorporating visual materials, primarily photographs, within his texts - but Stendhal’s account is sharpened by his awareness of how visual representation is conditioned by aesthetic categories. Thus, just as Henri’s memories of his bucolic sojourn in Ivrea are informed by the category of the beautiful, so his recollections of the ascent of St. Bernard are shaped in terms of the sublime. In a passage that should be considered alongside the crossing of the Alps

¹¹ STENDHAL, *The Life of Henry Brulard*, trans. John Sturrock, London, Penguin, 1995, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³ For discussion of how the *Life* questions “the very possibility of autographical truth” see Patrick M. BRAY, *The Novel Map. Space and Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction*, Evanston/Chicago, Northwestern University Press, 2015, 22 and chapter 1 “The Life and Death of Henry Brulard”, 23-40.

¹⁴ STENDHAL, *The Life of Henry Brulard*, 450.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 453.

episode in Wordsworth's *Prelude* - an autobiographical description that, like Stendhal's *Life*, resonates with memories of Napoleon's crossing - Henri, after a seemingly endless circular journey around an "infernal frozen lake", strewn with dead horses, arrives at last at his destination.¹⁶ Like Wordsworth, the crossing of the Alps results in disappointment: "Is that all there is to the Saint-Bernard?" announces Henri, much to the annoyance of his seasoned Captain.¹⁷ But unlike Wordsworth, disappointment does not result in the awakening of a sublime power within the self greater than mere Nature. Rather, what emerges for Stendhal is an abiding sense of the incongruity between aesthetically-informed expectations and brute actuality. Recalling the bombardment at Bard, for example, Stendhal notes that the "terrifying din" was "*sublime*, yet a little too close to danger"; and a few sentences further he suggests that his false impression of the beauties of the journey between Bard and Ivrea may have arisen because he was "so struck by the number of dead horses and other military debris, that no distinct memory is left".¹⁸

Today we might call this failure to remember a symptom of PTSD, and in *Vertigo*, commenting on this passage, Sebald suggests as much: "It seemed to [Henri] that his impressions had been erased by the very violence of their impact".¹⁹ It is, Sebald speculates, for this reason that Stendhal provides a sketch to show "how things were" when he came under fire. *B*, at the bottom right, is the village of Bard. The three *C*s above the village represent the fortress cannon, firing at the points marked with *L*s on the path traversing the steep slope, *P*. Point *X*, at the bottom of the valley, indicates where the terrified horses fell, while *H*, right at the top of the path, stands for Henri "and marks the narrator's own position". Sebald observes in conclusion that "when Beyle was in actual fact standing at that spot, he will not have been viewing the scene in this precise way, for in reality, as we know, everything is always quite different".²⁰ Commenting on the significance of maps and diagrams in *The Life of Henry Brulard* Patrick M. Bray observes how graphic representations "seem more real than written text because there is a material support that appears to coincide with the referent, yet the obligations of perspective (reducing three dimensions to one or two) reveal a referential illusion".²¹ In other words, while the representation of point *H* (Henri/y), seems to provide an answer to the question posed at the beginning of the

¹⁶ See Simon BAINBRIDGE, *Napoleon and English Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, chapter 2 "In such strength of usurpation?: Wordsworth's Napoleonic Imagination", 54-94.

¹⁷ STENDHAL, *Life*, 456.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 462.

¹⁹ W.G. SEBALD, *Vertigo*, 6. See Cathy CARUTH, "Introduction to Psychoanalysis", 7, and Bessel A. van der KOLK, Alexander C. MCFARLANE, "The Black Hole of Trauma", in: Bessel A. van der KOLK, Alexander C. MCFARLANE & Lars WEISATH (eds.), *Traumatic Stress. The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, New York and London, Guilford Press, 1996, 3-23.

²⁰ W.G. SEBALD, *Vertigo*, trans. Michael Hulse, London, The Harvill Press, 1999, 6-7.

²¹ Patrick M. BRAY, *The Novel Map*, 35. For further commentary on the function of maps, sketches and diagrams in the *Life* and in *The Charterhouse of Parma* see Anders EDBERG-PEDERSON, *Empire of Chance. The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2015, 184-223.

autobiography, “what eye can see itself?”, the fact remains that the graphic image functions as a supplement to the text, reinforcing rather than collapsing the distance between the subject who sees and the subject who is seen.²² The map does nothing more than double the ruse by which the author, narrator and subject of autobiography appear to coincide whilst remaining functionally distinct.

As several critics have noted, Stendhal’s graphic materials indicate a related mode of disjunction arising within the unconscious.²³ In the *Life*, the letter *H* first appears in a diagram describing Henri/y’s sleeping arrangements with his mother. In advance of the appearance of the diagram Henri/y confesses “My mother, Mme Henriette Gagnon, was a charming woman, and I was in love with my mother”, before stating “that I lost her when I was seven years old”. The death of the mother, which both the young and the adult Henri/y fail to “understand”, is mentioned four times in the course of the narration. Unable to return to the mother’s bed - “Her bedroom remained locked for ten years after her death” - Stendhal concludes the description with a bird’s-eye view of the room they shared, depicting “1. My mattress. - 2. Me” and “3. Henrietta’s bed”, overlaid by a large “X” marking the place of the mother’s body.²⁴ The mother, that is, remains barred to the son, and necessarily so, for without this primal experience of lack Henri/y cannot be constituted as an autobiographical subject. But for our purposes we may also note how, in Stendhal’s depiction of the experience of war, the autobiographical subject remains poised, as it were, between the falsifying heights of historical representation and the insistent depths of traumatic memory. In both cases *X* marks a spot that simultaneously attracts and repels the subject. Jacques Lacan’s term for that which subverts the signifying process in order to convey the unrepresentable is, of course, the Real.²⁵

As an indication of how perilously close Stendhal comes to exposing the traumatic Real of war, we may consider his description of a visit to the field of Marengo where, some fifteen months earlier, Napoleon had topped off his dramatic entry into Italy with a decisive victory over the Austrians. Primed by voracious reading of bulletins, and by first-hand accounts of the battle picked up while serving as a sub-lieutenant in the 6th Regiment in Milan in the summer of 1800, Stendhal was struck as he gazed across the “vast and silent terrain” by the quantities of bones and debris still littering the field.²⁶ Sebald comments that “the difference between the images of the battle

²² STENDHAL, *Life*, 6.

²³ Most notably Candace LANG, “Stendhal. Une autobiographie en dérive”, in: *MLN. Modern Language Notes*, 1979, 1072-92 and Brigitte MAHUZIER, “The Graphics of Autobiography. Struggle With Description in Proust and Stendhal”, in: *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 48, 12, 1988, 3122A. See Patrick M. BRAY, *The Novel Map*, 35-7.

²⁴ STENDHAL, *Life*, 28-30.

²⁵ See Jacques LACAN, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, 53-64.

²⁶ W.G. SEBALD, *Vertigo*, 17.

which he had in his head and what he now saw before him as evidence that the battle had in fact taken place occasioned in him a vertiginous sense of confusion such as he had never previously experienced”.²⁷ That sense of discrepancy between the symbolization of war as noble and transcendent and its horrifying actuality - a discrepancy veiled during the descent to Ivrea by the impression of beauty drawn from the engraving of that scene - is given additional force by Stendhal’s description of a hastily erected memorial column, the appearance of which leaves a “very shabby” impression on him (“elle est très mesquine”).²⁸ What Stendhal encounters at Marengo is not, of course, the reality of conflict but rather that which remains after conflict has “taken place”. Here, no less than at Bard, all that remains of the battle, aside from the skeletons of 16,000 men and 4,000 horses, is the sense of the gulf between the occluded visions of the combatants, the reified vistas of those who comment on combat’s aftermath, and the unseeing eyes of the dead; between these three perspectives the combat itself is missed.

The full significance of Stendhal’s “vertiginous sense of confusion” becomes apparent when one considers Lacan’s definition of trauma as the “missed encounter” with a “reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating endlessly”.²⁹ From the loss of the mother to the missed encounter at Marengo, Stendhal’s failure to assimilate the Real is manifested in a series of hallucinatory episodes, many of which endeavour to come to terms with the lost object by depicting it as horrifyingly intrusive. Thus, on 22 April 1809, two days after the clash between Austrian and French soldiers at Ebersberg, Stendahl discovers “the bodies of men and horses”:

there were still about thirty on the bridge; we were obliged to shove a lot of them into the river, which was excessively wide; in the middle, four hundred paces downstream from the bridge, a horse was standing erect and motionless; odd effect. The whole town of Ebersberg was still burning, the street through which we passed was strewn with corpses, most of them French and nearly all of them charred. Some were so badly burned that the human form of the skeleton could hardly be recognized. In several places, the corpses were heaped up; I examined their faces. On the bridge was a worthy German lying dead, his eyes open; German courage, faithfulness and kindness were portrayed on his face, which had a slight expression of melancholy.³⁰

“Our carriage”, Stendhal adds, “was obliged to run over these corpses disfigured by flames [...] I confess that the whole thing made me sick”.³¹ Still further, during the Russian campaign of autumn-winter 1812, Stendhal encounters “an ocean of barbarity [...] everything is gross, filthy,

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ STENDHAL, *Journal* (1801-17), 27 September 1801, in: Victor DEL LITTO (ed.), *Oeuvres intimes*, 2 volumes, Paris, Gallimard-Pléiade, 1981, I, 26.

²⁹ Jacques LACAN, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 58.

³⁰ STENDHAL, *The Private Diaries of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)*, trans. Robert Sage, London, Victor Gollancz, 1955, 294. See STENDHAL, *Oeuvres intimes*, I, 534-5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 294-295.

stinking, both physically and morally”.³² From Smolensk he writes of “our profound misery” as he and a column of fifteen hundred wounded men marched for eighteen days through a “muddy abyss” while enduring sporadic attacks from Russian soldiers.³³ No glittering prize, he adds, can compensate “for the mud in which I am buried”. Far removed “from the heights that my soul inhabits [...] are fetid marshes in which I am plunged”.³⁴

What emerges in these accounts, aside from a repeated impression of the chaos of battle, is a sense of moral and material disintegration: as navigable roads yield to oozing slime so transcendental aspirations fall into a stinking mire. The Real is presented here not so much as an ineffable *X* resisting representation but rather as nauseatingly material. For Lacan the disclosure of this “unnameable [...] unlocatable form [...] in which everything is swallowed up” is “a revelation of that which is least penetrable in the real, of the real lacking any possible mediation, of the ultimate real”.³⁵ To some extent, as critics have noted, the Lacanian Real, in this early incarnation, is close to Kristeva’s notion of the abject; as that which threatens life, the abject, in the form of mud, blood, or vomit, must be “radically excluded” from the living body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border separating meaning and non-meaning.³⁶ But, insofar as the abject object is used to determine the boundaries of the subject, it must also be seen as a vital component of the subject. When, in *The Life of Henry Brulard*, Stendhal once again addresses the abject matter of war, it becomes clear that “matière” and “ma mère” are closely related, and that it is the adolescent subject’s failure to overcome his fascination with the grossly maternal that jeopardises his transformation into a military man. Thus, Stendhal notes twice of his inability to wield a sabre that his “skin is too delicate [...] the least thing takes the skin off my fingers [...] in a word, the surface of my body is that of a woman”, before adding: “Hence maybe an insurmountable revulsion for whatever looks *dirty, or damp, or blackish* in colour”.³⁷ For Henri/y, the recognition of the woman on the surface of his flesh marks the point at which the return of the lost mother threatens to undo the illusory integrity of the masculine subject.

³² Letter to Félix Faure, 24 August 1812, in: STENDHAL, Henri MARINEAU & Victor DEL LITTO (eds.), *Correspondence*, 6 volumes, Paris, Gallimard-Pléiade, 1963-99, I, 656-7. English translation from Stendhal’s correspondence here and below adapted from Robert ALTER & Carol COSMAN, *A Lion for Love: A Critical Biography of Stendhal*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1986, 119.

³³ Letter to La Comtesse Pierre Daru, 7 November 1812, in: STENDHAL, *Correspondence*, I, 680.

³⁴ Letter to Félix Faure, 24 August 1812, in: STENDHAL, *Correspondence*, I, 657.

³⁵ Jacques LACAN & Jacques-Alain MILLER (ed.), *The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, New York and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 326.

³⁶ Julia KRISTEVA, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Samuel Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1982, 2. On comparative readings of the abject and the Real see, for example, Ruth RONAN, *Representing the Real. Psychoanalysis and Culture*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002, 37-40. On the associations between mud and loss of identity in First World War literature see Santanu DAS, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006: “the subterranean, muddy world of the trenches confronted the soldiers [...] with the threat, both physical and psychic, of *dissolution into formless matter*”, 36-37.

³⁷ STENDHAL, *Life*, 168.

There is, however, a sense in which this notion of the insistent, abject Real against which the subject repeatedly attempts to define himself prevents recognition of that arguably more terrifying conception of the Real as the “missed encounter”. It is this latter conception, I would suggest, that begins to emerge, with recurring insistence, in Stendhal’s later journal entries and that paves the way for the representation of Waterloo in *The Charterhouse of Parma*. For if, as Stendhal recalled of his first experience of coming under fire at Bard, that it was the loss of “a sort of virginity weighing as much on me as the other”, a repeated exposure to the decaying matter that is a consequence of war has, by 1813, almost entirely inured him to this sexualised high, rendering assertions of phallic integrity increasingly precarious.³⁸ As Stendhal notes in a journal entry, written during the battle of Bautzen, he no longer feels stirred by the rhetoric of military heroism (“je ne me passionne plus pour ce genre d’observations”): “I am sick of it [...] it’s like a man who has drunk too much punch and has been forced to throw it up; he is disgusted with it for life”.³⁹ As at Smolensk, where the sight of a map allows him to recall the hills of his youth, Stendhal is rescued from supine dissolution by taking advantage of an aerial perspective.⁴⁰ But while his position on top of a slope affords an unimpeded and notably detached view of the battle unfolding below, enabling him to draw pleasure from the “terrifying” sound of cannon-fire, he concludes acerbically that the battle leaves him with “nothing to say” (“c’est-à-dire rien”).⁴¹

3. WRITING AFTER WAR: “WAS THAT BATTLE WATERLOO?”

That sense of nothingness undoubtedly informs Stendhal’s justly celebrated description of the Battle of Waterloo in the *Charterhouse of Parma*. As noted earlier, what most readers recall of this description is Fabrice’s enquiry: “But is this a real battle?” (“mais ceci est-il une véritable bataille?”); what most readers forget is that Fabrice asks this question not once, but three times: the question is put initially to an avuncular sergeant-major during the height of the fighting and then later, in the aftermath of battle, to Corporal Aubry, the gruff veteran who provides the callow youth with vital lessons in combat survival.⁴² The second time around the question is phrased differently: “have I really been present at a battle?” (“Ai-je réellement assisté à une bataille?”). He fancied that he had, but his happiness would have been at its height had he been sure”.⁴³ Two weeks after the battle, recuperating from his wounds at an inn in Amiens, a sadder and wiser Fabrice reflects

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

³⁹ 21 May 1813. STENDHAL, *Journal* (1801-17), in: STENDHAL, *Oeuvres intimes*, I, 868. English translation adapted from Robert ALTER and Carol COSMAN, *A Lion for Love*, 117. Alter and Cosman freely render “je ne me passionne plus pour ce genre d’observations” as “I no longer get a hard-on over that sort of observation”, 117.

⁴⁰ See Letter to Félix Faure, 24 August 1812, in: STENDHAL, *Correspondence*, I, 657.

⁴¹ STENDHAL, *Oeuvres intimes*, I, 869.

⁴² STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 48. STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 44.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67. STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 61.

“profoundly [...] on the things that had been happening to him” yet remains “a child” in one crucial respect: “was what he had seen a battle? And, secondly, was that battle Waterloo?” (“Il n’était resté enfant que sur un point: ce qu’il avait vu, était-ce une bataille, et en second lieu, cette bataille était-elle Waterloo?”).⁴⁴ Like Stendhal in the wake of Marengo corroboration of wartime experience is sought through reading, but the confirmation Fabrice requires is lost in a chain of continuous and modal verb forms and past participles: “He was always hoping to find in the newspapers, or in the accounts of the fighting, some description that would enable him to recognise the places that he had passed through in the retinue of Marshall Ney, and later with the general” (“il espérait toujours trouver dans les journaux, ou dans les récits de la bataille, quelque description qui lui permettrait de reconnaître les lieux qu’il avait parcourus à la suite du maréchal Ney, et plus tard l’autre general”).⁴⁵ Fabrice’s search for “some description” that would make sense of his experience of the battle now known by the proper name “Waterloo” is presented here as a linguistic predicament. Since none of these descriptions satisfies Fabrice it is language itself that becomes a site of conflict, suggesting further that Waterloo remains an occurrence beyond the powers of representation: something that the would-be soldier experiences but which he is unable to comprehend or phrase coherently. In light of what has been said so far about the Real of war, Fabrice’s attempts to locate his actions in the past (“Ai-je réellement assisté à une bataille?”; “ce qu’il avait vu, était-ce une bataille, et en second lieu, cette bataille était-elle Waterloo?”) may be understood, to adapt Jan Mieszkowski’s reading, as an effort to forge “a past he could claim as his own in the place of a past that has gone missing”.⁴⁶

The story of how Fabrice forges his identity as a “real soldier” is, in this respect, worth rehearsing.⁴⁷ Having been mistakenly gaoled as a spy, Fabrice bribes his way out of prison dressed in the uniform of a recently deceased hussar who, it turns out, was also a thief. Stitched into this costume by the gaoler’s wife, Fabrice proceeds to beg, borrow and exchange his way across the field of battle, changing names and allegiances, as well as weapons and horses as the occasion fits, with dazzling rapidity. It is, in other words, as a dead man that Fabrice makes his debut on the field, mistaking the fabricated existence of a “voleur” for the “voilà!” and “voici” of “un vrai militaire”. Fabrice’s initiation to the reality of war is conducted initially by a wily but kind-hearted canteen-woman who perceives his naivety and lack of experience straight away; unable, like Stendhal, to hold a sabre steadily, the pale youth with “beautiful eyes” seeks advice on how to pass as a manly soldier.⁴⁸ Throughout these scenes Fabrice is aroused by the repeated sounds of cannon

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 78. STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 72.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Jan MIESZKOWSKI, *Watching War*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012, 75.

⁴⁷ STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 47.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

fire: “It’s like a rosary”, he exclaims, only to find his romantic expectations of conflict checked by a protracted and, under the aegis of the canny *vivandière*, highly ritualized encounter with a mutilated dead body, the sight of which causes Fabrice almost to be sick.⁴⁹ At first, Fabrice is struck by the “filthy feet of the corpse, which had been stripped of its shoes and left only with a wretched pair of blood-soaked trousers [...] ‘Come closer,’” says the canteen-woman, ““you’ve got to get used to it. Look [...] he got it in the head””. Next, in an echo of an experience documented by Stendhal on the road to Vienna, Fabrice is encouraged to shake the dead man’s hand. Although nauseated by the prospect Fabrice nevertheless takes the hand and gives it a firm shake; then he remains “as if prostrated; he felt he did not have the strength to get back on his horse. What horrified him above all was the open eye”.⁵⁰ The incident serves as a blunt corrective to Fabrice’s dream of military life as “a sublime brotherhood of knights, like that of the heroes of *Jerusalem Delivered*. To see death arriving was nothing, surrounded by heroic and tender souls, noble companions who shake you by the hand as you draw your last breath”.⁵¹

The sense of disorientation is manifested not only in Fabrice’s occluded view of the battle, but also in his inability to grant expression to his increasingly fragmented experiences. As already noted, Waterloo is, for Fabrice, an event in excess of verbal expression. It is, moreover, an experience that questions his ability to forge a coherent sense of self. Thus, despite Fabrice’s repeated attempts to assure himself of the reality of his experiences and of his newly forged identity as a soldier (“Ah, so I’m under fire at last! he told himself. I’ve seen firing! he repeated with satisfaction. Now I’m a real soldier”; “Ah! m’y voilà donc enfin au feu! se dit-il. J’ai vu le feu! se répétait-il avec satisfaction. Me voici un vrai militaire”), the assertive force of “voilà”, “vu” and “voici” fails to realise that which exceeds comprehension.⁵² Fabrice therefore “looks in vain to see where the shots were coming from”, and although he saw (“voyait”) the white smoke of the battery a long way off”, the noise of shooting from “much closer by” (“beaucoup plus voisines”) renders the shock of war alarmingly immediate.⁵³

For Mieszkowski, as for numerous other readers of the battle scene at Waterloo, Fabrice offers a perspective on war “that is neither epic nor panoramic but fragmentary, limited, and above all confused”.⁵⁴ In contrast to the French Emperor’s all-encompassing view, an idealised perspective signalled in advance of Waterloo by the sighting of an eagle, “Napoleon’s bird”, what

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 47; STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 43.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ Jan MIESZKOWSKI, *Watching War*, 75. See, for example, Anders EDBERG-PEDERSON, *Empire of Chance*. “The scene that Stendhal develops in the battle scene at Waterloo is fragmented, fractured, dislocated. It is a heterogeneous space that does not form a coherent whole but only a series of discrete and dizzying topographies” (199).

Fabrice sees of the battlefield is partial, occluded, and frequently contradictory: perception is blocked by clouds of white smoke; ground that appears solid is criss-crossed by treacherous flooded gullies and canals; the corpses of red coats appear uncannily alive and those who appear enemies turn out to be allies.⁵⁵ And so Fabrice, who “could not understand it at all” (“il n’y comprenait rien du tout”), wonders “what’s going on then?” (“mais que se passe-t-il donc?”)⁵⁶ As Anders Edberg-Pederson has suggested, Fabrice’s mounting sense of perplexity may be read both as an ironic counterpoint to the epistemological certainties of conventional realist fiction and, at the same time, as curiously akin to the conventions of cognitive deprivation associated with computer-generated immersive environments. Drawing interesting parallels with the application of virtual reality in contemporary military training, Edberg-Pederson argues that the effects of spatiotemporal distortion on the field of Waterloo forces Fabrice and, by extension, the reader, to constantly revise their understanding of the events taking place around them. Key to this experiential mode of cognition is the disruption of relations of cause and effect. Thus, “Suddenly” a cannon shot fells two soldiers next to Fabrice, and “suddenly” four soldiers appear out of the haze having been previously mistaken for the enemy.⁵⁷ Events occur with such dazzling rapidity that Fabrice is unable to comprehend them: “by the time he looked” at the dead soldiers he is “already twenty paces from the escort”.⁵⁸ The sense in which such events literally strike the bewildered young soldier is conveyed aptly by the recurrence of the phrase “tout à coup”. As in the Lacanian theory of trauma, events impinge on Fabrice in a manner that is violent and unmediated. In so far as these events are registered rather than experienced (“tout à coup”), they emerge in the text as representatives of the missed encounter with the Real. But what Fabrice does see, and what runs the risk of blocking his progress entirely, are those material remnants of the Real that threaten to dissolve the boundaries between self and other. Thus, immediately following the death of the two soldiers Fabrice fixates on the “horrible” sight of a “horse all covered in blood that was struggling on the ploughed soil, its feet caught up in its own entrails. It was trying to follow the others; the blood was flowing into the mud”.

Such scenes, redolent of the “ocean of barbarity” witnessed by Stendhal during the Russian winter of 1813, contrast markedly with the noble and elevated visions that prompted Fabrice to come to war. Instead, in a marked challenge to the Kantian notion of war as an indicator of the Sublime, Fabrice becomes immersed in a grossly sensual, inchoate realm exceeding rational

⁵⁵ STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 32.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 47, 56. STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 43, 51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47, 48. STENDHAL, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, 43, 44. See Anders EDBERG-PEDERSON, *Empire of Chance*, 199-207.

⁵⁸ STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 47.

comprehension.⁵⁹ Within this traumascape Fabrice fails not only to realise his romantic dream of war but also, crucially, to recognise his biological father. At the beginning of the novel we are introduced to a young French officer called Lieutenant Robert who, in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of Italy, has been billeted in the Marquise del Dongo's palace in Milan. Robert is described as "a somewhat unscrupulous [...] conscript", a man who, like Fabrice, has fashioned himself as an officer by patching together fragments of clothing stolen from dead men.⁶⁰ Despite his comic appearance Robert presents a refreshing contrast to the reactionary Marquise, whose opposition to the Enlightenment and hatred of Napoleon is on a par with his cruel and miserly treatment of Fabrice. Robert next appears on the field of battle as part of the retinue of Marshal Ney. Now tall and thin, "with a gaunt face and terrifying eyes", the officer fails to recognise his illegitimate son when, having received a wound in an enemy attack, he is assisted by his aides-de-camp to commandeer Fabrice's horse.⁶¹ Although in many ways the embodiment of the Napoleonic idealism eschewed by the Marquise, General Robert's status as a father figure is dashed as the son calls out in the language of his legal guardian "Ladri! Ladri! (Thieves! Thieves!)": "It was comic", Stendhal adds, "to be running after thieves in the middle of a battlefield", but tragic, we might add, not to realise that one of the thieves is, in fact, one's own father.⁶²

As Fabrice rids himself of his romantic notions of martial nobility, a child-like state informed by readings of Ariosto and Tasso, as well as by his idealised love for the Emperor (who, incidentally is another paternal surrogate the youth fails to perceive: "So was that the Emperor who went past?"), so he begins slowly to adapt to the harsh realities of war.⁶³ Brian Joseph Martin has argued that the field of Waterloo serves as a locus of maturation for Fabrice: as Fabrice's schooling on the field of war continues so he is able to forego his regressive attachment to idealised father figures and accept the care and companionship of his male and female comrades in arms. Though, as Martin adds, it is tempting to see the *cantinière* and Corporal Aubry as "surrogate parents, they are more like fraternal military mentors", offering advice and protection "long after Napoleon and General Robert have abandoned Fabrice and galloped away".⁶⁴ Central to the role of these military friends is their acceptance of a world dominated by contingency, multiplicity and exchange. As Fabrice comes to realise, survival on the field of battle is bound up with the ability to manipulate appearances, to take advantage of circumstances, to exercise purchase power and,

⁵⁹ See Immanuel KANT, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Walter S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1987, §28, 262-263.

⁶⁰ STENDHAL, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁴ Brian Joseph MARTIN, *Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France*, Durham, New Hampshire, University of New Hampshire Press, 2011, 122.

where necessary, to steal. Were Fabrice possessed of insight, and were he aware of his biological father's fabricated identity, he would understand that his experience of disillusionment in war has provided him with a vital lesson in modernity.⁶⁵

4. A TOUCH OF THE REAL: SEBALD AFTER STENDHAL

The irruption of trauma is manifested in Stendhal's prose under a variety of guises: at Bard as point X, where the horses plunge to their deaths; at Smolensk as the "muddy abyss" and, at Bautzen, as a meaningless "nothing". In Fabrice's case trauma emerges in the gap between noble ideals and abject experience as well as in his repeated failure to recognise his biological and symbolic fathers. For Fabrice the field of Waterloo remains open to question, a matter of disordered first-hand impressions and second-hand claims to knowledge, and so long as the truth of war fails to arrive so the hero of the tale remains in suspense, unable, as it were, to grasp the real of his desire. The fact that Fabrice's experience of Waterloo only becomes meaningful after the event, in other words only when it has been rendered reproducible through the medium of newsprint, demonstrates how, once again, the effect of reality is contingent on a suspension of the Real.⁶⁶

Something of that feeling of suspense is conveyed by Sebald in *Vertigo*. Readers of this book will perhaps remember their initial sense of perplexity on moving from the opening chapter on Beyle through a series of seemingly unrelated chapters taking in, amongst other things, a painting by Pisanello, a missing passport, the Great Fire of London, Casanova, the suicide of a dinner companion, a story by Kafka and an account of a closed-down pizzeria in Verona. But at the conclusion of *Vertigo* we finally catch up with an event that has been left in abeyance: Stendhal's missed encounter with the battle of Marengo. Along the way we read in the chapter describing Kafka's stay in a sanatorium in Riva of a certain retired General of Hussars named Ludwig von Koch. At dinner the general looks up "abruptly from the book which always lies open beside him" to remark of the "vast range of unfathomable contingencies" that "come between the logic of the battleplan and that of the final despatches [...] Tiny details imperceptible to us decide everything [...] but they weigh as heavy as the 50,000 dead soldiers and horses at Waterloo [...] Stendhal had a clearer grasp of this than any high command".⁶⁷ A few pages later the general is discovered dead

⁶⁵ On Fabrice's inability to learn from his experiences and on the fabricated nature of his identity see Roger PEARSON, *Stendhal's Violin. A Novelist and His Reader*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, 230-231.

⁶⁶ Lacan draws attention to how reality leaves the Real "en souffrance", a phrase meaning "in suspense", "in abeyance", "pending". Suggestively, "Souffrance" also means "pain". See Jacques LACAN, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 55-56. For more on the relations between knowledge and reproducibility in the context of Waterloo see Jan MIESZKOWSKI, *Watching War*, 80.

⁶⁷ W.G. SEBALD, *Vertigo*, 156-157.

in his armchair, having contrived to shoot himself in the heart and the head, the unnamed novel - it must be *The Charterhouse of Parma* - remaining open in his lap.

Our fate, as readers of fiction and surveyors of history, is no less suspended: as the teacher André Hilary informs his class in Sebald's great, final work of fiction, *Austerlitz*, a Napoleonic battle is impossible to describe:

In the end all anyone could ever do was sum up the unknown factors in the ridiculous phrase, "The fortunes of battle swayed this way and that", or some similarly feeble and useless cliché. All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces which have already been staged often enough by others. We try to reproduce the reality but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves upon us: the fallen drummer boy, the infantryman shown in the act of stabbing another, the horse's eye starting from its socket, the invulnerable Emperor surrounded by his generals [...] Our concern with history [...] is a concern with pre-formed images already imprinted on our brains, images which we keep staring at while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered.⁶⁸

On a visit to a familiar house in the Austrian village of his childhood, the unnamed narrator of *Vertigo* recalls an injunction against climbing up into the attic lest he meet with a certain "grey *chasseur*".⁶⁹ Now, in adulthood, as the narrator enters the prohibited space to pick over the scattered remains of a family history, he becomes "aware of something like an apparition, a uniformed figure, which now could be seen more clearly, now more faintly behind the blade of light that slanted through the attic window". On closer inspection the uncanny figure reveals itself to be a tailor's dummy dressed in the uniform of a Tyrolean *chasseur*, one of the irregulars who fought against the French at Marengo. The narrator, not believing his eyes, extends his fingers to touch "one of the uniform sleeves that hung down empty" only to watch it crumble, to his "utter horror", into dust.⁷⁰ Unable to touch the *chasseur* the narrator finds himself prey to a recurring dream in which he must endure the "touch of the real":

I dreamed, and occasionally still do, that this stranger reaches out his hand to me and I, in the teeth of my fear, venture ever closer to him, so close that, at last, I can touch him. And every time, I then see before me the fingers of my right hand, dusty and even blackened from that one touch, like the token of some great woe that nothing in the world could put right.⁷¹

As at Ebersberg, where Stendhal remembers his friend Montbadon touching the hand of a "handsome dead officer" only to discover that "the officer's skin remained in his palm", what Sebald's dream manifests is the ghastly, inert residue that remains when language fails to capture

⁶⁸ W.G. SEBALD, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell, London, Penguin, 2001, 101.

⁶⁹ W.G. SEBALD, *Vertigo*, 222.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 228-229.

the Real.⁷² Yet, as both authors show, that moment of “utter horror” is preferable to the bland assurances of the all-encompassing view. Thus, while “institutional” sites of “cultural memory” - whether in the form of monuments, panoramas or “poetic interpretations” - “serve literally, as well as figuratively, as cover-ups of the past”, a counter-hegemonic literary tradition works to disclose the past, unearthing the traumatic encounter that official history seeks to conceal.⁷³

To advance this archaeological allusion a little further, we may consider, briefly and in closing, a “tiny detail” from the field of Waterloo, a skeleton uncovered beneath a car park adjacent to the Lion Mound in June 2012. Historians believe that this is the body of Friedrich Brandt, a 23-year old private on the King’s German Legion of George III.⁷⁴ Displayed in a glass case at the Waterloo museum and visitor centre, Brandt’s skeleton appears compellingly present, hard and recalcitrant, and utterly unlike Sebald’s frangible “grey *chasseur*”. Yet, I would suggest, as palpable a presence as these bones appear their violated status as a museum piece rather than as mortal remains should serve no less as an insistent reminder of that “great woe that nothing in the world could put right”.⁷⁵

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⁷² STENDHAL, *Private Diaries*, 295.

⁷³ Simon COOKE, “Cultural Memory on the Move in Contemporary Travel Writing. W.G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn*”, in: Astrid ERLI and Ann RIGNEY (eds.), *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, 15-30 (16).

⁷⁴ James DUNN, “Only Full Skeleton Retrieved From Battle of Waterloo in 200 Years”, in: *Independent*, 5 April 2015, [online], <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/only-full-skeleton-retrieved-from-battle-of-waterloo-in-200-years-identified-by-historian-after-10157110.html>>.

⁷⁵ For further reflections on the subversion of “omniscience” and “rational thought” in Napoleonic war writing see W.G. SEBALD, “A Comet in the Heavens. On Johann Peter Hebel”, in: *A Place in the Country*, trans. Jo Catling, London, Penguin, 2014, 5-36 (13-14).