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From the Attic to the Cosmos: Myth in the Art of Anselm Kiefer 1973-2007

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FROM THE ATTIC TO THE COSMOS:
MYTHOLOGY IN THE ART OF ANSELM KIEFER 1973-2007

by

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SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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MARY MACNAUGHTON
BILL ANTHES

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

*Our tragedy is that we don't know our beginnings...This is not just a German problem.*¹ –Anselm Kiefer

Mythological stories offer the earliest accounts of humanity's search for beginnings. In the words of Mircea Eliade, "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings.'...Myth, then, is always an account of a 'creation.'"² These stories of creation seek to explain the mysteries of the world; and, in the archaic societies that produced them, myths were regarded as true and sacred accounts.³ The invaluable insights myths provide on human nature remain as true in modern times as they were in the ancient past.

German artist Anselm Kiefer has drawn from this ancient source throughout every decade of his career. In a 2008 interview with Michael Auping, Kiefer explained, "Science has not found our beginnings. The closest we can come to the beginnings are the old myths, the old stories."⁴ Kiefer also treats stories from the Old and New Testament as myths; their original separation was a manmade construct.⁵ Myth is one of many possible lenses from which to study Kiefer. His complex art is inspired by literature, philosophy, history, alchemy, and mythology. However, myth's consistent presence in Kiefer's works makes it an insightful tool through which to analyze his artistic career. His focus gradually

¹ Anselm Kiefer

² Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1998), 6.

³ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 1.

⁴ "Anselm Kiefer on Mythology and Human Experience," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art video, 1:30, October 2006,

<http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/268>

⁵ Eliade, 2.

changed over time, but myth remained a constant in his aim to confront collective memory and establish his own origin.

In 1968, Kiefer began his career with a specific origin in mind—his identity as a German artist born in 1945. This year is also marked by Hitler’s suicide, and subsequently, the end of World War II. Even though the war itself had ended, it left a haunting legacy for Germany. The country’s national identity was as destroyed as its landscape.⁶ Kiefer remembers playing in the aftermath as a child: “I did not have any toys. So, I played in the bricks of ruined buildings around me and with which I built houses.”⁷ His father had been an officer in the war, yet Kiefer was supplied with no explanation for the destroyed state of these buildings. His own beginnings were shrouded by a national “repression” of history. Silence was an epidemic at this time in Germany. No one wanted to talk about the war; no one wanted to remember Hitler. Kiefer recalls, “When, at the end of the 1960s, I became interested in the Nazi era, it was a taboo subject in Germany. No one spoke about it anymore, no more in my house than anywhere else.”⁸ Therefore, he felt the need to confront the taboo in order to understand his own identity as a German, and as an artist, before moving beyond its recent history.

Before committing himself to art, Kiefer studied law at the University of Freiburg. He did not want to become a lawyer, but was interested in “the philosophical aspects of law,” he explained, “People need a context or a content, something to bind them together. This could be stretched to mythologies. Law, mythology, religion – they are all

⁶ Michael Auping, 27

⁷ Michael Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2005), 6.

⁸ Anselm Kiefer, “Pour survivre, je cree un sense, et c’est mon art,” interviewed by Philippe Dagen in *Le Monde* (August 4, 2005), 20.

structures for investigating human character.”⁹ The way that Kiefer approached law illustrates that he was interested in universal themes even before he began making art. He then went on to study with Peter Dreher, an artist and professor at the University of Freiburg, and later showed pieces to German artist Joseph Beuys (1921-1986). Both influenced Kiefer’s understanding of art. He recalls how “[he and Beuys] were both in Germany at a certain time—a time when a dialogue about history and spirituality needed to begin...To evoke the spiritual not only looking at ourselves but into the history of our nation.”¹⁰ Kiefer does not find spirituality unique to himself and Beuys; he finds all artists to be naturally spiritual because they are always “searching for new beginnings.”¹¹ However, his spirituality seems quite unique, and even extreme. In 1966, Kiefer spent three weeks living in a cell of the Le Corbusier (1887-1965) designed monastery of La Tourette. What did he do for those three weeks? Kiefer recalls, “just thinking quietly—about the larger questions.”¹² These larger spiritual questions would continue to captivate him throughout his career.

The taboo surrounding German history was at odds with Kiefer’s need to understand his beginnings. For this reason, the spirituality in his earlier work is often overshadowed by its subject. At a time when Germany wanted to forget its history, to separate itself from World War II and its Nazi past, Kiefer’s art did the opposite. In 1969, he presented a series of photographs entitled *Occupations*. It is one of his earliest and most controversial works. These photographs show Kiefer performing the Nazi

⁹ Anselm Kiefer, “Heaven Is an Idea: An Interview with Anselm Kiefer,” (interviewed by Michael Auping) in *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth* (London: Prestel, 2005), 167.

¹⁰ Anselm Kiefer, Auping interview, 171.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Auping, *Heaven and Earth*, 29.

salute in various locations throughout Europe. Because the Nazi's laid claim to Roman history, Kiefer chose sites in Italy and France associated with Roman history to stage his salute.¹³

Occupations remains a confusing piece of conceptual art. Kiefer explained his motive for this series, stating: "I do not identify with Nero or Hitler, but I have to reenact what they did just a little bit in order to understand the madness. That is why I make these attempts to become a fascist."¹⁴ Scholars have differing opinions on the goal and success of *Occupations*. Lisa Saltzman argues that Kiefer's series was negotiating the loss of national and self-identity in Germany at the time. She explains that Kiefer "took up the paternal legacy and the role of the father as a means of negotiating his own identity in relation to history."¹⁵ His personal identity in relation to history is certainly of utmost importance to Kiefer. The shock value of this series, and Kiefer's explanation, were presumably intentional. He wanted people to engage in discussion. He wanted them to remember the past. Whether or not this was appropriate is controversial.

The controversy surrounding his early works is at fault for the often incomplete, incorrect, or narrow analyses scholars provide on Kiefer. Two recently published exhibition catalogues set out to correct this. In the preface to *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Places*, Markus Bruderlin states: "It is therefore appropriate to reconsider the earlier phases of Kiefer's career in the context of his work as a whole; and this exhibition

¹³ Dora Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 132.

¹⁴ Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing*, 132.

¹⁵ Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47.

sets out to make a specific contribution to that reappraisal.”¹⁶ Michael Auping’s, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, further contributes to the reappraisal of Kiefer’s early works. He does so through the thematic lens of “heaven and earth,” which runs through Kiefer’s body of work.

This thesis will look back on Kiefer’s work through the theme of mythology in an effort to re-evaluate his earlier art within the context of his works since 1990. From the 1970s to the present, Kiefer has explored selected myths from German, Christian, Greek, Judaic, and Egyptian culture to find links between personal and universal human experience. We begin by examining Kiefer’s controversial Attic Paintings of 1973. These intimate and personal works draw from German and Christian mythology. From this point, we will analyze three selected works from the 1980s: *Icarus—March Sand*, *Aaron*, and *Osiris and Isis*. These paintings serve to show how Kiefer expanded his mythic sources to that of Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian cultures. Following this discussion, we will look at two paintings from the 1990s—*Falling Stars* and *Man Under Pyramid*. In both works, Kiefer focused on the cosmos to present man’s relationship with terrestrial and heavenly realms. Lastly, his 2007 permanent installation at the Louvre Museum will serve to illustrate how he presented his own cultivated, personal mythology under the stars. The 1990s mark Kiefer’s broadest expansion yet; in a sense, he went from “the attic to the universe”—the microcosm to the macrocosm—over the course of three decades. The conclusion compares his Louvre installation, which Kiefer calls a self-portrait, to his Attic Paintings thirty-five years prior.

¹⁶ Markus Bruderlin, *Anselm Kiefer: Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001*, Exh. cat. (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 9.

In 1971, Kiefer moved to Germany's Oden Forest; it is the setting for many German myths. He lived in a former schoolhouse and converted its attic into his studio. The wooden attic served as the setting for Kiefer's early paintings, and in his words, "a place to teach myself history."¹⁷ In these works, Kiefer drew from Christian stories and German myths to recall, and re-contextualize, recent Germany history. Chapter one will look closely at two of these paintings, *Nothung* and *Quaternity* (1973). The space of an attic literally serves as a place to store away forgotten things; thus, it is ironic that Kiefer confronted Germany's repressed history in this space. But, the attic is also a common literary symbol for the unconscious. These three works show how Kiefer used mythology to bring German history into the forefront of his conscious. In addition, this chapter will examine a particular watercolor *My Father Promised Me a Sword* (1974), which Kiefer produced after a trip to North Cape, Norway. This trip is significant because Norse mythology is the root of Germanic myths; and this journey reveals Kiefer's desire to travel to the source of something—another type of origin. The Attic Paintings and related watercolor, *My Father Promised Me a Sword*, are points of departure for his later work.

In order to address topics beyond recent German history, Kiefer had to first understand his own origin as a German artist born in 1945. He gained understanding of his beginnings in the Attic paintings; and subsequently, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, broadened his mythological scope. Chapter two will examine his interest in Greek, Judaic and Egyptian myths, which inspired new imagery and ideas. In *Icarus—March Sand* (1981), Kiefer commented on German national identity and the nature of history by

¹⁷ Anselm Kiefer quote, found in: Michael Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 35.

juxtaposing the Greek myth of Icarus against a historical German territory. To represent Icarus, he used the symbol of a palette with wings. This symbol is important for Kiefer; it is present in a few works prior to *Icarus—March Sand*, and numerous works since.

Over four decades of painting, Kiefer has presented a unique view on history; he finds human history inextricably bound to nature and natural history. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he formed an artistic process that mirrored his view on history. Kiefer built up canvases and added layers of natural material to their surfaces. Scholars call this period his breakthrough into artistic maturity. These canvases seem to blur the line between painting and sculpture, just as their content does not distinguish between ancient, recent, or present time. The cultures that Kiefer drew from expanded during this time, indicating that there may be a link between his incorporation of non-Germanic mythologies and his mature style. The link between Kiefer's broader mythological base and his mature style underscores the importance of mythology in his developmental process.

Throughout the 1980s, by looking to other areas of world myth, Kiefer continued to find new ways of commenting on modern existence and history. He explored Judaic mythology in a series of landscape paintings, such as *Aaron* (1984). In the Old Testament, Aaron is Moses' imperfect brother who crafted the infamous Golden Calf. Kiefer re-contextualized this myth to resonate both universally and personal. The imperfect nature of Aaron, in contrast to Moses, broadly relates to the qualities in all people. Furthermore, Aaron, as the sculptor of the controversial false idol—the Golden Calf—is similar to Kiefer, whose early works were, and continue to be, a source of controversy. On one level, *Aaron* can be read as a response to Theodore Adorno's

statement, “After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric.”¹⁸ Kiefer still draws from Judaic mythology and the teachings of the Kabala in his most recent works.

In 1987, Kiefer completed *Osiris and Isis*, whose title references Egyptian mythology. Osiris is the Egyptian god of the dead who was tragically murdered and dismembered by his own brother. The ancient story illustrates human capacity for evil—even to our own kin—which forces us to recall the unspeakable evil of the Holocaust. While on this level the work relates to German history, Kiefer was also using the myth to comment on nuclear energy.¹⁹ Isis attempted to resurrect her husband, Osiris, by fusing his body parts together; nuclear energy is created through fusion and fission of atoms.

Kiefer’s art over the past four decades presents a fusion of past and present, myth and history, personal and universal. The physicality of his works is equally dense; he often incorporates lead, copper, ash, straw and other natural materials atop thick layers of paint. What is his goal? He wants to establish origin. Initially, the origin in question is his identity in a post-war Germany. It was the natural starting point, but Kiefer cautions his viewers: “We should also not forget the difference between what first motivated me and the work that is the result.”²⁰ The work that is a result grapples with the origin of humanity. And, throughout his career, he has used selected myths to visually formulate a cohesive, non-scientific view of “the beginning.”

Since 1990, Kiefer has used cosmic imagery to deal with existential questions on the origins of man, the meaning of life, and the role of “heaven”. In his still ongoing

¹⁸ Lisa Saltzman

¹⁹ Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, Exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1987), 70.

²⁰ Anselm Kiefer, interview by Michael Auping in *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 174.

cosmic series, he turns his attention to humanity's earliest beginnings in the stars. Chapter three explores the personal mythology Kiefer presents in these works. The discussion is centered around three pieces: *Falling Stars* (1995), *Man Under a Pyramid* (1996), and his Louvre installation—*Athanor, Danae, and Hortus Conclusus* (2007). He was drawn to the theories of Robert Fludd (1574-1637), which establish a relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Each work depicts a man lying on the ground, gazing at the universe above. Clearly, the spirituality Kiefer possessed in the monastery of La Tourette never left him; it has returned to the forefront twenty-four years later. It seems as though Kiefer had to establish his personal origin, within the context of myth and German history, in order return to “larger questions” that first captivated him.

Chapter One: *Beginnings In The Attic*

*After the Second World War, as a matter of principle, having an interest in mythology was looked upon with suspicion. It became clear just how dangerous it could be for politicians to make use of myths and to abuse and interpret them as justifications and templates for behavior. But is it not even more dangerous to bury the myths in the collective subconscious, so to speak, rather than to continue working on them in a way that everyone can see?*²¹ –Anselm Kiefer

Anselm Kiefer's investigations of mythology began in the sparse, wooden attic of a former schoolhouse—"between heaven and earth." Here, he painted what Markus Bruderlin calls, "...ten or so masterworks that laid the foundations of his pictorial universe."²² His wooden Attic Studio is the ironically plain setting in each of these large-scale paintings from 1973. In them, Kiefer addressed recent German history through Germanic and Christian myths in order to understand his identity—both as a German, and an artist. In many ways, these early works show Kiefer grappling with the famous question posed by Marguerite Duras after World War II: "Comment etre encore un Allemand?"²³ By placing the subjects of National Socialism, Hitler, and World War II alongside ancient myths, Kiefer was able to talk about these difficult topics and situate them in a larger context. However, there exists a double meaning in his artistic choices, as Kiefer chose to illustrate several of the same myths that Hitler had elevated throughout Germany.²⁴ Because of the controversy surrounding these works and his earlier *Occupations*, the meaning and role of the Attic Paintings in Kiefer's career has been

²¹ Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem* (London: Prestel, 2010), 175.

²² Markus Bruderlin, "Attic Paintings 1973" in *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001*, 37.

²³ Marguerite Duras, as quoted in: Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

²⁴ Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1987), 26.

misinterpreted by scholars. Therefore, in light of his recent contributions to the art world, now is an appropriate time to re-assess his earliest works. This chapter will re-examine Kiefer's Attic Paintings, specifically *Nothung* and *Quaternity*, along with his 1974 watercolor, *My Father Promised Me a Sword*, in light of Kiefer's works since approximately 1990.

For Kiefer, the physical source of a particular mythology is very important. It is as if the artist feels the need to place himself at the origin of these creation stories. The Oden Forest that surrounded his Attic Studio is known as the setting for many German myths. In this way, the forest is his personal origin. His Attic Paintings draw from these myths and reference the tree filled forest. In 1974, Kiefer furthered his understanding of German myths when he traveled to North Cape, Norway.²⁵ Through this trip, he sought to probe the roots of German mythology, which are held in Norse mythology. Throughout his travels, Kiefer took Polaroid photos of his surroundings, which later served as his inspiration for a book of watercolors entitled, *Erotic im Fernen Osten: Transitions From Cool to Warm*.²⁶ In one of these watercolor, *My Father Promised Me a Sword* (1974), Kiefer placed the mythic, German sword Nothung at its "source" in an icy, Nordic landscape. We see the same sword piercing the floorboards of his attic in *Nothung* (1973).

Kiefer's interest in myth began as an effort to understand his identity as a German. However, in the words of Michael Auping, "This early period in the development of Kiefer's art has to some extent become obscured behind the controversy

²⁵ Anselm Kiefer, *A Book by Anselm Kiefer* (Boston: George Braziller Inc. and The Museum of Fine Arts, 1988), 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

that accompanied the artist's *Occupations* series of the early 1970s."²⁷ The controversy surrounding *Occupations* extended to his Attic Paintings. Critics accused Kiefer "...of depicting Nazism 'not in order to denounce it, but in order to joyfully perpetuate it.'"²⁸ However, his work since the 1970s renders these accusations incorrect.

Kiefer's intent and personal discovery in his early works acted as a catalyst that shaped the direction of his art since this point. Through allusions to mythology, he was simultaneously addressing WWII and discovering what it meant to be a German artist after its devastation. Looking back on this period of his career, Kiefer said: "I was interested in the possibility of going back, not just through German law and history, but through the history of the concept of spirituality."²⁹ Thus, he went back to the beginning by drawing upon German and Christian myths.

Born in 1945 in Donaueschingen, just months after Hitler's suicide and the end of WWII, Kiefer grew up in a Germany of ruins where no one wanted to address the horrors of WWII, Hitler, and the Holocaust. Even his father, who had been an officer in the war, never mentioned it in his home.³⁰ In the words of Andrea Lauterwein, "[Kiefer] therefore belonged to the 'second generation', who grew up in a climate of simultaneous amnesia and guilt, with no personal experience or memory of the Nazi regime."³¹

Lauterwein continues, describing the 'first generation' as:

...a nation of fallen heroes, who wanted only to forget as quickly as possible their period of collective hypnosis. The institutions of the Federal Republic [of Germany] granted a kind of amnesty to the people, and took

²⁷ Michael Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 33.

²⁸ Andrea Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer/Paul Celan: Myth, Mourning and Memory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 29.

²⁹ Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 28.

³⁰ Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer*, 26.

³¹ Lauterwein, 23.

*on complete responsibility for the past, but they also imposed a new identity which wanted to cut all ties with German tradition and the Nazi past...as a result, history was also blocked off from family discourse, and there was no dialogue between the generations.*³²

The lack of direct information on the German past was to be a major obstacle for Kiefer and other ‘second generation’ Germans. Lauterwein illuminates on the consequences of this “memory gap,” stating that “It not only hindered the articulation of moral responsibility, but it also prevented the vague sense of collective guilt from being transformed into individual responsibility.”³³ Kiefer’s Attic Painting’s struggle with the cultural divide described by Lauterwin; it forced him to find a new way of remembering the past through myth to establish his “hidden” origin.

There are many possible themes to trace in Kiefer’s art; he draws from mythology, literature, poetry, history, and philosophy to form his complex web of visual imagery. However, the nature of mythology, and its consistent presence in every period of Kiefer’s art, make it an insightful theme through which to trace his artistic evolution from 1973 to 2007. Kiefer’s exploration of human character through mythology began around 1970.³⁴ He made watercolors with cosmic titles such as, *Every Human Being Stands Beneath His Own Dome of Heaven* (1970), which foreshadow his later interest in the cosmos as a heaven. In 1973, he produced his first series of *paintings*—the Attic Paintings—that directly draw from German and Christian myths. Furthermore, through his 1974 trip to North Cape, Norway, Kiefer sought to probe the roots of these German

³² Lauterwein, 23.

³³ Lauterwein, 24.

³⁴ Rosenthal, 16.

myths which lie in Norse mythology.³⁵ His intent for traveling to North Cape illustrates his need to see the physical source that produced the mythology in question. He continues this pattern of “occupying” the physical location of a mythological source throughout the next three decades of his career.

A deeply rooted connection exists between attributes of a culture and their mythology. Rafael Lopez-Pedraza illuminates the implications of this connection between Germans and Germanic myths in *Anselm Kiefer*. Using Carl Jung’s *Essays on Contemporary Events*, Lopez-Pedraza describes a “mythology of warriors”³⁶ capable of leading to “...sudden states of possession,”³⁷ which places its emphasis not on reflection, but on heroic death.³⁸ The separation between heroes and gods is not as distinct as it is in the mythologies of other cultures.³⁹ One is forced to question how these qualities of German mythology reveal attributes of the German psyche. Jung’s three essays propose an answer to this question. He stated that there is a “Wotanic biological factor” evident in the characteristics of the German people.⁴⁰ The king of the gods, Wotan, is a frenzied, greed driven god who is fated to fall from supremacy, yet fights this at all costs. By labeling this factor biological, Jung is making the connection between the qualities of Wotan and the qualities of Germans concrete and inevitable, as if they are an inborn time bomb.

³⁵ Anselm Kiefer, *A Book by Anselm Kiefer* (Boston: George Braziller Inc. and The Museum of Fine Arts, 1988), 4.

³⁶ Rafael Lopez-Pedraza, *Anselm Kiefer: The Psychology of “After the Catastrophe”* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1996), 10.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lopez-Pedraza, 11.

³⁹ John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-46.

⁴⁰ Lopez-Pedraza, 29.

Kiefer had read Jung's writings, a connection that is made evident by his 1973 painting *Quaternity*. The title of the piece refers to Jung's claim of a fourth evil side to the Holy Trinity necessary for completeness in religion.⁴¹ Furthermore, Kiefer is also in agreement with the argument that a culture's mythological fables simultaneously explain and infiltrate the psychological makeup of the people belonging to that culture. "In the 1973 series of attics," Lauterwein explains, "[Kiefer] focuses on the destructiveness of Germanic myth as a foundation for the heroic ideology of racial purity."⁴² German Christianity too, was linked to racial "purity."⁴³

Kiefer's painting, *Nothung*, refers to the German hero myth of Siegfried, which comes from the German *Nibelungenlied* and holds its roots in Norse tales of the *Edda*.⁴⁴ References to the story of Siegfried reoccur throughout his work; therefore, the story must be properly explained in order to further understand his art. According to the myth, Siegfried was the son of Siegmund and the grandson Wotan, but was raised by the dwarf Mime after the death of his parents. He was born in underground world of the Nibelung, a sort of alchemical dwarf people who worked as miners and metalworkers. Their king, Albreich, had been in possession of the Ring being guarded by the dragon, Fafner. The Ring was the greatest treasure on earth; it gave its owner domain over the world and the power to defeat even Wotan.

Wotan was the one eyed king of the gods who gave up his eye in exchange for a drink from the fountain of wisdom. As a result, he knew of the inevitable Twilight of the Gods, a day when his rule over the universe would come to an end. Siegfried was the

⁴¹ Lopez-Pedraza, 30.

⁴² Lauterwein, 57.

⁴³ Lauterwein, 44.

⁴⁴ Rosenthal, 42.

prophesized Walsung⁴⁵ who would cause the Twilight of the Gods by re-forging the sword Nothung, (given to his father by Wotan and later shattered by Wotan), and recovering the Ring. Upon learning his destiny, Siegfried, who knew no fear, set out to accomplish his prophesized mission and did so with ease. He placed the Ring on his finger, and through tasting the blood of the slain Fafner, which stained Nothung, gained the ability to understand the song of the birds. However, he was not aware that Alberich had placed a curse upon the Ring, fating any wearer besides himself to die from the hands of another.

The birds told Siegfried of two things: Mime's evil intentions and a valkyrie named Brünnhilde who was put to sleep by Wotan, her father, for showing compassion to Siegfried's mother. He killed Mime with the sword and then strode through the ring of fire surrounding the sleeping valkyrie, and awoke her with a kiss. He removed her armor and she became mortal. As a promise of his love and eventual return for her, Siegfried gave Brünnhilde the Ring. Tragedy strikes and Alberich's curse on the Ring is fulfilled when Siegfried is tricked by a potion into marrying another woman and killed as a result of Brünnhilde's jealousy. If she could not have him, no one would.⁴⁶

The myth is well known for its place in Richard Wagner's opera, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Wagner's portrayal of Siegfried in the myth became Hitler's celebrated model for the hero, a man obsessed with the lure of gold.⁴⁷ Therefore, by the time Kiefer completed *Nothung* in 1973, the mythic reference would have recalled an uncomfortable

⁴⁵ Meaning "world hero"

⁴⁶ Lindow, 42-46.

⁴⁷ Lopez-Pedraza, 40.

association with Hitler's propaganda in Germany.⁴⁸ He also expects his viewers to be well versed in the realms of history, theology, and myth.⁴⁹ Kiefer does not need to render horrific war-images to force remembrance. The placement of the bloody sword in the sparse, wooden attic, along with the inscriptions "Notung!"⁵⁰ and "My father promised me a sword"⁵¹ are all of the clues necessary for the viewer to make his or her own connections. Kiefer wants his audience to think and draw their own conclusions from the material he presents.

Nothing is theatrically large in size, measuring 118^{1/8} by 170 inches, and its materials consist of oil and charcoal on burlap, with oil and charcoal on cardboard. When asked if the monumental scale of many of his works is necessary, Kiefer responded: "No, it is only my temperament. Scale is completely unimportant."⁵² However, if his scale is synonymous with his temperament, then scale is not unimportant at all. Mark Rosenthal argues that the scale of Kiefer's work from 1973 onwards was directly tied to the large and spectacular element of Wagner's operas.⁵³ It is also interesting to note that his temperament led him to create a massive depiction of a typically introverted and personal space. The size of his works could then be equated to the universality of their message, as well as Kiefer's value on the importance of his works intent. He was not simply creating art for arts sake; he was creating art driven by a

⁴⁸ Rosenthal, 40-41.

⁴⁹ Matthew Biro, *Anselm Kiefer and the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 92.

⁵⁰ Another spelling of "Nothung."

⁵¹ Translated from the German text

⁵² From a 2010 interview with Sir Normand Rosenthal, unable to find original source

⁵³ Rosenthal, 26

necessity to address the taboo subjects of Hitler, WWII and the Holocaust. *Nothung* embodies this struggle.

The setting for *Nothung* is Kiefer's studio.⁵⁴ It is a wooden attic space that has seemingly been stripped of its interior; all that is left are his words, the structures' framework and the sword that pierces the right foreground. The wooden floorboards come out at the viewer, beckoning us forward into the secret space Kiefer has provided. His detailed rendering of pattern in the wood intends to show our inseparable relationship to the past. The wood is a metaphor used to illuminate how human history and natural history, in this case the growth of trees, are a part of the present.⁵⁵ Just as the trees are a part of the present, the bloodied sword and the dark legacy it recalls are a part Germany's, the German psyche's, and Kiefer's own present.

Both the spaces of attic and artists' studio are very personal areas. The attic is traditionally a symbol for the subconscious. Kiefer is acknowledging his place as a German in the collective history of the nation by figuratively piercing his own subconscious with the indestructible sword. He is inviting the viewer into the personal, complex realm of his mind, asking us to join him in discovering the bloodied sword that penetrates the rooms' interior. This dichotomy between the personal and the universal in Kiefer's art parallels the very nature of mythology—it is universally applicable, yet simultaneously, or perhaps as a result, remains personally relevant.

The inscription, "Notung!," above the sword entices the viewer forward even more, appearing as an excitedly scribbled exclamation of discovery. The blood on the

⁵⁴ Rosenthal, 22

⁵⁵ John C. Gilmour, *Fire on the Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 72.

sword refers to the bloodshed brought on by directly by greed, and indirectly through folly and evil, in the myth of Siegfried. At the same time, the stained sword of Nothung brings to mind the blood that was shed during WWII, uniting myth and history as one.⁵⁶ In effect, that connection evokes feelings of guilt and/or reflection in the viewer, forcing a remembrance of Germany's recent history. The blood is also representative of Kiefer's struggle to understand his identity as a German post WWII, evidenced by the sword stabbed in the studio attic of his mind. Wotan is considered the "father figure" of Germany.⁵⁷ Therefore, he too is inheriting Germany's history and "Wotanic biological factor" that comes with its mythology, and he shows this by placing the sword in his attic studio. Nothung is figuratively stabbing his mind; he feels a responsibility as an artist to address the past. Kiefer is using the myth as a tool of reflection in *Nothung*, placing German history in a larger context that transcends time and place.

The story of Siegfried is alluded to in several of Kiefer's other works. Another 1973 painting, *Germany's Spiritual Heroes*, connects key figures in German history to the cyclical nature of the rise and fall of gods in Wagner's *Ring* operas.⁵⁸ The myth also appears in a series entitled *Siegfried's Difficult Way to Brünnhilde* (1977), in a painting of the same title from 1980, and in the work *Grane* (1983), whose title refers to Brünnhilde's horse. *Nothung* foreshadowed the creation of *My Father Promised Me a Sword*, which depicts the same sword in a different setting. This work will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

⁵⁶ Because the myth had been re-popularized by Hitler, as previously mentioned.

⁵⁷ Lindow, 41.

⁵⁸ Biro, 112.

In the same way that *Nothung* seems to predict *My Father Promised Me a Sword*, Kiefer's 1973 work, *Resurrexit*, foretells his creation of *Quaternity* (1973). In the two latter works, Kiefer's allusions shift from Germanic myth to Christian theology. *Resurrexit* depicts a snake slithering through a desolate German forest. The symbol of the snake is universally regarded as a representation of evil. "Evil" looks up towards the top of the canvas where precarious wooden steps lead to a tiny door. It is the door to Kiefer's studio attic, placed above the plane of the forest and snake on a separate, but attached canvas. This arrangement makes it appear as though the snake is being invited in.

In *Quaternity*, the snake has achieved his goal of entry. The work measures 118^{1/8} by 171 inches and is constructed from charcoal and oil on burlap. Again, the scale of the painting is massive, inviting and engulfing the viewer inside through his use of tilted perspective. Kiefer positions the snake and three small fires on the floorboards of the secretive room of his subconscious—the same room seen representing the realm of his own mind in *Nothung*. However, *Quaternity* is illustrating the existence of pure evil through Christian iconography. In German, Kiefer labeled his four characters: the fires which burn atop the wood represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who make up the Holy Trinity in Christian theology. The snake is labeled "Satan." The word "Quaternity" is written in the lower left corner, echoing the title of the work.

Kiefer's script serves to give his audience the context necessary to connect the work to Carl Jung's idea of the quaternity, which holds its roots in a fourth century

debate over the role and existence of Satan.⁵⁹ In Jung's 1952 book, *Answer to Job*, he claimed that a fourth, evil side must exist to complete the Holy Trinity in order to explain unspeakable evil.⁶⁰ He referred to this side as God's shadow.⁶¹ Kiefer acknowledges this by placing the snake in a shadowy corner of the attic, highlighting its difference from the bright burning fires representative of the trinity. The equidistant arrangement of his props exude balance and completeness, supporting Jung's claim for the necessity of a fourth element. It is this balance that keeps the three little fires from engulfing their wooden surrounding.

Kiefer's studio attic setting for depicting the idea of quaternity holds three distinct levels of significance. The attention to wood detail recalls the forests of Germany—a stage for many German myths.⁶² The attic setting is a place where time does not exist.⁶³ It is a place where ideas can be tested and, in the case of *Quaternity*, the nature of evil can be explored in the private canals of the mind. He brought the Holy Trinity and Satan outside of their associated domains of heaven and hell by placing them in this room. Through this relocation, Kiefer is connecting Christian ideological symbols of pure good and pure evil to the reality of good and evil on Earth. In an attempt to reconcile how the two can coexist in the same realm, he is presenting the inevitability and necessity of their coexistence. Good and evil will always be here. But for Kiefer, in order to rebuild after evils' destruction one must first acknowledge the evil. By presenting grand themes of folly, evil and redemption throughout myth and history in a barren, private space, he is

⁵⁹ Michael Auping, *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110* (Fort Worth: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2002) 89.

⁶⁰ Auping, *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110*, 90.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Auping, *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110*, 90-91.

⁶³ Rosenthal, 22.

showing the viewer his own process of discovery. It may have been for Kiefer to stage these ideas there in order to present his own progression understanding before moving on to grander settings and universal explorations of human nature.

Quaternity forces the viewer to consider that the Holy Trinity would not exist without Satan, and vice versa. They are joined in an inseparable foursome. Furthermore, Kiefer's revisitation of Germany's past, along with the snakes' presence in his rendered studio, make it possible for the viewer to associate the snake with Hitler.⁶⁴ Whether this association was intended by the artist is not important. For, the fact remains that this association has been made thereby accomplishing Kiefer's goal of inspiring reflection. The connection of Hitler to the snake is in line with Kiefer's method of using universal truths inherent in mythological and religious tales to contextualize recent history. By situating the scene in his studio attic, Kiefer was telling viewers his belief system—that it is necessary to explore themes that most preferred to “store in the attic” in order to be a German artist after WWII.

After the acknowledgement of history, redemption and rebuilding are possible. For Kiefer, this rebuilding refers to the literal reconstruction of a national identity in Germany. During the early 1970s, he felt a burden of responsibility as an artist to aid in this national process. In a series of 1973 works, *Parsifal I*, *Parsifal II*, *Parsifal III*, and *Parsifal III*, Kiefer used the German myth of Parsifal as a vehicle to explore redemption. The myth holds its roots in the legend of the Holy Grail. The Parsifal story was the basis for Wagner's last opera of the same title.⁶⁵ The massive scale works are again set inside of the wooden attic studio Kiefer used during that time. Each of these works depict a

⁶⁴ Auping, *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110*, 91-92.

⁶⁵ Lopez-Pedraza, 34.

similarly sparse, stage-like setting containing props used to symbolize stages in the story of Parsifal. While the works do not appear more positive in tone or setting than *Nothung* and *Quaternity*, his attention to this myth of redemption illuminates the possibility for rebuilding after reflection more directly.

After 1974, the settings in his art shifted from the studio attic of his home to German landscapes and Neo-classical architecture.⁶⁶ Artistic choices such as setting are not accidental for Kiefer. Whatever his reason may have been, his move from the attic displays a new level of confidence. It is possible that the change in environment signified a small personal victory for the artist. Perhaps he felt successful in bringing the horrors of WWII out from the realm of subconscious “attic space” and into the public’s greater consciousness. His change in setting could also symbolize the completion of his first phase in understanding the past he has inherited as a German artist.

It is important to note that this stylistic change in location directly follows Kiefer’s 1974 journey to North Cape, Norway. Through traveling to North Cape, he sought to deepen his understanding of German myths by exploring their roots in Norse tales.⁶⁷ Throughout his travels, Kiefer took Polaroid photos of his surroundings, which later served as his inspiration for a book of watercolors entitled *Erotic im Fernen Osten: Transitions From Cool to Warm*.⁶⁸ This artist book, completed in 1977 and later published as *A Book by Anselm Kiefer* in 1988, consists of a series of 65 watercolors which gradually shift from cool toned landscapes to warm abstract renderings of the female figure.

⁶⁶ Rosenthal, 52.

⁶⁷ Kiefer, *A Book by Anselm Kiefer* (from the introduction by Theodore Stebbins Jr. and Susan Cragg Ricci), 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

In a 2004 interview, Kiefer stated: “The book, the idea of a book or the image of a book, is a symbol of learning, of transmitting knowledge.. I make my own books to find my way through the old stories.”⁶⁹ Therefore, his path-finding in Norway can be viewed as a liminal journey following Arnold van Gennep’s rites of passage: separation, transition, and reincorporation. First, Kiefer left his home in search for a furthered understanding of his heritage through myth. Then, he began creating a book of watercolors literally exploring transition in its title and content. Once he returned to Germany, he reincorporated what he discovered into his artistic pursuits. This is evidenced by the new settings of subsequently produced works.

One watercolor work in particular, *My Father Promised Me a Sword* (1974), is further indication that Kiefer discovered what he was looking for on his journey.⁷⁰ The work is derived from a watercolor landscape in *Erotic im Fernen Osten: Transitions From Cool to Warm*. The title refers to Kiefer’s inscription in *Nothung*, painted one year earlier. It contains the same sword, which is again the only prop used to refer to the myth of Siegfried. However, the sword is now being presented at its source, piercing the cliff of the icy Norwegian landscape. It appears as an exclamation of discovery for Kiefer. The watercolor also serves as further proof of the purpose and importance that lay in his trip. His travels and subsequent work, *My Father Promised Me a Sword*, display a large step in his personal process towards understanding recent German past and his own identity as a German born in “year zero.” He found a context for himself in North Cape; a context which allowed for his continuing progression as an artist.

⁶⁹ Auping, *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110*, 8.

⁷⁰ Lopez-Pedraza, 17.

For Kiefer, destruction is not completely bleak, for it offers the opportunity for rebirth. Like the myth of the Phoenix, he is optimistic about rebirth, as long the past is not forgotten. In this case it is the reconstruction of a German national identity after WWII; however, in order to create new life after death, one first has to acknowledge the devastation. Through his use of mythic stories in the early 1970s that contextualize and bind humanity, Kiefer is forcing the divided nation of Germany to do so. In a 1976 autobiography of sorts, in which Kiefer lists words, phrases and milestones, the last line reads, “The essential is not yet done.”⁷¹ Indeed this was the case, as his subject matter follows a progression from specifically German towards the universal. As his artistic goals continued to broaden and change over 40 years, mythological stories remained a constant medium for Kiefer to communicate his ideas.

⁷¹ Rosenthal, 39.

Chapter Two: *Expanding Mythologies in the 1980s*

*Of course ancient culture is relevant. We come from somewhere. [Our] movement isn't just into the future, it's into the past and into the future at the same time.*⁷² –Anselm Kiefer

Kiefer's interest in the past, from ancient history to recent, has permeated his art since he first began his career in the late 1960s. While some scholars criticize this obsession, he clearly states the reason for his need to revisit history. For Kiefer, the process of art making is highly personal; the past is not an isolated event, it is a continuing part of the present. His works present an ongoing dialogue with history in search for meaning. As John Gilmour states, "Kiefer makes a serious use of the past because he believes... that the past helps to constitute what we are."⁷³ His art appears to be originally driven by the isolation associated with modernity and the widespread destruction of WWII.

Throughout Kiefer's career, he uses mythology, arguable the most ancient moral code, to find meaning in a modern world. His engagement with myth began in the early 1970s as a way to indirectly address the legacy of Nazism. During this period, he focused on Germanic and Christian myth's of folly and evil; the same myths that had been central for Richard Wagner and later perverted by Adolf Hitler for the advancement of Nazism.⁷⁴ Kiefer placed these events in a larger context of myth in order to address modern German history the way he saw fit. In the early 1980s, Kiefer turned his attention away from strictly Germanic myth in an effort to find new contexts for modern

⁷² Anselm Kiefer spoke these words in a public discussion with curator Sir Norman Rosenthal in 2010.

⁷³ John C. Gilmour, , *Fire on the Earth: Anselm Kiefer and the Postmodern World*, 136.

⁷⁴ Gilmour, 24.

existence and history. Kiefer still used his chosen myths to address Germany by commenting on national identity; however, his search for meaning was broadening beyond strictly Germany and moving towards universal questions of human nature, existence, and death. For, shortly after he broadened his mythological base, he also expanded his thematic focus in cosmic works which address heaven, death, and human existence in our world.

Kiefer's use of mythology reveals that his ultimate goal was not transcendence for Germany, as some scholars find it to be. His works present an enduring investigation of our modern world through mythology in order to contradict the post-Enlightenment view of history as a chronological narrative.⁷⁵ Since Kiefer's art is deeply personal, it is natural that he began his exploration with the modern catastrophe of recent German history because he is a German born in "year zero." Germany's drive to forget motivated Kiefer to confront the past by presenting a spiritual re-telling of history. This motivation should not be misconstrued as the desire to redeem Germany through art.

This chapter will examine three paintings from the early to mid 1980s in order to argue that his turn towards outside mythologies acted as a catalyst for his later contemplations on the spirit, cosmos, and human nature. Beginning most prominently in the early 80s, Kiefer's art explored human character and German identity through myths of Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian culture. At this time, he still exhibited a preoccupation with his nation's history, but broadened the scope with which he did so by drawing on non-Germanic myths. Kiefer continued referencing German myths as he had in the 1970s. For example, his 1983 painting, *The Norns*, presents the three fates of German

⁷⁵ Gilmour, 134.

mythology within the interior of a building by Nazi celebrated architect, Albert Speer.⁷⁶ It is important to note that he did not abandon use of German myths during this time, but these works will not be examined in this chapter.

This an essential period to study because his exploration of non-Germanic myths impacted the direction of his later work in style and content. Because Kiefer's works from approximately the 1990's to the present illustrate the inseparable relationship between human life and the earth, it is necessary to examine how he uses myth and style in this period to show the inseparable relationship between past and present. For Kiefer, each of these ideas are bound together to form the concept of time as a circle.⁷⁷ His investigations of myths during this period aided him in visually presenting this.

While scholars such as Rosenthal and Biro have made insightful analyses of Kiefer's 1980s works, the importance and effect of this period on his future development has not been sufficiently examined. They have not paid enough attention to his then newly emerging fascination with myths from various cultures, and what Kiefer meant by incorporating them. Many view his body of work in two distinct phases. They separate his paintings which address German history from his later paintings which explore the relationship between humanity and natural history. This separation is problematic and does not allow for a more complete understanding of the works. Instead of two distinct parts, let us view the gradual transitions in his representation and examine *how* he moves away from specifically German themes. His interest and examination of a wide range of

⁷⁶ For a discussion of these works, see: Christopher Ransmayr, Markus Bruderlin, Mark Rosenthal, and Katharina Schmidt, *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 45.

⁷⁷ Gilmour, 134.

mythologies allowed for Kiefer's contemplations on universal human nature, which appear in his works starting in 1985, and more prominently in the 1990s to the present.

The concepts of destruction, renewal, and transcendence are primary interests for Kiefer. Is destruction necessary for rebuilding, and can one transcend the past? Mythology offers symbols and allegories for him to explore these themes, which appear in three selected works: *Icarus—March Sand* (1981), *Aaron* (1984-1985), and *Osiris and Isis* (1985-1987). Although these paintings make up only a small portion of his work in this decade, they illustrate how Kiefer used mythic fables from three cultures to visually and ideologically connect the past with the present. He drew from Greek myth in the work *Icarus—March Sand*, in which the tragic figure of Icarus is symbolically presented as a winged palette atop a German landscape. The work uses ancient mythology to comment on postwar national identity and his own limits as an artist. After traveling to Jerusalem, he showed a fascination with the history and culture surrounding the holy land. He produced works such as *Aaron*, *Jerusalem*, and *Departure From Egypt*, which are grounded in stories from the Old Testament. Lastly, *Osiris and Isis* draws on Egyptian mythology to present Kiefer's

In addition, the 1980s marked a time of renewed desire in Germany for a national identity.⁷⁸ This desire was reflected in a turn to conservative politics, discussions of erecting national monuments, and the Historikerstreit debate, which attempted to assign blame for the holocaust.⁷⁹ These phenomena were efforts to rebuild German national

⁷⁸ Andreas Huyssens, "Anselm Kiefer: The Terror of History, The Temptation of Myth" *October* (Spring, 1989): 28.

⁷⁹ Huyssens, 29.

pride by separating the nation's present from its dark past.⁸⁰ Although discussion within Germany was more apparent in this time, the Holocaust was only 35 years behind and remained an uncomfortable subject. Kiefer, perhaps responding to this, used mythological stories to engage in the debate.

His 1981 work *Icarus—March Sand* suggests the impossibility of separating German identity from Germany's history. It is comprised of oil, shellac, and sand on photograph mounted on canvas and measures 114 ³/₁₆ inches by 141 ³/₄ inches. The massive work has a tactile quality as a result of Kiefer's creative process. He intentionally reveals the layers of this process. The thick cracked paint and texture from the sand makes the work seem as if it is a ruin itself. His color scheme is monotone and earthy, using mainly muddy black and variations of brown. The central figure of the work is a palette attached to large black wing which sweep behind it and up towards the top of the canvas. It is Kiefer's representation of Icarus from Greek mythology—a man who attempts to escape the labyrinth by flying with man-made wings of wax. Icarus ignored warnings and flew too close to the sun, causing the wax to melt. He plummeted to his death as a result of his hubris. Kiefer's Icarus figure is set amongst a charred landscape representing the March Heath in Brandenburg territory. The area is well known, especially to Germans, for being a richly historical territory that has been fought over since the 17th century. The territory's name had been included in a patriotic song used by Hitler's marching army.⁸¹ Kiefer clarifies the location by writing "Ikarus-markischer Sand" across the bottom right of the curving terrain. What is Kiefer suggesting about the nature of painting, and why does he choose Icarus as a medium for communication?

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Huyssens, 31.

The work combines reference to painting, mythology, and history to achieve a particular meaning, but this meaning is debated over by art historians and critics. Because of the density of the work, each symbol must be analyzed independently before theorizing a coherent message. Firstly, the symbol of the palette with wings is of utmost importance. He uses it in several installation pieces and other paintings throughout his career. In *Icarus—March Sand*, he placed it at the center of the work, its charred wings extend across the landscape. On the use of the palette as a symbol in his works, Kiefer stated: “The palette represents the idea of the artist connecting heaven and earth. He works here but looks up there. He is always moving between the two realms...the palette can transform reality by suggesting new visions.”⁸² Kiefer views this as a duty of the artist. The new vision he is suggesting in *Icarus* is a way to view German identity and history as an inseparable unit.

Hubris is a major theme in many stories from Greek mythology, and it is arguable that Kiefer is drawn to *Icarus* because he relates to the figure. He personalizes the figure of *Icarus* to himself by attaching wings to the palette—the symbol of the palette represents the artist, as well as the act of painting. Perhaps he is acknowledging his own over-ambition and hubris in his artistic goal; confronting one of the darkest times in modern history to achieve redemption for Germany is no menial pursuit. *Icarus* is fated to fall because he is human. He cannot ascend to the realm of the Gods in the sky. This realm is sealed off from mortal life in the myth just as this realm is sealed off in Kiefer’s work.

⁸² Wessel Stoker, “Can Heaven Bear the Weight of History? The ‘Spirituality of Concrete’ in the Work of Anselm Kiefer” *Literature and Theology* (2010): 397.

Sky and light are only visible in a sliver of space at the top of his claustrophobic composition. The horizon line of the landscape seems to push the sky realm out of the picture because of the receding curving strokes Kiefer uses to depict the Brandenburg territory. Furthermore, a watery black cloud of paint intrudes on the sky clearing, compressing it to an even smaller space. The rest of the heavenly realm is nearly blocked out by the palettes thick, blackened wings. The choice not to include the sun, or even a notable amount of sky, in this landscape is important. In the myth, Icarus is striving towards the sun; this realm actually causes the climax of his story by resulting in his death. By minimizing visible sky space, Kiefer is suggesting his own impossibility of achieving flight, specifically transcendence from the burden of his nation's history.

In addition to the claustrophobic sky, the charred wings are also preventing the palette from achieving transcendence. Wings are typically thought of as light and feathery. These are the very features which allow them to soar. Even the mythic wings of Icarus are made of wax, a light and malleable substance. However, Kiefer chooses to blacken the wings of his palette. In fact, the black strokes which form the them suggest weight because of their thickness, darkness and solidity. These two qualities are in direct contrast to the idea of flight.

Therefore, the wings of the palette, just as the wings of Icarus, are doomed to fail. But, unlike the wings of Icarus which melt from the sun, Kiefers wings are doomed to fail because of the fires below them. The cremated landscape of the March Heath is licked by flames that appear permanently lit. As Kiefer finds nature, history, and the present to be inseparable, one can presume that the flames in the work may be fueled by the past. The 17th century battles that were fought across this stretch of land are engrained in the

territory. March Sand's inclusion in a Nazi political war song cannot, just like the battles, be forgotten. Therefore, the natural landscape of Germany cannot be separated from the human history which has shaped it, nor can either be separated from Germany's present. This is suggested by his connection between the fires which scar the territory and the charred wings of his palette. The landscape below is culpable for their burnt state. In Kiefer's myth, it is the reality of history that prevents transcendence.

Manipulation of mythology and history is an essential aspect of Kiefer's representations. Through alluding to Icarus, painting, natural land, and German history, he has created a unique mythology to serve specific interpretations about himself as an artist and the national identity of Germany. In the work, *Icarus—March Sand*, Kiefer could be humbly acknowledging the impossibility of one artist to achieve redemption for Germany's past; that it would be foolish to assume he could. The possibility for transcendence of the palette is made impossible by the charred wings, which have been burnt by the territory below—the very territory that pushes out the sky realm the palette is striving for. The work could be read as the artist's admission that he cannot offer redemption through art.

Perhaps, through his use of Icarus, he is also acknowledging his own over-ambition in his desire to reconstruct a national identity through art. The work does not seem to offer redemption because it closes off the possibility for transcendence of the palette. However, redemption does not have to be the ultimate goal in his reflections on WWII. For Kiefer, the value of revisiting Germany's horrific past lies in the way it is inextricably bound to the present. This idea is paralleled by his layering of materials, which are mounted on canvas, but built upon a photograph. The reality of the photograph

is smashed between the creative world of the artist by canvas underneath, and paint, emulsion, shellac, and sand above. Furthermore, the ambiguous treatment of reality alongside, and in play with, mythic realm also serves to blur the difference between times of ancient past, historical past, and the present. These tools, combined with the content and composition of the work, could serve to illustrate his point of view on national German identity. That is, despite the strong desire separate the nation's present from its dark past in constructing a new national identity, this is separation is not possible.

Scholars Andreas Huyssens, Mark Rosenthal, and Mark Taylor offer markedly different interpretations of *Icarus—March Sand*. All three agree that the palette is Kiefer's chosen symbol to represent himself in the work. The symbol of the palette, as well as the palette with wings, are present in various works throughout his career.⁸³ Huyssens writes that because Kiefer's works so obviously reference myth and history, they have "...given rise to the mystification that somehow myth transcends history, that it can redeem us from history, and that art, especially painting, is the high road toward redemption."⁸⁴ He acknowledges that Kiefer himself, as well as Rosenthal and other critics, are partly responsible for evoking this response to his art.⁸⁵ Indeed, Kiefer has expressed an interest with transcendence and the spiritual and cosmic realm of heaven. However, that interest can be isolated as a natural human interest in the spirit. This quest or fascination does not necessarily need to extend to art's ability, or lack thereof, to achieve transcendence by achieving redemption for the history of an entire nation.

⁸³ palette with lead wings, see works on pg 80 in Rosenthal

⁸⁴ Huyssens, 33.

⁸⁵ Huyssens, 34.

When viewing his work, it is important to isolate his personal interest in renewal and transcendence from that of a national desire for both. Both Huysens and Taylor agree that Kiefer's symbolism, content, and creative process in *Icarus—March Sand* reveal that Kiefer not does find it possible for his art to achieve redemption for Germany's history. In contrast, Rosenthal's misinterpretation of the work culminates the his final question: "The problem for Kiefer's Icarus is this: Can art as a spiritual quest heal the decayed land and ascend to a higher plane as well? This mangy Icarus is a sad symbol of the power of art."⁸⁶ The first issue between these two conclusions lies in that Rosenthal finds the work to be about the question of art's power. Kiefer is not offering up this question for the viewer. He is in fact, as Huysens and Taylor argue, stating the answer. This answer is no, art cannot redeem Germany from its history. But, the fact that Kiefer concludes it cannot in *Icarus—March Sand* is not a "sad symbol of the power of art." The works melancholic character is not mourning the lack of art's power to transcend. Rather, this piece is commenting on a false belief that Germany can move beyond its past in constructing a new national identity. As Huysens states, "Kiefer's painting—in all its forms, its materials, and subject matter—is emphatically about memory, not about forgetting..."⁸⁷ He is not mourning the weakness of artistic power through his "mangy Icarus." Instead, he is illustrating the way in which history cannot be separated from our present and acknowledging the inability to transcend it through charring mythic wings with "fires of history."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Rosenthal, 80.

⁸⁷ Huysens,

⁸⁸ Huysens,

Kiefer extends his perception on German history to universal human history, as he finds history inextricably bound to nature and natural history, making his layered use of natural materials an appropriate means of expression. This is illustrated in his use of Greek mythology in *Icarus—March Sand* to comment of German identity and German history. It is possible that he was drawn to this story because of the overarching theme of hubris which runs through it. When Icarus tries to escape the labyrinth and transcend to the realm of the gods, he is trying to escape a trap. Perhaps Kiefer found this story so appropriate because it paralleled the hubris of Germany in attempting to escape the labyrinth of its history.

Kiefer continued expanding his scope of mythological sources after he traveled to Jerusalem in 1984.⁸⁹ That year, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem held a retrospective of his work; he was the first German contemporary artist to be given a retrospective at the museum. Kiefer's journey to Jerusalem parallels his trip to North Cape, Norway eleven years earlier where he sought to probe the roots of Germanic mythology at their physical source.⁹⁰ His time in Jerusalem may have laid the foundation for his later interest in Kabbalah. Kiefer's subsequent paintings, such as *Aaron* (1984-85), *Departure From Egypt* (1984), *The Red Sea* (1984-85), and *Jerusalem* (1986), present Old Testament stories on theatrically large canvases. Each of these works are thematically linked symbolic landscapes; the paintings are visually related through his distinct treatment of the canvases. They arise from his exploration of the Old Testament and the history of

⁸⁹ Tony Godfrey, "Anselm Kiefer at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem" *The Burlington Magazine* (September 1984): 590.

⁹⁰ Lopez-Pedraza, 55.

Jerusalem, a land which is centrally important for three different religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In *Aaron*, Kiefer presents the symbol of a rod surrounded by twelve staffs which recall the story of Aaron in Exodus and the twelve tribes of Israel.⁹¹ The painting measures a colossal 130 by 196^{7/8} inches, and its materials add to its weighty presence. Kiefer used oil, acrylic, emulsion, and shellac on canvas, with lead, woodcut, and cardboard. Similar to *Icarus—March Sand*, the work depicts a charred, apocalyptic landscape as the backdrop for symbols that allude to ancient myth. Again, Kiefer used a color scheme of dark neutrals and natural materials to create a destroyed landscape. The natural ground, scarred by black paint and lead, recedes in a row of curving lines towards the horizon. Also similar to *Icarus—March Sand*, the horizon line appears to be pushing the sky realm out of the canvas, leaving a barely visible strip of deep blue flecked by splotches of orange-gold paint.

As is the case in *Icarus—March Sand*, one is only able to formulate Kiefer's mythic allusion in the painting through its title and sparing visual symbols. A lead staff lays horizontally in the lower portion of the landscape. It is a symbol for Aaron's magical rod in the Exodus. This book of the Hebrew Bible chronicles Moses leading the Israelites departure from Egypt. The story of Exodus is a liberation for the Israelites from years of subservience. Interestingly, it is Moses' rod that is more well known and more powerful than his brother Aaron's. However, Kiefer chose to focus on Aaron's rod in this work and several others.⁹² Rosenthal notes on the significance of Kiefer's choice: "In contrast to Moses, who is unwaveringly loyal and spiritual, Aaron is a troubled and

⁹¹ Rosenthal, 121

⁹² Lisa Saltzman, "To Figure, or Not to Figure", 72.

troublesome figure...Aaron's questionable character is revealed when he rebels against Moses by creating the Golden Calf and encouraging the Jews to worship it."⁹³ By creating the Golden Calf, Aaron becomes a sort of artist. Therefore, It is possible to assume that Kiefer connects himself to Aaron because of this. Lisa Saltzman's discussion of Kiefer is centered around the problem of creating "art after Auschwitz." In this light, his works are like Aaron's Golden Calf—taboo. The association between the artist and mythic figure is another commonality between *Aaron* and *Icarus—March Sand*; both serve to show how personal Kiefer's creations are.

Rosenthal also concludes the possibility for a connection between the artist and Aaron, noting that "...Aaron's character flaws and their source, explained in the texts as due to his being close to the Egyptians in kind, may hold a kind of unhappy fascination for Kiefer, too. In a sense, each suffers because of an accident of birth."⁹⁴ Furthermore, Aaron's rod is explained to be less powerful because of its contact with that of the Egyptian magician's. Just as Aaron reaped the consequences of his birthplace, so too did Kiefer by being born a German at the end of WWII. His choice to make Aaron's rod the focal point of the work supports the connections Rosenthal establishes between the two. As in *Icarus—March Sand*, the power of Kiefer's rod, the palette, is limited in its abilities.

While Rosenthal makes insightful analysis of the association between Kiefer and Aaron, there is another possibility for his choice. Unlike Moses, who was a rarity in his devotion and goodness, Aaron possessed good and bad qualities. This makes Aaron more human. These traits are at odds against each other, and make him more accessible

⁹³ Rosenthal, 121.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

on a universal level than Moses. Kiefer's interest in good and evil, exhibited in the previously discussed work *Quaternity*, acknowledges the potential for man to be both good and evil. For, *Quaternity* suggests that there must be 'bad' alongside 'good' to allow for completeness. It is this complexity that seems to intrigue him about Aaron, and in turn, human nature. He chose to present a mythic figure who is universally relatable. In this way, Kiefer's *Aaron*, although visually different, is markedly similar to his later paintings which address human spirit on a universal level.

The rod and vertical staffs in *Aaron* recall an association to snakes. The snake is present in many mythological structures, from shamanistic religions to Christianity, where it represents the temptation of evil. This likens *Aaron* to *Quaternity* and a 1985 painting, *The Miracle of the Serpents*. Both Rosenthal and Gilmour address claim that this association is intended because Kiefer presented the rods of Aaron and Moses as snakes in *The Miracle of the Serpents*.⁹⁵ Rosenthal adds that this may suggest "...the imperfect or perhaps evil identity of all."⁹⁶ In this way, Kiefer gives Aaron a new context outside of the story of Exodus. Wessel Stoker confirms Rosenthal's thoughts, stating that "...an important aspect of spirituality in Kiefer's work is that evil is a part of the structure of the world."⁹⁷ His focus on the imperfect Aaron, in addition to the connection between snake and staff, establishes a relationship between the faulted mythic figure and modern man. Aaron becomes symbol for universal human character

Yet another layer of meaning is added to Kiefer's *Aaron* when we examine its materials. Through the use of lead to imply Aaron's magical staff, Kiefer aligned the

⁹⁵ Rosenthal, 121 and Gilmour, 105

⁹⁶ Rosenthal 121.

⁹⁷ Stoker, "Can Heaven Bear the Weight of History? The 'Spirituality of Concrete' in the Work of Anselm Kiefer" 402.

symbol with themes of destruction, renewal, and transcendence. Lead, which the artist first used in 1974, holds a great deal of significance in his works.⁹⁸ An exhibition pamphlet from the Museum of Modern Art discusses the implications of the substance:

*Since late antiquity, the planet Saturn and the metal lead have been linked together, notably by medieval alchemists, in a series of correspondences between the celestial and terrestrial spheres...Through Saturn, lead was further linked to Capricorn in the Zodiac and to the masculine gender, Saturday (the day of meditation), time, natural disasters, the color black, and earth, the most material of the Four Elements. Of the Four Humors, Saturn was black bile, the melancholic or watery temperament of creativity, madness and genius; in the early Renaissance, Saturn...became the sign of artists.*⁹⁹

Lead was also believed to hold energy, most notably the energy of spells, which makes it an appropriate substance for Aaron's rod in the work. It was also the material from which the alchemists tried to create gold and, in this way, relates to the story of Aaron and the Golden Calf. Furthermore, reliquaries and caskets were made from lead, allowing for a paradoxical association to both preservation and destruction.¹⁰⁰

It is possible that this aspect appealed to Kiefer because of the struggles Jews had undergone to preserve their culture in the wake of World War II's destruction. Moreover, a likening between the artist and Aaron is made more apparent because of leads association to Saturn and artistic pursuits. Rosenthal states that "Kiefer believes the idea of an archetypal exodus to be fundamental to all people."¹⁰¹ In *Aaron*, this fundamental exodus can be expanded to a constant spiritual journey for the artist and, more broadly, for all people. Since Exodus tells the story of a journey, and Aaron's imperfection exists in everyone, Kiefer may be referring to a universal journey—man's aspiration towards a

⁹⁸ MOMA pamphlet.

⁹⁹ MOMA pamphlet.

¹⁰⁰ MOMA pamphlet.

¹⁰¹ Rosenthal, 120.

higher spiritual realm, or heaven, since lead is the earthly material linked to celestial spheres.

Interest in a universal plight towards heaven, and the connection between heaven and earth has been present in Kiefer's work since 1969.¹⁰² Investigations into mythology helped him to develop and visually represent these interests. Both Stokes and Gilmour agree that ideas from Jewish mysticism and Kaballah greatly influenced the artist. Gilmour views his work through a philosophical lens, offering the insight that, "Like Nietzsche, [Kiefer] seems to envision the juncture of the path of the past with the path of the future as requiring that we rethink our dismissal of ancient modes of thought and reconsider our judgment of them as *merely* mythical."¹⁰³ His trip to Israel also caused Kiefer to further broaden his mythological scope; he found inspiration for the following work in a Roman ruin he had seen there.¹⁰⁴

Kiefer created the painting *Osiris and Isis* (1985-87) out of oil, acrylic, and emulsion on canvas, with clay, porcelain, lead, copper wire, and circuit board.¹⁰⁵ Again he employed the mammoth scale so characteristic of the artist—the painting measures 150 by 220½ inches. His layered use of materials was an appropriate means of expression, as he finds our history inextricably bound to natural and ancient history. The central element in the piece is a brick pyramid which stretches across from right to left. The viewer's eye is invited into the work from the bottom point of the pyramid in the foreground. Then, one is directed upwards by its receding bricks to a black square of circuit board which sits above the scene. From this small square, copper wires reach

¹⁰² Stoker, 397.

¹⁰³ Gilmour, 127.

¹⁰⁴ Rosenthal, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Kiefer also produced a painting of the same name in 1986.

down the painting, respecting the pyramids slanted sides and adding to the physicality of the work. Kiefer placed broken pieces of porcelain at each wires end; both elements serve to blur the line between painting and sculpture. The sky of *Osiris and Isis* is milky black and incorporates hints of the rust color in the wires, as well as the rust color used for the pyramid. A rust colored floor space under the pyramid is hinted at by grid lines in the lower right portion of the canvas. The work appears to be just as much a ruin as the form it contains. What do this imposing pyramid, and its accompanying materials, symbolize for Kiefer?

The pyramid recalls the famed pyramids of Egypt and the work's title affirms this association. In Egyptian mythology, Osiris is the god of the underworld who was killed by his brother. He split Osiris' body into fourteen parts and scattered them around the world. Isis is the goddess of fertility and the wife and sister of Osiris. Consumed by grief over her husband's death, she attempted to resurrect him by rejoining his body parts, recovering all but his penis. Isis was also worshipped in Roman culture as the goddess of fertility, for she gave birth to a son, Horus, by immaculate conception.¹⁰⁶

Kiefer's treatment of the sky is similar to the quality of the sky in his later paintings of the cosmos. Because it only fills a relatively small area of the canvas, the sky in *Osiris and Isis* is similar to that of *Icarus—March Sand* and *Aaron*. However, unlike those works, this sky does not seem to be at odds with the earthly realm. The night sky surrounds the top of the pyramid harmoniously. Milky white clouds swirl through the blackness and an orb-like shape, presumably the moon, hovers above the scene to the left of the pyramid. Furthermore, Kiefer presents a more clear division

¹⁰⁶ Rosenthal, 153.

between ground, object, and sky than we have seen in the previously addressed works. Yet, despite his clearer division of compositional and symbolic space, the painting is fluid. He established a subtle visual connection between the sky realm and the earthly realm by repeating its dark hue and quality at the left foot of the pyramid.

The painting was shown alongside others in 1987 under the umbrella theme that Kiefer labeled “Break and Fusion.”¹⁰⁷ This mirrors the myth of Osiris and Isis; Osiris is broken apart and Isis attempts to fuse the parts together, striving for his resurrection and eternal life. At the time of the work, Kiefer was interested in nuclear energy.¹⁰⁸ It creates large quantities of energy from a molecular level. Yet because of the elements volatility, nuclear energy holds the potential for a great deal of destruction. Again we see the themes of destruction and creation appealing to Kiefer. Kiefer continues to use the symbol of the pyramid to represent our connection to ancient cultures, as we will see in his personal mythology since 1990.

¹⁰⁷ Rosenthal, 160.

¹⁰⁸ Rosenthal, 153.

Chapter Three: As Above, So Below

*I think that interesting writers and painters have something to do with mythology. Like them, I strive to explain the enigmas of the world in a non-scientific way (because science cannot). And by moving backward – at the same time as I do so –, I project myself into the future. These two movements are inexorably bound. The further I go into the past, the further I go into the future. It's logical.*¹⁰⁹ –Anselm Kiefer

Kiefer's cosmic series from the early 1990s to the present largely focuses on Earth's, (and subsequently humanity's), relationship with heaven to address "the enigmas of the world" through his unique spirituality. The spirituality he presents in these works has been cultivated from his lifelong investigation of history through myths. It is a spirituality that Kiefer says has been with him since he was a child.¹¹⁰ He ascribes mythic significance to natural elements like plants, stars, water, and other earthly materials.¹¹¹ For an artist whose works have consistently been characterized as melancholic and depressive, it seems an unexpectedly spiritual and harmonious outlook.

In 1990, perhaps in pursuit of harmony, Kiefer moved away from Germany to France. "I needed to move," he explained, "I am not only a German."¹¹² France represented freedom from the weight of German history. We can then presume that Kiefer had come to terms with his origin as a German. The location where he settled, Barjac, in the South of France, is still his home today. Clearly, it holds a

¹⁰⁹ Marie-Laure Bernadac, Anselm Kiefer, Jean Marc Terrasse, and Brigitte Donon, *Anselm Kiefer au Louvre* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 2007), 16.

¹¹⁰ Anselm Kiefer in an interview with Michael Auping

¹¹¹ Anselm Kiefer, "Cette Obscure Lumiere qui Tombe des Etoiles..." 4

¹¹² Michael Auping, 94

great deal of significance for Kiefer; his move marked the fulfillment of a lifelong desire:

*I grew up on the Rhine, the border river. But, even at that time, it wasn't just a geographical boundary. You could hear the clapping of the water against the rocky bank, see the lights on the opposite shore and the dangerous turbulence of the river itself. The country on the other side was not just one among many. For the child who could not reach it, it was a promise of the future, a hope. It was the Promise Land.*¹¹³

France represents a literal break from Kiefer's ties to his fatherland; since moving there, he moved away from German themes and created a series of cosmic works that draw upon an imagined mythology in paintings such as *Falling Stars* (1995), *Man Under Pyramid* (1996), and a permanent installation at the Louvre Museum in 2008, *Athanor, Danae, and Hortus Conclusus*. Let us call this a Kieferian mythology—one that he had been forming through his life-long investigations of other cultures. In it, he combines literary, scientific, alchemical, and mythical aspects to present a new world history.¹¹⁴ Each work we will examine shares a commonality—they contain the central figure of a man, whom Kiefer depicted in the meditative shavasana pose associated with Hatha Yoga.¹¹⁵ The man gazes at the night sky, emphasizing the subject of his meditation. Kiefer used imagery of the cosmos in these works in order to address questions of human existence and our origin.

There is a tendency among art historians to either separate or conflate these cosmic works from Kiefer's previous works that address German history; however,

¹¹³ Schmidt, Anselm Kiefer: Next Year In Jerusalem, 200.

¹¹⁴ Anselm Kiefer, "Cette obscure claret qui tombe des etoiles..." By Bernard Comment, *Art Press* (September 1996): 23.

¹¹⁵ Schmidt, 75.

to do this is to ignore the *way* he confronted history. We must not forget how, even when dealing with the Holocaust, World War II, and Hitler, as he did so frequently throughout the 1970s and 80s, Kiefer presented these events through the allusions to mythology. He began addressing German World War II era history through myths because it was such a difficult and tragic thing to talk about, even visually.

However, Kiefer's use of myth to discuss these events reveals an interest that is larger than German history; it extends to humanity and our shared world history.

From this point, his use of mythology evolved and expanded to comment more overtly on human character, heaven, and the impossibility of transcending the past.

Kiefer blends myth with reality, ancient with present, to establish his personal narrative of history. This position is logical for the artist, for, as he stated, by moving backwards he projects himself into the future. Just as he views these movements into past and present to be "inexorably bound," so too does he view man's relationship with nature. The earlier works we have discussed present an intermingling of ancient and recent. Similarly, Kiefer's cosmic works also present recent scientific insight alongside ancient mythical theories of how the universe operates.¹¹⁶

In recently published exhibition catalogues, Michael Auping and Katharina Schmidt offer more a wholistic analysis of Kiefer's body of work. Schmidt discusses how Kiefer has, since 1995, reverted back to cosmic themes, which held his interest early in his career. Auping acknowledges the continuous spiritual thread that runs through Kiefer's works. He focuses on this theme through the lens of heaven and

¹¹⁶ Schmidt, *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Places*, 75.

earth, and aptly notes that, “For Kiefer, the idea of heaven can elevate us only if it can carry the weight of history.”¹¹⁷ It is possible that their insights on Kiefer’s spirituality, which they acknowledge are present even in his works on German history, can be made because of their historical distance from WWII. When Kiefer began dealing with German history in 1969, there was a taboo surrounding the subject. Perhaps even in the 1970s and 80s, the wounds of Nazi Germany were still too fresh to allow for an unbiased and complete study of Kiefer’s works, as their subjects were still highly controversial. Now, Auping and Schmidt’s exhibition catalogues reveal that the twenty-first century is an appropriate time to look back on Kiefer’s early works with a fresh perspective. In the 1970s, it was impossible to know where Kiefer was going with his artistic pursuits, but the work that he has produced since 1990 necessitates a re-examination of his work from a contemporary standpoint in order to better understand the content and aim of his art. Predominantly since 1990, Kiefer’s work have exhibited a consistent interest in universal themes beyond Germany history.

Kiefer’s 1995 painting *Falling Stars* depicts a man lying down beneath the night sky. The man may be the artist himself, lying atop cracked, natural earth while gazing at the stars above. It seems that he is present at the genesis—either dead and becoming one with stars and earth—or alive as a direct product of both. Neither reading of Kiefer’s imagery is incorrect; and perhaps both are necessary for a complete understanding of the painting. These readings represent the cycle of human life, and can be extended, through contemplations of the cosmos, to the never-ending cycle of destruction and renewal in the

¹¹⁷ Auping, 27.

universe. The figure in the work is meditating on this cycle in the natural world around him. His skin, rendered like clay, is the color of the ground. His pants are as milky black as the sky. These visual links serve to further solidify the figure's relationship to both; there is a oneness between man, earth, and universe

In *Falling Stars*, time is irrelevant; Kiefer achieves this through visual simplicity and a minimal palette. The figure could be a contemporary man or a man who lived thousands of years ago; it is left unclear. He could even be the first man, lying on the barren earth at the moment of creation. Kiefer renders the ground like clay—a natural, earthly material used by many ancient civilizations. There are cracks throughout its surface. Night sky is the only other element. Kiefer speckles white dots throughout the blackness to create the illusion of thousands of stars and constellations. The lack of a sense of time in the piece gives it an otherworldly feel. All of these decisions are intentional on Kiefer's part; they add to the feeling of deep spirituality in the painting, which is indeed there, embodied in the while this figure who gazes at the cosmos.

As early as 1971, Kiefer drew from myth to express the problematic relationship between humans and nature. The reclining figure in *Falling Stars* has roots in Kiefer's prior work, and specifically recalls one of his early watercolors, *Man Lying with Branch* (1971), where the artist merges the natural and human world through his imagery. However, unlike *Falling Stars*, this earlier image of the unity of man and nature is a violent one. In early watercolor, Kiefer placed a tree either piercing, or sprouting from, the figure's abdomen. Blood drips from the point of intersection between earth and man. The bloody intersection symbolizes an inherent contradiction in human character—we wreak havoc on nature, yet simultaneously desire to connect with it. Nature and

civilization are at odds. Kiefer used the symbol of the tree or branch in several other works of the same year. Auping notes that his trees, “while referring to a symbol of German nationalism, also evoke the ancient tradition of tree worship that includes the Norse legend of the Yggdrasil, in which the universe is envisioned as a sprawling evergreen; the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the biblical Garden of Eden; and the kabbalistic Tree of Life.”¹¹⁸ Auping’s insight illustrates the vast mythological sources Kiefer’s work contains.

While the blood in *Man Lying with Branch* suggests the conflict inherent in our connection with the natural world and the universe; twenty-four years later, *Fall Stars* suggests a unity between the same reclining figure and the universe around him. About a similar work with a cosmic theme, from his still ongoing cosmic series, *The Starred Heaven* (1980), Kiefer stated his artistic goal: “I was using myself as the hero of an imagined myth or revolution. It is humorous, pathetic, but it is an important part of researching about who we are in this universe. We are capable of thinking very high and very low. Placing ourselves between heaven and earth is more difficult.”¹¹⁹ While he was not directly referring to *Falling Stars*, his words evoke the imagery of the painting and suggests that Kiefer may have identified with the reclining figure in this work as well. Because of the ambiguous appearance of the man, one cannot say the picture is a self-portrait. But, it is clear that Kiefer identifies with the figure because they are both performing the same action—contemplating the meaning and origin of human existence in the vast universe.

¹¹⁸ Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 56.

¹¹⁹ Auping, 28.

The unity of man, earth, and sky in the painting suggests that perhaps Kiefer's new home in France offered a more peaceful setting for him to place our existence between heaven and earth. Furthermore, the two decades between his early watercolor and this painting were marked by his continuous investigation of mythology. Therefore, it is also possible to conclude that his re-appropriation of mythological stories enabled him to present a figure in *Falling Stars* who is finally at one with his surroundings. The figure's pose, shavasana, furthers this argument because it is a meditative and grounding posture. The figure is neither thinking high or low; instead, through his color scheme and treatment of the canvas, Kiefer succeeds in placing him between heaven and earth.

Just as the reclining figure is a recurring image with roots in works of the early 1970s, it is important to note that the cosmic sphere is not a new interest for Kiefer; his 1970 watercolor *Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven* shows that the question of man's place in the universe has fascinated him since the start of his career. In this piece, a tiny figure stands inside of a translucent blue dome. Looking back on this watercolor, Kiefer said: "Each man has his own dome, his own perception, his own theories. There is no one god for all."¹²⁰ The work's title affirms Kiefer's statement about the deeply personal nature of this "dome." Each individual holds a different conception of heaven and each has a unique way of forming one. Kiefer investigated mythology and religion to inform his own ideas on heaven. But, the commonality exists in that each individual *has* a conception of heaven, and herein is the universal appeal of Kiefer's work.

¹²⁰ Auping, *Anselm Kiefer: Heaven and Earth*, 31.

Under the dome of the cosmos, Kiefer's figure in *Falling Stars* is still searching for the meaning of his existence and wondering how he relates to the universe around him. To visualize these ideas, Kiefer paints a barely perceptible white line in the sky. It extends diagonally from the mid-upper portion of the canvas to the reclining man's eyes. It can be seen as an indicator of his line of sight, furthering the notion that he is staring at the heavens, and contemplating the connection between the "heaven" in the stars and the Earth he lies on.¹²¹ The thin line could also be read as reaching downward towards the man to indicate that he is a product of the stars above. The duplicity in meaning seems intentional; both contemplation and origin, in relation to the universe, are important ideas for Kiefer. In the "imagined mythology" Kiefer presents in *Falling Stars*, this white line serves to illustrate our universal aspiration towards our own conception of heaven, symbolized in the painting as the cosmos.

The title of the work also mirrors the duality present in the simple white line, as "falling stars" seem to be an oxymoron. Stars exist miles above earth and appear stagnant in the night sky; how could they be falling? Kiefer could be referring to the never-ending cycle of destruction and renewal in the universe; Stars live and die, but they appear static, as it takes years for their light to reach Earth. Some of the stars the figure is gazing at may no longer exist as they appear, or may no longer exist at all. A meaning of hope can also be garnered from the title *Falling Stars*. Children are taught to wish upon a falling star in the hopes that their dream may come true. It has become culturally engrained that falling stars are "lucky," which implies that they symbolize hope and desire.

¹²¹ I use quotes around the word heaven to indicate that I am not referring to heaven in its typical religious context.

Kiefer's cosmic imagery suggests that the contradictions between life and death, hope and tragedy, and good and evil abound in human history and natural history. Marina Warner explains that "Kiefer's cosmic struggle with contradiction reflects Georges Bataille's assertion, in 1947: 'Night is also a sun, and the absence of myth is also a myth; the coldest, the purest, the only *true* myth.'"¹²² Kiefer's figural, cosmic works lie at the heart of this contradiction. In the words of the artist, "Filled emptiness is like loud silence."¹²³

The cosmic imagery that Kiefer initiated in the 1970s continues in the 1990s. During these years, Kiefer explored ancient world myths in the division between heaven and earth is not as distinct as it is in our modern world. For example, in Greek mythology, gods and goddesses occupied the sky realm of heaven, but could also walk among and interact with humans; they also possessed character imperfections just like moral men and women. In Jewish mysticism and the Old Testament, chosen prophets could communicate with God; exemplified by the covenants between God and Noah, Abraham, or Moses. Even in the Christian Holy Trinity, Jesus is the son of God, implying some interaction between higher power and mortal man.

Kiefer's 1996 painting, *Man Under a Pyramid*, depicts a man lying in shavasana at the foot of an archaic structure; he seems to be yearning for the time of ancient mythologies when there was a connection between heaven and earth, a spiritual explanation for our existence. The same year he completed this work, in an interview in *Art Press*, explained that a visual work should "...think about a

¹²² Marina Warner, *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001*, 11.

¹²³ Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem*, 176.

situation that will go beyond art history, that brings in an existential feeling or the history of the world...If you want to change painting then that is an art history issue, whereas I want to change something in the history of the world. What it is I cannot say.”¹²⁴ Whilst lying at the foot of an ancient pyramid, the figure in *Man Under a Pyramid* seems as though he is connecting with the history of the world under a cloudy night sky. The figure is acting out Kiefer’s stated aspiration for a visual work, and there is indeed something existential about the entirety of the painting.

There are four divisions in the painting, marked by earth, Man, ancient structure, and sky. Again, as in *Falling Stars*, it is not clear whether the figure is awake, asleep, or dead. Kiefer’s treatment of the canvas gives an aged and weathered appearance to the work. He often exposes his paintings to natural elements by leaving them outdoors for some time to achieve this effect.¹²⁵ It appears as if Kiefer was creating a ruin to depict a connection to an ancient time.

The structure of the pyramid is an essential element of this work. The pyramid’s base extends across the lower portion of the painting and its peak reaches into a dusty sky. The painting is not as crisp as *Falling Stars*; Kiefer uses muted earth tones of beige and ashen gray throughout the piece. However, the point of the pyramid seems to function as the white line in did in *Falling Stars*, directing the viewer’s, and the figure’s, gaze upwards towards night sky. Simultaneously, the pyramid expands downward toward the man; like him, it too is relegated to Earth. They are both grounded to a thin strip of cracked, beige terrain. Auping notes that

¹²⁴ Anselm Kiefer, “Cette obscure claret qui tombe des etoiles...” By Bernard Comment, *Art Press* (September 1996): 26.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

pyramidal structures “...aspire to the symbolic transcendence of the mountain, an ancient symbol of the connection between heaven and earth.”¹²⁶ This pyramid, all at once bound to Earth and reaching towards sky, seems to exist in a liminal space between these two realms. Since Kiefer established a visual connection between each element in the work, it is possible to conclude that the figure’s thoughts also occupy this liminal space. Perhaps he is searching for a connection with his history and the worlds around him.

There are various scholarly interpretations of this painting, some of which are incorrectly clouded with Holocaust-era associations. *Man Under a Pyramid* is jointly housed by the Tate in London and National Galleries of Scotland. The latter provides the following caption for the work on its website:

*Usually denoting the presence of a tomb, ancient pyramids are commonly used to symbolize spiritual salvation.... However, in Kiefer’s image, a body is still present beneath the pyramid. In his thick application of paint and ash, the artist creates a sense of gravity and re-contextualizes the pyramid motif for a post-Holocaust era. Recalling the brick-like structures in his earlier paintings of Nazi mausoleums, it acts as a reminder to the haunting legacy of war.*¹²⁷

Firstly, Kiefer had established a sort of “trademark style” by this point in his career; two of which are his thick application of paint and incorporation of natural materials. Furthermore, the body at the foot of the pyramid had already appeared, in the same meditative posture, in *Falling Stars*. Neither his style, nor this figure, denotes an association to the this Holocaust or the “haunting legacy of the war.” Yet, even a museum which houses the work cannot avoid the temptation to connect *Man Under a Pyramid* to themes which occupied Kiefer’s earlier works. The sense of gravity,

¹²⁶ Auping, 110

¹²⁷ National Galleries of Scotland online: Anselm Kiefer, *Man Under a Pyramid*.

which is indeed palpable in the work, is not infused with the horrors of Nazism. Kiefer explained in 1996: "...I never wanted to use German history as a prop, or to create a style based on this theme. It was a process of exploration that was effective at a given moment, in certain conditions. For me it had an existential dimension. But now this existential dimension has gone. I know what happened."¹²⁸ Clearly, Kiefer had stated the purpose of his historical explorations into the German collective memory. But, its purpose was no longer relevant to him by 1996, the year of this work. Kiefer's focus in *Man Under a Pyramid* was not German World War II era history; his focus was on the history of the world and, as Kiefer accomplished in *Falling Stars*, the work presents a unity between man and celestial and earthly spheres.

Barbara Rose offered another problematic interpretation of the pyramid symbol in Kiefer's works. She illuminates on the connection between his pyramids and the brick burning factories, which inspired Kiefer in India.¹²⁹ Commenting on this series, to which *Man Under a Pyramid* belongs, she finds that "Given Kiefer's preoccupation with Germany's Nazi era, it cannot be accidental that these brick factories are essentially ovens."¹³⁰ While it is true that these factories function like ovens, Kiefer was not using them in his work as metaphors for Nazi concentration camps. He was fascinated with these brick burning factories because they were simultaneously an entity of both creation and destruction.¹³¹ In the artists words,

¹²⁸ Interview with *Art Press* 1996

¹²⁹ Barbara Rose, "Kiefer's Cosmos" *Art in America* (December, 1998): 71.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Schmidt, *Anselm Kiefer: The Seven Heavenly Palaces 1973-2001*, 41.

“Rubble represents not only an end, but also a beginning.”¹³² These brick factories embody the idea of metamorphosis.

Kiefer’s engagement with cosmic imagery led him to draw upon the theories of 17th English physician/philosopher Robert Fludd, who was known for his research in alchemical and hermetic knowledge.¹³³ One of Fludd’s beliefs was that the macrocosm (the heavens) influences the microcosm (human experience), summarized in the phrase attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, “as above, so below.”¹³⁴ Kiefer directly addressed Fludd’s theories in a number of works, such as *Sol Invictus* (1995), *The Secret Life of Plants* (1998), a 1997 artist book of the same name, and *Every plant has his related star in the sky* (2001).¹³⁵ His theories directly appeal to the questions of origin which Kiefer has been raising and searching for throughout his career. Fludd’s ideas assert a relation between the macrocosm and the microcosm, specifically plants and stars. He believed that every plant, even every seed, had a corresponding star in the sky. As Katharina Schmidt explains, “[Fludd] argued in his works...that a kind of mystical alchemy—which he regarded as fully equal in status to orthodox theology—could lead to understanding of the universe.”¹³⁶ In his understanding, he found the origin of our universe to be “..sought in the dark Chaos (potential unity) from which arose the Light (divine illumination or actual unity).”¹³⁷ In 2003, Kiefer constructed a lead book called *For Robert Fludd*. Its

¹³² Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem*, 197.

¹³³ Anselm Kiefer, “Cette obscure claret qui tombee des etoiles...” 24.

¹³⁴ Professor MacNaughton, Scripps College: In our meetings, she told me the meaning of this alchemical phrase.

¹³⁵ Schmidt, 75.

¹³⁶ Schmidt, 76.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

lead sheets contain maps of stars with their accompanying NASA numbers, and sunflower seeds.

Kiefer's mythology, presented in *Falling Stars* and *Man Under a Pyramid*, is his theory of human existence. In 2007, Kiefer perfected the visualization of his mythology in his permanent installation at the Louvre Museum in Paris. What, then, is Kiefer's mythology? In his 2008 acceptance speech for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, Kiefer explained:

*In one centimeter of air—a sugar cube in size—there are roughly 45 billion atoms whizzing around. This unimaginable abundance is at the same time an inconceivable emptiness... We consist of empty space... According to the laws of nature on the preservation of matter, no atom is ever lost. Scientists argue that each of us carries within ourselves an unbelievably large number of atoms that have already been present in very different kinds of matter for millions of years before becoming part of us. Within ourselves, we carry atoms from the beach at Ostia and the stones of the Gobi desert, atoms from dinosaur bones as well as some from Shakespeare, from Martin Luther, from Einstein, and from the victims and oppressors of centuries past. I feel connected to people and stones that existed long before me and will continue to exist after I am gone.*¹³⁸

The reclining figure in Kiefer's cosmic works seems to represent this idea. The figure is the totality of human existence. Kiefer's Louvre installation perfectly visualizes his concept.

When Kiefer unveiled his permanent installation in 2007, he was the first living artist since George Braque to create a permanent work for the museum.¹³⁹ Kiefer formatted his installation as a triptych. It is comprised of one mural painting, *Athanor*, flanked by two installations, one on each side—*Danaë* and *Hortus Conclusus*. They are poised inside of three arches in the stairwell of the Louvre's Sully Wing, which links the

¹³⁸ Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem*, 198-199.

¹³⁹ Amy Serafin, "The Louvre Now Accepts the Living" *The New York Times*, 2007

Egyptian and Mesopotamian antiquities. The location of his work in the museum reveals that Louvre curators grasp the importance of ancient culture in Kiefer's art.

Kiefer calls the central mural, *Athanor*, a self-portrait.¹⁴⁰ As if to actualize this, he included parts of "himself" in the painting; "I am then in the material, in the paint, in the sand, directly in the clay."¹⁴¹ He covered the painting's ground with a layer of soil from his home in the South of France, on top of which, he poured molten lead. To render the stars in the night sky, Kiefer incorporated his unused paintings of snow.¹⁴² Stars and snow are similar for Kiefer; he finds that "When snow blows around, it's like stars...The sky is moving all the time."¹⁴³ Kiefer is literally a part of both celestial, and earthly realms in *Athanor*. The figure of a man, in shavasana pose, lies beneath the expansive constellations; his presence recalls the figure in previous paintings, *Falling Stars* and *Man Under a Pyramid*. Unclothed, he resembles something of a fully-grown fetus or corpse; but, he is not dead. Kiefer describes him as being "in the universe."¹⁴⁴ The figure is the artist himself. A beam of light radiates upward from the figure's abdomen and blends with the star-filled sky, literally connecting man and universe. It is important to note that he did not use soil from Germany to cover the work's ground. Perhaps this was simply because the Louvre is a French museum. However, it is also possible to assume that Kiefer had finally found his spiritual homeland in France.

There are several levels at which *Athanor* communicates a metamorphosis. The work's title refers to alchemy; Athanor is the name for the alchemical furnace capable of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem*, 201.

¹⁴² Serafin, *New York Times*.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

transforming base metals to gold, and mortality to immortality. Kiefer wrote the words “nigredo,” “albedo,” and “rubedo”—meaning black, white, and red—into the mural. These colors are the central colors of alchemy. The constant movement he describes is analogous to metamorphosis, on which he has said: “If there is no metamorphosis, we have nothing to hope for after death. Spiritual understanding of the idea of metamorphosis makes it easier to die. That is what the figure is thinking about in some of my paintings.”¹⁴⁵ The figure in *Athanor* is inside of this “alchemical furnace,” but Kiefer’s furnace is the natural world; its only elements are earth and sky. Above the lead covered soil, Kiefer used silver and gold, implying the possibility for transformation. It seems he is suggesting that the world is an athanor—humans can choose to elevate to gold, or remain as lead; the cycle of life goes on whether we are alive or dead. Here, Kiefer is connecting himself with the soil of his home, the earth, his art, and the stars, to place himself in the longest context—the context of natural history, the history of the universe.

Kiefer incorporated ancient Greek and Christian myths in *Danaë* and *Hortus Conclusus*, visualizing the cycle of life and death. To form both sculptures, he used lead, aluminum, silver and gold. These materials echo the cycle of metamorphosis in Kiefer’s central mural, *Athanor*. In Greek mythology, Danaë is the virgin who Zeus impregnated through a wash of golden rain. Kiefer represents Danaë as a sunflower. Her tall stem grows upwards from a stack of lead books. *Hortus Conclusus*, meaning enclosed garden, is meant to be analogous to the hill where Jesus was crucified.¹⁴⁶ The sunflowers which rise from the mound of metal, and the sunflower in *Danaë*, refer to Robert Flud’s

¹⁴⁵ Anselm Kiefer in a 1996 interview for *Art Press*, 214

¹⁴⁶ Serafin.

theories. These mythic events of virgin birth and sacrificial death are united, and incorporated in, the athena of Kiefer's artistic universe. In his Louvre installation, Kiefer presents the totality of his views. He positions his self-portrait between two mythic events, connecting his present to the ancient past. Thus, Kiefer is visualizing his theory on his existence's connection to natural, human, and universal history.

Conclusion

There is no history. Each human being made his own history, has his own thoughts and his own world. But everyone is alone with his own illusions, with his own methods. I think each human being tries to put themselves in a bigger context. So you always create an illusion that you stay longer on earth than you do...That's what religion is. That's what the pharaohs did when they created the pyramids. They want—put themselves in a longer, longer context. So you get interested in geological times too. But it's much stronger. And then in cosmic times too. This reassures you to find a sense [meaning] in the world, because in the world there is no sense. So the scientific process, as science, doesn't lead us to any key to the world. The more we know, the more we don't know. It's always like this. So only mythology tried to get some coherent view. And, also, alchemy tried to explain the world in a coherent way, what science never can do.¹⁴⁷ –Anselm Kiefer

For Kiefer, the spirituality inherent in ancient mythology can, and *should*, coexist with modernity. This concept, which he has cultivated over the past forty years, is the foundation of the personal mythology Kiefer presents in his still unconcluded cosmic series. And, if Kiefer's aim is in line with the pharaohs, then his body of work is his pyramid. The 1973 Attic Paintings form the base of this “pyramid.” In these most personal works, Kiefer used myth to understand the most immediate context—his own as an artist, and as a man, born in Germany, 1945. After this foundation was established, he looked beyond Germany for his mythic sources. Since predominantly 1990, Kiefer has visualized his theory of existence and placed himself in the longest context possible. In *Falling Stars*, *Man Under a Pyramid*, and *Athamor*, the reclining figure is connected to both geological *and* cosmic times. In each work, the figure is alone, perhaps reiterating Kiefer's notion that “everyone is alone with his own illusions, with his own methods.”

¹⁴⁷ “Anselm Kiefer on Mythology and Human Experience,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art video, 1:30, October 2006, <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/268>

Is Kiefer merely romanticizing the past? No. Rather, by discounting science, he is reminding people that humility and knowledge must go hand in hand. Myths were created in the absence of modern science. Therefore, mythic stories offer an essential human interpretation of the world. They were seen as true, just as science is today; what we assert to be scientific fact today can be discredited by a new discovery tomorrow. Kiefer incorporates scientific discoveries on atoms and particles into his cosmic mythology; in effect, making a myth out of modern science. Ancient wisdom and modern knowledge peacefully merge in his spiritual theory of existence. He feels that he is literally a *part* of each of his paintings, as their creator, and as a component of its materials.¹⁴⁸

First there is one's own personal history, shaped by the time, place, and family one is born into. Then there is the broader history of one's birthplace, for that has shaped the culture one grows up in. Even broader then, are the "geological times" Kiefer refers to—the history of the Earth—from its origin, to humanity's origin on Earth. Lastly, there is "cosmic times"—a sort of pre-history—the mysterious origin of the universe. Science attempts to explain this "original origin" of everything under the widely accepted Big Bang Theory. But, Kiefer does not accept this as any sort of "key to the world." He prefers mythology and alchemy over science. What do they do that science does not?

Science cannot replace mythic images and their power. Science's belief in progress is possible even itself a myth...Art, on the other hand, may appear as a glimpse, as a glimpse of the results of scientific research that, over the course of a thousand years, may become myth once again.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Anselm Kiefer, *Anselm Kiefer: Next Year in Jerusalem*, 178.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Images



Two photographs from *Occupations*, 1969 series



Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven, 1970



Man Lying with Branch, 1971



My Father Promised Me a Sword, 1974



Nothung, 1973



Germany's Spiritual Heroes, 1973



Resurrexit, 1971



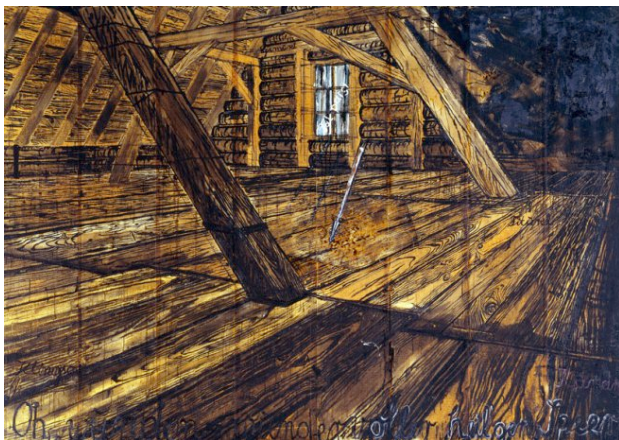
Quaternity, 1973



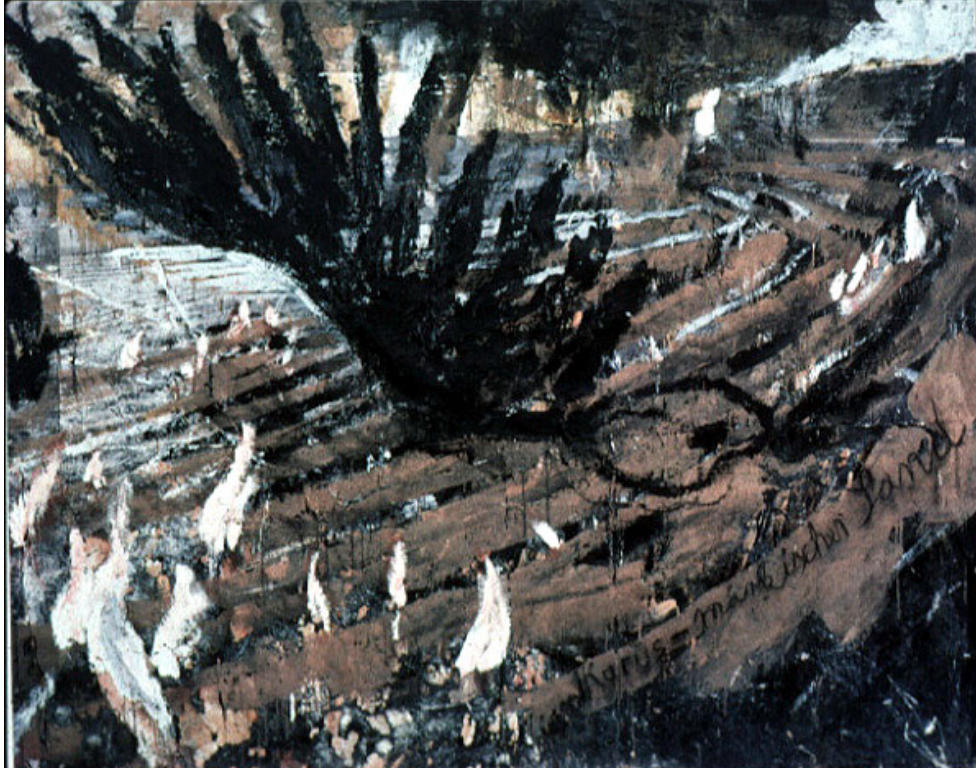
Parsifal I, 1973



Parsifal II, 1973



Parsifal III, 1973



Icarus—March Sand, 1981



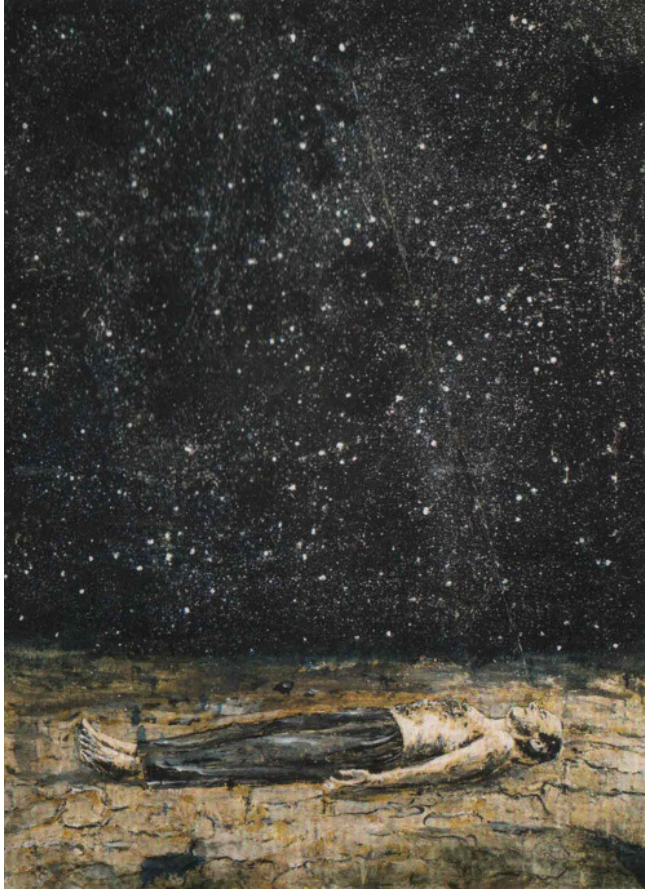
Aaron, 1984



The Miracle of Serpents, 1984-85



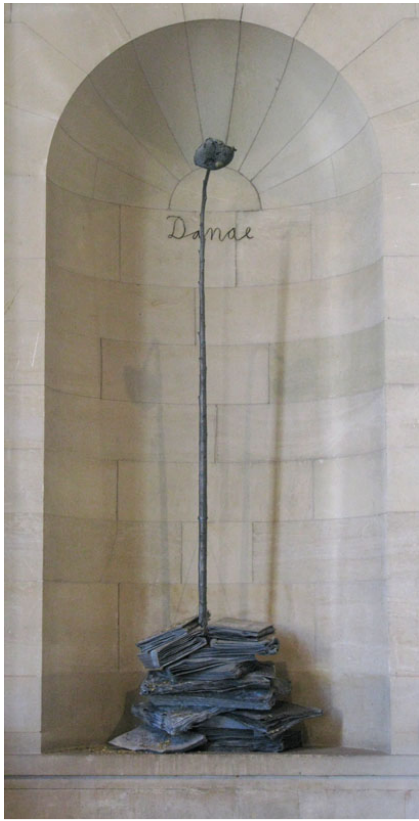
Osiris and Isis, 1987



Falling Stars, 1995



Man Under a Pyramid, 1996



Danae, 2007



Athanor, 2007



Hortus Conclusus, 2007

List of Illustrations

Anselm Kiefer

Occupations, 1969.

Photographs.

Private Collections.

Anselm Kiefer

Everyone Stands Under His own Dome of Heaven, 1970.

Watercolor, gouache, and graphite pencil on joined paper (15^{3/4} x 18^{7/8} inches).

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Denise and Andrew Saul Fund.

Anselm Kiefer

Man Lying with Branch, 1971.

Watercolor, gouache, and graphite pencil on paper (9^{5/8} x 10^{3/4} inches). Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Anselm Kiefer

Nothung, 1973.

Chalk, oil and paper fitted in on canvas (118^{1/8} x 170^{1/8} inches).

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Anselm Kiefer

Quaternity, 1973.

Oil and charcoal on burlap (117^{1/2} x 170^{1/4} inches).

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

Anselm Kiefer

Ressurexit, 1973.

Oil, acrylic, and charcoal on burlap (114^{1/8} x 70^{7/8} inches).

Private Collection Sanders, Amsterdam.

Anselm Kiefer

Germany's Spiritual Heroes, 1973

Oil and charcoal on burlap, mounted on canvas (120^{7/8} x 268^{1/2} inches).

The Broad Art Foundation.

Anselm Kiefer

Parsifal I, II, and III, 1973.

Oil and blood on paper laid on canvas (118^{3/8} x 171^{1/16} inches).

Tate, London.

Anselm Kiefer

My Father Promised Me a Sword, 1974.

Watercolor and ballpoint pen on paper (11^{1/8} x 8 inches).

Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Anselm Kiefer

Icarus—March Sand, 1981.

Oil, emulsion, shellac and sand on photograph, mounted on canvas (114^{1/4} x 141^{3/4} inches).

Private Collection.

Anselm Kiefer

Aaron, 1984.

Oil, emulsion, shellac, lead, and straw on canvas (130 x 196^{4/5} inches).

The Israel Museum, Collection of Norman and Irma Braman.

Anselm Kiefer

The Miracle of Serpents, 1984-85.

Collage and shellac on photographic paper (22^{3/16} x 32^{1/16} inches).

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Konrad M. Weis, Pittsburgh; and the Carnegie Museum of Art

Anselm Kiefer

Osiris and Isis, 1985-87.

Oil, acrylic, emulsion, clay, porcelain, lead, copper wire and circuit board on canvas (150 x 220^{1/2} x 6^{1/2} inches).

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Anselm Kiefer

Falling Stars, 1995.

Oil on canvas (90^{1/2} x 67 inches).

Private Collection, London.

Anselm Kiefer

Man Under a Pyramid, 1996.

Emulsion, acrylic, shellac and ash on burlap (110^{3/5} x 197^{3/5} x 2 inches).

Tate, London; National Galleries of Scotland.

Anselm Kiefer

Athamor, Danae, and Hortus Conclusus, 2007.

Painting, soil, lead, silver dust, gold dust, recycled paintings (*Athamor*). Lead, aluminum, silver and gold (*Danae* and *Hortus Conclusus*).

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