

An Exploration of Materiality in Josef Winkler's Narrative Structures

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## **Abstract**

Josef Winkler's work is defined by iterations of events from his childhood, most of them in the context of Austrian provincialism, Catholicism, and their patriarchal structures of dominance. In each of his narratives, memories are rehearsed and retold with increasing semantic precision, every time more complicated through intermedial references to sound, smell, and cinematic imagery. In his pursuit of the aesthetics of form and genre, Winkler consciously inserts material objects that become crucial elements in his recollections of the past. This dissertation argues that common household items, sacred relics, or brand items constitute familiar categories of objects that are presented, framed, and placed within the text, where they function as an essential part of narrative structure. While they re-affirm apparently ossified systems of belief, they also break them down. Everytime the object or thing re-occurs, it has changed and thereby changes everything around it. While he fetishizes and manipulates things, in particular those associated with the act of writing, he exposes both their power and their powerlessness with irony and satire. As objects in a system of exchange, they stand in as autobiographical as well as cultural signifiers and articulate a distinct discourse about a particularly ambiguous and ambivalent "semiotic order of things."

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## **Introduction: Josef Winkler and Materiality Theory**

Perhaps everyone has taken a critical look around one's home, or the homes of friends, or performed an introspection into the memory of one's childhood dwelling and questioned what impetus compels one to accumulate such a plethora of things, to amass collections, and to keep precisely the objects displayed in even the most austere of spaces. During such introspection it becomes clear that any household order cannot be the product of random spontaneity or thoughtless whimsy. The photographs, the books, the knick-knacks and ornaments quickly comprise a narrative, revealing one's history, culture, preferences and even highly personal externalizations of one's memory. Superstitions, fetishes, ideologies are revealed in much the same way in one's own domestic gallery. The question that arises, even if jokingly posed, is whether these embodiments of one's identity are indeed consciously selected, or perhaps have compelled us through some supernatural power to pick them up and feature them in our most important spaces. Identity, defined through complex subject-object relations, is the foundation of Materiality Theory, an interdisciplinary approach to things and the behavior humans demonstrate in their presence or absence.

The Austrian author Josef Winkler has risen to prominence during the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for many reasons, not least his visual, intermedial, and intertextual writing. His seventeen books released since 1979 follow a number of themes common to the Austrian corpus of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, namely, death, social criticism, and postwar issues. Winkler specializes in an autobiographical style. All his texts depend on a core

repertoire of memories of his childhood and family in rural Carinthia. During my first exposure to Winkler several years ago, something came to my attention. Certain peculiarities such as a calf-birthing rope (*Kalbstrick*), the body of his maternal grandmother, and the *Julius Meinl* logo among others were repeated a number of times within the text. Reading from one text to another I saw this trend present in other works as well. While repetition as narrative principle is nothing new, and quite common in fact to the works of Thomas Bernhard and Elfriede Jelinek, these repetitions did not appear as a mere device for thematic emphasis, but were also present in relation specific to memories and narrative structures that were repeated with the objects themselves.

The following analysis seeks to explore whether these objects possess a function in the text beyond their physical descriptive presence or symbolic value. The same impetus that has given rise to the study of fetishes and fetishism, subject-object relationship between humans and the things they surround themselves with, and notions that objects possess the capacity to compel us to control them as posited by Materiality Theory shall be of importance here. This analysis rejects the notion that the presence of objects is accidental. No one curates their home as a random assortment of junk; even for the most ambitious hoarder, compelled by the materiality of things to a more pathological level, objects are assumed to possess at least a function and at most unique agency. Winkler's "Ich," the narrating I, will be the subject of this analysis in relation to commonly repeated objects. In an analysis of the genealogy of Winkler's oeuvre, the question arises whether these objects mediate memory, narratives, or subjective conditions through their iterations and peculiar contextualization.



Although Materiality Theory is pervasive in most disciplines, it is seldom defined in terms of its origin and evolution from an entry in a dictionary to a discourse. Neither the etymology, nor the definition, nor the history of the term in prevalent encyclopedias provide a comprehensive understanding of the word “materiality.” Does the modern Latin word *materialis* and *materialitas* dating back to the 1520s refer to a “substance” or “matter”? Is it simply a “quality of being material” (1560), or a “quality of being important of matters at hand” (1640s)?<sup>1</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* differentiates between something material as that which “pertains to a matter as opposed to form,” and that which “pertains to matter or body, formed or consisting of matter; corporeal.”<sup>2</sup> Defining the term in its linguistic or etymological provenance, the entries in standard lexica present it in its most isolated and reduced form. However, once it enters various disciplines or discourses, it becomes evident that language itself can be causative, that is, it can produce a system of meanings and values. Language can become a formative force (Patterson 67). Associated with “corporeal,” material may be linked with “worldly” affairs and juxtaposed with spiritual or liberal pursuits (Williams 198).<sup>3</sup> Once the relationship between human and non-human, animate and non-animate, subject and object is established, it becomes visible (Boscagli 1). “This understanding of materiality put in place by the revised relation between people and things has far-reaching cultural,

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<sup>1</sup> Random House Dictionary, 2014. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Williams 197-201.

social, and political possibilities” (Boscagli 2).<sup>4</sup> For Boscagli things are those we own that “have shed their glamour as shiny commodities, yet we are unwilling to dispose of and relegate to the trash heap” (2). Boscagli’s “stuff” consists of the mundane and prosthetic things “that fill our pockets and purses, closets and trunks with which we furnish the self and the spaces we inhabit. . . . Stuff is unstable, recyclable, made of elements put in place by different networks of power and meaning, that encounter one another by chance and cohere only temporarily by affinity” (5). In Turkle’s collection of autobiographical essays, *Evocative Objects. Things We Think With*, objects are companions in life experiences—an apple, a train, ballet slippers, a laptop, etc.—and connect to emotional worlds. The most important aspect, however, is Williams’s assertion that these processes are not merely reflected in language but rather occur within language (22).

Today, “Materiality” has entered almost all areas as diverse as anthropology, cosmology, finance, theology, art, and, last but not least, literary studies. Titles, such as *Materiality*,<sup>5</sup> *Material Feminisms*,<sup>6</sup> *Materializing Religion*,<sup>7</sup> *Body Matters*,<sup>8</sup> *Materiality and Spectacle*<sup>9</sup> attest to the scope of discourses that pervade the academy as well as commerce and the arts. Efforts have been made to define what we mean by “material object,” yet is it equally important to clarify what this “object” is. Does it exist

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<sup>4</sup> In her monograph *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism*, Boscagli argues that “stuff” is disposable, yet we can’t let go and acquire and cumulate more and more of it.

<sup>5</sup> Miller.

<sup>6</sup> Alaimo and Heckman.

<sup>7</sup> Arweck and Keenan.

<sup>8</sup> Keane and Horner.

<sup>9</sup> Yu.

somewhere out there to be found and kept by us? Or is it an object that has entered a relationship fraught with passion, obsession, fear, or abhorrence? Is it a “thing,” that by its “thingness” can take on subjectivity, gain agency and manipulate us? Or is it just “stuff” that seems to be everywhere, “ready to overwhelm us, and at the same time [...] appear[s] to be an illusion, melting into air” (Boscagli 2). In other words, we are now confronted with a multitude of understandings, interpretations, and theories that do not provide a particularly unified approach to the study of things.

Theorists seem to agree that materiality is ultimately discursive, although they remain focused on “objects,” “things,” or “stuff” and the relationship they create among themselves or with the human subject that they conjoin. Extending the argument that materiality is discursive because it only functions in a constructed world where subject-object relationships and their mutual agency are represented in language, the question arises how materiality is represented in literary texts. Does the author/narrator simply create a table assembling a number of heterogeneous items that break up our prevailing system of taxonomy between the Same and the Other?<sup>10</sup> Or do they create a new “semiotic order of things” (Boscagli 3),<sup>11</sup> in which “strange categories can be assigned a precise meaning and a demonstrable content” through language? (Foucault XV). Do things reveal economic, social, gendered, and psychological relationships or traits of the characters? Are they markers in the text that intersect with narrative elements pertinent to

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<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, XV.

<sup>11</sup> Boscagli actually argues that a western philosophic, scientific, and semiotic order of things is no longer possible, since “stuff” is a materiality out of bounds that refuses to be contained. “Intruding in works of culture,” it “radically recasts fundamental questions of human and material agency in modernity” (3).

the story that is being told? Can the materiality of objects be transformed into agency that participates and partakes in the world of fiction through structural and semiotic strategies?

To explore these questions in literary texts, the dissertation will analyze Josef Winkler's works and examine how his youthful unconstrained "flood of words" (*Wortfluten*) become more restrained in his quest for precision and clarity, once he consciously uses material objects as structural devices. Winkler's play with themes and objects also extends to semantic elements when he intersects his narratives with quotations from other writers. Each of Winkler's texts work with a plethora of intertextual and paratextual references from a whole library of national and international authors such as Peter Handke, Terézia Mora, or Jenshiro Kawabata. The question arises whether one can interpret objects and texts as intertexts or just as literary elements that frame the text. In other words, is the discussion of materiality simply a discussion of intertextuality? Does research on intertextuality and referentiality dismiss the common object as insignificant and concentrate exclusively on text and form? In shifting the word-text correlation into a pure realm of ideation, do the semiotics and symbolism of signifier and signified ignore or disregard the obvious materiality of the object itself?

My analysis will explore the shift from the materiality of common household items (the calf-birthing rope or *Kalbstrick*) to the materiality of the body as it mediates memory, to the mediality of visual images produced by his "film camera eye" (*Filmkameraauge*) and stored in the repository of his notebooks. Of particular interest will be the tracing of the voice of the narrator as he turns from the angry young man, who

is absorbed in often blasphemous critique of his native Austria, into the mature writer who joins Foucault in his laughter about Borges encyclopedia (Foucault, *Order of Things*, XV), or enters into a Benjaminian carnevalesque world to participate and partake (435-436), to visualize and archive, not so much through action but through the creative energy of language, often with hilarious results.

Like Thomas Bernhard's, Elfriede Jelinek's, or Peter Handke's narratives, Josef Winkler's body of work evokes the memories of his childhood in the setting of entrenched Austrian provincialism, an atmosphere that is confined by religious traditions and patterns of political fascism. His texts, too, are permeated with biographical elements and scathing critiques of Austria's complicity in the Holocaust, its fascist past and the problematic relationship between parents and children, who have not yet come to terms with the history that still determines their lives, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Winkler's oeuvre is further characterized by seminal, often traumatic events, such as the death of his three maternal uncles, his father's aggressive disciplinary acts, the child's confrontation with his grandmother's corpse, or the suicide of two village boys that are iterated — often verbatim — in various narrative settings.

Josef Winkler was born on March 3, 1953 in Kaming, near Paternion in Carinthia (Kärnten), as the sixth child of the farmers Jakob and Maria Winkler. Raised within the extended family that consisted of his paternal and maternal grandparents, he experienced the traditional generational tensions and was subjected to paternal disciplinary acts that included beating and intimidation. His relationship to his father was ambiguous: while he feared and resented him, he also respected him and especially

enjoyed his stories about his war experiences. In at least eight of his books, the father plays a prominent role as dominating patriarch.

*Roppongi, oder Requiem für einen Vater* (2007), dedicated to the memory of his father, is an effusive rhetorical *tour de force* of reckoning and liberation and a text obsessed with the aesthetics of form and sound. Following the death of her three brothers in the war at the age of 18, 20, and 21, his mother fell silent, rendering his childhood home a world without language (“eine sprachlose Welt”). The companion piece to *Roppongi*, his “Requiem for his mother,” *Mutter und der Bleistift* (2013) reveals the close connection of the frail child to his quiet mother, who suffered from depression and bouts of nervous disorders. In contrast to the domineering father, his mother “let him be and live accordingly” (“Mutter ließ mich sein und leben”).<sup>12</sup>

The farm provided for the livelihood of the family, but money was scarce. When his mother explained that there was no money for books, the boy became class conscious, especially, since the teacher’s son was allowed to purchase books. With his growing obsession for books, he found a way through “Familienkriminalität” to acquire them: he stole money from his parents and bought a number of Karl May books. By the time he was 14, he had read almost all of Karl May.

After Winkler completed the rural Austrian primary school in Kamering, he attended a three year-commercial school in Vienna. To obtain his high school diploma, he enrolled in an evening school while working a day-time job at the publishing house

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<sup>12</sup> “‘Mutter ließ mich sein und leben.’ Der Kärntner Schriftsteller Josef Winkler im Gespräch über sein neues Buch *Mutter und der Bleistift*.” Interview by Kurier. Web. 16 Mar. 2015.

that produced his beloved Karl May books. From 1973 to 1982, he worked in the administration of the Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt. During this time, he organized the literary circle *Literarischer Arbeitskreis* and edited with Alois Brandstetter the literary magazine *Schreibarbeiten*.

Winkler is married to Christina Schwichtenberg with whom he has two children, a son Kasimir, and a daughter Siri. His wife, the daughter of an engineer, lived for four years with her parents in Rourkela, a town in the Indian province of Orissa. After she finished her studies in Art History with a dissertation on *Das Pittoreske und die römische Vedute um 1800* (1992), the couple visited India for the first time in 1993. Winkler writes in several of his books about their arrival in Varanasi, his shock about the poverty and filth in the streets, and his decision to return immediately to Europe. However, a longer stay in India proved to be a positive experience that became an endless source of inspiration for his various novels (*Indien, Domra, Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd*). In collaboration with his wife, who provided most of the photography, Winkler recently published his Indian notebooks *Indien* (2006) and *Kalkutta 1* (2011); *Kalkutta 2* (2012), and *Kalkutta 3* (2014).

With his wife and children, Winkler began to travel, first to Italy, then to India and Mexico. All his trips were “pilgrimages to sites of death cults” (“weltweite Pilgerfahrt[en] zu den Totenkulten,” *Realität* 160). Traumatized by the silence in his home, Winkler remains obsessed by his *angst* to lose language (“Angst vor dem Verlust der Sprache”),<sup>13</sup> to be afflicted with speechlessness (“Sprachlosigkeit”). In his interviews

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<sup>13</sup> Winkler, Interview by Kurier. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.

as well as in his literary texts and notebooks, Winkler talks about his writing as a project that is not concerned with content but with language, not with any kind of “Austrorealism” but with style and form. Writing is a search for depth and meaning, for “Verzweigungen in Stil und Form” (“branching off in style and form”)<sup>14</sup> and repeated attempts to write the same event in ever new semantic terms. He describes the process as a musical composition with theme and endless variations, not simply repetitions but artistic iterations crafted with precision and clarity. Work on a text is work on language (“Arbeit an einem Buch ist Arbeit an der Sprache”).<sup>15</sup> Writing is “etwas dringend und drängend darstellen” (“to represent something with urgency and compulsion”).<sup>16</sup>

In 2009 Winkler collaborated with Michael Pfeifenberger to produce the screenplay for a film representing his life and literary motifs entitled *Josef Winkler — Der Kinoleinwandgeher*. The film received positive reviews and won the 2009 Erasmus EuroMedia Special Award for Aesthetics and Design (Daffner 1). Despite the recognition, the film has not drawn much attention in academic scholarship (Daffner 1). While Pfeiffenberger called the film a “literary road movie about Winkler and his literature in all its radicalism and self-exposure,” Winkler himself saw it as an “art experiment,” that is “literature in film” (“Literatur im Film,” Daffner 3), emphasizing his conscious attempt to create a dialogic art form where the visual and the verbal intersect. Whereas his literary texts incorporate cinematic elements, the film was to integrate literary components, suggesting a newfound artistic synthesis, in which neither genre

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<sup>14</sup> Winkler, Interview by Kurier. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Winkler, Interview by Kurier. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Winkler, Interview by Kurier. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.



assumes the dominant role that “dictates and structures the overall interpretive framework” (Langford 11).

Today, Josef Winkler is well known for his provocative writing published between 1979 and 2015.<sup>17</sup> As one of the prominent Austrian postwar novelists, he has received a number of literary awards, among them the distinguished Georg Büchner Preis, a prestigious literary recognition (2008)<sup>18</sup>. He has been translated into the major European languages by Miguel Sáenz, Bernard Banoun, and Adrian West.<sup>19</sup> Since 2010 he is president of the Österreichische Kunstsenat (Austrian Art Senate).

Winkler remains an engaged and prolific writer who strives to perfect the aesthetics of form using concepts of hybridity, syncretion, fusion and dialogue (Langdon 11). He does not shy away from controversies as is well documented by the reception of his books, especially his early publications. On the occasion of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ingeborg Bachmann-Preis in 2009, Josef Winkler held the “Klagenfurter Rede zur Literatur,” in which he criticized the governments of Carinthia and the capital Klagenfurt for failing to build a library while enormous sums had been spent on the soccer stadium. Known for

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<sup>17</sup> That does not include the Notebooks Indien, Kalkutta 1,2, and 3.

<sup>18</sup>The prizes include: Verleger Preis of Ingeborg Bachmann Preis 1979; Anton Wildgans Preis 1980; Kranichsteiner Literaturpreis 1990; Stadtschreiber von Bergen 1994/1995; Bettina-von-Arnim-Preis 1995; Berliner Literaturpreis 1996; manuskripte-Preis des Landes Steiermark 1996; André-Gide-Preis 2000; Alfred-Döblin-Preis 2001; Otto-Stoessl-Preis 2001; Franz-Nabl-Preis der Stadt Graz 2005; Grand Austrian State Preis 2007; Georg Büchner Preis by Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Miguel Sáenz Sagaseta de Ilúrdoz is a Spanish translator who translated Brecht, Grass, Sebald and Bernhard. Bounon translated Winkler’s *Wenn es soweit ist* (2000), *Natura Morta* (2003), and *Muttersprache*. Michael Roloff *Das Zöglingsheft des Jean Genet* (1992/1997); Michael Mitchell, *The Serf* (1997). Adrian West is a contributing editor at Asymptote. He has translated Winkler's *The Graveyard of Bitter Oranges* (2012), *Natura Morta* (2014) and *When the Time Comes*.

his persistence, he has repeated his attack on various occasions, only recently in an interview with Gunter Kaindlstorfer<sup>20</sup> and in a speech he gave in 2014 in Klagenfurt in the Musil Literaturmuseum.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas literary scholarship has produced substantial research on Thomas Bernhard, Elfriede Jelinek, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Peter Handke, essays or monographs are still sparse about Josef Winkler's work. The collection of essays in *Josef Winkler*, edited by Günther H. Höfler and Gerhard Melzer (1998) covers his life and work and also includes a bibliography that, although dated, provides a basic list of scholarly contributions. More recent publications, mainly on a single work, or the autobiographical film *Kinoleinwandgeher*, include essays by Aspetsberger, Daffner, and Kacianka. Prevalent topics are Winkler's language and his provocative writings on Austrian Catholicism, latent fascism, his scatological and sexually explicit outpourings, and his obsession with death and the abject. Since recent narratives include his travels to India, Japan, and Mexico, Kalatebahli has argued that his oeuvre repeats hegemonial notions in postcolonial writings while undermining national myths and hierarchical Western structures in his exotic settings.<sup>22</sup> Daffner counters this argument when she

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<sup>20</sup> "Leselounge: Josef Winkler im Interview mit Günter Kaindlstorfer." Web. 27 Jan. 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Winkler was a member of the Jury to award the Humbert-Fink-Preis 2014 in the Musil Literaturmuseum in Klagenfurt to Antonio Fian. I attended the event.

<sup>22</sup> Kalatebahli: "Eine ganz andere Haltung repräsentiert Josef Winkler in seinem Roman Domra. Er klammert auf der inhaltlichen Ebene des Romans alle allgemeinen sozialen und politischen Fragen aus, aber durch seinen spezifischen Sprachstil und durch die strukturelle Anordnung des Stoffes sucht er die hierarchischen Ordnungen zu unterminieren" (14).

maintains that Winkler's writings suggest renegotiations of national and transnational identities (3).

The focus has remained on the familiar recurring themes as well as the richness of his language, but little has been said about his experimentation with material and medial elements in his texts. Rather than investigating individual texts in their chronological order, emphasis will be on material objects and how they function as aesthetic, structural, and communicative elements in the body of his work. This project begins with the analysis of a common household item, a fixture in every farm: the *Kalbstrick* or birthing rope, used to pull the fetus from the womb of the animal. After discussing the materiality of the living body, the corpse and the relic in the second chapter, the third chapter investigates the mediality of brand names. The trajectory from the material object or thing to the physicality of the body in all of its stages of ageing and decay to visual imagery as semantic markers of memory parallels Winkler's ambition to develop an innovative aesthetics of form through the intersection of literature and visual culture, in particular, photography and cinema.

To situate Winkler's narrative within the discourse of materiality and material culture, it is necessary to explore various theoretical concepts borrowed from anthropology, ethnic and cultural studies. For my first chapter, Hartmut Böhme's *Fetischismus und Kultur. Eine andere Theorie der Moderne*, Daniel Miller's *Materiality*, and Bill Brown's "Theory of Things" and *A Sense of Things: The Object Matters of American Literature* provide an interdisciplinary perspective on the topic. The discussion

of iteration as narrative strategy that is not so much grounded on temporality but on materiality will include Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*.

In his *Fetischismus und Kultur* Hartmut Böhme debunks the notion that cult and magic have been replaced by rational thought defining the relationship between subject and object, society and nature, intellect and thing as mutually exclusive. Things have always been with us, we just did not want to acknowledge them. Fetishism is no longer relegated to the past or to non-Western cultures; it has been "normalized" into cultural fetishism or "Waren-Fetishism," promoted into star-cult, fanzines, or pop-icons. Today, reason and magic are not alternatives but intimately linked together. We create things, we collect things, we are fascinated by them. And they create us, define us, and shape us. Although we claim that we do not believe in the agency of things, we act as if we do (13-14).<sup>23</sup>

Whereas Böhme sees the subject-object relationship mainly in terms of various expressions of fetishism, Daniel Miller argues that anthropology offers means to explore the plurality of forms of materiality by realizing that each situation changes, "because we live in a changing and varied world of practices" (Miller, *Materiality* 4). Miller's anthropological approach situates material culture as an exterior environment that habituates us and determines our behavior and identity (Miller, *Materiality* 4f.). Miller also coined the phrase "humility of things," that is, although ubiquitous in our lives, objects become invisible. The less we are aware of them, the greater is the power they

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<sup>23</sup> Böhme coins again a neologism, when he talks about material objects as "Leib-Gedinge." "Sie sind da — als was immer: rostiges Eisen, Relikt der Ahnen, Schrott, <Leib-Gedinge>, Wohltäter, ausrangiertes Nutzobjekt mit zweiter (symbolischer) Karriere ..." (14).

assume over us: they determine our expectations and set the scene for normative behavior without us being conscious of their capacity to do so (Miller, *Materiality* 5).

Bill Brown calls attention to the un-specificity that “things” denote (Brown, “Thing Theory” 3) and distinguishes between object and thing when he argues that the word “things [...] holds within it a more audacious ambiguity” (Brown, “Thing Theory” 4). We look through and at objects to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, and ourselves, and we understand them as facts. However, we are faced with the “thingness” of the object when it ceases to be useful, that is, when it turns from a neutral utilitarian tool into a machine that exerts its own will (Brown, “Thing Theory” 4).

G rard Genette provides the theoretical premise to address Winkler’s strategy of iteration. Genette argues that frequency, the number of times an event occurs in a text, functions, quite essentially, as a means of drawing attention to an event and coding it as important. Frequency also works as a means of exploring different modalities of an event by tweaking context or details, thereby approaching an event through a number of different thematic or ideological positions.

Beginning with *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd*, a collection of vignettes that he defined as experiments in the aesthetics of form, Winkler consciously uses material objects in his writings. Whereas *Milka* or *Bensdorf Schokolade*, *Hirsch Terpentinselzeife*, *Meinl Kaffee*, or *Smart Cigarettes* are mostly associated with individual characters, the *Kalbstrick* is a dominant object since it is not only associated with farm life, paternal discipline, maternal pain, and suicide, but also with writing. The first chapter shows that in its discursive manifestations, the rope becomes more prominent than the characters or

even the event itself. Whether it is the *Kalbstrick* as an instrument of punishment, death, dreams, memory, or inspiration, it is never the same. Placed within the rural environment and farming life, it is ubiquitous and feigns “humility,” yet it determines people’s lives and actions. In its dominance over those affected by it, it exercises subjugation. At the same time, it becomes the cause for obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behavior and establishes a fetishized and fetishizing relationship. Not situated in chronic or diachronic narrative structures, i.e., in adjectives that denote temporality and description, it is defined by verbs that denote its passive or active participation in the action. When covered with hair, skin and blood, the un-human<sup>24</sup> rope appropriates human characteristics, exploiting its association with the living body. In its ultimate manifestation, the *Kalbstrick* assumes agency through discourse, that is, it acquires language and takes on a life of its own.

Winkler’s oeuvre, especially his early work, displays his obsession with the physiology of the body, the abject, and the corpse in its various stages of decay. Marked by hard labor, wounds, and ageing, the body dissolves into its basic elements, osseous matter and molecules invisible to the eye. At the end of this descent, Winkler still maintains the materiality of the body, even the absent corpse (*Roppongi*), as it becomes tangible in the vivid imagery of memory and language. Christian valorization of the body that is displayed in wakes, funerals and *Reliquienkult* are also an important part in Winkler’s discourse of the body since skulls, bones, and fragments of bones not only

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<sup>24</sup> I will be using Bill Brown’s term “un-human” to differentiate it from the more common “non-human,” since “un-human” objects can take on human qualities in specific subject-object relationships.

stand in for the living as well as martyred and diseased bodies of the saints. Enshrined in sacred spaces (reliquaries), they are both bodily remains and venerated objects.

Expanding the boundaries of materiality to apply to the body, the question arises whether Winkler's understanding of the materiality of the body follows a trajectory, akin to the materiality of an object such as the *Kalbstrick*. Does it function in a similar narrative strategy, exploring an array of modalities, perspectives, ideologies, and contexts? The second chapter grounds the investigation of the materiality of the body in a brief overview of modern and postmodern theoretical approaches. It will then be argued that Winkler's representation of the body is deeply rooted in rural Austrian autochthonism<sup>25</sup> and Catholicism, distinctive of the geographically remote and secluded Alpine region of Carinthia. This dissertation further explores the relationship between the authorial I and the differing constructions of the materiality of the living body, the failing body, the diseased body, and the relic. In this context, it will be shown that the aestheticized, the fetishized, and the abject body exercises powers to reference, mediate, conceal, and reveal.

To explicate this thesis, Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and Judith Butler's reading and revision of Foucault in her lecture "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions" provide useful arguments. Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection as revulsion (*Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*) offers an interesting counterpoint to Winkler's fascination, even attraction to abjection. In the discussion of

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<sup>25</sup> Origin from the soil; the state of being aboriginal, or the state of being native to a region. Merriam Webster dictionary. Web. 3 Oct 2015.

the absent body of the father, Jacques Derrida's argument in his *Archive Fever* will reinforce the claim that the author/narrator performs as the *archon*, the authority who controls the archive of memory, stored and secured in his notebooks.

Whereas Winkler scholarship has addressed his uncompromising attacks on rural Catholicism, it has not done so in terms of religious materiality, embodied belief, and human relationships to sacred objects. David Morgan's collection of essays, *Religion and Material Culture. The Matter of Belief*, illustrates that belief is more than linguistic acts of signification, creedal utterances, or discursive performances. Handling objects, buying, and displaying commodities (12), even gazing at reliquiaries as repositories of precious particles of sacred matter (8), structure our relationship to the divine, that is otherwise not tangible (12). In his lecture "Materiality and Spectacle," Antony C. Yu further emphasizes the human desire to materialize the spiritual, to make sacrality visible. In Catholic rituals, for example, ashes are extensions of real persons; icons stand for something; the real bread and wine in the sacrament remains intact yet becomes something else.<sup>26</sup>

The discussion of materiality of the body begins with the physicality of the paternal body, a parchment inscribed with the traces of discipline, hard labor, and old age. Once the body/corpse is absent, the narrator experiences the compulsion to reconstitute it through the materiality of images and text. The notion of the materiality of the body becomes more complex, when traced in the cruciform of the author's native village Kaming, where the tortured body of Christ is visualized. Although one could

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<sup>26</sup> See Yu's explications in his lecture on the Panel "Materiality and Spectacle." Harvard School of Divinity. Lecture. Web. 13 Nov. 2015.



argue that the representation remains symbolic, the narrator deconstructs the metaphorical through the interrelationship of lived experiences inserted into the sacrality of materialized space (Yu). Since his fixation with death and the corpse goes back to his early childhood, mortality ceases to be an abstract idea; it is lived experience, materialized as abjection. Driven by his obsessive compulsive (Böhme calls it “anancastic,” 17) urge to participate and partake in the decomposition of the body, the narrator relates his experience with the death of his two grandmothers. The chapter closes with the discussion of the relic as materialized sacrality endowed with mediating powers. Similar to the *Kalbstrick*, the relic, too, is associated with the writing process when fetishized and eroticized. Although the skull, taken from the Roman catacombs, is ultimately devoid of agency, it remains a powerful force, precisely because its inspirational energy has not materialized. Ironically, writing about the failure of agency reveals its latent powers.

Winkler’s *Filmkamerakopf* (“film camera eye”) is a concept that becomes more apparent and frequent with the author’s shift in writing style during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It accompanies the search for authorial precision and concentration on autobiographic introspection based on familiar constellations of objects, events, and memories. This peculiar term possesses numerous possible interpretations; however, it appears to be rooted in the author’s self-representation as an agent participating and partaking (“teilnehmen und teilhaben”) in the tripartite relationship between the narrating I, the actors in the text, and the objects or things whose proximity defines them.

The third chapter explores the concept of *Filmkamerakopf* as the device that captures images and arranges them in a curated order, not unlike the medium of film. The eye of the lens produces, archives, selects, and mediates these images like stories in a picturebook or a film strip. As *Erinnerungsbilder* (“images of memory”), they reconstitute lived experience and mediate memory; telling their own stories, they intersect with the narrative. Among the various images, brand and brandnames take on a prominent role. The question arises whether brands and brandnames function like the *Kalbstrick* and the body as structural devices that establish complex relationships between themselves, the players in the text, and the authorial I. To explore these questions and define the shift from brands as material objects, that is, commodities produced through labor, to material objects as means of communication, and, finally, to material objects as medial images, I have selected as guides Jean Baudrillard’s *The System of Objects* and Andre Martin’s *Medien machen Marken*.

Drawing from Baudrillard’s and Martin’s theoretical framework in the analysis of Winkler’s placement of bands and brandnames, this chapter discusses first “literal” branding, that is the imprint of brandnames on commodities, common in Austrian culture. Second, simulacra, signs, and images that imply transnationalism but remain provincial, “participate” in cultural and religious rituals and provide the transition to the discussion of transnational items that are engaged in a system of exchange between Austria and Mexico. The chapter concludes with the analysis of brands that are “exported” and placed in satirical juxtaposition to foreign religious rites at the shores of the river Ganges in Varanasi.

Baudrillard understands Marx's concept of commodity in a much more radical way when he accuses him of excluding language, signs, and communication from the productive forces in his materialist analysis of production, the *Theory of Money*. If our culture is no longer grounded in traditional metaphysical assumptions of classifications but defined by simulations of objects, emphasis has shifted from labor and modes of production to gratification and consumption. Commodities no longer reference use value or utility but communication; relationships are restructured in terms of word, image or meaning and imply desire. The consumer is exposed to a systematic manipulation of signs and becomes conditioned to be integrated into that system.

Andree focuses on the "Medienphänomen Marke" that is no longer confined to the sale of a product or service once it has shed the pretense of an object produced by labor. Embedded in a complex network of medial images, arranged around connotations and associations, the product is invisible, covered by layers of wrapping, design, label, and advertising slogans. Marketing specialists research the effect and energies that exist between signifier and signified and manipulate consumers by constructing emphatic signs that create an "aura" through mediality.

All brandnames discussed in this section are introduced with their history and cultural significance. The chapter begins with the *Pelikan Füllfederhalter*, a brand fetishized by Winkler and venerated by the authorial I, as well as two common household items, *Bensdorp* or *Suchard Schokolade* and the *Hirsch Terpentinseife*. Pen, sweets, and soap represent materiality and are subject to wear and deterioration. Utility exposes them to decay, endowing the inanimate object with human qualities, that is, ageing and

mortality. Although their presence in the text imparts visual, haptic, gustatory, and tangible elements, their decomposition, visualized in the erasure of the logo that is branded into their surface, grants them agency to perform within the web of personal, cultural, and religious *Ängste* and *Zwänge* (Böhme 13-16).

A second group of brands consists of *Smart Export* cigarettes, *Moro Oranges*, and *Ovomaltine*. Marketing strategies, elegant designs of packagings and wrappers suggest transnational commercial exchange, urbanity and sophistication. However, once placed into the narrative, their stories of worldliness, masculinity, nutrition, and exoticism unravels, exposing their complicity with war, death, mourning, Catholic ritualistic violence, and political opportunism. In a dialogic exchange between image and text, the author/narrator humanizes the material object, subjecting it to the structural violence of its familial and cultural environment.

The *Zuckertotenkopf*, marketed and consumed during the annual *Día de los Muertos* in Mexico City is juxtaposed to the native *Mannerschnitten*<sup>27</sup> representing transnational items in a system of exchange. The white sugar skull, fetishized and conjured in obsessive outpourings by the narrating I to grant creative energies, is imported from Mexico to Austria while the *Mannerschnitten* are exported as hostess gifts from Austria to Mexico. Both are exposed as what they are: neither object is endowed with any supernatural powers. They are mass produced sweets, saccharin artifacts that lack the “aura” to affect those who touch, consume, or own them. The narrator ironizes this ambiguous subject-object relationship between the human and the un-human, yet he

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<sup>27</sup> *Mannerschnitten* are wafers with layers of cocoa and hazelnutt cream to create a chocolate snack, popular in Austria.

polemicalizes the global marketing strategies of *Ovomaltine* as nutritious drink for young children, when he visualizes its deadly effect on the lips of the dying child in Klagenfurt.

The chapter concludes with the analysis of a fourth group of transnational brand items that are marketed as representations of Austria's nexus to international trade and economic and political power. While the exotic, erotized image of the black woman on the wrapper of the *Moro Oranges* remains within the religious and cultural context of Austria, the dark-skinned youth with his Turkish Fez of the *Meinl Kaffee* appears at the site of cremation on the shores of the river Ganges in Varanasi. In a stark satire, the narrator manipulates marketing strategies geared to raise the desire for luxury goods when he strips the product down to its logo on the tattered bag. It remains open whether the product had been exported, whether the bag ever held the product for personal consumption, or whether the remnants of the logo expose consumerism as cult devoid of meaning. On the imaginative stage in India, the Viennese Hare Krishna girls perform the spectacle of mediality, devoid of substance and meaning.

Themes and topics of Josef Winkler's texts compare well with other 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian authors such as Elfriede Jelinek, Peter Handke, Ingeborg Bachman, and Thomas Bernhard. However, it is not merely Winkler's thematic association with this school of Austrian authors that make him of interest for scholarship. Austrian literature, perhaps more so than other national Germanic literatures has a tendency to focus on particular objects and a visual preference for storytelling.<sup>28</sup> While this project concentrates on Josef

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<sup>28</sup> Brunner's forthcoming collection of essays investigates Lessing, Wagner, Heine, Kafka, and Herta Müller. Emphasis is on the "In-Frage-Stellung" of the traditional order of things. Since things are imagined in literary texts, new semantic orders replace the

Winkler, a similar argument can be constructed in relationship to the writing of other authors and poets, such as Adalbert Stifter, Oskar Kokoschka, and Rainer Maria Rilke. Elfriede Jelinek or Thomas Bernhard are also known for their extremely graphic expositions, merging this preference for visual verisimilitude with other modalities of experience, not least the haptic and olfactory.

Materiality begins with the visual and haptic qualities of language, yet it is only fully exposed when these modes of narration reference intermediality. Winkler's writing has grown ever more preoccupied with the capacity of the written form of language to approach intermedial structures and his writing experiments with precisely this capacity. His biography and his innovative approach to language and writing make him a unique candidate for the study of materiality in prose. Furthermore, Winkler's attempts to approach autobiography through intertexts and intermedial references provide applicability of this thesis beyond the text. Winkler is not alone in this form of literary experimentation: Peter Handke attempts similar experimentation and other authors implicitly engage in it. Winkler's focus, however, on material objects is distinctively explicit and omnipresent to a degree that cannot be coincidental, nor can it be ignored.

Lastly, Winkler, as a living, active author who has only recently begun to attract scholarship has provided a more than sufficient and scholastically not yet exhausted corpus of source material, which will no doubt expand and undergo further experimentation in the future. The author's novel and experimental approach to the narration of lived experience and memory, his embrace of visual media and visual culture

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traditional systems, granting agency to material objects that reverse the relationship between the human and the un-human.

as a subject of his writing, and his ongoing attempts to thematize contemporary political issues in Carinthia and greater Austria render him a particularly relevant subject. In concentrating on Winkler, this project spans two literary epochs: Winkler's early writing resembles other 20<sup>th</sup> century texts, while his contemporary writing with its intermedial references leaps beyond the highlands of Austria and constructs a unique 21<sup>st</sup> century portrait of Austria, one that has not quite shed the problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but one structurally aware of the passage of time and the prevalence of a new media culture.

Austria is also no longer the sole focus of Winkler's text. The author includes autobiographic accounts of his travels to India, Japan, Mexico, and the USA. Austria is no longer the *Handlungsort* ("the place where the action occurs"), but it remains present as a point of comparison. Through objects and brand names the author ironically inserts Austria into an increasingly globalized, technological, and smaller world. The scope of this project does include an attempt to highlight this change from a repetitive focus on familiar loci surrounding the tiny town of Kaming, to a more elaborate web spanning outward from that same village into the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. This combination of intriguing attributes is the reason I have chosen Winkler as my sole subject. His writing spans multiple generations, moves from a rural environment to transnational domain, and culminates in an innovative and cutting edge portrayal of contemporary Austrian culture.

## 1. “Den Kalbstrick verlängern.” Materiality and the Writing Process

Josef Winkler’s work is defined by iterations of events from his childhood, most of them in the context of Austrian provincialism, Catholicism, and their patriarchal structures of dominance. In each of his narratives, memories are rehearsed and retold with increasing semantic precision, every time more complicated through intermedial references to sound, smell, and cinematic imagery. In his pursuit of the aesthetics of form and genre, Winkler consciously inserts material objects that become crucial elements in his recollections of the past. Common household items, sacred relics, or brand items constitute familiar categories of objects that are presented, framed, and placed within the text, where they function as an essential part of narrative structure. While they re-affirm apparently ossified systems of belief, they also break them down. Everytime the object or thing re-occurs, it has changed and thereby changes everything around it. By engaging in intensely fervent but also playful repetitions of themes and things, Winkler mitigates his compulsive *Wieder-Holung* (repetition). While he fetishizes and manipulates things, in particular those associated with the act of writing, he exposes both their power and their powerlessness with irony and satire. As objects in a system of exchange they stand in as autobiographical as well as cultural signifiers and articulate a distinct discourse about a particularly ambiguous and ambivalent “semiotic order of things” (Boscagli 3).

Investigating a specific material object as element of narrative structures is the task of the first chapter. From the various household items, primacy is given to a particular one: the *Kalbstrick* or calf-birthing rope. This chapter analyzes the rope in its



various manifestations: as *Leitmotif* in Winkler's oeuvre, when the narrative of the suicide of the two boys prefaces his first novel *Menschenkind* (1979); as instrument of paternal authority and violence, as well as an image of fear and abjection in *Wortschatz der Nacht* (2013), *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* (2003), *Der Ackermann aus Kärnten* (1980), and *Die Realität so sagen, als ob sie trotzdem nicht wär oder die Wutausbrüche der Engel* (2011); as *Erinnerungsbild* ("image of memory") in *Roppongi* (2007), and, finally, as object that is endowed with language and takes on a life of its own in *Wortschatz der Nacht*.

Like Jelinek's, Bernhard's or Handke's writings, Josef Winkler's work, too, is permeated with biographical elements that mediate memories of his childhood in the setting of Austrian provincialism, an environment that is defined by patriarchal structures, religious traditions, and recurrent patterns of political fascism. His persistent fascination with death, suicide, and the abject is linked to his intense focus on the material object that evolves from a common object ("Gebrauchsgegenstand") to a complex narratological element whose particular story intersects with the narrative in multiple ways. In his pursuit of semantic precision,<sup>29</sup> Winkler embeds in every one of his texts a series of autobiographical events, centered on material objects that are drawn from a repository of childhood experiences and memories. Iteration is frequently evoked in the process of writing when mental images insert themselves into the text.

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<sup>29</sup> In his interview with Kristina Werndl Winkler argued that he consciously opted not to connect the individual pieces into "irgendsoein Erzählbüschel oder in eine Novelle" (Winkler, Interview 129) but to extricate himself from the emotions of his earlier texts and strive to achieve "eine andere Qualität, eine größere Präzision" (Winkler, Interview 111).

Since material objects are so essential in Winkler's writing process, they take on fetishistic characteristics releasing an obsessive urge to articulate the same in ever more complex variations. To situate Winkler's narrative within the discourse of materiality and material culture, it is necessary to explore and draw on theoretical concepts borrowed from anthropology, ethnic studies, and fetishism. Although the Freudian concept of fetishism as substitution and displacement or the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism offer convincing theoretical approaches, Hartmut Böhme's *Fetischismus und Kultur. Eine andere Theorie der Moderne* offers a more relevant source for the argument. While he takes Freud and Marx into account, he stays focused on the cultural historicity ("kulturhistorischer Aspekt") of materiality of the object and the persistent dynamics between subject-object relationships. Within the broader context of cultural studies and modernity, Daniel Miller's *Materiality*, and Bill Brown's "Theory of Things" and *A Sense of Things: The Object Matters of American Literature* provide a useful anthropological and interdisciplinary perspective on the topic. For the discussion of iteration as narrative strategy Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* will provide the foundation for this analysis.

Although Böhme, Miller and Brown offer a broad theoretical framework for a discourse on materiality, the following selection of specific concepts provides a sharper focus on the *Kalbstrick* as material object. Böhme's work as cultural historian is pertinent, since he discusses fetishism in its various theoretical and practical aspects. Emphasis will be on fetishism as the obsessive (Böhme calls it "anancastic") urge the authorial I displays when he conjures up specific memories of the birthing rope in

moments of crisis (writer's block) and in terms of the tension of belief and disbelief. Miller's anthropological perspective of the environment furnished with objects or "stuff" that determine our behavior and shape our identity precisely because they have become ubiquitous and invisible in their "humility" provides a good foundation for the various manifestations of the calf-birthing rope. Precisely because it is such a common object, its power becomes manifest when it is used as instrument for punishment, suicide, burial rites, and, most importantly, as fetish in the writing process. And, finally, Brown's theory of the shift from the "object" to a "thing" that changes the human and un-human relationship in significant ways can illustrate Winkler's heterogeneous modes of the rope's representation. To contextualize these strands, a more comprehensive explanation of the main theses of these critics will set the stage for an interpretation of the *Kalbstrick* or calf-birthing rope.

From the cluster of material objects that distinguish themselves and include the *Pelikan Füllfederhalter*, the *Hirsch-Terpentinseife*, the *Singer Nähmaschine*, or the *Waschschüssel mit dem blauen Rand*, the *Kalbstrick*, or birthing rope is the most prominent. One of the recurring material objects that are embedded in the narrative structure of all of Winkler's work, it takes on multilayered significance in its various iterations. This chapter will investigate the *Kalbstrick* in its multiple manifestations as it evolves from a simple common household item to a structural device and, finally, assumes agency through discourse when it acquires language and takes on a life of its own. Once its own language intersects the narrative, it exposes its singular purpose. With the strategic placement in the text, it functions as instrument of authorial inspiration as

well as discipline that forces the writer to reign in his excessive urge to flood the pages with language and imagery and to focus on the aesthetics of form.<sup>30</sup> In its almost obsessive evocations, the authorial I establishes a form of fetishism that fits Böhme's understanding of cultural underpinnings.

To define Winkler's distinct mode of fetishism, the anecdote related by Niels Bohr and recorded by Werner Heisenberg serves as a good example of the ambiguous relationship between reason and superstition (Böhme 13). At the end of a discussion of modern scientists about the notion of God and the numinous in the evening of a conference in Brussels, Bohr tells the story about a neighbor in Tisvilde who had fastened a horseshoe above his front door. Asked whether he is superstitious and believes in the lucky charm, the man answers: "Natürlich nicht; aber man sagt doch, daß es auch dann hilft, wenn man nicht daran glaubt" (Böhme 13). This anecdote is an appropriate example of the work of a common object that takes on "fetishist" qualities in terms of culture, memory, and storytelling. Iteration of the anecdote by two scientists does not guarantee the rationality or actual truth of the story. It rather confirms the tension between the physicists' intellectual disposition, their deeply engrained cultural heritage, and their fascination with the unknowable that determines the interdependence of reason and intuition.

Böhme classifies the horseshoe as "talisman" or "amulet" that belongs to a subgroup of magical objects, the fetishes, which people keep as lucky charms, whether

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<sup>30</sup> What Ulrich Weinzierl called "Schreiben als disziplinierte Raserei, als Luftschöpfen eines vom Ertrinken Bedrohten, Schreiben als mühsam gebändigte Bilderflut." Web. 17 Mar. 2015.

they are serious believers or just skeptical “modern” and “enlightened” storytellers. Because we no longer believe in magical powers inherent in the material object that act independently and that we cannot control, we distance ourselves by framing them in stories, trivializing them through irony. Böhme argues further that we are conscious that material objects, once “inhabited” (“einwohnen”)<sup>31</sup> by magical powers, exist in tension with our understanding of modern subjectivity. Therefore, we claim independence from these objects or relegate them into non-Western cultures. Ironically, we are still fascinated with these objects, endowing them again with subjectivity that grants them “power” over us. Although we assert that we do not believe in fetishes, we create and re-create specific objects again and again, conceding dominance, be it magical, psychological, or otherwise (14).

In his explication, Böhme emphasizes the still shifting relationships between pre-modern and modern understanding of knowledge. Böhme claims that we insist on analyzing our relations to material objects scientifically, since we are still caught in the interstices of individuality and autonomy—the modern—and dependence and belief in the power of objects—the pre-modern. Although science promises distance through rational modes of inquiry, Böhme maintains that we actually analyze ourselves. Because objects stand in affiliation with our cognitive and practical activities (14), absolute objective materiality, separate from the human subject, does not exist. Subject-object

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<sup>31</sup> Böhme’s “einwohnen” is a neologism implying “dwelling in” the body as well as the soul.

relationships are always interdependent relationships. Although we claim that we do not believe in the subjectivity of the object, we still act as if we do (13-14).<sup>32</sup>

Böhme provides a comprehensive historical overview of theories of fetishism by citing pertinent philosophers, cultural critics, psychologists, and anthropologists who trace the concept to its African origin.<sup>33</sup> His collection of essays offers a wide range of perspectives: material culture, Christian veneration of effigies, ethnography, political idolatry, commodity fetishism, sexuality, and psychoanalysis. Whereas he differentiates within the disciplinary categories, his main goal is not the priority of particular theories but the complex interrelations and reciprocity between subject and object, often buried in relational processes. Primarily interested in proving that fetishism is not confined to non-Western cultures but that it exists in our midst, Böhme cites its practice in high and popular culture, for example, intellectual fetishism, food fetishism, fashion fetishism, or cinema fetishism. While Böhme works with the understanding of the pervasiveness of fetishism in pre-modern as well as modern culture, Winkler's use of material objects carries the understanding of interdependent subject-object relations and the notions of "magic" and "fetishist" into a complex postmodern model that turns Böhme's argument into a much more experimental mode of storytelling.

Modern, in Böhme's perspective, is not defined through the binary opposition of reason and fetishism but through the practice of a form of reason that keeps the horseshoe

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<sup>32</sup> Böhme coins again a neologism, when he talks about material objects as "Leib-Gedinge." "Sie sind da—als was immer: rostiges Eisen, Relikt der Ahnen, Schrott, <Leib-Gedinge> (sic), Wohltäter, ausrangiertes Nutzobjekt mit zweiter (symbolischer) Karriere ..." (14).

<sup>33</sup> Among others he cites Thomas Aquinas, Nikolaus of Kues, Husserl, Heidegger, Latour, Mauss, Marx, and Freud.

above the front door. Modern also implies to live with contradictions, without the urge for reconciliation and harmony. Modern culture differentiates between rationality and self-reflection on one side, and between the tolerance and even development of fetishistic practices on the other. We not only need fetishism for our daily social lives but require it as sources for our aesthetic creativity and erotic pleasure. Böhme further emphasizes the complexity of the interplay between reason and fetishism when he suggests that culture could serve as the reflexive and mediating agent that would allow us to observe, to moderate, and to situate contradictory moments in such a way that they create an “aesthetic ensemble” of the heterogeneous and an ethical acknowledgment of the non-ethical (30).

Böhme approaches materiality as a cultural critic who offers a perspective that differs from the anthropological venue. Most important in his discussion of fetishism is his differentiation between objects that possess more agency than human actors do and those that remain inanimate but gain agency through mere projection of the human subject. Human behavior is not so much dictated by free will but rather through the role the object plays in public and private lives. The most extreme position is when objects are anthropomorphized, acquiring human agency. In the discourse about subject-object relationships, Böhme tends to join the camp who believe that objects are not just objects but intrinsically anthropomorphic, have more agency than humans, and influence human behavior. Böhme’s understanding of subject-object relationships that approach fetishistic habits and practices offers a venue for the analysis of Winkler’s more ambivalent notion of materiality.

Winkler's use of material objects can be read as exactly this combination of reason, intuition, and feeling that lends latent possibilities to the horseshoe above the door. Borrowed from rural Austrian culture, familiar objects and their connotation to private and public life are conjured up so often in his narratives that they take on fetishistic characteristics. Furthermore, the subject-object relations and the interplay between reason and fetishism are transposed into the act of writing where they function as sources for inspiration and create indeed an "aesthetic ensemble" through their placement and iteration.

Whereas Böhme sees the subject-object relationship mainly in terms of various expressions of fetishism, Daniel Miller explores materiality as the "driving force behind humanity's attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be" (Miller, *Materiality* 2). His book *Materiality* approaches the issue from two perspectives: a) that things are mere artifacts; and b) that the dualism of subjects and objects cannot be transcended. While he grants philosophical solutions and definitions a place in his work, he argues that anthropology offers means to explore the plurality of forms of materiality by realizing that each situation changes, "because we live in a changing and varied world of practices" (Miller, *Materiality* 4). His more recent study, *The Comfort of Things*, documents life experiences of thirty people from a single street in South London and focuses exclusively on objects placed in the interior of houses. However, Miller is not interested in furnishings as a random collection but in their relationship to the people living with them.



They have been gradually accumulated as an expression of that person or household. Surely, if we can learn to listen to these things we have access to an authentic other voice. Yes, also contrived, but in a different way from that of language. (Miller, *Comfort of Things* 2)

Although Miller approaches his subject as an anthropologist claiming authenticity of voice and documentation, he nevertheless alters his sources and thereby inserts elements of fiction into his account (Miller, *Comfort of Things* 302).<sup>34</sup>

Miller starts with an investigation of materiality in terms of its most conventional expression, the artifact, and expands his inquiry to encompass a broader definition of materiality that includes the ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological, and the theoretical. As anthropologist, he situates material culture as an exterior environment that conditions us and determines our behavior and identity (Miller, *Materiality* 4f.). In his attempt to articulate a theory of things, Miller coined the term “humility of things,” that is, because we are surrounded by them in our everyday lives, they become invisible to us. When they seem to disappear, they exercise their power over us and determine our behavior without us being conscious of their capacity to do so (Miller, *Materiality* 5).

Similar to Böhme, Miller’s collection of essays offers a broad variety of claims and theories that assert that materiality or material culture remains problematic for those who are studied and those who study them. Whereas the philosophical discourse is necessary for his inquiry, Miller emphasizes the importance of anthropological

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<sup>34</sup> For ethical reasons and to protect the subjects of his research, “the streets bear fictional names, and so do all the participants. . . . real occupations have been changed to analogous ones.” Despite all these changes, the book “remains a work of non-fiction” (Miller, *Comfort of Things* 302).

methodology as it focuses on the practice of others, on the ethnographic engagement with people as they think of themselves as subjects, living in societies, surrounded by objects that they create and which in turn creates them. What can be observed in Miller's study is an attentiveness to materiality deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of people, a materiality that, although obvious, is hidden in plain sight.

Common cultural, religious, and domestic objects in Winkler's collection of works are part and parcel of Austrian history and culture, so deeply engrained that they are, as Miller points out, in their ubiquitous presence invisible and therefore powerful in their influence. Embedded in ritualistic practices or worn thin in domestic service, they nevertheless determine formative behavior. Situated in the unconscious, their agency has to be exposed in relentless semantic and visualized forms. One could argue that Winkler's texts illustrate precisely Miller's notion of a "humility of things" when he exposes the complex personal, historical, social, cultural and political significance of objects such as the *Kalbstrick*, common in a rural environment.

For Böhme, it does not matter what the things are in themselves ("von sich aus" oder "für sich" oder "an sich"), but what kind of relation we establish. The question arises, whether the object just exists by itself, or whether it is the part of the material format of our lives. Do things act upon us? Are we defined by and through them? Do they have agency? What kind of agency do we assign them? Do they serve us or do we serve them? (14) Both Böhme and Miller focus on the claim of the modern subject's autonomous self-consciousness and the relational experiences between subject and object, yet they do not answer the question of the nature of things. Miller, too, attempted

to offer multiple approaches to the notion of materiality and material culture. He used the terms object and thing interchangeably, but he does not provide a theory of materiality in terms of the “thingness” of the object. In “Thing Theory,” the introductory essay of a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (2001), Bill Brown provides a more fundamental inquiry into the subjectivity of objects that is more pertinent to my investigation of Winkler’s *Kalbstrick*.

Brown argues that things themselves are defined by their un-specificity (“Thing Theory” 3). We must therefore distinguish between object and thing because the “thing [...] holds within it a more audacious ambiguity” (4). When we look through and at the unspecified object, we can only see what it discloses about history, society, nature, and ourselves. Since we can distance ourselves from them, they remain facts. However, objects take on a life of their own when they cease to be useful, when they turn from a utilitarian tool into a machine that imposes its own will on us: “when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the window gets filthy [...]” (4). Once the object becomes the thing, subject-object relations change in terms of particular temporal and spatial contexts (7). Brown then seems to agree with Miller’s notion of the “humility of things” when he states that the “thingness of objects becomes palpable or visible or in some sense knowable, where there’s an interruption within a circuit, the sort of, the circuit whereby we, you know, float, as we do, through objects” (Brown, Interview. Web.).

So on the one hand, something that's very physical, on the other hand, something that's very metaphysical, but in both instances, a real retardation of our interaction with the object. We're stopping, right? We're stopping because we broke the glass

or we're stopping because the glass has, in some sense, broken our habits of use.

(Brown, Interview. Web.)

Although Brown presents a sophisticated argument, citing philosophers and critics who have wrestled with the problem at hand, he ultimately does not provide a precise definition of the “thing” and its “thingness” either. Granted that he differentiates between object and thing, he then assigns “subjectivity” or “interiority” only to things and reaffirms the notion that we use objects “to make meaning, to remake ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, and to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies” (Brown, *A Sense of Things* 4). Subject-object relations are not defined as commodity relations but become aesthetic and affective, by involving emotions such as desire, pleasure, frustration, and even pain. Brown’s approach is not so much an analysis of material and visual culture but an inquiry into the intersection of subject and thing. With his distinction between “material object” and “thing,” he is mostly interested in the changing relationship between subject and object or between human and “un-human.”<sup>35</sup> Standing out of its own context, causing interruptions, or breaking away from the site it inhabited, imply altering temporal and spatial sequences and creating new codes, meaning, and significance within a culture. Although Brown adds elements to clarify the difference between object and thing, and thus the subject-object and subject-thing relation, he can only affirm the idea that the “thing” remains ambiguous, elusive, and continues to slip away from a firm grasp of the theorist.

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<sup>35</sup> As stated before, I will continue to use Brown’s term „un-human“ in my analysis.

Böhme, Miller, and Brown offer a wide spectrum of ideas from various disciplines on materiality and material culture. Although their attempts to define the apparently self-evident terms of subject and object remain inconclusive, the editors/authors provide a framework and flexibility of interpretation. Important for this discussion are key terms such as the fetishistic subject-object relationships still irrefutable in modern and post-modern discourse; that material culture as an exterior environment habituates us, regulating our conduct and identity; and the ubiquitous and humble presence of things determining formative behavior. Current research attests that the debate is still important, that attention needs to be paid to particulars, and that literary texts are cultural objects in narrative form.<sup>36</sup>

The focus of this chapter is not so much on the investigation of material objects or subject-object relations in the domestic or public space within a literary text. Nor is materiality, consumerism, or the hybridity of materialities (Turkle 271) at stake. Although these theories provide a valid contribution to the project, this chapter investigates how Josef Winkler places and re-places material objects or things in the narrative structure of his works; how material object or things not simply evoke but establish relations that include the authorial I; and how they develop the story, mediate, and provide insight into the personal as well as the collective understanding of self, history, and culture.

Up to this point, the discussion has bracketed symbolism. Certainly, modernists correctly identified and harnessed the power of the body and the material object to

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<sup>36</sup> See: Alaimo and Hekman; Arweck and Keenan; Bennett and Joyce; Boscagli; Bräunlein; Brunner; Mulvey; Sassoon.

convey meaning. In that context, Anton Chekhov's rifle has become a ubiquitous trope in formalist literary and dramatic criticism. It represents, as Chekhov puts it, a necessary foreshadowing of violence, vital to plot and structure.

Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there. (Rayfield 203)

One could interpret the rifle simply as material object, as aesthetic element in the furnishing of the room. Furthermore, it could be read as part of common and well understood orders of symbolism; as a representation of war and political discourse; as compensation for phallic insufficiency and male impotence, or quite simply as an incarnation of pure weakness in a world of forces outside of the individual's capacity to control. According to Chekhov, however, the symbolic connotations tell only half of the story of the gun. An object on stage is not there merely to represent meaning, but to be used, that is, to interact in some capacity with a human agent. It is precisely in these interactions, in the relationship between object and human agent where the discourse of materiality becomes important, and diverges from the discussion of symbolism, which it resembles and may actively relate with, though the methodology and disciplinary affiliations of these "isms" differ starkly.

To invoke the question of the gun's materiality over simply relying on the notion of a symbolic dissemination is the aim of my project. While Chekhov was concerned with the dramaturgic construction of stage-space, my dissertation questions whether

material objects, not limited to guns, function similarly. Do they have a purpose beyond the construction of space and aesthetic mood? Does the object in a text behave similarly to that on stage? Is it there to be used like Chekhov's rifle? Is it there to give insight to plot, subjectivity, or narrative structure? It is through materiality theory that I hope to provide answers to these questions, through the assumption that objects and interaction therewith are essential informants.

As theoretical approaches to materiality, the interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies cited demonstrate that there is no specific method that would provide a single foundation for analysis. In fact, notions of subject-object relations, subjectivity of the object, fetishism, invisibility and agency, placement in texts as inhabited space, are all valid aspects that can be applied in search of meaning. The same is true for the discussion of symbolism and materiality; they are not mutually exclusive but intersect and negotiate both structure and content. Instead of reading Winkler's texts in terms of one specific theory, this chapter will trace the particular material object of the *Kalbstrick* within a text in its various modes of meaning and analyze its temporal and spatial placements in subsequently published narratives. By applying key concepts from three critics, a close reading will expose Winkler's propensity with a material object and its iteration in his narrative project to add a perspective to the theories of materiality in regard to textual analysis.

In Winkler's work, the autobiographical I creates a microcosm presented through the lens of a singular mode of subjectivity. That is, the author's world is a contiguous construction with the same authorial I as voice mediating autobiographic or semi-

autobiographic narration. The characters, spaces, events, and objects recur in all texts. Sometimes names are changed and new themes are introduced, but ultimately the author sticks to elements established in his first trilogy, developing and reinterpreting them from work to work. This world is constructed around what the author refers to as *Erinnerungsbilder*, visual memories of his childhood in the rural Carinthian village Kaming, or his travels to India, Mexico, and Japan. These *Erinnerungsbilder* are not just imagined or remembered images; although representational, they are constructed around material objects and are presented as fragments of reality.

The hemp rope, wash basin, sewing machine, or tombstones are common constituents in a rural setting that do not stand out or warrant special attention in the order of things. Iterated again and again, they not only establish a connection to people, they also create connections with each other. Embedded in stories that are repeated in all of Winkler's work, they take on significance beyond symbolic or semantic meanings. Furthermore, even when mentioned without the particular character or event, simply as non-descriptive objects, they instigate connections and connotations in the mind of the readers.

Of particular importance within Winkler's body of writing is the *Kalbstrick*, a rope used in rural areas for the birthing of calves, which appears in each of the author's works from his earliest to his most recent writing. On the surface, the calf-birthing rope is a ubiquitous barnyard implement, essential to animal husbandry. It consists of a cord—Winkler describes this as either of hemp or leather—with an adjustable noose at the end. It is implemented during difficult cattle-birthing, when it is affixed to the fetal



calf's neck or legs and used to pull the calf from the mother's body. Calving often requires some sort of human assistance to ensure the live birth of a healthy animal. This tool is not typically Austrian, but rather a universal object found in some form in small family barnyards and even in industrial cattle farms.

Winkler's first novel, *Menschenkind*, opens with an epigraph that encapsulates the narrative of the suicide of two boys that features the *Kalbstrick*, iterated in various modalities within the text and within other works. The epigraph is a strategy of situating text outside the main narrative body in order to frame it thematically or ideologically, thereby informing how a text can be read. In *Menschenkind* as well as his later works, Winkler displays a fondness for paratexts, employing them in their various incarnations throughout his opus. The epigraph as paratext functions as an independent unit of text, which can be read in isolation or in conjunction with the body of text they preface. Using the suicide of the boys in its gruesome details as the epigraph of his first publication not only sets the framework of his novel, it also provides the theme of his aesthetic project by giving center stage to one particular material object: the *Kalbstrick*. The epigraph encapsules Winkler's strategy by changing the *Kalbstrick* from the common farming tool to a complicit accomplice in the pain and the demise of the boys. Through its forceful action, the rope becomes the twitching nerve that participates and partakes in the torture of life and death.

In *Wortschatz der Nacht* (2013), the slightly revised version of Winkler's second book, originally entitled *Das lächelnde Gesicht der Totenmaske der Else Lasker-Schüler* and published in 1979 in the Graz Avantgarde-Journal "manuskripte," the young writer

describes the reality of the birthing process of a calf with merciless precision and intensity.<sup>37</sup>

Ein ähnlicher Kalbstrick wurde Tage später oder Tage vorher, vielleicht am selben Tag, im Dorf an die Fesseln eines Kalbes gebunden, das bereits mit seinen Beinen langsam aus der Scheide einer schwer schnaufenden, manchmal keuchenden Kuh dringt. Übergroß wie geschwollen sind die Augen der Kuh. In ihrem Gesicht sieht man die Schmerzen. Speichel, weiß und grün, tröpfelt und rinnt von ihren Lippen. An ihrer Kopfseite steht die Magd und krault an der Stirn des Tieres. (58)

Although the narrating I presents himself as an authoritative, omniscient narrator with a deliberate attention to detail, he undermines his reliability in several ways. First, Winkler's narration, with its particular focus on the construction of space and mood through the aforementioned surplus of detail, is rendered unreliable via the diffusion of time. The time of narration, “days ago or days later, maybe on the same day” (“Tage später oder Tage vorher, vielleicht am selben Tag”), with its ambiguity states that the event has, is, or will happen any moment across the entire span of past, present, and future. Second, because of this temporal uncertainty, space is equally indeterminable. The only reference to space given is that the birth happened in the village (“im Dorf”), presumably the narrator's *Heimat*-village of Kamering.

The *Kalbstrick*, with its apparently interminable scope and breadth of referentiality, becomes a commentary on the ubiquity of the tool itself, as well as the

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<sup>37</sup> Feuilleton der *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Mar. 1, 2013. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

ubiquity of life and death in an agrarian space and its cultural sphere. In Winkler's description of the calf-birthing process, it steps out of its "humility," i.e. its insignificance when it partakes in the animal's labor. The calving process is vivid, enhanced with sensory, especially visual, auditory, and haptic elements. The cow is breathing heavily, her eyes are swollen, her face distorted with pain. White and green saliva is oozing out of her mouth while she is comforted by the servant who strokes her head. Like the saliva that has drenched the servant's sleeves, the slime and blood of the womb have moistened the calving rope.

Although the seemingly omniscient narrator is reporting the event with precision, he immediately absents himself from the event when the animal is still-born. The confident authorial self now takes on the role of the timid and emotionally disturbed child who hides behind a newspaper, his Karl May books, or even crawls under the table.

Meldete der Nachbarbauer zur Tür hereinstürzend die Totgeburt eines Kalbes, wußte ich schnell mein Gesicht hinter den Zeitungsflügel, hinter einem Karl-May-Buch oder unter der Tischplatte zu verstecken. Ich konnte mein Gesicht nicht zum Schmerz verziehen, nein, ich konnte keine Maske des Mitleids aufsetzen, nicht weinen, hör zu weinen auf, nein, ich versteckte mein Gesicht, um frei und ungezwungen lachen zu können. Für leidende Kinder ist der Tod eines Tieres manchmal sehr schön. (58)

While the burial of the dead animal is packed into a long, intricately structured, partly dialogical sentence that represents the psychological pain of the boys who carry out the task, the phrases describing the calving rope are short, almost staccato.

Der Kalbstrick pendelt noch über dem Bord des leeren Heuwagens. Erde wird von den Beinen und Hosenröhren geklopft. Der Kalbstrick schwankt. Wo ist der Totengräber? Der Kalbstrick platzt aus allen Nähten. Warum sollen wir das Kalb begraben? [...] Blutgerinnsel macht sich langsam am Kalbstrick bemerkbar, aber keiner der beiden sieht es. [...] Schneller, man hat Mühe, das Laufen verfolgen zu können, zittert ein Blutstropfen im Kreis nach unten über eine Windung des Stricks. (58-59)

The active verbs “oscillate” (“pendeln”), “sway” (“schwanken”), and “burst” (“platzen”) are used to describe the material object of the rope, turning it into what Brown calls a “thing.” On a discursive or semantic level, language grants agency to the previously un-human *Kalbstrick*, each verb implying independent, albeit unstable movement or change.

Revealed in these verbs is the narrator’s subjectivity; he is the one who chooses to animate the object with these peculiar and grammatically unambiguous expressions. The *Kalbstrick*, in this instance, is active. It moves. It threatens to come apart. It participates in the scene. In light of Winkler’s fondness of wordplay, one could go so far and suggest that there is at least a homophonic association between the verb “schwanken,” and the early-modern German noun “Schwank”, the art of telling comic stories. Taken to its extreme, this interpretation would even imply the object’s capacity to communicate verbally, which is consistent with other instances featuring the calf-birthing rope.

The important point is that independent action is semantically imposed upon the object by the narrating I. It is, in Winkler’s unique word choices, given a degree of agency, a certain power of self-expression. Of course, the object itself remains inanimate,

the power it is given is discursive, but it nonetheless reveals the nature of the relationship between object and narrating I who is in possession of the power of language. When objects are given powers they do not have as primary characteristics, they take on fetishistic qualities. Through fetishism, a tenant of materiality, a subjective or cultural relationship between subject (agent) and object is constructed. If agency is granted to the object through discourse, the relationship between the object, in this case the *Kalbstrick*, and the author/narrator necessarily takes on the form of semantic fetishism.

In reference to Brown's understanding of the "thingness" of the material object, it can be argued that the *Kalbstrick* is breaking away from its site and standing out of its own context. It is now part of the discourse and can tell its own story. Furthermore, the agency of the rope is also conferred to the blood that makes itself slowly visible, without the boys noticing it. ("Blutgerinnsel macht sich langsam am Kalbstrick bemerkbar, aber keiner der beiden sieht es" 59). Ambiguity is here twofold: on the one hand, it is precisely because it is such a common object, which naturally bears the traces of the birth so that the blood stains remain unnoticed. On the other hand, it is the omniscient but also subjective as well as fetishistic authorial I who sees the blood and emphasizes its inherent powers over the human subject.

The powers of the *Kalbstrick*, acquired through the materiality of the organic fluids, are taken one step further when the rope, now saturated with the blood, actually starts dripping. Again, the verb "tremble" ("zittern") connotes human characteristics:

Schneller, man hat Mühe, das Laufen verfolgen zu können, zittert ein Blutstropfen im Kreis nach unten über eine Windung des Stricks. (59)

A close reading of the passage exposes the ambiguity in the semantic structure of the phrase. Since the “Schneller” can be read as a command, and the “man hat Mühe, das Laufen verfolgen zu können” as commentary of the narrating eye/I, the verb “zittern” associated with the *Kalbstrick* is the response of the trembling, animated, and fetishized rope. At this point, the narrator intervenes again to slow down the flow of blood in order to prolong the narrative process.

Noch ist der Blutstropfen nicht angekommen am Ende des Stricks, nein, ich verlangsame nun ein wenig seinen Lauf. Ich will es hinauszögern. (60)

It remains open, what the narrator wants to delay: if the “es” implies that the flow of the blood is congruent with his creative energy, then the calf-birthing rope has indeed changed from a material object into a fetishized, that is, magical “thing” that acts at a crucial moment as instigator of creative energy in Winkler’s often problematic “Schreibprozess.”

The *Kalbstrick* appears so frequently in Winkler's oeuvre that it demands an intertextual approach to determine the full significance of the device and to understand its orders of symbolism. As mentioned before, symbolism complements an object’s materiality, but it is, in and of itself, not an exhaustive approach. Although Winkler seems to focus on the materiality of the *Kalbstrick* and its actual usage in animal husbandry, he also entertains several modes of symbolism concerning the rope and its intertextual iterations. On the surface, it is an instrument of life, allowing the farmer to assist in the birth of calves and thereby increase the value of his estate. When used in this fashion, it “draws” or “pulls” the unborn into life albeit with force. In its shape and

texture it also resembles the umbilical cord that ties the newborn to the womb of the mother. In their symbolic meaning, the umbilical cord provides nourishment for the unborn and signifies the maternal, often associated with the domestic, while the *Kalbstrick* severs that bond and signifies the paternal, often associated with violence, discipline, and hard labor. In its dual function it represents life and death, liberation and oppression; in the parent's absence it symbolizes the father's power and the mother's bondage and pain. From there the calf-birthing rope takes a darker turn, when it changes into an instrument of violence, patriarchal family structures, discipline, and punishment.

More commonly in Winkler's work, the rope becomes associated with the father, who actually uses the rope as an instrument for corporeal punishment, or metaphorically, as a mere threat to discipline the young author/narrator or his siblings. The father's appropriation of the *Kalbstrick* establishes the subject-object relationship as one of paternal authority and violence.

*Der Überfluß der Armut verleitete mich dazu, eine Unzahl von Brotkrumen auf den Boden zu werfen. Vier oder fünf auseinandergebröckelte Brotstücke auf dem Boden zu meinen Füßen brachten den Kalbstrick zum Tanzen. Der Knoten war hart und genau gelegt. Das Blut kannte keine Grenzen. Der Mund schäumte, der Körper verfiel in ein epileptisches Zucken, der Kopf schlug den Holzboden bewußtlos, und aus den Heiligennägeln der Fußbretter tropfte das Blut der Mutter; sie entriß dem Vater den Kalbstrick und drängte ihn zu den Tieren hinaus. (Italics in text. Menschenkind 135)*

Through acts of violence, the relationship between the autobiographical I, the father, and the material object is synchronized into a grotesque “dance.” Boundaries of the human and un-human dissolve when it is no longer obvious whose mouth is foaming, whose body is twisting in epileptic seizures. The dance of the rope whips the bodies of both the criminal and the executioner into a frenzy that even affects the surface of the floor—also animated—rendering it unconscious. The actual *Kalbstrick*, or its imprints in the form of blood or bodily marks, stand in for the act of power and discipline.

While corporal punishment may have been widely practiced in postwar rural Austria and considered even a generally acceptable and even preferred method of discipline at the time, the *Kalbstrick* is not emblematic of all instances of punishment carried out throughout all parts of Austria, or the world for that matter. Therefore, its symbolic significance is limited. For Winkler, the unique relationship of *Kalbstrick* and characters is of interest, as it opens a window into the authorial I’s subjectivity, and the strategies of generating verisimilitude. Constructed across multiple narratives, it mediates visceral memories, especially in the paternally coded practice of corporal punishment.

Whereas the paternal figure is usually the actor, the mother frequently takes on the role of the protector.

*Die Bauernkinder legen ihre Hände, klein und nach Brot gierig wie die bettelnden Füße eines Hahns, auf die Schulter des Tisches, [...] ein roter Streifen von einem Kalbstrick verletzter Haut auf dem Oberschenkel des einen Kindes, das sich kniehoch an seine Mutter klammert, [...] an der Tür steht der Vater, der blutige Kalbstrick pendelt an seinen Knien, das Kind umarmt den Unterschenkel seiner*



*Mutter, beginnt mit tränenden Augen Brot zu kauen.* (Italics in text. *Menschenkind* 55)

In this passage, the interior of the room and the people present are constructed as one body with blood, hands, feet, shoulders, skin, thigh, knee, calf and eyes. Parents and children are connected with each other through their tears and wounds, inflicted by the still bloody calf-birthing rope that swings menacingly at the father's side. The intricate referentiality of the *Kalbstrick* then constructs a narrative, which relays the experience of patriarchal authority, discipline, and fear through the intersection of the human and un-human.

The narrator's relationship to material objects relies on perception and sensory stimulations: it is audible, haptic, olfactory, visual, or palpable. Specific references to the *Kalbstrick* as instrument of corporeal punishment, triggered by childhood memories of illicit acts and their consequences, are associated with watching a film starring the American comic actor Joseph Frank "Buster" Keaton who was known for his trademark stoic, deadpan expressions. In the vignette "Buster Keatons Tintentod," the memory of the narrator's father, literally emerging ("auftauchen") from the feculence of the stable after he had discovered his son's truancy, is vividly envisioned:

Während ich die aufgewärmte Suppe löffelte, tauchte der Patriarch in seiner geflickten, kotbeschierten Arbeitsmontur auf und hielt mir mit seinen langen Krallen, unter denen Kälbermist verborgen war—den speckigen Hut auf dem Kopf, die Wangen vor Wut eingefallen, die Prothese schlotternd—,einen nach

Kuhhaut riechenden Kalbstrick unter die Nase: Da: Schau ihn dir an! Wenn du noch einmal so spät heimkommst! Schau ihn dir genau an! (*Leichnam* 64)

The command “Look at it! Look at it closely!” (“Schau ihn dir an! Schau ihn dir genau an!”) is more than a speech act since it creates in its intensity one of those *Erinnerungsbilder* that had been deeply engrained in the youthful mind of the narrator.<sup>38</sup>

The squalid, even grotesque father figure and the reeking calf-birthing rope merge into an image of fear and abjection. The father does not use the rope to execute any physical punishment but implements it to inflict psychological pain. Not the body but the soul is disciplined. Memories of paternal discipline with the calf-birthing rope are iterated in varying degrees of remembered details again in the context of references to films in *Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot* (59; 74f.) or *Die Realitt so sagen, als ob sie trotzdem nicht wr* (35).

While the calf-birthing rope is used for actual corporeal punishment or just as a threat of the paternal disciplinary act, it can also take on the guise of the maternal when it is employed to inflict physical pain.

Es sollte, meine Damen und Herren, vom Kalbstrick die Rede sein, meine Damen und Herren, vom Kalbstrick, mit dem die Klber an Fesseln gebunden und mit Bauernhnden aus dem Mutterleib gezogen werden, es sollte vom Kalbstrick die Rede sein, [...] vom Kalbstrick, der rote reliefartige Nabelschnre auf den Rcken der Kinder, tagelange Brennesselspuren hinterlt, meine Damen und Herren, [...] . (*Wortschatz* 50)

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<sup>38</sup> An almost verbatim iteration is inserted in *Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot* (74f.).

The skin of the children turns into the parchment where disciplinary violence imprints itself in the shape of an umbilical cord, signifying the maternal qualities of nurture but also suffering, violence, and deprivation. The rapid sequence of the word *Kalbstrick* is now both a semantic replication of the beating with the rope and a successive flashing of the image in the mind of the reader.

Because of the particular shape of the calf-birthing rope—its adjustable knot at one end—the *Kalbstrick* resembles a noose and is allegedly a preferred method in the village of Kamering to commit suicide. It is most frequently associated with the double suicide of the two village boys Robert and Jakob.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the birthing metaphor, along with its violent impressions of the calf being ripped from its mother by a farmhand, both covered with blood, afterbirth, and fecal matter, or his father threatening him with a *Kalbstrick* that reeks of the aforementioned substances, the image of the two boys exiting the world with the same tool in the same space imparts a complex and ambivalent catalogue of meaning to the calf-birthing rope.

Am 29. September 1976 stiegen in meinem Heimatort Kamering bei Paternion, Kärnten, der 17jährige Mechanikerlehrling Jakob Pichler und sein gleichaltriger Freund, der Maurerlehrling Robert Ladinig, mit einem drei Meter langen Kalbstrick über eine Holzleiter des Pfarrhofstadels zu einem Trambaum hinauf. Sie schlangen das Seil um ihn und verknoteten die beiden Seilenden hinter ihren linken Ohren. Der Nerv des Stricks zuckte. Ihre Hände flochten sich zu einem Zopf ineinander, immer schneller im Kreis sich drehend wirbelten sie wieder

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<sup>39</sup> The boys' names are with one exception, where they are Christian and Herbert, always referred to as Robert and Jakob (*Realität* 149).

auseinander und kamen vor ihren blutunterlaufenden Augen zum Stehen.

(*Menschenkind*, Epigraph)

The epigraph in *Menschenkind* is thematic, providing an unmitigated description of the two boys mounting the rope on the beam in the barn and tying it around their necks in a fashion similar to the birthing practices. In the moment of their death, the rope and the bodies merge: its nerve twitches, their hands are braided; like a spinning top, their bodies whirl around in a circular motion until they come to a stop facing each other eye to eye. Although the calf-birthing rope is used as a metaphor of the linkage between life and death, its materiality is emphasized. Moreover, the interconnecting subject-object relationship is established between the boys' intention to die and the rope's execution of their wish.

The double suicide is iterated in *Wortschatz der Nacht*, another early work published in 1979, the same year as *Menschenkind*. While leafing through his folder of Carinthian newspaper clippings from October 1, 1976, the narrator comes across the notice of the youngsters' death. In a powerful and unrestrained torrent of words, the narrator records the memories of his friendship with Robert, the funeral, the pain, and complex emotions of loss, but also the guilt he felt about the death of the boys. Given the subtext of implied homophobia and structural violence, the text functions as an expression of individual and collective shame, guilt, and culpability. Furthermore, it is a condemnation of the family, the village, Austrian rural culture, and Catholicism. In short, *Wortschatz der Nacht*, while adopting adolescent themes of sex, alienation, and a fascination with suicide, concerns itself primarily with a search for understanding the

boys' double suicide. The text is a polemic against cultural forces and implicit collective agency, which may have contributed to that event.

These themes are explicated in a passage where the narrating I addresses an audience in an insinuated courtroom requesting to listen to the testimony of the *Kalbstrick*.

Es sollte, meine Damen und Herren vom Kalbstrick die Rede sein [...] es sollte vom Kalbstrick die Rede sein, mit dem sich Robert und Jakob im Pfarrhofstadel erhängt haben, [...] meine Damen und Herren, hört dem Kalbstrick zu, er hat schon genug gelebt, er kann selber sprechen, meine Damen und Herren, schwingt ihn und laßt ihn einmal schnalzen, auf eine Bretterwand, eine Strohpuppe oder auf eine Glasscheibe, meine Damen und Herren, horcht genau hin, und ihr werdet seine Sprache besser verstehen als die eigene [...]. (*Wortschatz* 50)

Within this insinuation, punctuated by speech act and performance, the rope is anthropomorphized to the degree where it possesses the capacity for language, a language that serves as testimony in the context of the courtroom. Testimony, in its legal and historical context, functions as a recollection of memory, often mediated by lawyer or interviewer, with the expectation that that which is spoken is truth, albeit in varying degrees of reliability. This proclivity toward truth is established symbolically via oaths or spatial contexts, i.e. the courtroom witness bench, or the constructed, premeditated setting of a filmed or recorded interview. In Winkler's narrative, such a setting is textually constructed, and it is assumed through wordplay, that the *Kalbstrick* possesses the agency

and capacity to give reliable testimony. His irrefutable deposition is delivered as dramatic performance of the violent act of beating and cracking on various surfaces.

If, according to Böhme, material objects take on fetishistic characteristics when they assume individual or collective meaning and powers (“Kräfte”), which they do not possess as primary characteristics, one could argue that in a quasi projective act the calf-birthing rope not only “acquires” (“beilegen”) and incorporates them, it also emits (“ausstrahlen”) them. As explicated, the fetishised object becomes an agent that assumes authority and exhibits anxieties and desires. “Als ein bedeutendes und kraftgeladenes Objekt wird das Fetisch-Ding für den Fetischisten zu einem Agens, an das dieser fortan durch Verehrungs-, Furcht- oder Wunschemotive gebunden ist” (Böhme 17). After its testimony, the calf-birthing-rope is endowed with energies to affect and bind (“Das Ding erhält damit Wirk- und Bindungsenergien.” 17). Böhme argues that the relationship between the fetishist and the fetishized object becomes compulsive and obsessive (Böhme: “anancastic”): it functions yet it is blind (“verblendet”); it is a consciously implemented mechanism that is unconscious of its inner structures. (“[...] es ist ein bewusst gehandhabter Mechanismus, der in seiner inneren Struktur unbewusst bleibt.” 17)<sup>40</sup>

Böhme’s argument that there is no absolute objective materiality separate from the human subject, but always interdependent relationships, holds in Winkler’s case,

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<sup>40</sup> Böhme devotes a segment of his chapter on “Fetischismus, Sexualität und Psychoanalyse” to “Sigmund Freud: Verschlungene Wege zum Fetischismus” and “Fetischismus als metapsychologisches Konzept” (396-411). Although this project does not attempt to include on a psychoanalytic analysis of fetishism, Freud’s theories play an important part in Böhme’s definition.

since the calf-birthing rope has ceased to be a material object and has taken on meanings of its own. In other words, the semantic shift of the rope not only changes its linguistic composition, it also alters in its materiality cultural, religious, and social connotations, especially when it is linked to gender. Furthermore, if the *Kalbstrick* expands meaning and power through persistent iterations in Winkler's various literary texts, it is fetishized and appropriates agency as instigator of the writing process. It is the trigger for the release of archived *Erinnerungsbilder*, stored in the repository of the writer's memory and written down in his notebooks. Furthermore, by inserting the narrating I into the subject-object relation, writing the object becomes compulsive, that is anancastic. Asked by his father not to write again about the boys, the narrator admits:

Ich versprach ihm hoch und heilig, nichts mehr über die Selbstmörder zu schreiben, tatsächlich aber tauchten sie in meinen folgenden Büchern immer wieder als rumorende Gespenster des kreuzförmig gebauten Dorfes auf. (*Realität* 130)

Once established as an obsessive-compulsive element in the triangulation of subject-object-autobiographical I, the *Kalbstrick*—already associated with violence and death—can take on additional meanings, one of them as the rope used to lower a coffin into the grave. “Der am Flussufer eingeeiste Sarg,” one of several passages in *Roppongi* referencing the calf-birthing rope, catalogues once more its various implementations.

Nach einer Beerdigung hat früher der Totengräber die Knochen, die er beim Ausheben des Grabes fand, nach der Messe und den Trauerfeierlichkeiten, bei denen der Sarg an Stricken, mit denen sich die Dorfjugend erhängt, Kälber auf die

Welt gezogen und Kinder geschlagen werden, in die Erde hineingelassen wurde  
und die Trauergemeinde den immer noch vor offenen Grab stehenden  
Verwandten noch einmal kondolierte, auf den Sarg gelegt, bevor er das Loch  
zuschaufelte. (*Roppongi* 57)

A symbolic reading would draw upon established associations with the *Kalbstrick* as an intermediary between life and death. Such a reading is plausible given that the *Kalbstrick* is now a component in a Catholic burial ritual, itself a complex arrangement of symbolism and performance. However, in the passage quoted from *Roppongi*, the act of lowering the coffin is explicitly connected with the materiality of the *Kalbstrick* as the instrument of aggressive discipline and suicide. In these acts of violence, self-inflicted or administered by others, the rope is no longer an inanimate object; it has become the “thing” that takes on a life of its own. It is never a silent bystander but actively participates and partakes in pain, death (suicide), and the ritual of interment.

Furthermore, the reader is explicitly made aware of the object's history and its multiple applications. Winkler reminds us of its grim connotations in plain words without the reliance on symbolism to communicate. That does not mean that Winkler neglects to establish orders of representation for which the *Kalbstrick* may become a visual sign; after all, with frequent repetition in his work that seems unavoidable, but that process is not in practice here. Rather, through the explicit written reminder, Winkler is inserting the *Kalbstrick* as a polemic device, referencing violence and injustices through language and not through symbolic purport.



Through the explicit relation with his previous narratives, the author inserts his ideology into the burial ritual. Semantically, the ritual of lowering the coffin is framed by the custom of laying the bones of the previously buried family members on top of the casket. Visually, however, the arrangement is reversed, when we imagine the material ropes as the frame with the “bouquet” of bones on the top. When the narrating I speaks for it, the *Kalbstrick* becomes a rather unwilling participant; with the exception of the aid to commit suicide, all actions involving the *Kalbstrick* are written in the passive voice. Whereas the Kamering youth consciously selects the *Kalbstrick* to end their lives, birthing, discipline, and burial are executed by those in power. Among the requisites common in funeral rites—casket, flowers, the hole in the ground—, the calf-birthing rope seems now rather strikingly anatopistic. However, with its purely subjective significance, it injects itself into the ritual and becomes part of the religious and cultural ceremony, exactly in the moment of final and absolute departure of the dead from the living. With its participation in birthing and burying, punishing and killing, the autobiographical I has established the calf-birthing rope as powerful agent in the cultural setting of rural Carinthia.

*Roppongi* was written in response to the death of the author's father. While it contains many themes similar to Winkler's previous work including Austrian Catholicism and his travels to India, the main theme of the text appears to be the act of laying to rest, or more specifically, authorial participation in life and death. The authorial gaze, referred to as *Filmkamerakopf* in ever increasing frequency, records the visual image and translates it into the letters on the pages of the notebooks. The primal memory

(“Augenblick”), the recurrent narrative event of aunt Tresl, lifting the child over the rim of the coffin, and his obsessive pursuit of funeral rites in all parts of the world, are expression of the authorial I’s desire to participate (“teilnehmen”) and partake (“teilhaben”) in the moment of death. It is the “Ur-participation,” initiated by the imperative “Schau, Seppl, Schau! ” (*Leichnam* 22; *Roppongi* 95) that infuses the material object with subjectivity to generate an interdependent triangulated subject-object relation. The fetishistic connection between the narrating I and the *Kalbstrick* becomes clearer in this regard, as both the authorial I and the rope are doing just that, participating in the liminality—the transition between physical death and ritual death. In the grander scope this occurs through language; Winkler’s act of writing and recording death takes on the form of text.

In the vignette “Mit zwei brennenden Kirchtürmen unter den Armen” (*Leichnam* 80) Winkler uses again the “Doppelselbstmord” to insert his autobiographical I into the text as the voice of the narrator and the author whom the father blames for the suicide of his sons:

Das ist kein Mensch ... Der hat das Dorf kaputtgemacht ... Wir im Dorf sind anständige Leut ... Die Leut im Dorf hassen ihn, und niemand mehr will ihn im Dorf sehen, jeder weicht ihm aus ... Mit dem Winkler wird es noch schlimmer ... Die Geschichte ist noch nicht ausgestanden ... Aber der ist es nicht wert, daß man über ihn ein Wort verliert ... Kein Sterbenswörtchen mehr, die Geschichte ist noch nicht ausgestanden, die Geschichte *hat* sich noch nicht! (80).

Although the narrator assigns the speech to the boys' father, it is he who has not finished writing the story. The italicized *hat* in the sentence fragment "die Geschichte *hat* sich noch nicht" is a clear indication that writing the story is still an ongoing process. In the text, the *Kalbstrick* becomes the physical manifestation of narrative power over the object.

Wenn ich seinen immer noch bei mir liegenden Kalbstrickteil verlängere und in den Pfarrstadel gehe, den Strick am Hals verknüpfe und im Morgengrauen mit zwei brennenden Kirchtürmen unter meinen Armen [...] vom Trambaum springe, [...] . (*Leichnam* 80)

The narrating I has kept a piece of the rope that not only connects him to the boys but also feeds into his own fantasies about suicide. In his hands, the rope can be extended to reach into the "Pfarrstadel," the place and time of the death of the boys, to experience the moment himself, when the rope cuts into his own flesh. It can also be extended to writing and re-writing the story of the youngsters' death. As narrator he is now equally responsible for their suicide; although he has empathy for the two "sympathische" boys, he has killed them again and again through the act of writing ("Tintentod," *Leichnam* 64).

In the vignette "Hautabschürfungen auf dem Kalbstrick, von Menschenhaut" (*Leichnam* 109), the story is again retold. One small detail is now added: the narrating I had found the piece of calf-birthing rope after the death of the two boys in the stable. In its roles as executioner, witness, and relic, the piece of rope is again fetishized. The skin-abrasions ("Hautabschürfungen"), mentioned in the title, are ambiguous: it is not clear whether they are remnants of the boys' bodies or the authorial I's hands, having handled

the rope repeatedly like prayer beads or fetishistic effigies. Stored in the closet and archived in memory, the birthing rope is now the keeper of the story.<sup>41</sup>

In den Träumen taucht immer wieder der Kalbstrick auf, einen Teil hat die Polizei konfisziert, der andere Teil ist in meinen Händen. Im Kleiderkasten liegt er in einem Plastiksack. Ich öffne die Kastentür und greife ängstlich, wie man mit einem Lederhandschuh ins Loch eines Iltis greift, nach unten, der Kopf dreht sich zum Fenster, und die Augen starren ins grüne Blattwerk der Bäume, bis der Strick durch meine Finger gleitet und ein scheuer Blick die Stelle des Einschnittes abtastet. (*Ackermann* 254)

Invoked in dreams and during the author's phases of writer's block, the rope has become one of the most powerful *Erinnerungsbilder* that work through affect, which in turn creates a *Wortflut*, a torrent of effusive language.

In Winkler's early works, the calf-birthing rope is connected to suicide, death, violence, and polemics against the residents of his native village.<sup>42</sup> In his later texts, it is tempered through the connection with the writer's son who has no knowledge of the rope's history or subjective energy. While cleaning out his closet, the narrator comes

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<sup>41</sup> Böhme prefaces his chapter on Freud with a "Urszene des Fetischs," Freud's quotation from Robert J. Stoller: "Ein Fetisch ist eine Geschichte, die sich als Gegenstand ausgibt" (373, and qtd. 401). Böhme understands the fetish then both as a material object and a reification, and as a reified narrative. ("... dass er [der Fetisch] tatsächliches Ding ist und zugleich eine Verdinglichung, eine verdinglichte Erzählung" 401.)

<sup>42</sup> "Und dann haben sich diese zwei Jugendlichen in meinem Heimatdorf an einem einzigen drei Meter langen Strick das Leben genommen, vorher andere Burschen, ein Mädchen, wie man aus *Wenn es soweit ist* weiß. [...]" "Das sind alles so Geschichten, die dieses Dorf, dieses Erzählen und mich mitgeprägt haben. Die meisten sind Todesgeschichten, und aus diesem Grund wohl ist es so, dass dieses Thema so stark und dominierend ist." (Werndl, Interview 128)

across the calf-birthing rope and places it on his writing desk. The significance of the rope takes another turn once the spatial—the placing of the object—is linked to the temporal.

Es war erst kürzlich, ich räumte meinen Kasten auf und legte das Kalbstrickeil, [...] auf den Schreibtisch, [...] als ihn das Kind entdeckte, entwendete und zwischen seinen Spielsachen verschwinden ließ, um den Strick ein paar Tage später triumphierend hervorzukramen [...] . (*Leichnam* 109)

The storing/hiding of the rope is repeated by the child and the “discovery” is dramatized by the child’s triumphant display and his series of questions: “Was ist denn das?” “Und was tut man mit einem Kalbstrick?” (*Leichnam* 109) Before the father can think of an evasive answer, the child “abuses” the rope in his play-acting by turning it into a whip to lash his rocking horse.

In “Hautabschürfungen auf dem Kalbstrick, von Menschenhaut,” the narrator inserts irony when he juxtaposes his obsession with the calf-birthing rope with his son’s play-acting that taunts his father’s relationship to this particular object. Although the son is clearly unaware of the rope’s complex significance in the life of his parent, he still senses its importance when he disposes of it, albeit in jest. While the child toys with the rope, the narrating I interlaces the story of the two boys into the fabric of the narrative, giving the scene a more sinister turn. The particles of skin, attached to the rope, are human, providing the rope with bodily matter. However, the authenticity of the rope is now questioned when the narrator admits that he found the piece in the stable where the boys committed suicide. It is the narrating I that re-grants power to the rope, no matter

whether it is actually a piece of the strangulation device or not. All that matters is the fact that the rope has been present at the site of self-destruction. The vignette ends with the powerful assertion of the authenticity of the rope:

Kaum hatte ich ihm eine ausweichende Antwort gegeben, peitschte er mit dem Strick, mit dem sich die beiden Buben aufgehängt haben, sein Schaukelpferd.

(*Leichnam* 109)

Although ignorant of the latent powers of the calf-birthing rope, the child unwittingly uses the rope in a violent and disciplinary act, thus affirming the agency, the narrating I has granted the un-human thing.

To explore Winkler's narrative strategies of iteration further, Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, in particular his chapter on "Frequency," provides the methodological support. Genette defines the concept as "relations of frequency (or, more simply, of repetition) between the narrative and the diegesis" and as "aspects of narrative temporality" (113):

An event is not only capable of happening; it can also happen again, or be repeated: the sun rises every day. Of course, strictly speaking the *identity* of these multiple occurrences is debatable: "the sun" that "rises" every morning is not exactly the same from one day to another—any more than the "8:25 P.M.

Geneva-to-Paris" train, dear to Ferdinand de Saussure, is made up each evening of the same cars hooked to the same locomotive. (113)

Genette argues that the "repetition" is a mental construction, "which eliminates from each occurrence everything belonging to it that is peculiar to itself, in order to preserve only

what it shares with all others of the same class, which is an abstraction: ‘the sun,’ ‘the morning,’ ‘to rise.’” (113). In other words, the events are not “identical” or “recurring” as the same events, but are actually a “series of several similar events *considered only in terms of their resemblance*” (113).

Genette explicates further that a narrative statement can be produced and iterated one or more times in the same text in a particular succession:

[...] nothing prevents me from saying or writing, “Pierre came yesterday evening, Pierre came yesterday evening, Pierre came yesterday evening.” Here again, the identity and therefore the repetition are facts of abstraction; materially (phonetically or graphically) or even ideally (linguistically) none of the occurrences is completely identical to the others, solely by virtue of their co-presence or their succession, which diversify these three statements into a first, a next, and a last. (114)

According to Genette, the capacities for “repetition” establish a system of relationships between the narrated events (story) and the narrative statements (text) that can be grouped into four categories: a narrative can tell once what happened once,  $n$  times what happened  $n$  times,  $n$  times what happened once, once what happened  $n$  times (114). For Winkler’s narrative strategies, the second (calf-birthing rope) and third categories (double suicide) are the most applicable, since the event/object not only refers to the repetition of a statement with or without stylistic variations,<sup>43</sup> but also to repetitions with variations in

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<sup>43</sup> Genette gives the examples: “Yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early” and “Yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed before it was too late, yesterday I put myself to bed early” (115).

points of view (115). Using Proust's descriptions of repeated actions as example, Genette points out that the text does not narrate what happened but what used to happen at Combray, "regularly, ritually, every day, or every Sunday, or every Saturday, etc." (114f.)

Winkler uses the technique in a singular way when the autobiographical I focalizes—to use Genette's term—on specific events that are not iterated in their actual chronological or even cultural context but as stories centered on images produced by his *Filmkamerakopf* and archived as *Erinnerungsbilder* in the mind of the young child. Events such as birth and death by the *Kalbstrick* are not so much iterated within one text in predictable frequency but interspersed in most of Winkler's texts. Moreover, iterations are always associated with material objects in visual, haptic, auratic, and olfactory connotations, as the example of the calf-birthing rope has demonstrated. And they are discursive because iteration allows the narrator to re-interpret events, themes, and ideas through multiple semantic constructions.

In another passage quoted from Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Genette provides a detailed analysis of the iterative principles that reveal a "more complex and more entangled hierarchical structure" through the use of adjectives such as "always," chronological elements such as "spring/summer" and other temporal variants such as "on some days, though very rarely" (137). Winkler, too, employs similar narrative structures. Whereas Genette is more concerned with the iteration of many events in terms of one narrated sequence, Winkler actually repeats one event in its various modalities and its



changing relationship to material objects. By choosing active verbs implying motion instead of adverbs denoting frequency, Winkler creates a more dynamic scenario, where distinct processes are repeated in different permutations of language.

A more important aspect of Genette's explication of Proust's text is his discussion of the work of memory—"voluntary" or not—"which reduces (diachronic) periods to (synchronic) epochs and events to pictures—epochs and pictures that memory arranges in an order not theirs, but its own" (156). He quotes Proust himself:

Leaving aside, for the moment, all questions of the value I attach to such unconscious memories, [...] let me concentrate attention on the purely compositional aspect of the matter, and point out that, in order to pass from one plane to another, I make use, not of "fact," but of something in which I find a greater degree of purity and significance, as a link—namely, a phenomenon of memory. (qtd. Genette 159)

Pointing to Proust's confession that involuntary memory is a "*significant link and method of transition,*" Genette rightly exposes the writer's conscious use of "the past definite, the past indefinite, the present participle, and of certain pronouns and prepositions" as a "vision" that "can also be a matter of style and of technique" (159). In other words, Proust has renewed our awareness of things around us and sharpened our eyes to know and experience the "reality of our external world" (159).

Winkler's author/narrator is fairly consistent across the body of this work, vacillating between omniscient and focalized narration. Reliability or verisimilitude ("Wahrhaftigkeit") is not a factor the reader can expect; nor is it arguably important. One

is left with the poetic project, in which the memory of the autobiographical I is nonetheless means of expression. Therefore, methodology interrogating memory must be adopted. Winkler does not simply rely on one memory model. At times Proustian (sensory), at times Benjaminian (*Denkbilder* and *Erinnerungsbilder*),<sup>44</sup> he explores the act of remembering in direct conjunction with the act of writing. To access the most powerful episodes of lived experiences, not just the visual but the complete sensory data is provided.

While Genette's explication of his theory on frequency and iteration stays within the interpretation of a single text, an analysis of Winkler's mode of frequency and iteration suggests to consider all of his writing, beginning with his published and unpublished texts. Since Winkler's iterations are part of his project of the aesthetics of form, his repeated retellings of the same events are experiments in language and tone. One could even go so far as to talk about intertextuality, intermediality, or even transtextuality; that is, in order to understand one text, it is necessary to have read all his writing, including his interviews and notebooks; furthermore, to understand his oeuvre, one has to know each text individually.

In a different chapter, Genette coins two terms useful in understanding the literary representation of time (83-84). First, one has the time of narration, which is a moment in time the narration takes place. This can happen before, after, or during an event. It is simply the time frame from which the narrator recalls or describes an event in progress or after it occurred. Second, there is narrated time. Narrated time closely resembles

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<sup>44</sup> Weigel 99-102 provides a thoughtful reading of Benjamin's concepts.

Lessing's aesthetics of the written word, in other words, narrated time functions as the illusion of time passing in the text. Once space is constructed, changes in that space in the form of verbs, or sequential indicators such as adverbs, conjunctions, and adjectives constitute the passage of time, or at least give the impression that things in a text are moving forward via a logical, sequential progression, even in the absence of linearity. The caveat for Genette, as mentioned before, is that this process must occur semantically.

For Genette, frequency, that is the number of times an event occurs in a text, functions as means of drawing attention to an event and coding it as important. Repetition also explores different modalities of an event by altering context or details, thereby recording an event through a number of different thematic or ideological positions. Precisely this appears to be Winkler's strategy. Genette, of course, stays the course, arguing for the retention of particular linguistic time indicators. He does not say whether objects, that is, nouns, or any other particular element can function as indicators of iteration or frequency.

Whereas Genette grounds repetition in parts of speech, Winkler's placement of the object defines his narrative strategy. The object turned "thing" becomes part of the discourse, assumes agency semantically, and forges relationships within a text and across texts. Not specific elements of time but the presence of the object—in our case the *Kalbstrick*—instigates time through repetition. In other words, it mediates childhood memories remembered throughout a lifetime in ever changing semantic constructions and generates narratives that expose the dynamics of the narrator's personal and artistic growth. In its fetishistic qualities, it transmits personal, cultural and historical systems of

belief. In this way, the *Kalbstrick* functions as kenning for previously established narratives and relationships in the context and modality of the text—in the same manner as Genette’s theory suggests.

The foundation of Winkler’s thematic catalogue is established in his early works, where he iterates in effusive language the same events that pivot around material objects, in our case, the *Kalbstrick*. In its discursive manifestations, the rope becomes more prominent than the characters or even the event itself. Whether it is the *Kalbstrick* as an instrument of punishment, death, dreams, memory, or inspiration, it is never the same. Placed within the rural environment and farming life, it is ubiquitous, feigns “humility,” and determines people’s lives and actions, as Miller would argue. In its dominance over those affected by it, it exercises subjugation. At the same time, it becomes the cause for obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behavior and establishes a fetishized and fetishizing relationship. Not situated in chronic or diachronic narrative structures, i.e. in adjectives that denote temporality and description, it is defined by verbs that denote its passive or active participation in the action. The *Kalbstrick* assumes agency through discourse, that is, it takes on a life of its own.

The *Kalbstrick* stands in semantically for characters, their emotions, rage, anger; furthermore for structural and personal violence, animalistic drives, unrestrained sexuality, brutality, pain, and suffering. By inflicting pain it gets afflicted, bears the marks of abuse: blood, sweat, slime, excrement. In its abject materiality it stands in for human deviation and it embodies the individual and collective unconscious. Although the object/thing can be a symbol, a metaphor, a signifier or a sign, it is always consciously

placed and indicative of Winkler's narrative strategy. For Winkler, frequency is therefore not the repetition of a single event *n*-times or *n*-events *n*-times but in and of itself an opportunity to rewrite his fabula in ever new moods and modalities: be it polemical, ideological, emotional, or rebellious.

Böhme, Miller and Brown seem to agree that materiality is constructed. At times they go as far as identifying language around objects and language of objects as the revealing factor of what materiality can be. If it is language that determines materiality, then it is also a matter of textual analysis to determine the extent of this theory, what these relationships that are spoken of by all these theoreticians are, and what comprises them. An investigation of Winkler's work proves that materiality theory is not limited to the social sciences but also a question of literary studies. In other words, the discourse about materiality and subject-object relations is as relevant in language as it is in the study of human behavior.

With the exception of Reichensperger's discussion of the *Kalbstrick* in terms of allegory, no analysis exists of the birthing rope as material object. It was the goal of this chapter to demonstrate that objects are not merely clutter in Winkler's work, but essential in the construction of relationships, which, in turn, are part of the author's writing strategy. Materiality exists within the relationship of the subject—in this case particularly the autobiographical I—and the *Kalbstrick*. Furthermore, Winkler develops this relationship into a narrative strategy that explores an array of modalities, perspectives, ideologies, and contexts. Foremost, it is the author's polemics, his brutal images that evoke a verisimilitude of reality. He wants to be heard and employs language for his

project. Lastly, this relationship, as seen by the aforementioned theorists, is discursive in nature, and therefore part of the domain of language to explore and interpret. But Winkler goes further in his construction of his texts when he demonstrates an unbridled reverence for writing as well as the inability to write. That is the reason why he fetishizes precisely this act. The fetish, an externalization of this urge, reveals itself then in the obsession with the object, not the least the *Kalbstrick*, which becomes the authorial disciplinary instrument. Writing, language, and object here function in unison to communicate what the noun, the verb, cannot accomplish in isolation.

## **2. Writing the Body: Materiality and Aesthetics of the Body**

In Winkler's works the human body enjoys a peculiar presence, bordering on omnipresence, primarily because the frequent reference and the focus on mortality serve as vehicle for social criticism, religious practice, and autobiographic memory. Winkler's representation of the body invites broad possibilities of approach, through which its ontology, commodification, fetishization, and objectification becomes fair game for analysis. Not least the sheer visual and affective potential of the body, housed within the author's specific and detailed description, exposes the abject and componential elements and introduces an aesthetic aspect in an unconventional mode. Through the author's language, living and dead bodies, even osseous matter, are presented as dynamic, possessing agency while retaining the metaphysical components in their material presence. This material presence is the impetus of this chapter, which seeks to explore the materiality of the body, that is, the relationship between the authorial I and the body as represented in language, assuming the body mediates memory, religious attitudes, or tensions in the form of polemics and writing strategies.

The various interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies that examine the body grapple with the notions of its biological, symbolic, ontological, socially, or culturally constructed modalities, in other words, with the materiality of the body and its mediation in language and imagery. Whereas biology, anthropology, sociology, or psychology reference bodies as living—physical—objects in their research, philosophy is more concerned with the dualism of body and mind, while literary analysis relies on the

construction of the body in language: it materializes only when it is visible and tangible in the process of writing it. Feminist theorists, in particular, have written about the production of discourse, performativity, material bodies and the processes of materialization as well as the relationship between subjectivity, corporeality, and identity.<sup>45</sup> Recent material feminism has argued that discursive representation is not concerned with lived materiality and ignores unexpected agency of corporeality. This strand of feminism also argues that nature is more than a passive social construction but an “agentic” force that interacts with changes of the human.<sup>46</sup> As research in cultural studies has pointed out, tattooing, plastic surgery, body sculpting are increasingly popular, expressive of social and cultural fascination with body image.<sup>47</sup> Often, the argument is a top down one, assuming global economic forces and media proliferation of homogenous body imagery are responsible for the normative, familiarly toned, slender, and notably Western body type. What is not articulated is that by general consent these norms, among all other trends in fashion, are organic and almost unpredictably fluid.

Materiality theory of the body is prevalent in disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary and cultural studies, borrowing and merging ideologies and

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<sup>45</sup>“Feminist Perspectives on the Body.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Web. 7 June 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Alaimo and Hekmann 4ff. The editors of this collection of essays argue that material feminism has to move away from the discursive, i.e. the analysis of discourses *about* the body and focus on the lived, material bodies and evolving corporeal practices. The essays address, for example, biology, ecology, the human and non-human body, ethics, vitalism, memory and forgetting. “Agentic forces” is a term coined by the editors and used by the authors. In this chapter, the term is appropriate since it describes the energy at work, especially in regards to the materiality of human and un-human bodies. It also implies Böhme’s “wirken” of agency.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis gives a comprehensive overview of body theory.



methodologies to generate an approach for interpretation and understanding. There is neither consent within or across disciplines on one common theoretical approach to the materiality of the body; nor whether or how they compete, overlap, or intersect. The question arises: how can we understand the physicality of the body and how can we gain access to its “materiality,” be it biological or otherwise. Further analysis, however, makes it clear that the paradox of discursive construction of the body and materiality of the body persists, since materiality, too, is visually and semantically constructed; and that includes even the study of the physical body in the health and social sciences. This requires a conscious effort to probe how language is used to produce meaning.

How can Winkler’s work, which is permeated with references to the body—the youthful, the aging, the pathological, the tortured, and the diseased body—be situated in this discourse? If the body is similar to material objects such as the *Kalbstrick*, does it also function like that narrative strategy that explores an array of modalities, perspectives, ideologies, and contexts? Is materiality and embodiment represented in competing, that is binary, opposition? Where does the body as symbol or metaphor intersect with materiality? How do “agentic” forces of the body as abject affect the writing process? How does material culture in religion with its ritualistic practices of funerals and veneration of relics play a role? In this chapter, I ground the investigation of the materiality of the body in Winkler’s texts in a brief overview of modern and postmodern theoretical approaches. I then argue that Winkler’s representation of the body is deeply rooted in rural Austrian autochthonism and Catholicism distinctive of the geographically remote and secluded Alpine region of Carinthia. I further explore the relationship

between the authorial I and the differing constructions of the materiality of the living body, the failing body, the diseased body, and the relic. In this context, I investigate the aestheticized, the fetishized, and the abject body and its power to reference, mediate, conceal, and reveal.

The body, particularly the female body, has been a topic of research in science,<sup>48</sup> anthropology,<sup>49</sup> sociology,<sup>50</sup> economics,<sup>51</sup> sociolinguistics,<sup>52</sup> social psychology,<sup>53</sup> cultural theory,<sup>54</sup> and aesthetics.<sup>55</sup> Drawing on a wide array of interdisciplinary concepts and methods, numerous publications offer research that compiled data from private and public sources as well as critical analyses of literary texts on the representation of the body. They range from the investigation of visual images in the media and advertising,<sup>56</sup> to studies of bodily ageing, gendered bodies, bodies at risk, ill and disabled bodies, bodies at play—sports and dance—and the narcissistic body.<sup>57</sup> While appearing multifaceted, the interest in the body shares common themes, even after decades of removal from its origins in feminist critique.

Since the 1960s various discussions have emerged around specific questions of the articulation of the body in language and discourse, especially the articulation of the

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<sup>48</sup> A vast field of medical research that reaches into economics and politics is available but too broad to list here, since it is not part of this project.

<sup>49</sup> Locke and Farquhar.

<sup>50</sup> Scott and Morgan; Waterhouse; Shilling.

<sup>51</sup> Stuckler and Basu.

<sup>52</sup> Coupland and Quinn.

<sup>53</sup> Gervais, Vesco, Förster, Maass, and Suitner.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault 1975; Joeres.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis. See also bibliography of works consulted.

<sup>56</sup> Blood.

<sup>57</sup> Coupland and Quinn; Foucault; Butler;

body *as* discourse. Feminist criticism, especially, has pointed out that “society constructs meanings around the biological conditions of gender in order to discipline and control the body” (Lewis 247). An extensive literature in cognitive psychology also suggests that objectifying images in the media reduce women’s bodies to their sexual body parts dehumanizing women but not men (Gervais, Vesco, Förster, Maass, and Suitner 744). While mid-century scholarship was concerned with the cultural devaluation of the body, especially the female body, most contemporary critics, especially the poststructuralists seek to deconstruct the paradigm of binary opposition of male/female and mind/body, arguing that it is not a stable form of reality but rather depends on discursive powers (Price and Shildrick 218).

Although the abundance of recent scholarship on the body suggests significant current relevance of the subject, the debate about mind and body, the fundamental components of human existence and their relationship, is not a recent question of inquiry but has been the prevailing topic of philosophy and theology over the centuries. In the last four decades, however, feminism, particularly the philosophy of embodiment (Lennon)—a relative recent area of studies—and cultural studies have challenged concepts of “body” as ontological “being” and material “thing” as traditionally viewed by Plato, Augustine, and the bible. With Rorty’s introduction of the term “linguistic turn,” social and cultural sciences have adopted the concept in various ways, shifting perspectives and modes of interpretation. Consequently, the selection of “material turn” as the principle of “thinking through things” and the claim that objects are not projections

of human agency but possess agency themselves (Bräunlein 14), shifted the discourse from ontology to the investigation of materiality.

Winkler's world is inhabited by human and un-human beings that act, dictate, dominate, suffer, perform and destroy alike. His imaginary manipulation of things create a new semantic order of things, destabilizing reality as modernity had fashioned it with the debate of the mind/body dichotomy. This "aus-den-Fugen-geratene Welt" can only be reigned in with language, more precisely, an aesthetics of form. However, his "new" aesthetics no longer adheres to traditional modes of narration or systems of belief; it rather challenges concepts of rationality, mind/body relationships, and normative behavior. To situate Winkler in the intellectual history of materiality discourse regarding the split between mind/soul and body, the spiritual and the physical, a brief recapitulation of theories is in order. This apparent divergence is merited, since Winkler is deeply rooted in the tradition, is fascinated by it, yet rebels against it, and castigates, even reviles it.

Enlightenment thinkers had generally endorsed Platonic dualism in their construction of the body. According to Plato, true substances cannot be physical bodies because they are visible, inconsistent, variable and soluble, and therefore unreliable. True substances must be eternal forms, of which the bodies are only imperfect replicas. In contrast to physical substances, they are constant, invariable, invisible and dissoluble. Only forms provide 'universal' concepts, grounds for intelligibility, and are instrumental in the process of understanding. For Plato, mind and body are different. Whereas the intellect is immaterial with a strong affinity to the soul that will inhabit the realm of

forms after the body's dissolution, the body is material and subject to decline and death. Plato's principle of duality with its superiority of the mind over sensory or appetitive desires of the body not only applies to human understanding but also to the formation of a rational and orderly body politic (Lewis 249; Annas 63-74).

By adopting the Platonic model of the ontological body, 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers emphasized the primacy of reason and rationality as venues for the production and organization of knowledge. Like Plato, they separated the mind from the sensory and emotional sector of the self, relying on the application of reasoned and empirically gained knowledge to increase human control over nature and economic production. The key to expanding all areas of knowledge was the notion that science, based on the experimental method developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was able to construct principles that were universally applicable. Furthermore, by understanding the human body as material object for empirical study, the Enlightenment project prioritized instrumental reason advocating a change in the ways of thinking, not only about science but also about the self, the arts, society, and politics. In contrast to the philosophical discourse of pure and instrumental reason, the physical body became an object of scientific study and discovery, made accessible through encyclopedias, medical treatises, and visual representations of dissections.

For Kant, and in a slightly different context Adam Smith, pure reason and practical reason were the driving forces in philosophical discourse. Man is a creature full of inner conflict, living in a state of constant contradiction. On the one hand, he is capable of reasonable thinking, good behavior and orderly co-existence with others and

can exert a positive influence both politically and morally; on the other hand he is driven by self-love that strives for satisfaction of his own needs which makes him non-social. It is this very tension between selfish aggression and reasonable behavior in society, which Kant sees as the moving power of world history that necessarily leads to the good because both poles of interest remain dialectically reconciled with each other. Most importantly, Kant understands autonomy as moral autonomy, that is, the human capability to use rational faculties to give himself the law by which he acts. The fundamental principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative, is the law of an autonomous will that subjugates the physical body and controls all forms of passions. Whereas the sensory perception of the physical body arises in knowledge production, the priority of the intellect is never questioned.

Descartes' adoption of Platonic dualism set the foundation for the binary construction of nature and the human condition. "Cogito, ergo sum"—I think, therefore I am—not only established the difference between mind and body but also the superiority of the mind over the physical body, "insisting that only knowledge can produce the proof of the matter, reality and the sensory experience of the body" (Lewis 249). Whereas the body is in its materiality extendable and divisible into separate parts (legs, arms, etc.), the mind cannot be divided, even if it can be labeled separately, according to the different cognitive processes. Since mind and body differ, they necessarily must be separable and distinct substances (Skirry 97-120).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, philosophical discourse and the reliance on empirical scientific methods of inquiry determined the dialectics of the material world that

separated the physicality of the body from the rationality of the mind, “which has its own metaphysical connections to the spirit, the soul and God” (Lewis 249). The development of the disciplines with their particular methodologies furthered discourses that were grounded in the notion that empirical knowledge production—that included knowledge about the functions of the physical body—would yield objective results and procure the “truth.” In other words, the scientist would objectify the body in its physical as well as psychological fabric to construct knowledge. Although the Cartesian dialectics of mind and body remained in place, reconciliation was achieved through these discourses that in turn created a hierarchical order of knowledge: the intellect exercised power over the physicality of the body (Lewis 250). Still, primacy was given to the body as ontological being, defined by the mind/body dualism, and not as materialized invisible forces that control human behavior.

From the four categories of discourses (Lewis 250f.), I will briefly mention the *economic body* (Marx) and the *sociological body* (Weber), sparing the *biological body* (Descartes, Newton, Darwin) and the *humanist body* (Bentham, Mill) since these terms do not immediately contribute to this project, while Marx and Weber broadly overlap with Winkler’s understanding of the objectified body. In his *Communist Manifesto* Marx argues as the development of the bourgeoisie, that is, capital, grows proportionally to the proletariat, the laborers “must sell themselves piece-meal,” they “are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all fluctuations of the market” (25). Because the worker is alienated from the products—his objectified human labor—, he is also alienated from the work process.

He neither owns nor controls work and product. Estranged labor erases individuality and creativity; in short, the worker's body is no longer subject to the tension of mind and body or the hierarchical order of physicality and spirituality but has become objectified, a form of property that is bought and sold; he is an appendage to his machine. He is the sum total of labor, treated like any productive machinery, exploited, and dehumanized (20).

Max Weber, too, accepted the Cartesian mind-body duality but positioned historical, social, and cultural forms of knowledge in the natural sciences. He defined the process of rationalization, particularly the rationalization of the body, through the increasing emphasis on calculation and control within the social life, that is, the application of mathematical systems to achieve a desired end. Accordingly, behavior in society is based on social action that, in turn, is informed by ethical and disciplined decisions. However, individual intentions and purposes are subjected to structural constraints that are embedded in systems based on efficiency and control. Weber's term "stahlhartes Gehäuse" (iron cage) implies objectification of the body that is entrapped in technically ordered, rigid, and dehumanized societies (Weber 356; Lewis 251).

In Winkler's world inherent cultural and social structures of violence have subjugated the soul, leaving a grim vision of the body in its utmost abjection. The reader is constantly exposed to graphic images of the sexualized, tortured, or diseased body. Absent is Lessing's body of Laokoon, represented in the moment when mental and



physical pain are captured with a sense of beauty.<sup>58</sup> Rebellling against Western tradition of body/mind dichotomy, Winkler intends to expose the idealism and aesthetics as a veneer that hides the deterioration and putrefaction of the materiality of being. Notions of harmony and beauty, saccharin images of a “heile Welt,” dead children surrounded by angels adorned with halos, or brand icons promising pleasure and the good life, are relentlessly ironized or satirized. “Die Stunde der Wahrheit löst die Stunde der Lüge ab“ could serve as motto of his work (*Ackermann II*). This chapter will analyze *Realität so sagen, als ob sie trotzdem wär oder die Wutausbrüche der Engel* (2011), *Menschenkind* (1979), *Der Ackermann aus Kärnten* (1980), *Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot* (2008), *Mutter und der Bleistift* (2013), *Roppongi* (2007), and *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* (2003) and trace Winkler’s construction of the materiality of the body as it challenges traditional historical, cultural, and religious manifestations.

In his construction of the body, particularly the materiality and objectification of the body and labor, Winkler finds common ground in Marx when the eighth issue of his journal *Schreibarbeiten* opens with a quote from *Das Kapital*, emphasizing the fusion of

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<sup>58</sup> Lessing, Laokoon. “Und dieses nun auf den Laokoon angewendet, so ist die Ursache klar, die ich suche. Der Meister arbeitete auf die höchste Schönheit, unter den angenommenen Umständen des körperlichen Schmerzes. Dieser, in aller seiner entstellenden Heftigkeit, war mit jener nicht zu verbinden. Er mußte ihn also herabsetzen; er mußte Schreien in Seufzen mildern; nicht weil das Schreien eine unedle Seele verrät, sondern weil es das Gesicht auf eine ekelhafte Weise verstellt. Denn man rei dem Laokoon in Gedanken nur den Mund auf, und urteile. Man lasse ihn schreien, und sehe. Es war eine Bildung, die Mitleid einflöte, weil sie Schönheit und Schmerz zugleich zeigte; nun ist es eine häliche, eine abscheuliche Bildung geworden, von der man gern sein Gesicht verwendet, weil der Anblick des Schmerzes Unlust erregt, ohne daß die Schönheit des leidenden Gegenstandes diese Unlust in das süe Gefühl des Mitleids verwandeln kann.“ Web. 15 Feb. 2015.

human and mechanical strength to subjugate and appropriate, i.e., exploit the natural resources available to him.

Die seiner Leiblichkeit angehörigen Naturkräfte, Arme, Beine, Kopf und Hand, setzt er in Bewegung, um sich den Naturstoff in einer für sein eigenes Leben brauchbaren Form anzueignen. (Marx, *Kapital* 192)

Marx's concept of the physicality of labor, translated into the image of the machine-like working body, set in motion to appropriate natural resources, is aestheticized in the narrator's effusive, almost breathless *Wortfluten*, when he traces the markings of agricultural labor in the paternal body. Consciously placed, creating an "aura" of visual and sensual presence in the text, the narrating I exposes the body in the process of "aneignen" of "Naturstoff" in an ironic way.

Mit dem Marterwerkzeug von Nägeln, Hammer und Zange in seinen abgearbeiteten, krallenartigen, immerzu schmutzigen Händen mit den unregelmäßig geschnittenen Fingernägeln—mit einer Zange, mit der er die Zähne der neugeborenen Ferkel abzwickte, manikürte er auch seine Finger- und Zehennägel—, sagte er zu mir: "Schau nicht links und schau nicht rechts!" (*Realität* 139)

Marx's notion of the body as an appendage to the machine is materialized in the father's connection with his tools. Mediated by the authorial *Wortmaschine* (*Menschenkind* 12), nails, hammer, and pliers are semantically reconstructed in the finger- and toenails as well as in the grip of the claw-like hand, worn down like the instruments with frequent use. The tools are given the nomenclature "Marterwerkzeuge." Not only do they "torture"

the wood and the barbed wire fences, eaten away by rust and decay, they also wear down the skin and replace it with callous tissue that is now covered with the grime of the surfaces they touched. The “agentic” force of the rural environment has seeped into the living body permeating it with its materialistic components. The agency of the body, visualized in the “Marterwerkzeug,” held in ever dirty hands, is articulated in the command: “Schau nicht links und schau nicht rechts!”

While Marx still understands the body as ontological, i.e., a body robbed of its spiritual component through the exploitation of capitalist labor, interdisciplinary research in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has reshaped the debate on the materiality of the body as the site of cultural, sociological, or linguistic construction. In his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault argues that discipline, exercised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, created a new economy and politics for bodies through training, observation, and control. These “docile bodies” function perfectly in their controlled environment, be it factories, armies, prisons, and classrooms. To create these bodies, subjects and their world are constructed in a system of thought that are expressed in an interrelationship of power and knowledge. “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault, *Discipline* 136). The modern body, then, is normalized and “subjected to scientific, social, and economic surveillance” (Punday 511). Foucault understands the normalized body as a spatial “site,” as “the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas),” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 83). As Punday points out, Foucault never observes the body itself but discusses books that describe bodies; in other words, Foucault explores the body through

language. Since the body can be analyzed without the physical or ontological body being part of his inquiry, Punday suggests that Foucault's body site should be treated as a trope in his analysis of the history of social ordering (514).

In her critique of Foucault, Judith Butler argued in her lecture on "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily inscriptions," that a definition of what constitutes "the body" would actually require a discussion of whether its ontological presence exists prior to the notion of the body as a site of construction (Butler, "Foucault and Paradox" 601).

[...] there is a body that is in some sense there, pregiven, existentially available to become the site of its own ostensible construction. What is it that circumscribes this site called "the body"? How is this delimitation made, and who makes it? Does the existent body in its anonymous universality have a gender, an unspoken one? [...] What shape does this body have and how is it to be known? [...] Is the body ontologically distinct from the process of construction it undergoes? (601)

In his analysis of Butler's reading of Foucault, Dudrick refutes Butler's assumption that "Foucault holds that *ideas about bodies* are constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes" (227), when he replaces *ideas about bodies* with *bodies themselves* (228). Adding Foucault's definition of the body in *Discipline and Punish*, he expands the notion of body to render it as "*bodies 'directly involved in a political field—that is, souls themselves'*" (Dudrick 228). Although Dudrick's notion of body and spiritual agency is interesting, it does not grant them materiality. It just integrates them into the Foucauldian system of agency defined by knowledge and power.

Although Winkler's construction of the body is discursive, it goes beyond Butler's performativity and Foucault's subjected and docile bodies. Whereas Foucault's "docile bodies" have internalized power structures rendered invisible, Winkler's bodies bear distinct marks of discipline, torture, self-inflicted injuries, or even death in form of accidental and intentional wounds. Moreover, Winkler's disciplined bodies are always in proximity to material objects that mediate violence, tension, obsession, "Zwang," often revealed in fetishistic behavior. As the subject-object relationship of *Kalbstrick* and body illustrate, material objects and bodies, corpses and body parts are consciously placed and iterated in the text, so that the narrative of corpses, or twisted and convulsive bodies, intersects with the narrative of "agentic" forces that determine cultural knowledge, power, and discipline

As noted in the discussion of the *Kalbstrick*, tenuous subject-object relations, materiality and agency of the object, and fetishism are aspects that can intersect with symbolism and metaphor, creating a complex archeological narrative structure. In an interview, Winkler himself refers to his first book *Menschenkind* as the most metaphorical, that is, the most vague and ambiguous, while his second novel *Der Ackermann aus Kärnten* returns to the clarity of the story about the child struggling with a patriarchal father-figure, an Übermensch, a God.

[...] im *Ackermann aus Kärnten*, da werden die Metaphern vom ersten Buch aufgebrochen. Da wird es dann ganz klar, es geht um eine Figur. Es geht um einen Patriarchen. Es ist der Kampf eines Kindes mit einem Patriarchen, mit einem Übermenschen, mit einem Vater, mit einem Gott. (Grohotolsky 13f.)

In his pursuit of the aesthetics of form, Winkler consciously sets up relationships between the subject and the object that are defined by materiality. Furthermore, he situates the characters—and that includes the authorial I—in an environment that is described as both corporeal and material. Through this lens, the cruciform village of Kamering becomes a multilayered network of meanings that arc from the individual to the familial, the communal, the cultural and the religious. Embedded in this network of intersecting strands, the narrating I lays out his struggles with language, evidenced in his obsession and fixation with his family and home. Driven by the tension between silence and unconstrained *Wortfluten*, he hammers his sentences onto the page. His narratives are never constructed in the abstract realm of a figure of speech, an analogy, or something that is just “similar” to the “reality” of life experiences; they are constituted in a palpable and tangible world of sensuality and iconography.

The opening 35 pages of *Der Ackermann aus Kärnten* deliver a fervent account of life and death in the cruciform village of Kamering. Uninterrupted by any semantic breaks, the narrator talks about the childhood he spent in the “Corpus dieses Dorfkruzifix” (206). Although “Körper” and “verkörpern” serve as recurrent semantic markers expecting wholeness, the passage is permeated with references to body parts: hands, feet, toes, arms, pupils, ankles, chest, heads, heart, lungs—all in connection to the cross and the body of Christ. The cruciform of the space not only determines the location of the dwellings, it also marks the villagers and dictates their behavior: violence, suicide, sacrilege. In the middle of the cross-beams, at the point where they intersect, in the heart

of the crucifix, is the narrator's home. Since the topography of the village prescribes conduct, it also compels the author to write.

Wunden haben mich zur Sprache gebracht: die beiden Lehrlinge haben sie in mir erzwungen. (216)

Because he embodies the village ("denn in mir verkörpert sich das Dorf" 213), he is driven by his mother's admonition, "*Sprachen sind Seelen*," to turn the silence of his home into the language of his texts (216).

In the opening of *Der Ackermann aus Kärnten*, Winkler constructs a tortuous portrayal of his native village that is both effective and affective, since it reveals the intensity of narrative labor that also impacts the reader. Furthermore, it exposes the agonizing, almost anancastic relationship—he calls it his "dörfliche Haßliebe" (*Menschenkind* 147)—between the autobiographical authorial self and Kamering.

Die geographische Anatomie unseres Dorfes läßt sich mit einem Kruzifix vergleichen. Von der Dorfstraße, zu deren linker und rechter Hand Häuser stehen, strecken sich im oberen Teil zwei Arme, auf die die Bauernhäuser wie die Knorpel eines Rosenkranzes aufgefädelt sind. Ganz links, an der angepflockten Hand, stockt das Blut des ersten Hauses. Das Zimmer der verstorbenen Mutter ist rot austapeziert. Am letzten Haus des rechten Armes steht ein roter Kalbstrick für den Nagel, der die rechte Hand des Kruzifix hochhält. Den Kopf dieses Kruzifix bilden Pfarrhof und Heustadel, in dem sich die beiden siebzehnjährigen Lehrlinge umbrachten. Nur die Wunde, die sich an der linken Brustseite in der Nähe des Herzens befindet, ist noch geschlossen. Mehrere Anläufe des Todes haben Angst

ausgelöst. Mit einer Lanze gegen sich selbst wollte die Schwester dieses letzte Wundmal öffnen. Eine Überdosis Schlaftabletten der Tochter, und die Mutter träumt nicht mehr, die Heiligenbilder beginnen zu sprechen, treten aus ihrem Rahmen und gehen im Stehschritt vor dem Totenbett auf und ab. Die Pfauenfedern öffnen verschlafen die Lider. Die Fußnägel des Gekreuzigten werden zu Sargschrauben. Das Roggenfeld verwandelt sich zu unzähligen, von schwarzen Raben überflogenen Brotlaiben. Die Stunde der Wahrheit löst die Stunde der Lüge ab. *Wer den Tod fürchtet, verliert sein Leben.* (Ackermann 10f.)

Although the passage could be read in terms of metaphor, symbolism or even psychophysical experience of the pain of torture (Reichensperger 59), I argue that Winkler intentionally sets up metaphorical connections, yet he deconstructs them semantically through the interrelationship of the body, sacrality materialized in space, the icon as materialistic metaphor, and the sacrament where secular aspects become something else (Yu).

Dynamic relationships between human beings and sacred others (gods, spirits, saints, ancestors) are mediated or embodied in material objects such as icons, images, texts, linguistic signs, talismans, and relics (Lynch, Yu). Since sacrality is invisible, ashes are realistic extensions of real persons in authority of sacral power; icons are materialistic metaphors that stand for something; the real bread and wine in the sacrament remains intact but becomes something else; transubstantiation is enacted by ritual.<sup>59</sup> If sacrality is materialized as space, physical objects such as tombs, burial sites, and mounts are

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<sup>59</sup> See Yu's explications in his lecture on the Panel "Materiality and Spectacle." Harvard School of Divinity. Web. 15 Jan. 2015.



valorized, not as simple physical objects but as spatial sacrality. Geographical locations channel creative and sacred energies of the cosmos (Yu). The sacred is no longer an idea, it is what you see, touch, feel; invisible forces and powers are mediated by the material.

The cruciform topography and architecture of Kaming ceases to be metaphorical when the narrator materializes its sacrality as space furnished with religious icons. The wooden form of the crucifix, often referred to as the “Längs- and Querbalken,” traversed by the villagers in their daily movements,<sup>60</sup> is now burdened with the tortured body of Christ. Furthermore, the body is not simply attached to the cross; its “bodiness” anthropomorphizes the geography of the village into the visible corpse of the dead Christ. Hands, arms, fingers, bones, cartilage, and skull narrate the life experiences of violence, discipline (*Kalbstrick*), torture, and suffered or inflicted pain. With powerful language, the narrating I mediates shared divine and human anguish, bestowed by one another or self-inflicted, through the agency of the materialized sacred object. The wound on the left hand not only stops the circulation of the blood in the divine body, it is also the marking of the geographical site where the lifeblood of the narrator’s maternal family ceased to flow. After the death of three sons, the grandmother died of a broken heart and the household sank into silence. With the loss of the sons, language also ceased to exist.

The right hand is held up by the *Kalbstrick*, the ubiquitous material object that stands in for discipline, authoritative patriarchy, but also for the act of writing. It connects the hand with the skull, the site of the double suicide of the two seventeen year old boys. The only wound not yet open and festering is the spot near the heart, marking the

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<sup>60</sup> “Der Jogl ging schnellen Schrittes den linken Querbalken des kreuzförmig gebauten Dorfes entlang zum Gasthaus, [...]” (*Mutter und Bleistift* 46).

unsuccessful suicide attempt of the sister. The passage ends with the visualization of the powers of agency that are at work between subject and object, the authorial I and his text. Not the artist paints the stories on the canvas, the icons themselves speak for those unable to speak. They talk, step out of their frames, walk up and down in front of the bier, endow the surrounding objects with agency: the peacock feathers open their sleepy eyes to watch the spectacle that is unfolding. Winkler goes so far as to recreate, and in doing so critique the concept of transubstantiation, the most important moment in the Catholic mass, by which the field of rye becomes the loaf of bread, the secular form of the body of Christ. Driven by his “dörfliche Haßliebe” (*Menschenkind* 147), the authorial I, identifying with the biblical prodigal son who has to return to his village during phases of recurring “Sprachkrisen,” has mediated the latent forces of the village through language, materialized in the form of the printed text. Furthermore, within the complex interrelationship of religious iconography, sacred topography, and the individual households of the village, not the narrator but the objects perform social, familial and cultural behavior.

The geographic anatomy of the cruciform village, marked by the twisted body of the tortured Christ, becomes a sacred space that is defiled by the violence of those who inhabit it. Memories of fallen soldiers, suicides, and the deterioration of the body through hard labor and ageing place the materiality of the body center stage. In *Menschenkind*, the authorial I refers to his fixation with death as an ambiguous blend of pleasure and horror (“Vergnügen und Entsetzen” 60); in *Roppongi* he feeds his necrophile curiosity (“necrophile Neugier” 143) with fetishistic practices and obsessive, often blasphemic

vituperations. In his earlier works, his “anancastic” fascination with death and dying is focused on family members and friends in Kaming, while in his later works, he links native rituals with funeral rites in Japan, India, and Mexico. Aside from the suicide of the two boys, the death of his paternal and maternal grandmothers as well as his father are the most prominent and emphatically iterated events.

The narrating I dates the beginning of his “necrophile Neugier” to the particular moment in his childhood, when his aunt Tressl, the “gute Haut,” had lifted the three-year old to view the lifeless body of his maternal grandmother.

Damals, als ich drei Jahre alt war, nahm mich die kinderlos gebliebene Taufpatin Theresia Ragatschnig, *die Gute Haut*, wie sie als allseits geschätzte Dorfhelferin, Kuchen- und Tortenbäckerin genannt wurde, an der Hand, führte mich über die breite, knarrende, mit einem groben, roten Teppich ausgelegte breite Holzstiege ins Aufbahrungszimmer meiner Großmutter mütterlicherseits, die früh hingegangen war, und hob mich über den mit Immergün geschmückten, hoch auf einem Katafalk stehenden Sarg, deutete auf das aschfarbene, eingefallene Gesicht meiner Großmutter und flüsterte: Schau, Seppl, Schau! Bis zu diesem Augenblick kann ich mich zurückerinnern, mit diesem Augenblick setzt die Flut meiner Erinnerungsbilder ein. *Laß mich durch deine Nägelmal erblicken meine Gnadenwahl; durch deine aufgespaltne Seit mein arme Seele heimgeleit.* (Leichnam 22)

The *Erinnerungsbild* of the corpse in its display of decomposition is stored in the archives of memory, from whence it can be recalled to evoke the “flood” of mental

images that are transferred into language, hammered onto paper with the “Kugelkopf der Schreibmaschine.” Tresl’s hand, literally the “Gute Haut,” mediates between the sweet treats she creates and death, rendering the mood almost serene. The empathy with the heartbreak about the loss of the grandmother’s sons – the last one fragmented by a bomb—is almost tangible.

The authorial gaze, referred to as *Filmkamerakopf* in the vignette “Im Sternhagel der Bilder” (*Wimper* 121f.) and in ever increasing frequency in *Roppongi*, functions like Morgan’s “embodied eye” that records images like photographs, which are “powerful precisely because they preserve the dead” (Morgan, *Embodied Eye* 29).

Any image is an image by virtue of its ability to enact something called *presence* [...] that is occasioned by the body’s absence. Any image may act as trace of its original, sharing with it some aspect of its being, even if only enough to *promise* the power of overcoming absence. (Morgan, *Embodied Eye* 29)

In Winkler’s texts, the focus is on the somatic body’s relation to the corpse and the image of the corpse, stored in the body. If texts are like images “extended forms of what they represent” (Morgan, *Embodied Eye* 33), they are materialized life experiences, “traces of its original,” preserved between the covers of a book, promising the power to overcome absence. The primal memory (“Augenblick”), the recurrent narrative event of the aunt lifting him over the rim of the coffin, and his obsessive pursuit of funeral rites in all parts of the world, are expression of his desire to participate (“teilnehmen”) and partake (“teilhabe”) in the moment of death. Writing becomes an act of mediation

(“Verbindung”) between life and death, if only with the eye and hand. It is the “Ur-participation,” and the imperative “Schau, Seppel, Schau!” (*Leichnam* 22; *Roppongi* 95).

The body, or more precisely in this context, the corpse, reveals its meditative properties as an agent through which the union between the narrating I’s memory and his writing process becomes obvious. It maintains its materiality through the sensory experience, which in *Roppongi*, *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd*, and *Realität so sagen, als ob sie trotzdem nicht wär*, remains chiefly a visual one. Although somatic perception (“geschüttelt vom Lachen der Trauerlust,” *Menschenkind* 85) is felt, visual perception is perhaps the most important to Winkler, though his work is characterized by an appreciation of detail appealing to aural, haptic, and olfactory perception. This primacy of the visual sense is explained by the author/narrator’s interest in cinema, which too is a recurrent theme extending to the mention of titles, or going as far as referencing entire scenes as intertext as he does with Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation*, starring Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Olfactory elements, too, such as the smell of urine, seeping from the paternal grandmother’s corpse, can evoke visual images of the maternal grandmother’s more peaceful body. In the vignette “Die gute Haut,” memory is mediated through both the haptic sense and olfaction.

Ich bleibe oft bei Immergrünstauden stehen, besonders nach einem Regenguß,  
zupfe ein paar Blätter ab, zerbrösle sie, rieche daran. (*Leichnam* 22)

While the visual sense is still a factor, the author/narrator gives touch and smell primacy to relay the totality of experience while practicing brevity. Invoked is the scent of recent

rain and evergreen branches, a combination in true Proustian style to bring forth deep memory, in this case the ur-memory of aunt Tresl, the deceased grandmother, the catafalk and coffin. With the “Zerbröseln” of the evergreen, the narrator reacts again to the “agentic” forces of death, decomposition and funeral rites as practiced in rural Catholicism.

The devout aspiration, “Stossgebet” in German, written into the vignette, is a type of prayer which in Catholicism is intended to be memorized and repeated throughout the day in order to maintain one’s proximity to God through continuous prayer. It is usually uttered in lieu of profanity or as grammatical exclamation. “Die Gute Haut,” like many other Vignettes, contains the prayer in italicized form.<sup>61</sup> The aspiration refers to John 20:24-27, where Thomas is skeptical of the resurrection of Christ, willing only to believe in it if he can place his fingers into Christ’s wounds. Written in a time when eye-witnesses were no longer available, this gospel valorizes a new conception of belief by asserting the truth about the bodily risen Christ through belief *without* seeing. The figure of “doubting” Thomas merges the materiality of the body, faith, and sacrality,<sup>62</sup> when he no longer represents unconditional faith in the resurrection of Jesus, but requires an empirical test of Jesus’s living body.

The prayer functions, like the title and order of the vignettes, as a form of paratext. Its presence adds information to the text, revealing, for example, an aspect of

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<sup>61</sup> In an interview Winkler explains that he is consciously inserting texts from prayerbooks in his narratives in ever more refined (“verfeinert”) and subtle (“fein”) ways. (Grohotolsky 24)

<sup>62</sup> The moment, when Thomas lays his hand into the wound on Christ’s body is a also favorite subject in Christian iconography; see Morgan’s chapter “Beholding Flesh” in *Embodied Eye* 36-38.

the authorial I's family history and its deep roots in Catholicism. As linguistic sign, it also represents materialized sacrality, visually conjured in its accentuation in print. In referencing the devout ejaculation and framing it as paratext, Winkler accomplishes at least three things. He develops his authorial self-image as the empirically minded skeptic, and thus pariah like-figure through the analogy achieved between memory and biblical reference. He reveals the agency of omnipresent Catholicism as practiced in his household. Lastly, he makes reference to the importance of sacrality, as Catholicism materializes it in the body, in religious texts, and in ritualistic enactments of sacraments.

Agency of the body, determining powerful subject-object relations, is mobilized in the moment when the healthy body has deteriorated with age and breaks down. It is the moment when the texture of the skin becomes porous, secreting matter that exposes the body's chemical composition. Mortality is no longer an abstract idea; it is lived experience materialized as abjection. The narrator remembers his anancastic urge to observe and partake in the gradual demise of his paternal grandmother, cared for by his mother in his childhood home, which is intensified by the proximity to the body of the dying woman.

Sie [die Mutter] frisierte die Alte, schmierte ihr Veilchenöl ins dünne grau-weiße Haar, flocht zwei Zöpfe, die sie als semmelartiges Gebilde auf dem Hinterkopf zusammendrehte und mit zwei welligen silbernen Nadeln feststeckte. Eine bestimmte Stelle des dunkelgrünen Diwans, den ihr Sohn, der Onkel Hans, Konditor der Konditorei Rabitsch in Klagenfurt, [...] zu einem Geburtstag angebracht hatte, auf dem und wo die Alte Tag für Tag stundenlang saß und

spekulierend, wie sie es nannte, ihre beiden Daumen drehte, war verseucht von ihrem Urin und eingebeult von ihrem Gewicht, sie wog weit über hundert Kilogramm. [...] Nach einigen Wochen *taute* die Großmutter, wie es hieß, wieder *auf* und ging langsam mit ihren nach Urin riechenden, heruntergerutschten schwarzen Strümpfen und knöchelhohen grauen Filzpatschen, deren Innenseiten mit schwarzen Hakenkreuzen bestickt waren, über die Stiege hinunter, schlapfte schlüpfend mit ihrem kolossalen Lebendgewicht den engen Flur entlang und setzte sich wortlos in die Küche. (*Mutter und Bleistift* 42f.)

Weight, smell, and sight not only objectify the body into an enormous lump of lifeless or barely mobile flesh, they also dehumanize it with the reference to heavy livestock (“Lebendgewicht”). The loss of language removes her from the community of the family and turns her into a motionless “thing,” that is only touched by human hands when the minimum of hygienic care is administered. Especially revolting is the association of bodily matter such as urine with ingredients for edible matter: the oil, rubbed into the greasy hair, touches the “bread roll” and evokes the scent of the baked goods produced in Uncle Hans’s “Konditorei.” Since the uncle is the mediator between the urine-soaked couch and the goods produced in his bakery, disgust replaces the appetite for his delicacies.

Although Julia Kristeva’s understanding of the abject is grounded in a psychosexual approach, her conception of the subject-object relation as one of the self with the world is useful for this analysis. In her *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva argues that it is not just disgust or horror but the encounter with



suffering as such. More precisely, the abject refers to the human response to an impending breakdown in meaning, when the difference between subject and object, self and other is erased. Abjection is a moral response when one realizes that one has gone too far and is lost in absolute degradation. She further associates abjection with the improper, the unclean, the stuff that makes you gag, provokes tears, or perspiration. It can be an item of food, “a piece of filth, waste, or dung” (2).

The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them. (2)

The reaction to the abject, apparent in somatic changes such as sudden drops in blood pressure and the resultant nausea and/or vomiting connected to experience of bodily refuse or remains is, according to Kristeva, culturally categorized under the blanket term and in the language of horror, and enjoys frequent exploitation across the varied media employed by that genre. As her own reaction describes it, nausea even separates her from the person offering it. Since food is not “other” for “her,” she expels “herself,” spits “herself” out, abjects “herself” (3).

Whereas Kristeva’s body reacts, that is “abjects” (3) in revulsion, Winkler’s narrator is fascinated, even attracted by abjection. After the authorial I has literally objectified the body out of its agency, his somatic reaction, fueled by “Vergnügen und Entsetzen” in the moment of death (*Menschenkind* 60), revitalizes latent “agentic” forces of the body with his obsession to participate (“teilnehmen”) and partake (“teilhaben”) in

the materiality of the abject. He not only observes but visits his grandmother, applies some of the oil to his hair and fantasizes lying in a coffin next to the corpse of a dead child.

Oft öffnete ich, wenn ich die vereinsamte, bettlägrig gewordene Großmutter in ihrem Zimmer besuchte, [...] das Fläschchen mit dem Veilchenöl, roch daran, schmierte mir ein paar Tropfen ins Haar, setzte mich, den Rücken zum Fenster [...] an den Tisch, öffnete die Schublade und schaute in einem dicken Fotoalbum mit türkisfarbenem, gepolstertem Einband auf ein Bild mit einem aufgebahrten und so schön zurechtgemachten Kind, daß ich mich am liebsten zu ihm gelegt hätte, wenn noch Platz vorhanden gewesen wäre. (*Mutter und Bleistift* 44)

Mortality as abject, materialized in the grandmother's body, is juxtaposed to the saccharin image of a dead child. Although the physicality of death and decay remains intact, it becomes something else through the narrator's fetishistic behavior and his performance of the Catholic ritual of the last rites.

Winkler's novel *Roppongi: Requiem für einen Vater* (2007) is a reconstitution of the father's body in the absence of his corpse. The narrator's *Filmkameraauge* is repeatedly evoked as it relentlessly records and stores memories in form of *Erinnerungsbildern* in his notebooks. In his fascination and obsession to restore materiality to the temporality of lived experiences, the author/narrator becomes the Derridian *archon* who is on a feverish quest to observe, preserve, and control biographical memory in the form of visual images, in the context of our argument, the parental body. Since the body mediates memory, it is objectified when it is projected as

repository of lived experience and time, in particular, the experienced conflict between the sense of belonging to and estrangement from existing patriarchal power structures.

*Roppongi* is a narrative about loss displaying the role of writing as materialized memory. To prompt the act of remembering, Winkler focuses on the human body and the powerful imagery it can evoke, especially visions of the paternal body marked by hard labor on the farm. In his archive of *Erinnerungsbilder*, the body is not only descriptive, but also a semantic construction. The narrator consciously utilizes the language of the body (“verkörpern”) aided by elements of sensory perceptions—the smell, the grime, the wounds—to construct the physicality of the body. Since he is partly forbidden, partly unable to attend his father’s funeral, the parental body becomes the focal point of memory and writing, something in need of further understanding, archiving, and control. The process of remembering the father is the continued process of rewriting himself—it is the story not of the prodigal son, but of the return of the prodigal son to the home of his father.<sup>63</sup> Writing himself through the body of the father becomes the narrator’s obsessive search for authorial power. By objectifying himself as the Other, he can take on the role of the Derridian *archon* who controls the archives of memory. Retrieving the images from the vaults of memory moves the narrator—to cite Morgan—“toward the body because body and image promise one another and therefore lend themselves as a bonded pair to the work of mourning”(30).

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<sup>63</sup> Winkler’s *Der Leibeigene* (1998) is his first book about the topic, since he returned to Kaming during a phase of writer’s block to observe his father and find inspiration and energy to write.

The totemic moment, when the son can finally bury the father so that he can occupy the place of the deceased father, is denied through the father's powerful command not to be present at his funeral. From his childhood on, he has participated in these religious rites of departure; in the case of his father, he may not participate in the ritual. Because of his absence, he can neither observe nor archive the event, nor can he control the event, so that it will not slip from his thoughts, be preserved as *Erinnerungsbild*. His father's ban of the son has deprived the son of the memory of his father's corpse lying in state. Even in death, the father asserted his power when he challenged his son's conjecture that memory is controllable.

The novel opens with the "Narayama-Lied,"<sup>64</sup> a paratext that informs how the text itself can be read. Fukuzawa's topographical elevation of the parental body anticipates Winkler's textual elevation of the same, guiding the structure of an otherwise complex narrative arrangement. The art of burial, the often totemic celebration of parental demise, vacillates in the novel between Catholic and Hindu traditions. Since much of this particular narrative comprises an attempt at translating topography into text, the rituals become the cultural content mediated from one context to another, concurrently archived in the author's notebook, and subsequently buried between the covers of a work. The writing process, the process of observation and recording, is an exertion of control over

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<sup>64</sup> The "Narayama-Lied" is the call to the father to set out on his journey to the sacred mountain, the dwelling place of the *Kami*, where he will meet his death and be reunited with nature. In the story of Orin and her son Tappei, who carries his mother on his back, the cruel act of abandonment of the aged on top of the icy mountain is reconstructed as the conflict of filial duty, social pressure, and tradition. The practice, necessitated by scarcity of food and poverty in the village, mythologizes the parental body in an act of veneration and abjection.

the process of remembering, in this case an expression of power over the graphic memory of the body, its destruction and interment. Body and memory are bound in this fashion, tied in twine in the archive of the narrator's notebooks.

Wenn ich ein Notizbuch vollgeschrieben hatte, wurde es mit der langen Schnur, mit der auch die einzelnen Blätter befestigt waren, zusammengebunden und verschnürt, damit kein Wort verlorengehen, kein Satz herausrieseln konnte, und erst wieder geöffnet, wenn ich, vor dem Einschlafen im Hotelzimmer, die eingeklebten Bilder wieder anschauen und die ausgeschnittenen Zeitungsartikel lesen und mir beim Blättern und Rascheln im vollgeschriebenen Notizbuch dann und wann auch bestätigen wollte, daß ich wenigstens irgend etwas getan hatte und nicht ganz umsonst auf der Welt war, mich auch nicht ganz umsonst am Ufer der Ganga und in der heiligen Stadt Varanasi herumgetrieben hatte. (145)

The author/narrator performs as the Derridian *archon*, the authority that commences and commands what is housed in the archive (*arkhē*). The notebook is the *arkheion*, materialized domestic space, where public documents are filed; it is secured and guarded; only the *archon* has access, that is, the hermeneutic right and competence for interpretation and for "speaking the law" (Derrida, *Archive Fever* 3). If the Derridian archive "shelters in itself the memory of the name *arkhē* [,] but ... also shelters itself from this memory which it shelters" (Derrida, *Archive Fever* 2), the author/narrator not only collects and stores the images and textual remnants, he also revisits them. After they are secured and shelved, they can be retrieved and re-activated at will.

The text itself, like much of his previous and later work, is laden with strong themes of death in which the body in its form as corpse or its material composite of elements, such as ashes, fluids, and osseous remains is omnipresent. Winkler's *I/eye* narrates ethnographic descriptions of death and funerary rites, juxtaposing Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions, in Carinthia from his own family history, and in India, at the Harishchandra Ghat cremation site along the Ganges in Varanasi. Amidst thousands of bodies, body parts, and visceral details of the abject and sacrilege, one body is curiously absent, the body of the father. Since Winkler's father dies when he is attending a "Literatursymposium" in Tokyo, he cannot participate and partake in the funeral rites. So the father's wish—or curse, as the author/narrator calls it—"Wenn ich einmal nicht mehr bin, dann möchte ich nicht, daß du zu meinem Begräbnis kommst!" (66) was granted. In the moment of loss, the narrator/author feels compelled to reconstruct his memories of the father through photographs, phrases, and commands, in an effort to enact presence in the body's absence.

The author/narrator's father is robust, hale and healthy, "laying down the pitchfork" at 95, and living to the ripe old age of 99. Although detailed descriptions of the father's body are rare, he is remembered as the patriarchal figure that embodies the authoritarian structures of power and violence. Interpersonal family relations are recollected as self-negation, discipline, and punishments. Physical and verbal abuse during the author/narrator's formative years is remembered as a sign of love, since it was understood that it shapes the youngster and guarantees an upright and industrious progeny. The relationship between author/narrator and father is therefore tenuous and

complex, pivoting between moments of violence, and moments of shared interest—the father’s storytelling (*Realität* 140), for example,—and cooperation on the farm.

Despite the father’s apparent physical strength and endurance, memories reveal concealed wear on the body. Illness and physical as well as emotional pain are present, albeit sublimated by discipline enacted upon himself. For example, the son remembers occasions when the smell of the “Cayennepfefferdickeextrakt,” a mixture of spices used in “Hansaplast-Wärmepflaster” to soothe muscle pains, evoked a rush of tender feelings towards the father:

Das Wärmepflaster enthielt Cayennepfefferdickeextrakt und roch nach einer Gewürzmischung, deren Aroma ich als Kind immer mit einer selten verschenkten Zärtlichkeit verband, denn besonders sanft war er, wenn er, das löchrige Wärmepflaster auf dem Rücken, gekrümmt mit einer Heugabel die Futterbarren im Stall entlangging—oder wenn seine Oberkieferprothese in Reparatur, er verlegen war und nicht ohne eine lächerliche Figur zu machen und clownhafte Grimassen zu schneiden schreien, uns zur Arbeit rufen konnte. (62)

The Proustian moment of recall retrieves instances of tenderness, his father’s placidness, caused by pain and discomfort. The scent of the Hansa-plast medicated bandages has inscribed itself favorably into the author/narrator’s memory, because it is associated with a far milder temperance toward him and the rest of the family. Furthermore, the father’s reliance on prosthetic teeth is another sign of emasculation, noted in particular when they are broken and his toothlessness becomes visible. In its defects the body becomes visible as material substance that is subject to decay and demise. The images of physical

deterioration merge with the images of corpses representing the “agentic” forces of materialized mortality.

Frequently recurrent *Erinnerungsbilder*, referenced to construct the body of the father, are two photos, one the retouched image of the tall and slender figure of the grandfather (“der schlanke, großgewachsene Großvater” 40) that dominates the living room (“die Bauernstube” 47), the other the image of the father from the thirties that hangs in the hallway. Both images evidence the patriarchic order of the household; the grandfather, the moderate and revered man assumes the primary place in the household. His large portrait commands the room, remembered as the inner sanctum, where the family gathers on Sundays and the grandfather’s corpse will lie in state. The father, on the other hand, depicted in Hasselblat photographs, taken from his brother, Uncle Franz, the former SS-member and photography enthusiast, is much more modest. It has been relegated to the hallway above the telephone, a reminder of the son’s subordinate role during the thirty years he had to wait to become heir of the farm.

This picture becomes emblematic of the father. Rather than the memory of the ailing and aging father, it represents him as a proud young man, with an air of self confidence, the injured finger clearly visible that holds the weathered reigns of his two horses “Fuchs” and “Onga.” In the narrator’s memory, the imprint of loss is superimposed with the imprint of a presence that “was” (Morgan, *Embodied Eye* 30).

Auf dem Foto mit dem Braunstich aus den Dreißigerjahren, das an der Wand über dem beigefarbenen Telefon aufgehängt ist, hält der auf der neuen, von seinen beiden Pferden gezogenen Mähmaschine sitzende Vater die trockenen, brüchigen



Pferderiemen. An der linken Hand sieht man deutlich den Stumpf seines kleinen Fingers, der ihm von einer Heuschneidemaschine abgetrennt wurde, als er drei Jahre alt war und bei den Arbeiten im Heustadel mithalf, das Heu bündelweise in die Schneidemaschine gesteckt und die Hand nicht schnell genug zurückgezogen hatte. (35)

This photograph, referenced no less than thirteen times in the text, is archived within Winkler's writing. Its iterations are part of the author/narrator's process of recollection, since with each repetition another detail is added. For example, the name of the second horse, "Onga," or the missing digit of his finger, or the story about how his father rode that tractor through the cruciform village three times that day, etc. These repetitions of an event attribute a new component of the memory, or in this case post memory: the body of the father is not remembered as the old, frail, "lieb" (dear, endearing, cute) father, but the father at his most youthful and most powerful point in his life, situated in his elevated position on the tractor.

The narrator is struggling to process the absence of the body and with it the absence of the specific *Erinnerungsbild* of his father's corpse that he cannot store in the archive of memory. Yet he can bury the parental body in his text and he can also rewrite him in future narratives. In a Proustian experience, the body of the egret at the pond in the garden of the Embassy in Japan evokes the memory of his childhood and his tenuous relationship with his parent ("[...] meine eigene, mit bitterer Liebe und süßem Haß vollgestopfte Kindheit [...]"; *Menschenkind* 148). The animal represents the Freudian

“Totemtier” that can now be added to the *Erinnerungsbilder* in his notebook.<sup>65</sup> Although absent from Carinthia and from his father’s funeral, the egret at the pond in Roppongi not only embodies the father but also the lived experiences of both father and son.

Der tote Vater hat sich also, dachte ich in diesem Augenblick des Schreckens, der Trauer, Sentimentalität, der Zufriedenheit und des Glücks, in der Gestalt eines weißen Reiheres noch einmal bei mir blicken lassen, bevor er unter die Erde geschaufelt wird mit seinen langen dünnen roten Beinen, mit seinem erdig gewordenen spitzen, langen Schnabel, auf der Suche nach den Würmern seines zukünftigen Grabes in Roppongi. (65)

If totemism is the attempt to appease the insulted father and reconcile with him (Freud 428), *Roppongi*<sup>66</sup> is the second narrative of the emaciated (“halb abgefleischt”; *Realität* 133) prodigal son, returning home to evoke memory to release his language from the festering boil of his “Schreibproblematik.”

From the time of the publication of his first work, *Menschenkind* (1979), critics have commented on Winkler’s effusive and often blasphemous attacks on Catholicism, particularly the close-mindedness of rural Kamering, his hometown.<sup>67</sup> In his brief essay “Blasphemische Erweckungen” Dirk Linck focuses on the homosexual body that is excluded from the religious, genealogical, and patriarchal structures of rural cohesion

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<sup>65</sup> In his *Totem and Taboo* Freud cites Reinach’s *Code de totémisme*, that lists the “Totemtier,” that protects, warns, prophesies the future, and represent familial connections (388).

<sup>66</sup> *Der Leibeigene* (1997) was Winkler’s first attempt to write the story of the prodigal son. *Roppongi* followed after his father’s death.

<sup>67</sup> Höfler and Melzer, pp. 99-179, cover reviews in major newspapers until 1998; see also on-line critiques of his work after 1998.

(30). He also recognizes Winkler's obsession with Kamering as well as his travels to Rome in search of "Bildmaterial für seine blasphemischen Erweckungen" (32). Deeply rooted in and alienated from his native village, he writes out of the "Zwang" to define his otherness through the homosexual body.

Franz Haas's "*Ketzergebete* oder Josef Winklers poetologische Herbergsuche" reads Winkler's writing in Rome, the seat of the Pope, the "highest clerical transvestite" ("der oberste Kirchentranvestit," *Der Leibeigene* 299) as intertextual experiment. Both fascinated and repulsed, the narrator prays to the "God of the pencil" ("Gott des Bleistifts," *Der Leibeigene* 214) to grant him the gift of blasphemy so that he can write a subtext in the liturgical style of Catholic rituals. Embedded in what Haas calls "literary prayers" of an heretic, still rooted in his Catholic upbringing (48), is the discourse of the sexualized, particularly the homosexual body, in its semiotic "celebration of sex and death" ("Zeilebration von Sex und Tod" 41).

Richard Reichensperger notes in his essay "Zu einer Sprache des Schmerzes: Josef Winkler" that the "language of violence" ("diese Sprache der Gewalt" 63) justifies itself in the language of ideology. Father and priest, both objectified, dominate the village and embody two kinds of ideology: the patriarchal-absolutistic and the Catholic-national-socialist. Reichensperger points out that both strands continue and overlap in folkloric tradition—he calls it "Konterdetermination," that is, a past that has not been dealt with but has simply been subsumed by Catholic ideology.

A more recent discussion of Winkler's "Religionskritik" is Alice Bolterauer's essay "'Ich bin Gegner. Ich bin gegen das Gebet, aber ich bete.' Zur Ambivalenz der

Gottesrede in Josef Winklers Erzählung *Wenn es soweit ist.*” Bolterauer argues that it is less the authoritative structure of the village that engenders aggressive behavior but rather the stupidity and malevolence of the villagers who are trapped in hopelessness and dysfunction (176). Nevertheless, church and religion are catalysts that have nothing to do with theological dogmatism but instigate naïve piety and dubious superstition (176f.). In the chapter “Gottesrede,” Bolterauer points to Winkler’s intertextual insertions of prayers and religious images taken from prayerbooks, hagiographies, confessionals, and burial rituals. Deeply rooted in his Catholic upbringing, Winkler seems to be ambivalent in his critique: while he stands on moral grounds when he rejects what he perceives as hollow religious language, he is also fascinated by the aesthetics of litanies, processions, and prayers (186). Bolterauer argues further that Winkler creates with his insertion and the changes of hagiography, confession, and funeral rites ritualistic forms of language that mimic prayers and generate ritualistic narrative modes. Ironically, it is not the narrator who polemicizes but Catholicism that speaks for itself.

Whereas Winkler scholarship has addressed his uncompromising attacks on rural Catholicism and also included his representation of the body, especially the sexualized body, it has not done so in terms of religious materiality, embodied belief, and human relationships to sacred objects. David Morgan’s collection of essays, *Religion and Material Culture. The Matter of Belief*, offers various aspects of the materiality of belief in different religions to illustrate that belief is more than linguistic acts of signification, creedal utterances, or discursive performances. He argues that belief is embodied practices, lived religion.

Forms of materiality—sensations, things, spaces, and performance—are a matrix in which belief happens as touching and seeing, hearing and tasting, feeling and emotion, as will and action, as imagination and intuition. [...] Materiality is a compelling register in which to examine belief because feeling, acting, interacting, and sensation embody human relations to the powers whose invocation structures social life. (8)

Materiality then “mediates belief” and “material objects and practices both enable it and enact it” (12). Handling objects, dressing in certain ways, buying, displaying commodities (12), even gazing at reliquaries as repositories of precious particles of sacred matter (8) are real forms of sacred imagination that structure our relationship to the divine (12).

If bodies have the somatic capacity to convey feelings not in an abstract way but through intuitive movements, ritual worship shapes collective behavior effectively because it is affective. “The body in such cases does more than signify belief: it hosts belief.” “[...] corporate exercises such as kneeling, group recitations, musical and vocal performances serve as techniques to discipline the individual body to participate in the social body of belief” (59). Bodies are therefore not only constructed by history or culture, but also by religion. The slender body is the ideal body because this is “the person whom God meant to be” (61). Thin bodies represent proximity to God: “religion and power are inextricable” (61). Images of Jesus are especially compelling:<sup>68</sup> if worship is understood as a presentation of the personal and collective self to the divine, the divine

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<sup>68</sup> See also Morgan, *Embodied Eye* 7-16.

is no longer abstract or passive; it becomes a participant that is “invoked, conjured or lamented” (65).

Morgan’s definition of things and thingness echoes Brown’s and Miller’s theories, except that things are not only secular or fetishistic but also sacred objects. The subject-object relationship is established because things are never just “things,” they are “things-for-us” (*Material Culture* 70). Furthermore, they “exist within spaces of value, the cultural marketplace of desire” (171). They come to us “with genealogies and biographies,” that is, they embody more than just their physicality (72); they have their own narratives. According to Morgan, religious material culture “consists of objects, spaces, practices and ideas in which belief takes place” (73). In other words, materiality in religion is situated in the individual as well as the social body; the life of belief not only draws from formative modes of behavior but is also the story of things, bodies, spaces, and practices.

Morgan’s collection of essays is a comprehensive and informative study of religion and material culture as it is represented in spiritualism, art, architecture, clothing, and performativity. Winkler’s “Religionsschelte” on the other hand, is an intentional polemic of said “lived belief.” A close analysis of Winkler’s texts shows that it is exactly the individual and collective body that reveals religious practices as entrenched and calcified. Since Austrian Catholicism and fascism are closely connected, even interchangeable, the polemics also expose the power and agency of ideological patterns

(“Ideologiemuster”).<sup>69</sup> Coming to terms with the past not only exposes old wounds, it also inflicts injuries on the individual as well as the collective body.

Winkler’s Catholic rhetoric, his quotes from prayerbooks, the bible, eulogies, and the catechism are intertexts that brand his work as both anti-Catholic and Catholic literature.<sup>70</sup> His words, “Ich bin ein Gegner. Ich bin gegen das Gebet, aber ich bete” (*Friedhof* 315), link him to the horseshoe of Bohr’s neighbor. As linguistic sign, the sentence is a talisman, similar to a “Stossgebet,” and other quotes from sacred texts and prayers. In its fetishistic qualities it becomes a sacred object that conceals and reveals the “agentic” powers of culture, memory, and storytelling. It is also the materialized authority of the rural clergy, who discipline the individual and collective body to participate in the corporate exercises of kneeling, praying, confessing, and veneration.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Reichensperger 59.

<sup>70</sup> Haas refers to him as “Knochensammler” 177.

<sup>71</sup>“Wehe euch! Keine Masken im Gotteshaus, kein Make-up im Gesicht von gläubigen Frauen, nicht mit lackierten Fingernägeln sollen die Hände gefaltet und Gebete gesprochen werden, keine zusammengeknüllte Illustrierte im aufgetupierten blonden Haar, nein, nicht im Gotteshaus! Außen hui und innen pfui! Wehe euch!” (*Wenn es soweit ist* 80f.)

“Es war eine Strafe Gottes! Rief der Pfarrer mehrere Male von der Kanzel.” (*Wenn es soweit ist* 12)

“Das ist eine Todsünde, donnerte der Priester von der Kanzel. *Liebe Gläubige*, so begann er jede Predigt, und mit einer Todsündendrohung hörte er auf.” (*Ackermann* 356)

“Man hört das Blättern, Rascheln der Gebetsbücher, schnelles und langsames Atmen, leichtes Stöhnen. Man sah Lippenbewegungen und Augen, die mit ihren Gebeten das schwarze Innere auskehren mußten. Man sah übereinandergeschlagene Füße und verschränkte Hände, die den Gott meiner Kindheit anflehten, für die Himmelfahrt der Seele der Toten bettelten und nach Getreide Ausschau hielten. Das gelbe Weizenfeld schien im Regen zu dämmern [...] Der Priester zelebriert weiter. Die Ministranten bedienen ihn. Zu seinen Füßen kiend, seine Unterschenkel anstarrend, möchten sie ihm manchmal die Zehen küssen.” (*Menschenkind* 121f.)

“Nebenbei: die Haltung des christlichen Gebetes—die Augen geschlossen, den Kopf gesenkt!—ist der Meditation nicht zuträglich. Diese Körperhaltung appelliert an eine

By drinking holy water to cure her nervous condition, the narrator's mother is participating and partaking in ritualized superstition, sanctioned by culture and religion.

Winkler is fully knowledgeable about every detail of rural Carinthian Catholicism. The "Erzministrant" practiced and observed not only the rituals but also the prescribed performativity of masses, processions, baptisms, and interments. Whereas Protestantism considers the Bible as the sole source of doctrinal truth, Catholicism relies on religious handbooks, the "catechisms," that contain instructions on the religious doctrines. Ample footnotes reference the Scriptures as well as authoritative statements by the Church fathers, ecumenical councils, and papal synods. Traditions and rituals, creeds, sacraments, commandments, and prayers, memorized in early childhood, are mediated by the clergy whose authoritative presence shaped the minds of the young, especially in their formative years to enforce normative behavior.

Catholicism, even in its European context, with its heavy dependence on Vatican authority, is no monolithic entity. Catholicism differs regionally due to historical, cultural, and geographic factors. Furthermore, German Catholicism is profoundly influenced by the Reformation. Principles of Enlightenment reason, biblical hermeneutics, and neo-platonic philosophy have found their way into Catholicism. This is particularly evident in the seminaries, which have furthered Catholic theology through scholarship, and its critical approach toward superstition. Austrian Catholicism,

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geschlossene und unterwürfige Geisteshaltung, sie entmutigt das geistige Wagnis. In dieser Position mag es geschehen, daß Gott über Euch kommt, euch das Genick bricht und für verhängnisvoll lange Zeit sein Zeichen hinterläßt. Für die Meditation muß eine offene—aber nicht herausfordernde—Haltung gefunden werden. Nicht in Hingabe an Gott. Man nehme sich in acht. Ein wenig zuviel, und Gott verleiht euch seine Gnade; dann seid ihr im Arsch." (*Wenn es soweit ist* 6)



particularly sub-alpine Catholicism found in Carinthia, was spared the tendrils of reformation through its remoteness and geographic removal from the mostly north-German phenomenon. Sub-alpine Catholicism remained, up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, more accepting of superstitions, the political authority of the priests, Vatican hierarchy, and the death and relic cults evident in burial rites and the distribution of sacraments.

The German language distinguishes between “Leib,” “Körper,” and “Leichnam.” “Leib” is derived from old- and middle-high German “lîp” or “Leben”; “leibeigen” means to belong to someone in terms of property; “Leibgeding” is a contract, in which one person signs a pledge to be responsible for another one. “Körper,” on the other hand, is the old- and middle-high German *korper* or *körper*, meaning both body and corpse. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the middle-high German word “lôch”—“Leichnam,” also meaning “Fleisch” and “Leib”—is replaced by the Latin word “corpus,” changing it to body, substance, and the collective. In Catholicism, the body of Christ is always referred to as “Leib” to assert that he is risen in the flesh. Pre-modern iconography such as Dürer’s “Resurrected Jesus appearing to his mother,” or “Incredulity of St. Thomas,” both from *Small Passion*, show his physical and spiritual presence: although his head is illuminated by the incandescent *trinitus*, his muscular body does not show any traces of death and decay.<sup>72</sup> References to Christ in prayers and, most importantly, in the ritual of transubstantiation, always refer to the body of Christ as “Leib,” the living body that he re-inhabited after being buried for three days.

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<sup>72</sup> See Morgan’s discussion and images, *Embodied Eye* 36-39.

In the discourse of mind/body dualism, it is necessary to include a brief discussion of the Catholic body. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,<sup>73</sup> “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Gen.1:27). Created in the “image of God,” human nature unites the spiritual and the material world; it is also gendered. “Man” is able to know his creator and “share, by knowledge and love, God’s own life” (Cat 356). The human individual possesses the dignity of a person, is capable of self-knowledge, self-possession and has a free will (Cat 357). Through the act of creation, God formed the human person of dust and breathed life into him; thus the unity of the corporeal and the spiritual is established (Cat 362). “Soul” can refer to human life or the entire person; it also refers to the spiritual principle, that is, the “soul” resides in the body. (Cat 364f.)

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through this very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. (qtd. in Cat 364)

The “soul” is not “produced” by the parents but created immediately by God; it is immortal, does not perish when it is separated from the body at death, and will be reunited with the body, when it is resurrected on the Day of Judgment (Cat 366). The dogma of the materiality of the body is affirmed in the belief of the Resurrection of

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<sup>73</sup> Part One: the Profession of Faith; Section two: The Profession of the Christian Faith. Paragraph 6. Man. Published by the Vatican. Abbr. “Cat.” Web. 13 May 2014.

Christ, the Assumption, Mary's bodily presence in heaven, and the cult of relics and fetishism. Sacrality is not an idea, it is what you see, touch, experience in lived belief. It is mediated by the matter of bones, ashes, and relics, since they are realistic extensions of actual persons in authority of sacral power (Yu).

In returning to Winkler and his relationship to Catholicism, his narrator is obsessed with the host, the materialized "Leib" of Christ.<sup>74</sup> As a youngster, he steals some and eats them secretly. He watches the priest break them and is horrified when the "Knochensplitter" are stuck in his throat. Fascinated by the ritualistic enactment of transubstantiation, communion, and procession, he describes the performative act of a "Fronleichnamsprozession," when the host is carried through the village, enclosed in the "Monstranz." Again, the anatomic geography of Kamering functions as the space where Catholicism, fascism, and rural culture intersect.

The vignette "Den blutbespritzten Himmel übers Dorf tragen" (*Leichnam* 13) displays various religious objects—the "Monstranz," the "Weihrauchfass," and the "blutbespritzter Himmel" as fetishized "things," to critique institutional power structures of the Catholic Church. When the priest carries "die mit duftendem Jasmin umkränzte Monstranz [...] von Hausaltar zu Hausaltar," the "handtellergroße Hostie," the material object that stands in for the body ("Leib") of Christ, is endowed with an aura of holiness. The narrator subverts this auratic display with satire when he points out that the host is

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<sup>74</sup> During the last rites for his grandmother, the priest refers to the narrator as "'Das ist mein Erzministrant!'" "Während er ihr den Leib Christi verabreichte, die im Bett liegende Großmutter ihre breite Zunge herausstreckte, stand ich, die Zähne zusammenbeißend, neben dem Pfarrer, denn das Wachs der brennenden Kerze tropfte auf meine Hände" (88).

“eingeklemmt im Ziborium der goldenen, mit Jasmin umkränzten Monstranz,” which implies an act of violence similar to the crucifixion of Christ. When the procession stops “betend and segnend” in front of the “Kriegerdenkmal,” the connections between the Church and the fascist past are ironically exposed. By linking the ritual of the *Fronleichnamsumzug* to the political rituals that fascism borrowed from religious traditions, the “eingeklemmte” host symbolizes the locked up (“aufbewahrt,” “weggeschlossen,” “verklemmt”) past that is a taboo, circumvented within Catholic rites.

The blessing of the grave of the dead soldier evokes memories of *Jugendweihe*, an institutionalized ritual clothed in nationalism.<sup>75</sup> The “Weihwasserkessel” itself is absent as an object, yet it is represented by the drops of holy water on the “Lorbeerkranz der Kärntner Fahne.” The flag, a symbol of provincial nationalism, is integrated into religious ritual. The blood stains on the “Himmel” are associated with Franz Hinterfeldner, who was killed by a hand grenade that tore his intestines from his belly and severed his head from his neck (13).<sup>76</sup> The blood-bespattered and headless corpse is brutalized again when he is reduced to the materiality of a series of letters carved into a rock. As a petrefact, the corpse of Franz Hinterfeldner has become a religious artifact that participates in the ritual. “Der auf der Marmorplatte eingemeißelte Franz Hinterfeldner” (13), is constrained (“verschlossen,” “eingeklemmt”), yet celebrated in the annual ritual that masks latent fascism with religious pomp. The bloodstains on the “Himmel” acquire blasphemous

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<sup>75</sup> The concept “Jugendweihe” dates back to Arnold van Gennep’s *Übergangsriten* (1909), that are defined as “rites of passage,” i.e., the transition from one condition to another: cosmic or social (21).

<sup>76</sup> Like Hinterfeldner, the third son on Winkler’s maternal side was torn to pieces by a bomb in WW II. His body could not be viewed because of the gruesome sight.

characteristics when associated with anti-Semitism and the ritualistic killing of Christ. In this vignette, Winkler consecrates and desecrates at the same time; he iterates the ritual exposing the layers of cultural, political and religious interconnections that are both buried and displayed. He also reveals the absurdity and emptiness of the performance.

Catholicism, particularly Mediterranean Catholicism, has strongly embraced the cult of relics. Relics come in three orders. The first class and most powerful are actual remains of saints and the beatified (bones, hair, fingernails). The second are objects once having belonged to saints and the beatified, such as the cloak of St. Martin; in the third and least 'effective' class are objects having come into contact with a saint or other relic. Icons and images sometimes share in some of the same veneration of the three classes of relics, but do not classify under Vatican law as relics. Since relics are rooted in the behavioral phenomenon of materiality, they mediate the presence of a saint or of the divine. Proximity to the relic through pilgrimage or by attending mass (every Catholic Church has, or should have, at least one of the three categories of relics embedded in its altar), or even being buried as close to an altar as possible, is a strategy of achieving proximity to the sacred, and in doing so, gaining access to the appellate authority of saints in the afterlife, requesting absolution, or beseeching for intervention in the case of illness or misfortune. As such, the power of relics changes Europe's landscape, urban design, and economy following the crusades, and can largely be credited for the makeup of urban space in late medieval and early modern Europe (architecture and location of churches and cemeteries).

If bodily remains of persons such as bones, blood, ashes, hair, etc. are materialized sacrality, they are venerated and endowed with powers. They become “agentic” forces of mediation and create a “materialistic meconomy” (Yu)<sup>77</sup>. Similar to the *Kalbstrick*, relics are associated with the writing process; proximity establishes the interrelationship between the narrating I and his text. In the vignette “Totenkopf unter der Engelsbrücke” (*Leichnam* 112) Winkler plays with the placement of bones as biofact, their transformation into an artifact, their fetishization, the modified subject/object relationship engendered by the “Handhabung,” and the fascination, even erotization of the object. He also plays with the narrator who observes (in a kind of “belauern”) and ironizes himself, when the skull, which he had removed from the religious burial ground of the catacombs, is exposed as what it is: a bone and not a powerful object of inspiration. Yet, it is what it is, and what it is not. While Winkler critiques the “Reliquienkult” he also engages in it in a playful way. Although the “Totenkopf” fails as an object of inspiration—it has no connection to his own lived experiences—the narrator is still able to write about his failure of writing.

The vignette “Totenkopf unter der Engelsbrücke” (*Leichnam* 112) opens with the narrator’s account of two transgressions: the theft of a tool to steal a religious relic preserved in a venerated burial place: the Roman catacombs. Using a “Kombizange” that he had stolen in a supermarket, he removes a skull from the catacombs and places it on his desk in the hope that it would inspire him. Not only the change of location—from the

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<sup>77</sup> Meconomy: The study of the social currency, exchanges and resources of an individual in a system, as well as the psychological, behavioral and social implications this has for the individual. Web. 3 Oct. 2015.

catacombs to the desk—but also the use of the tool, that is, the “Bearbeitung” of the object by a handheld device, underlines the materiality of the object that is transformed from a biofact into an artifact. The act of desecration is also an act of consecration since the placement of the relic on the desk in the writer’s study transposes the workplace into a “musealen” as well as “sakralen Raum.” With the handheld tool the fetishist transformed the skull from the “Leichenteil” into an inspirational device by moving it physically from the catacombs to the writer’s desk. The narrator reworks (“bearbeiten”) the object again when, as the “wordsmith,” he recreates it semantically by re-naming the anonymous “Totenkopf” a “Mönchstotenkopf.” The skull has gained historicity and identity as a member of a religious order.

With his relocation, the narrating “I” changed the skull in “a projective act” into a religious object, endowing it with magic powers; as “kraftgeladenes Objekt” the “Ding” was intended to become a “Fetisch-Ding,” arousing and eroticizing the fetishist subject. However, the “Ding” failed to work as “agentic” force, evoked through fetishistic desire and fear. After the object was placed into the sanctuary of the study, the narrator acknowledges “der pietätlose Diebstahl war sinnlos, ich schrieb, vor dem Schädel sitzend, keinen einzigen nennenswerten Satz” (112). In contrast to the horseshoe above the door of Niels Bohr’s neighbor, which holds the magic power whether he believes in it or not, the “Totenkopf” remains an inanimate object that fails in its role. Furthermore, unlike the *Kalbstrick*, the *Totenkopf* was devoid of the “agentic” forces associated with his childhood, family, and village. In the end, only the ritual acts of fetishizing and interment can be repeated (“wieder-holt”), when the narrator wraps the

“Mönchstotenkopf“ in the rosarote *Gazzetta dello Sport*, places it into a plastic sack and buries it under the “Engelsbrücke” in Rome. Although the “Mönchstotenkopf“ has become a “Leichen-Ding” that did not acquire “Wirk- und Bindungsenergien” (Böhme 17), it still holds power over the narrator, precisely because its energy is diminished. The subject/object relationship remains “zwanghaft,” because of the narrator’s fear of becoming in this exchange “unmenschlich, sprachlos, tot,” i.e. a “Leichen-Ding” himself. Yet writing about the failure of agency shows exactly its latent powers.

This chapter tried to pose the question of the body and its materiality, that is, the relationship between body and individual and its visibility through behavior, and most importantly, language. As established in the previous chapter, an exhaustive investigation of the materiality of the body is not limited to the aforementioned examples. It became necessary to include the ideation of the ambivalent attitudes in classical philosophy between the body as material and as ontological entity, because these conflicting attitudes are essential in understanding the body in contemporary cultural studies and in Winkler’s own work. Furthermore, it became crucial to understand the body in Winkler’s own cultural context, namely that of Austrian Catholicism and its religious philosophy. Rather than construct opposition between secular humanist and Catholic views of the body, this chapter endeavored to draw comparisons, showing that both strains are mutually informative. To understand the body and its materiality in Winkler’s text, which, like the *Kalbstrick*, is contingent to the writing process, human behavior in the presence of the body and its remains becomes visible as text, and consequently part of the hermeneutic questioning of the ontological and material self.



### 3. Brands and Trans/Nationalism: Materiality and Mediality beyond the Borders of Austria and the Page

Josef Winkler's *Filmkamerakopf*, the self-described recording apparatus consisting of eyes, hand, Pelican pen and Indian notebook characterizes an approach to representing reality in the medium of text and image. Moreover, it is striving, or at least confessing an interest in creating these images so that they approach, unhampered by the constraints of text, the total vision of cinema. What results must not be mistaken for a lengthy exposition of details and particulars, or a hyper real construction of space and topography, serving as the stage for embedded social criticism. Instead, Winkler's textual construction is, like the medium of cinema itself, a result of process, editing, form, and genre. What Winkler's *Filmkamerakopf* chooses to observe and preserve is limited by this attention to form and genre, and is therefore a strategic mechanism instrumental in the exposition of memory and narrative. It must employ modes of observation that not only construct space in cinematic verisimilitude, but also serve the autobiographical project and its interwoven elements of polemics and social criticism.<sup>78</sup> Material objects, bodies, and, not least, brands are integrated into Winkler's projects to this end. In this chapter I will concentrate on brands which must not be misread as mere symbols, but rather as encapsulated narratives, informers of autobiographic memory, and links to Austria's national and transnational connections. I will explore how brands and brand

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<sup>78</sup> Christopher Isherwood is credited as the first author who use the metaphor of *Filmkameraauge* in his writing. The first of his *Berlin Stories* opens with "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking." For further studies of the concept, see Feigel and Adams.

names are both narratives and trans-medial images, and how they function as part of Winkler's project, questioning what narratives brands mediate in the context that the author/narrator creates.

The *Filmkamerakopf* is a nod to the autobiographical I's admiration of cinema. On the surface, the term appears to describe a visual recapturing of occurring event by a passive, voyeuristic agent. This assumption is plausible since it appears consistent with the autobiographical I's own declarations of purpose and function as a passive participant ("teilhaben"), specifically in events bordering on the liminality of life and death. On a deeper level however, the term transmits a tacit reminder that the purpose of cinema and the camera's eye is not to capture reality, but rather to construct a visual medium based on the director's interpretation of narrative. Therefore, the lens functions as mediator, an active agent selecting, modifying, and winnowing down carefully chosen visual images in a curated order, not unlike the medium of film. This represents the active facet of the authorial self-representation: partaking ("teilnehmen"). The autobiographical I therefore becomes an active agent, and not just a scribe, taking control of the observation through writing, while concurrently emulating the form and function of cinematic methods.

Whether the autobiographical I is intentionally emulating the cinematic eye out of his well-documented admiration for the cinema or as a stylistic choice, the question arises how these elements of visual culture have been incorporated into the text. Films like *Lost in Translation* and Harald Reinl's *Winnetou* trilogy are not only referenced, but cited and transcribed to a degree that they possess a meaningful function in the narrative and

attest to the seepage of visual culture.<sup>79</sup> The presence of brands and brand imagery, which have either implicitly or explicitly found their way into Winkler's texts, are further evidence of the transposition of visual culture into his narratives.

This chapter chooses not to question whether references to brands and branding are explicit or implicit. Given the preferential treatment of visual modes and the growing omnipresence and omnipotence of consumerism and consumer culture towards and into the new millennium, the capture of brands and branding may be accidental or altogether unavoidable. But even if this appears to be the case, the discourse of materiality is appropriate and can reveal facets of the brand that are not and cannot be transmitted by the word-sign combination of brand semiotics like *Coca-Cola*, *Suchard* chocolate or *Julius Meinl Coffee*. Because I argue that Winkler's text is a curated interpretation of visual events, and that brands are subject to the same phenomenon of materiality as has been discussed in previous chapters, brands and their icons are precluded from being considered incidental debris as a consequence of consumer culture, or as accidental qualities in the text (in an Aristotelian sense).

Extensive research has been done on consumerism, marketing communication or marketing semiotics, the shift from products and production to the understanding of the

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<sup>79</sup> Winkler's latest book, *Winnetou, Abel und Ich* (2014), is the story of the narrator's encounter with Karl May, Sascha Schneider's illustrations on the covers of the books, and the Reinl film versions. In a complex structure, the book intersects four rewrites of May, entitled "Nach der Reiseerzählung 'Winnetou I' von Karl May"; "Nach der Reiseerzählung 'Winnetou II' von Karl May"; "Nach der Reiseerzählung 'Winnetou III' von Karl May"; and "Nach der Reiseerzählung 'Weihnacht' von Karl May" with an autobiographical chapter and Schneider's illustrations.

commodity as sign.<sup>80</sup> Once advertisements used semiotics more skillfully and self-consciously, decoding of ideology and re-using of social meaning became important. (Williamson, Preface 1982). Because the obvious function of advertisements is selling a product, statements from the world of things are translated “into a form that means something in terms of people”; in other words, they not only influence behavior, they also define who you are (Williamson 12).<sup>81</sup> In their essay “The Semiotic Paradigm on Meaning in the Marketplace,” Oswald and Mick give a comprehensive overview of the concept of semantics in terms of the nature and role of meaning in marketplace activities, such as product design, branding, advertising, and retailing. They point out that a brand can be defined as “a system of signs and symbols that fulfill, in the imaginary/symbolic realm, consumer needs for intangibles such as an emotional experience, a relationship, or a sense of belonging in an increasingly fragmented and confusing world” (4). By replacing the linguistic discourse with imagery, a structural model for producing and interpreting meaning in photography and cinema could be created (6). Since non-linguistic discourse works with association of similarity and contiguity, marketers no longer communicate brand messages through language but through visual material. Oswald and Mick cite the advertisement of Nike Shox Turbo running shoes where “an

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<sup>80</sup> See Baudrillard, Benjamin, *Arcades Project*; Böhme’s “Warenfetischismus” (283-372); Coffin; Dyer; Williamson, and the extensive bibliography in Andree’s *Medien machen Marken*.

<sup>81</sup> A car with low gas mileage may signal a thrifty person, while a car with high gas mileage may signal a person ,above money pettiness. ‘ “50 mpg” and “20 mpg” translate “thing” statements into statements about humans, since they give a humanly symbolic “exchange-value.” Similarly, when diamonds are marketed as symbols of eternal love, their material substance is translated into a symbol; the sign becomes what it signifies, the thing stands for feelings (Williamson 12).

elaborate network of metaphorical and metonymical associations both creates associations of power and dexterity with the brand, and implicates the reader/consumer in those associations” (6). Marketers who produce compelling advertisements and consumers responding to them operate in an interdependent relationship of collusion and complicity. Winkler’s *Filmkamerakopf* both responds, captures, and stores images that seem to advertise a confluence of cultural and autobiographical memory. However, a closer analysis exposes the ambiguity of attraction and repulsion, obsession and critical distance that implicates the reader as well as the author in the discourse of branding, marketing, and writing.<sup>82</sup> Before I engage in a closer investigation of Winkler’s use of brand names, a brief discussion of the development from production to consumption is in order.

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<sup>82</sup>Brands and their materiality in literature feature most prominently in William Gibson’s Post Science Fiction *Blue Ant* trilogy. His first corpus of work, following the attacks of September 11, demonstrate the influence of those events and the increasing commercialism and interconnectedness of a computerized world. When Gibson asserted that writing about the future was no longer possible, the present, through unpredictable and frequent metamorphoses of culture and technology, became far more interesting than any speculative attempt at representing the future. The 9/11 nodal point constituted a giddy rekindling of hibernating cold war paranoia, directed not only at a state or purveyors of a certain political philosophy, but are now embodied by every aspect of society and culture. Gibson’s eye on the present has forced his writing to take on numerous metafictional elements which are comparable to Winkler’s recent works. Gibson has experimented with brands, embedded narratives, and a palimpsest of numerous, unrelated yet intersecting narratives. The crux of the *Blue Ant* Trilogy refers to the prediction, or rather the desire to anticipate and capitalize on trends, conflicting on problems of originality and the sign-referent conflict. The structure resembles the post-modern detective novel, in which the protagonist engages in a search for the origin of an elusive trend, coining the term “cool hunter” to describe this practice. This process, informed by Baudrillard’s notion of the Hyperreal, extends the term into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and demonstrates its presence and manifold prominence in a manner that Winkler, too, though unrelated, appears to attempt in his writing.

Affinity and/or affiliation with an object and its semiotics may inform our behavior to own it. This correlates with what Marx, Simmel, and Benjamin describe as the “magic” or “aura” an object or artwork emanates, causing the consumer to forget or disregard an object’s origin, specifically, the accumulation of labor and resources that provide its utility/value. Recognizing this as brand fetishism, Böhme borrows the term from Marx to explain the phenomenon that leads to the exploitation of the worker, who does not see the mark-up his labor produces. In fact, he sees less if the object becomes part of the capitalist mass-production apparatus, which seeks to exploit all possible gain from the fleeting fetishistic fascination with said object. In the *Theory of Money* Marx makes a semiotic argument, correlating the value of gold with its representative power. In short, what the narrative may possess, or is implied to possess, transcends its production value by an order of magnitude. This narrative appears of interest to Winkler who identifies, references, and constructs memory, satire, and social criticism into brands particular to him.

In his essay “Commodity, Sign, and Spectacle: Retracing Baudrillard’s Hyperreality,” Mendoza cites Baudrillard who understands Marx’s concept of commodity in a much more radical way:

Marx, in his materialist analysis of production, had virtually circumscribed productive forces as a privileged domain from which language, signs, and communication in general found themselves excluded. In fact, Marx does not even provide for a genuine theory of railroads as “media,” as modes of communication: they hardly enter into consideration. (47)

If commodity is no longer considered a material object but rather a means of communication, that is, a sign, Baudrillard had to invert certain assumptions and redefine Marx's label as "historical materialist." To shift from production to consumption, Baudrillard needed to reverse Marx's premise "The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself."<sup>83</sup>

In his *The System of Objects* Jean Baudrillard argues that our culture is no longer rooted in traditional metaphysical assumptions of classifications but is dominated by simulations of objects that have "no firm origin, no referent, no ground for foundation" (1). The acceleration of products, appliances, and gadgets and their dissemination no longer allow a systematic inventory or an exhaustive catalogue, as the *Encyclopédie* had provided in the Age of Enlightenment (1). Because the number of criteria of classification multiply with the number of objects produced for different functions, needs, or value, Baudrillard suggests studying objects according to the "processes whereby people relate to them and with the systems of human behaviors and relationships that result therefrom" (2). In *The System of Objects* Baudrillard moves beyond a Marxian critique of capitalism when he inverts his analysis of commodity and argues that it should be based on consumption (217). Since commodities no longer reference use value or utility but communication, the referent is restructured in relation to word, image or meaning and implies desire.

By privileging consumption over production, Baudrillard has to clarify that objects and material goods are not objects of consumption but of needs and the

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<sup>83</sup> Marx and Engels, *German Ideology* 16 (qtd. in Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* 101).

satisfaction of needs (217). He argues further that a “whole system of needs, socialized or unconscious, cultural or practical ... threatens the objective status of the object itself” (7). In this system, the consumer is not merely a passive recipient of production (217);<sup>84</sup> he is subjected “to a *systematic manipulation of signs*,”<sup>85</sup> aimed at creating a subject that can be integrated into that system. This conversion of the object to the systemic status of a sign implies the simultaneous transformation of the human relationship into a relationship of consumption — of consuming and being consumed. In and through objects this relationship is at once consummated and abolished; the object becomes its inescapable mediation — and before long, the sign that replaces it altogether (218f.).

A world that is based on abstraction, has to be “produced — mastered, inventoried, controlled, ... it has be *constructed*” (28). Consummation and consumption then shift from the object to the relationship itself, resulting in the objectification of the subject and the subjectification of the object (Mendoza 48). Since needs create an ever growing desire for the production of things, consumption is irrepressible; “because it is founded upon a *lack*” (224), Winkler’s placement of brand items in his narrative can be understood as both critique and fascination with these needs, desires, and obsessions in a world manipulated by a system of signs. Integrating brand items provides the narrator with an opportunity to construct a “semiotic order of things” (Boscagli 3), by decoding

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<sup>84</sup> “Consumption is surely *not* that passive process of absorption and appropriation which is contrasted to the supposedly active mode of production, thus counterposing two oversimplified patterns of behavior (and of alienation)” (217).

<sup>85</sup> “... consumption is *the virtual totality of all objects and messages ready-constituted as a more or less coherent discourse*. If it has any meaning at all consumption means *an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs*” (218).



their particular denotative and connotative meaning, thus exposing what is hidden and repressed.

Whereas Baudrillard is more concerned with the history of commodity from its production to its consumption, from a material thing to an abstract sign, Martin Andree focuses on the mediality of brands. In his *Medien machen Marken* he argues that the “Medienphänomen Marke” is no longer confined to the sale of an object or a service but has expanded its boundaries and entered the sphere of “Medialität,” that is, communication. The product is embedded in a complicated network of medial messages, a concentric order of semantic levels arranged around the nucleus that reaches into the spheres of connotations and associations (20). The innermost part of a product is no longer visible but is covered by medial layers: wrapping, design, label, advertisement, etc. (23). Whereas Baudrillard emphasizes “the systematic and limitless acquisition of consumption’s sign-objects” (223), Andree argues that products have become medial images that have replaced the salesperson behind the counter and now communicate themselves (23). Imagery now instigates a non-linguistic discourse that operates in terms of similarity, contiguity or opposition.

Andree also points out that proper names and models emanate from specific effects and energies (“bestimmte Wirkungen und Energien” 36)<sup>86</sup> that exist between signifier and signified. Marketing specialists use this understanding to manipulate: since names connote a mass product not an individual, a product not a person or place, brands construct new references by creating denotations that have not been used before. By

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<sup>86</sup> Böhme, too, speaks of “Wirk- und Bindungsenergien” 17.

inserting metaphors, they create a language that makes things visible and generates congruence between signified and signifier (39).<sup>87</sup> The phantasma of uniqueness of the product is constructed out of the connection of eponymy and metaphoricity of the brand name (44),<sup>88</sup> creating a marked space of identity in contrast to an “unmarked space” outside its semantic territory (44). Borrowing from emblemata—title (inscriptio), symbol (pictura), and narrative text (subscriptio)—designed brands construct emphatic signs endowing mass products with an aura created through mediality (45).

It is difficult to trace particular theoretical discourses in Winkler’s idiosyncratic writing, since he seems to employ various lines of arguments in his work. Brand names count among Winkler’s specific and explicit references. They are inserted as specific brand names, reference to brand iconography or labels, and descriptions of a branded item and its qualities. Winkler consciously places specific consumer products —*Meinl Kaffee, Smart Export Cigarettes, Suchard* and *Bensdorp Schokolade, Hirsch Terpentinseife, Singer Nähmaschine, Pelikanfüllfederhalter, Flobertgewehr*, and *Coca Cola* —into an autobiographical as well as cultural frame of reference, defining a semantic territory where established boundaries of narrative systems are erased and the

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<sup>87</sup> Eponymous dimension: personification of Dr. Best, Schwarzkopf, Dior, Hugo Boss, Meister Proper. Acronyms that disguise references to people: Haribo – Hans Riegel Bonn; instead of proper names locations are used: Weihenstephan, Evian; an address 4711; a region: Almighurt, Obstgarten; ingredients: Palmolive, Milka; an achievement: Duracell, Vitakraft (xx39).

<sup>88</sup> “Das Phantasma der ‘Einzigartigkeit’ des Produkts, entwachsend aus der *Verbindung von Eponymie und der Metaphorizität des Markennamens* ist das Gravitationszentrum der Markenkommunikation” (44).

differences between „inside“ and „outside“ are questioned.<sup>89</sup> By placing brand named items into his narrative, Winkler not only peels away the layers of medial interferences but also exposes the agency of these items on the actors of his stories. The relation between subject and “Warendering”<sup>90</sup> is one of fixation and obsession that turns the subject-object relation into a symbiotic affinity erasing the boundaries between self and other.

Brand name items take on an important role when Winkler places them outside their commercial and cultural setting into an autobiographical context, where they become part of Winkler’s project of imagery translated into ultimate precision in language and style. Whereas material objects such as the ball head of the electric type writer, the pen, or the traces of milk at the mouth of the farmer’s children (*Menschenkind* 55) are embedded as generic items in the earlier texts (*Menschenkind* —1979, *Wortschatz der Nacht*—2013), they take on specific identities as name brands that intersect the autobiographical narrative with their own stories in Winkler’s later works. Inserting the autobiographical I with his obsession and fetishism into the subject-object relationship creates a triangulation between actors, things, and narrator opening up a discourse that ranges from the polemic to the macabre to satire with hilarious results. After a brief discussion of *Wortschatz der Nacht*, I will analyze *Menschenkind* (1979), *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* (2003), *Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot*

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<sup>89</sup> Andree quotes Luhmann who argues that brands define a semantic territory that differentiates between “inside” and “outside” (32).

<sup>90</sup> Marx and Engels, *Werke* 23: 62.

(2008),<sup>91</sup> *Roppongi* (2007) to show how brand names as objects in a system of compulsive exchange stand in as autobiographical as well as cultural signifiers and are manipulated through their intersection of narratives and their experimental placement and re-placement in the text.

Winkler's second Novel, *Wortschatz der Nacht*, published almost 30 years after it was written, opens with the narrator's fervent account of his writing process, in which he traces his childhood in the footprints of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, carved into the ball head ("Kugelkopf") of his electrical typewriter and imprinted on the lines of white paper.<sup>92</sup> He even carries the fetishized object in the pockets of his jeans, clutches it in his hand, attaches it to his body, and animates it in his dreams into an organizing element of his "Wortanfalle" (*Realitat* 133) and "Bildersturme."<sup>93</sup>

Tag und Nacht trage ich den Kugelkopf meiner elektrischen Schreibmaschine in meinen Jeans. Denke ich an meine Kindheit, so klammern sich meine Finger, sofort, wie um Leben zu retten, an den Buchstaben des Kugelkopfes fest, umschlieen ihn mit der Handflache, mache die Hand zur Faust, als ob ich den Kugelkopf zerdrucken und zusehen wollte, wie zwischen meinen Fingern die Safte meiner Kindheit hervorrinnen, ... ich klammere mich weiter an den Kugelkopf meiner elektrischen Schreibmaschine, Zeile fur Zeile schreite ich auf

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<sup>91</sup> The title refers to a song by Fred Raymond Borchert (1928).

<sup>92</sup> Winkler wrote *Wortschatz der Nacht* in what he calls a "Wortanfall" during a few nights in 1979. It was published in 2013.

<sup>93</sup> Friedmar Apel, "Spiel mir das Lied vom Karntner Tod." "Mit Sprachritualen werden hier traumatische Erfahrungen in einem katholischen Dorf gebandigt." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 Mar. 2013. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

der Fußgängerzone vorwärts, meine Fußsohlen hinterlassen Spuren von 26  
alphabetischen Buchstaben. ... Wälze ich mich im Schlaf, dreht sich der  
Kugelkopf mit und organisiert die Bilder. Im Reziprokwert erwache ich mit einem  
organischen Kopf, greife nach dem Kugelkopf auf dem Nachttisch oder im  
Hosensack meiner Jeans, stehe auf und setze ihn der Schreibmaschine auf den  
Hals, und noch mit verklebten Augen und müden Händen setzt am weißen Papier  
eine um ihre eigene Achse rollende Walze der Schreibmaschine den Tanz der  
Wörter fort. (*Wortschatz* 9-10)

The *Wortfluten* released from the repository of language by an objectified *Wortmaschine* (*Menschenkind* 12), can only be channeled into the materiality of a text through the materiality of an object: the ball head of the electrical typewriter offers the haptic element to an otherwise fluid outburst. Endowed with the power to shape language into text, the ball becomes an agent that shapes the flow of creative energy into a linguistic reality while the body is still in a state of languid inaction.

*Menschenkind* and *Wortschatz der Nacht* are narrative experiments intended to shock the reader through their explicit sexual and blasphemous attacks. In their intensity they appall and fascinate at the same time. Iteration of the memory of horrifying events such as the corpse of the grandmother, shown to the three-year old by his aunt Tresl, the suicide of the two young men, or the rotten cadavers of animals amid the refuse of the farm (*Wortschatz* 17) are posing ever greater challenges to the narrator's creative imagination. Whereas *Menschenkind* and *Wortschatz* are driven by a kind of ritualistic exorcism of childhood trauma ("sprachrituellen Bewältigung der traumatischen

Erfahrungen im katholischen Dorf”); <sup>94</sup>*Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* and *Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot*, are characterized by an increased attention to structure, form, and brevity. *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* consists of 73 “Prosaminiaturen” or “Prosavignetten,” representing a variety of genres: anecdotes, satires, prose narratives, and commentaries are grouped around a photograph of Winkler and his son in India. In contrast to *Menschenkind* and *Wortschatz der Nacht*, *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd* is Winkler’s conscious attempt to extricate himself from the emotions of his earlier texts and strive to achieve “eine andere Qualitt, eine grere Przision.”<sup>95</sup> Now, Winkler is explicit about language, structure, and form:

Mein Thema ist vor allem die Sprache, die Form, der Stil und der Klang. Mich interessiert keine Mitteilungsliteratur, das ist nur das Fundament, das Material, um etwas daraus zu machen. Mein letztes Buch „Roppongi“ habe ich zum Schluss zehnmal nur noch auf den Klang hin durchgelesen. Mir ist wichtig, dass die Stze singen. Die Stze sind erst fertig, wenn sie singen und einen schenen Ton haben.<sup>96</sup>

Precision of language is closely linked to a system of still images retelling a series of iconic incidents. Although Winkler’s language captures the event in a concise language relying on visual modes of perception translated into text, certain images are selected and iterated as part of his strategy. As mentioned above, a recurring image, an “Urbild,” iterated in his work, is the memory of Winkler’s aunt Tresl, lifting the boy to see his

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<sup>94</sup> Winkler, Interview by Apel. Web. 25 Jan. 2015.

<sup>95</sup> Winkler, Interview by Werndl 111.

<sup>96</sup> Winkler, Interview by Woisetschlger. Web. 15 Jan. 2015.

deceased grandmother; equally powerful is the image of the double suicide of Jakob and Robert, who hanged themselves from a hayloft beam.

*Ich rei mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot* follows the structure of *Leichnam* as it consists of “Prosaminiaturen” or short narratives that connect the autobiographical experience of death with texts of authors—Curzio Malaparte, Annemarie Schwarzenbach, Alfred Doblin, Peter Handke, Terzia Mora, Gerald Zschorsch and Paul Nizon—whose work also focalize on the encounter with death and dying. Quotes from the various texts are placed as signifiers that both mark and blur the boundaries between the autobiographical self and the other. Written after the death of the author’s father, this text, too, differs from early works, tending toward refined style and editing. The autobiographical narrating I now departs and juxtaposes rural Austria with global spaces and cultures. Brands, including traditional Austrian names, follow the narrating I into this transnational space, in ironic, satirical, critical, or problematic ways.

Winkler’s style shows that iteration and brevity are not mutually exclusive but function concurrently by exposing the materiality of memory through the mediation of objects. Since brands and brand names are part of this collection of frequently remembered images, they are also retrieved from the archives of memory, epitomized by the *Filmkamerakopf*, translated into visual imagery, placed into the text between the pages of his orange Indian notebook, and thus restored into the narrative as semantic markers of memory, reference, and metanarrative.

Andree points to the etymological root of the word Mark: Germanic \*marka ist not only a sign but also a “Grenz-Zeichen” that differentiates the inside (difference) and

the outside (relationships to others). “Markenzeichen” then is an intensified marking, engl. “brand,” a sign inscribed on the skin of the animal (German “brandmarken”). It is related to the archaic imagination of emphatic signs — scars, carvings, tatoos — that are more than simple signs but construct existential affiliations and identities (31f.). For Winkler, the traces of the logo in the *Terpentin-Hirschseife*, the *Suchard Schokolade* or the engraved tip of the *Pelikanfüllfederhalter* is more than the semantic territory established by the mediality of the object (Andree 31). By removing the layers of wrapping to expose the markings on the surface of the object, Winkler uncovers its material core; furthermore, he lays bare obsessive behavior evoked by hiding the encryptions that embody individual and collective memories.<sup>97</sup> The following analysis will first explore Winkler’s experimentation with figuratively branded national products (*Pelikanfüllfederhalter*, *Milka Schokolade*, *Hirsch Terpentinseife*) and brands whose wrappings imply transnationalism but remain trapped in history and cultural practices (*Smart Cigarettes*, *Moro Orangen*). It will then move to brands that fail as agents in a transnational system of exchange (*Mexican Zuckertotenkopf*, *Manner Schnitten*), to national brands that, once exported to a transnational stage, are nothing but tattered simulacra (*Meinl Kaffee*).

One of the most significant brand name items is the *Pelikanfüllfederhalter* and its derivative forms of *Feder*, since they represent Winkler’s personal writing fetish and are connected to the mundane object of the *Kalbstrick* on the one hand and the fetishized religious object of the *Mönchstotenkopf* on the other (*Leichnam*, “Totenkopf unter der

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<sup>97</sup> Andrée could argue that Winkler indeed traces the origin of the word “Marke” (31f.)



Engelsbrücke” 112). Invented by the chemist Carl Hornemann in 1838, it received its branding from the chemist Günther Wagner in 1878, who took the pelican from his coat of arms. By using the image of the pelican, the ancient symbol of cooperation and sense of family, Wagner was playing on the sensitivity of writers to acquire the *Federhalter*, a commodity that implied affluence as well as style. Adding the image of the bird, Wagner was also entertaining the customer’s notion that the feathers of the pelican were the most suitable instruments of writing.

In the vignette “Gangesdelphine und Pelikanfüllfeder” (*Leichnam* 38) Winkler appropriates this notion of softness and pliability of the feather that adjusts to the writer’s hand and functions as the conduit between his imagination and the *Notizbuch*. Precision in language and style is no longer achieved in a delirious state of a feverish mind, when texts are produced by the inane *Schädel* of the electric *Kugelpfedschreibmaschine* (*Leichnam* 38). Although the writing process involved the tactile hand-*Kugelpopf* contact in *Wortschatz der Nacht*, it has become more tangible and physical in *Leichnam* with its emphasis on the “beautiful sound” and precision in language and style.

Bei mir entsteht es immer nur ganz konkret, wenn ich irgendetwas beobachten will, also mit Füllfeder und mit Notizbuch. Was mich auch sehr elektrisiert, erregt oder fast erotisiert, ist einfach vor der Schreibmaschine zu sitzen, die Tastatur vor mir liegen zu haben und die einzelnen Buchstaben zu berühren, abzutasten. Da beginnt es irgendwie, auch mit dieser Körperlichkeit. Schreiben hat mit

Körperlichkeit, glaube ich, sehr viel zu tun, besonders mit so emotionale [sic] Geschichten, die ich jetzt hier vorgelesen habe.<sup>98</sup>

Attracted to the object that generates the writing process through the *Feder*, the narrator fetishizes and eroticizes the pen, when his hand traces the words with the “nach allen Richtungen ausschwingenden, weichen Flügel einer Goldfeder mit dem schönen Namen Pelikan“ (*Leichnam* 38).

The pen not only possesses powers and becomes a magic wand, it also compels him to write. The fear of losing his ability to write is transferred to the pen when he is driven from his nightmare across the house to his writing desk to ensure the presence of the *Feder* in its case.

Füllfederhalter mit stumpfen, harten Stahlfedern, die sich ständig gegen die Sätze sträuben, können mich zur Weißglut treiben, ich brauche zum Schreiben die nach allen Richtungen ausschwingenden, weichen Flügel einer Goldfeder mit dem schönen Namen Pelikan, die ich da und dort, auch am Ufer des Ganges, ins kleine indische Tintenfaß eintauche, dabei den in den Fluß ein- und wieder auftauchenden Gangesdelphinen zuschauend. Oft schrecke ich nachts mit Herzklopfen aus einem Traum auf, irre in der Wohnung umher und suche meine Füllfeder, die ich ohnehin nicht verlegt, die ich am Abend sorgfältig in eine schöne handbemalte Schatulle aus Kaschmir gelegt habe, auf der Gazellen äsen und über die Steppe laufen. (*Leichnam* 38)

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<sup>98</sup> Winkler, Interview by Werndl 111.

By removing the layers of flashy packaging, the author/narrator literally touches the image of the pelican, “branded” beneath the arabesque lines of the tip of the pen. The physical contact with the branded image of the “soft wings of the golden feather” mediates the materiality of the writing instrument, which, in turn, inspires him to write. When placing the ornate box with the “branded” pen next to the *Kalbstrick* on his desk, the narrator consciously links three objects to childhood memories that involve pain and scarring as bodily inscriptions. By playfully connecting and juxtaposing heterogenous items, Winkler is conscious of, but also ironizes, his own obsession with his childhood experiences and the autobiographical elements of his writing.

Winkler uses *Bensdorp* and *Suchard Schokolade* in three vignettes. In “Heidelbeerschmaus nach dem Kinderbegräbnis” (*Leichnam* 17), the narrator and his friends wrap a “Büschel Maiblumen” in a “Bensdorp Schokoladeschleife,” which they stick into little Mariele’s grave. Like the narrator, the children have saved the wrapper and use it now to tie the flowers together as a gift for their dead friend. The wrapper implies memories of the sweet contents and connects the children with the dead girl. In “Blaue Bensdorf, lila Suchard” (*Leichnam* 68f.), the chocolate is associated with the narrator’s uncle Franz and gains both positive and negative characteristics. When Franz is affluent, he brings the sweets on his visits and provides a moment of happiness and comfort for the children. On the day of his interment the narrator remembers these little childhood pleasures, yet, at the same time, he is also reminded of the uncle’s Fascist past as an SS-officer. The chocolate is now linked to the current sinister and almost grotesque scene in the *Trauerhaus* and Austrian complicity during the Third Reich. In his layering

of pleasure, pain, nationalistic pride (“Er war stolz ... bei der SS gewesen zu sein,” 68), and *Angst*, the brand item again mediates childhood emotions and unconsciously determines patterns of adult behavior.

While the chocolate evokes ambiguous childhood memories, Winkler creates a negative connotation of disgust and fear with his use of the traditional “Terpentinseife, auf der ein Hirschkopf eingeprägt war” (*Leichnam* 27). In contrast to the *Pelikanfüllfederhalter*, this item is a basic and inexpensive soap introduced by Georg Schicht in 1849. Unlike the softness of the Pelikan-feather, it is tied to the “Waschschüssel mit dem dünnen blauen Rand” (*Leichnam* 27, 31, 33f.), an object used to wash the body or hold the blood from the slaughtered pig. Although it is associated with cleanliness (“Dieser Tierarzt bestand darauf, dass ihm nach seiner Arbeit eine Waschschüssel mit frischem Wasser, Terpentinseife und ein frisches, gebügelt Handtuch bereitgestellt wurden.” *Leichnam* 33f.), its smell is unpleasant. Used to scrub the grimy feet of the farmer and the bloody hands of the veterinarian, it soils the water and leaves remnants that are repulsive in that they contain discarded body parts such as skin or finger- and toenails. The soap is also associated with the Catholic ritual of the performative washing of the feet or the ablation of the corpse in burial rites. In the vignette “Hirschskelette unter dem Spiegeleis,” Winkler uses the emblem on the soap as a metonymic link to the skeletons that have sunk to the bottom of the lake and that evoke memories of his childhood and the illness of his mother (*Leichnam* 52-55). Like the *Kalbstrick* the emblem on the soap is linked both to paternal vulgarity and control and maternal pain and suffering.

The design for *Smart Export*, one of the most successful designs in Austrian history, dates back to 1955. The name of the brand appears in elegant cursive letters above the emblem of the federal eagle, enhanced by the now famous gold and white stripes. In 1959 the eagle was replaced by a globe with the inscription “SEMPER ET UBIQUE. IMMER UND ÜBERALL,” followed by the word “EXPORT” in capital antiqua letters. The superfluous “que” in “ubique” was retained because the rhythm seemed to be more important than linguistic accuracy. The replacement of the national eagle with the globe and the additional word “Export” had turned the regional brand into an international product.

The elegant design and the allusion to transnationalism and global marketing of the package stands in stark contrast to the memory of the young author/narrator, who associates the smell of the cigarette with his guilty conscience and his compulsion to seek absolution of his crime in the confessional of the local church. After tormenting, killing and burying several young swallows, his fear of divine retribution is met with the smell of stale cigarettes in the dark and narrow space of the confessional. The moment of spirituality changes into the reality of the village priest who smokes the black *Smart Export* like the boy’s maternal grandfather.

Der Pfarrer rauchte die schwarzen Smart Export wie mein Großvater  
mütterlicherseits. (*Leichnam*, “Augenlid Gottes” 36)

The reader, accustomed to Winkler’s effusive outpourings, is taken aback by the blunt statement that links the clergyman to the narrator’s family. Whereas the priest’s smoking habit underscores a rather mundane habit of Europe in the 1960s, the image and the

olfaction suggested by the description of scent and smoke, integrate the brand into the author/narrator's experience with and critique of rural Austrian Catholicism.

The reference to his grandfather, especially, evokes the narrator's traumatic memories of the three uncles who had lost their lives in the Second World War and whose deaths took away the family's ability to speak, imposing silence on the household. By juxtaposing the grim narrative with the elegant packaging that could be at home in a Viennese Café, the narrator links its reference to worldliness, masculinity, and class with war, death, and mourning. By interjecting his narrative into the narrative of the brand, he ironically links those associations, as his lived experience both confirms and contradicts the message in a macabre way. The invoked globality of the consumer product is in line with the globality of war; the death tolls through smoking link the product with the war dead; the elegant surface of the wrapping corresponds to the embellishment of military service as patriotism. Materiality and simulacra of the product render the meaning of the object ambiguous.

*Moro* blood oranges — “moro” meaning “Moor” or “dark skinned —, produced in Sicily, Spain, and North Africa, are a variety of oranges that acquire the dark red color only when exposed to extreme fluctuation of temperatures (15° by day and 2° at night). Because of their delicacy, they are wrapped in velina paper that distinguishes them from the more common white or “blond” orange and also preserves them. The wrappers have innovative themes: a chalice of blood, Mount Etna erupting dark orange boulders or lava, and, most of all, the now classic design of the politically incorrect image of a stylized African with bright red lips and large earrings with the lettering “Moro,” “marking it as a

colonial orange with a Spanish history.”<sup>99</sup> The *Smart Export* wrapper created the olfactory space, yet merely implied transnational marketing;<sup>100</sup> the delicate transparent paper of the *Moro* oranges produces a haptic space where the exchange between the former colonial subject and current economic relations are played out.<sup>101</sup>

In “Sindbad auf dem Zirkusplakat,” the author/narrator relates, how he collected, even ironed, the thin wrappers of the *Moro* Blutorangen:

Blutorangen, das magischste aller Wörter für mich—aus Sizilien habe ich ausgebügelt, das Bügeleisen auf Seide eingestellt, damit die knisternden, mit einem Negermädchen mit Ohrringen bedruckten, fettigen Orangenpapiere nicht braun werden oder verbrennen, und sie stapelweise auf den Nachttisch gelegt, neben ein Karl May Buch, in dem als Lesezeichen eine Fasanenfeder lag.

(*Leichnam* 89)

The narrator does not emphasize the zesty taste of the fruit but the sensation of the waxy tissue, flattened by the warm iron, when he displays it on his nightstand. The conscious placement of the three heterogeneous items—the image of the African girl, the narrative about the Native Americans, and the exotic pheasant feather—creates a still-life, where material objects assume agency and partake in a narrative of their own. Ironically, the flashy marketing of the luxury item does not conceal but rather reveals colonial violence and exploitation.

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<sup>99</sup> Roy, 107.

<sup>100</sup> The cigarettes are produced in Austria, Germany, and Finland.

<sup>101</sup> Roy, 107.

Winkler goes further, when he integrates the imported brand into the traditional Catholic ritual of the procession, where it communicates a tenuous relationship of the exoticized, erotic Other represented by the stereotypical African girl.

Nach der Palmsonntagsmesse, mit dem Palmbesen in der Hand, auf dem braune Schokoladenbrezeln hingen und in knisterndes Papier eingehüllte Moroblutorangen aufgespießt waren zwischen Palmkätzchen und dem stacheligen Kranewitt,<sup>102</sup> verdrehten auf dem Friedhof, vor den Gräbern ihrer Verwandten stehend, die Kinder ihre kahlgeschorenen Köpfe und schauten auf den Kirchturm, dem die Glocken abhanden gekommen waren, und in den Himmel hinauf. Nicht selten wurde das auf dem Moro Orangenpapier abgebildete Negermädchen mit den goldenen Ohrringen von den zugespitzten Holzstäbchen des Palmbesens am Hals aufgespießt und ihre Augen durchlöchert. (*Leichnam*, “Blutorangenflecken auf den Holzspiessen des Palmbesens,” 14f.)

The narrator not only visualizes but also stages the scene of a Catholic ritual, the procession on Palm Sunday, which is captured as a still-life in the cemetery. The image is accentuated by the shades of orange and brown that mimics the color of exotic fruit and skin. Whereas the sweetness of the chocolate-covered pretzels evoke the culinary pleasures of holiday festivities, the thorns of the juniper branches and the missing church bells foreshadow Holy Week with its silence on Good Friday. Acts of personal and communal transgression are transferred into ritualistic objects and subjected to violent language, when both orange and label are perforated by the symbols of Palm Sunday. As

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<sup>102</sup> Wacholder; engl. Juniper.



fruit, wrapper, and logo are tortured in anticipation of the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday, they become part of Winkler's polemic against the practices of rural Catholicism. Similar to the packaging of the *Smart Export* cigarettes, the valin paper of the *Moro* oranges inserts its own narrative into the narrator's lived experience. In addition to the haptic component of memory—the compulsion of touching and preserving the wrapper—the sound of torn valin and the sight of the pierced body of the black girl grant agency to the brand that vividly exposes the violence performed at the annual re-enactment of the torture of Christ.

In *Menschenkind*, traces of milk around the mouths of the farmer's children are linked with the imprints of the *Kalbstrick* on their thighs, both signs of maternal care and paternal discipline:

*Die Bauernkinder legen ihre Hände, klein und nach Brot gierig wie die bettelnden Füße eines Hahns, auf die Schulter des Tisches, Milchspuren an ihrem Mund, schlicht geordnetes Haar, weizengelb und kastanienbraun, ein rotes Streifen von einem Kalbstrick verletzter Haut auf dem Oberschenkel des einen Kindes, das sich kniehoch an die Füße seiner Mutter klammert, die mit der Last langsam humpelnd zwei, drei Schritte zum Weizenbrot geht, andächtig wie vor einem Altar stehenbleibt, drei Kreuze in die Unterseite des Brotes schneidet, an der Tür steht der Vater, der blutige Kalbstrick pendelt an seinen Knien, das Kind umarmt den Unterschenkel seiner Mutter, beginnt mit tränenden Augen Brot zu kauen. (Italics in text; Menschenkind 55)*

The narrator stages the domestic scene of a simple meal consisting of milk and bread. Whereas the frugality is intensified by the dominating father and his bloody rope, the children are provided for through the parent's hard labor and the animals of the farm. Sign and signifier change, when the traces of the more fashionable drink, *Ovomaltine*, provide a semantic space for critique of consumerism and corporate greed.

*Ovomaltine*, a name derived from Latin *ovum* for "egg" and malt, was developed in 1865 by the Swiss chemist Georg Wander as a nutritional supplement for children and the infirm. Registered as a trademark in 1906, it became immediately popular as a nourishing food. When the British company A. Wander Ltd. was established, the name was inadvertently mistranslated in the export papers and was marketed as *Ovaltine*.<sup>103</sup> Although the logo and packaging have changed over the years, the orange wrapping and the blue lettering have stayed consistent.

"Knochenstilleben auf dem Asphalt mit Ovomaltine" is a polemic against the city council of Klagenfurt who had redirected all construction resources from the much needed road work to build the soccer stadium for the European championship, causing the death of 9-year old Lorenz who was hit by a truck.<sup>104</sup>

Um das neue Fußballstadion schneller fertigstellen zu können, in dem im Juni 2008 in Klagenfurt drei Europameisterschaftsspiele stattfinden, also viereinhalb Stunden Fußball gespielt werden soll, wurde von dieser Kreuzung, an der sich der tödliche Unfall ereignete, immer wieder Personal abgezogen. Dieser kleine Junge,

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<sup>103</sup> From April 1931 to January 1940, *Ovaltine* sponsored *Little Orphan Annie* on the NBC radio network.

<sup>104</sup> The Wörthersee Stadion is a multipurpose stadium built for the 2008 European Football Championships to hold 30 000. It was opened in September 2007.

der neunjährige Lorenz, ist der erste Tote der Fußballeuropameisterschaft.

(*Leichnam 97*)

In contrast to the farmer's boy, the child, growing up in an urban environment is indulged with the more nourishing and globally recognizable *Ovomaltine*. However, availability of consumer goods comes with a price: city life also exposes him to the danger of traffic, negligence, stress, and economic power structures. Building the soccer stadium is much more profitable than building roads or sidewalks since it brings fans and tourism to the city, filling the coffers of merchants and officials. Although the author/narrator was not present at the scene of the accident, he nevertheless imagines the event and describes it in vivid colors:

Vom Omnibus aus, der im Verkehr ins Stocken geraten war, sahen Schulkinder den sterbenden, noch zappelnden Jungen auf dem Asphalt liegen mit dem vom Speichel verklebten Ovomaltinepulver in den Mundwinkeln, wie ich es mir jetzt beim Schreiben vorstelle. (*Wimper 97*)

The powerful image of the dying boy with traces of a globally marketed nutritional drink in his mouth is one of the still-lives, iterated like others in Winkler's work. Because the death of the child occurred days before the narrator's trip to Mexico to attend the *Día de los muertos*, the account of the accident blends the autobiographical with the foreign. Haunted by his self-created image, the narrator himself becomes a *Knochenstilleben*, a shadow of himself, who wanders the streets that have become a cemetery. The materiality of the bright orange of the *Ovomaltine* package is replicated in the orange color of the marigolds ("Tagetesblumen"), the yellow and orange cut-outs, even the orange trash

truck. In the end, his obsession with the death of the child, the asphalt of the road, and the drink endow the material objects with the power to influence his mental state and psychological disposition. By merging self and material object, his fantasies become nightmares, nightmares become madness, and madness becomes text.

Und heute habe ich schulfrei, heute bin ich tödlich verunglückt! Sagt der Asphalt als Spiegel der Nacht. Und zum Frühstück kein in der schaumigen Milchtasse sich auflösendes klebriges Ovomaltinepulver mehr. (100)

The color orange, the narrator's as well as his son's favorite color, permeates the vignette and draws the narrator/author's gaze to things that evoke memories of his encounter with death and dying during his childhood and on his trips to India.

In the vignette "Die Farbe Orange" (*Leichnam* 87-88), the narrator focalizes on the orange dot on the forehead of the handsome young *Dom*, who assists in the cremation of the dead in the river Ganges. He engages in an ironic wordplay when he reveals that the "untouchable" had left the orange dot on his pillow (87). The transfer of the dot of color from the forehead of the young man onto the inanimate fabric of the narrator's headrest re-materialized the disembodied smudge of paint, giving agency to the now fetishized object that stands in for the human subject. Orange then becomes the compulsory color of memory informing his behavior in a fetishistic way. The color thus endows the product with agency that exposes subconscious drives and aversions.

For Winkler, brands and brand names are both material objects and simulacra, signifiers that assume the identity of the signified and become ambiguous pawns in the constellations of authorial I, actors, and things. One example is the multilayered scene of

the narrator who is attending a *Literatursymposium* in Tokyo when he learns about his father's death. Unable to attend the funeral, see the father's corpse, and take his leave, he injects a scene of the American film *Lost in Translation*. The passage begins in cinematic fashion, where the authorial I imagines the grave of his departed father, ensconced by flowers coated in a thin veil of freshly fallen snow, while he himself travels through Tokyo on the other side of the globe. He finds himself in the New York Bar off the Park Hyatt Tokyo, near the Nishi-Shinjuku Station, the most iconic site of the movie. Seated beside his children, who are watching the film *Lost in Translation* on a nearby television, drinking from a bottle of *San Pellegrino* mineral water, the authorial I is re-visited by the memory of his father, this time standing toothless with pitchfork in hand on a pile of manure.

Scarlett Johansson's dialog with Bill Murray is intersected by a cinematic scene of the father's image and voice, now iterating the words he had said after watching a film about the "Haß- und Verzweiflungsgefühle":

Du kannst über mich schreiben, was du willst, wenn es dir nur hilft, aber laß die beiden Buben im Dorf in Ruh! Laß die Toten in Frieden! Schreib nichts mehr über die beiden Selbstmörder! (*Roppongi* 101)

Although the calf-birthing rope, now referenced as the noose, implies paternal discipline and violence, the image retrieves the memory of the aged and somewhat emasculated father, transposing him from Kamering into downtown Tokyo. Internalized in this moment of remembrance, the narrator's body merges with his father's body when he himself now repeats the familiar words:

Laß die beiden erhängten Buben in Ruh! murmelte ich vor mich hin, die grüne, durchsichtige Pellegrino-Mineralwasserflasche in Augenhöhe haltend und durch das Glas auf den Bildschirm schauend. (*Roppongi* 101)

Winkler not only references the film linking it with the memory of his father, he also inserts specifically the green, thick necked, elegantly lumpy (“vornehm klumpig”) *Pellegrino* bottle between him and the moving visual image. The cinematic scene of the hotel bar in Tokyo becomes the materialized space where the narrator participates and partakes through the prism of the Italian water bottle in a moment shared with his father who is standing on a compost heap in Carinthia.

For the moment, the Italian water bottle becomes the lens through which the authorial I sees Sofia Coppola’s film. On a symbolic level it would appear that the water bottle becomes the mediator between the authorial I and cinematic imagery. The film title *Lost in translation* further implies the difficulty of mediating *urtext* from one language to another. The lengthy sentences in this passage, containing an abundance of gerunds and visually descriptive terms “auf die unzähligen großen roten Lichter und auf die blauen Glühwürmchenstraßen des nächtlichen Tokio schauend,” “schmallippig mit eingefallenem Mund, eine kotbehangende Gabel haltend, auf dem Misthaufen stand, die Misthügel zerstreute, die abgeschlagenen Hühnerköpfe mit den geschlossenen Augen,” “die kleine, vornehm klumpige grüne Pellegrino-Mineralwasserflasche mit dem dünnen Hals an der Theke im Kreis drehend” (*Roppongi* 101f.), comprise a typical Winklerian style striving for cinematic visuality. The question remains does the *Pellegrino* water bottle possess a function beyond its symbolic purport? Is it an encapsulation of lived

experience, an attempt at adding haptic and visual verisimilitude to text, or evidence of branding and the evocative connection to memory?

Curiously, what is not present is the film itself. Even the iconic Park Hyatt Sky Bar in film and in location is absent, reduced by the narrator to the indefinite article "...in einer Bar des Park Hyatt Tokio" (101). While everyone, except the narrator, is watching the television set, he now intersects the cinematic dialog with his inner monologue "laß die beiden erhängten Buben in Ruh! murmelte ich vor mich hin" (101). In this complex intermedial exchange, Bill Murray and Scarlet Johansson are now transcribed in German, extending the tenuous father-son encounter in Kaming.

"Wann reist du ab?" sagte Scarlett zu Bill. „Morgen!“ antwortete er. „Du wirst mir fehlen! Musst du gleich los?“ sagte sie. „Ja, meine Bodyguards warten schon... also dann... möchtest du mir nicht eine gute Reise wünschen?“ „Ja, das wollte ich... o.k. ... dann mach's gut!“ „Ja, du auch“ – „Mach's gut!“

The bottle of *Pellegrino* water becomes a center point in this scene, as it negates the visual impact of the film by rendering whatever light passes through it as green distortion. The dialogue, in this case a goodbye scene near the end of the movie is all that remains, translated, ironically, into German. The memory of the father and his frail mother ("an ihrer sich immer mehr verdunkelnden Seele erkrankt" 102), takes precedent. The body of the authorial self disintegrates further as the passage continues. The father is again quoted "Du bist Luft für mich," at which the body of the authorial I vanishes as well, "denn ich wußte, daß ich der einzige luftleere Raum in diesem Dorf bin, ein Stück Vakuum, das in der Gestalt eines Kindes die Stalluft verwirrte" (102). The body of the

narrator vanishes at this point too. Only the dialogue between Scarlett and Bill remain, now triangulated with the authorial I: Mach's gut, Vater ... o.k. ... ich wünsche die eine gute Reise ... ok.! (105).<sup>105</sup> The passage, concluding with the description of the father's burial, becomes the semantic construction that stands in place of his physical presence partaking in the interment of his father in Kaming.

Whereas the Italian Pellegrino water bottle in Tokyo becomes the prism that mediates absence and loss in a transnational setting, the white sugar skull (*Zuckertotenkopf*) Winkler acquires during his six-week stay in Mexico City is not marked by a specific brand name, nor is it linked to memories of lived experiences. However, it becomes a transmedial image that assumes a multifaceted function as symbol, sign, commodity and fetishized material object that is—similar to the rural *Kalbstrick* and the skull from the catacombs in Rome—linked to the *Zwänge and Ängste* in the process of writing. The setting of “Himmelfahrtsgeschichten unter dem Antlitz eines Mexikanischen Zuckertotenkopfes” (*Wimper* 49) is Mexico where the author and his family are spending the *Día de los Muertes*, festivities celebrating the equivalent of the European Alls Saints Day. The narrator focuses on an image of Frida Kahlo that he has pasted in his 400-page long Mexican Notebook where quotes from Peter Handke's *Der Bildverlust*, Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, and Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage* intersect with autobiographical references and travel accounts. The image shows Kahlo in a hospital bed in 1951, holding a big white sugar skull with large eye sockets lined with

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<sup>105</sup> Like the “inner monologue,” the passage has no quotation marks.



glossy green paper.<sup>106</sup> Similar to his account of the dead child with the *Ovomaltine* oozing from his lips, the narrator inserts the description of her accident. Whereas he had to rely previously on a report in a Klagenfurt newspaper, he now quotes Kahlo's own memory of her accident, in which he vicariously participates:

“Kurz nachdem wir in den Bus gestiegen waren,“ erzählt Frida Kahlo, “kam der Zusammenprall. Wir hatten zuerst in einem anderen Bus gesessen, aber ich hatte ein kleines Schirmchen verloren, und wir stiegen aus, um es zu suchen; so kam es, daß wir in diesen Bus stiegen, der mich verstümmelte. Die Straßenbahn fuhr langsam, aber unser Busfahrer war ein ungeduldiger junger Mann. Als die Bahn um die Ecke bog, schob sie den Bus gegen die Hauswand. Durch den Aufprall flogen wir nach vorn, und ich wurde von dem Handlauf durchbohrt wie ein Stier vom Degen. Ein Mann sah mich in einer riesigen Blutlache liegen, er hob mich hoch und legte mich auf einen Billardtisch, bis das Rote Kreuz eintraf. Ich verlor meine Jungfräulichkeit, eine Niere war gequetscht, ich konnte kein Wasser lassen. Niemand schenkte mir Beachtung.” (*Wimper* 50-51)

Critically injured in an accident on September 17, 1925, Kahlo endured numerous surgeries. While recovering and during the frequent hospital stays, she turned to painting, creating a series of now famous self-portraits. The one in question represents the artist holding the skull with the green glittering eyes, referencing her near death experience and her excruciating pain. Kahlo died July 13, 1954 at the age of 47.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Web. 3 Mar. 2015.

<sup>107</sup> Herrera's biography contains a number of color plates as well as black and white photos of her work.

As I have argued in a previous chapter, deterioration or violation of a body—here the piercing of the body and the crushing of internal organs—exposes its chemical composition of tissue, blood and bones. Mortality is no longer an abstract idea but a lived experience, materialized as abjection. Fascinated by the abject in its gore, the narrator is obsessed with the image, conjuring it up thirteen times in various intersections with quotes from Handke, Mora, and Austen. He not only pastes it into his notebook, he also purchases a white sugar skull that he carries around, similar to his *Kugelschreiberkopf*, adding the haptic to the visual and semantic components. Since the image and phrase are linked to the Mexican holiday of *Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead, they take on a connotation with religious *Heiligenbildchen* and *Stoßgebete* that is immediately ironized when the narrator links them to the ubiquitous advertisement for the sweet that is bought and consumed during the festivities. Although the narrator seems to aestheticize his fetishism, he unconsciously participates and partakes in the ritual of religious and capitalist manipulation and exploitation.

The *Día de los Muertos* dates back to more than four thousand years, when indigenous people occupying what is now Mexico and Central America celebrated death as the end of an old and the beginning of a new life. Death was part of the natural cycle of life, devoid of a sense of horror, *angst* and the revulsion in the presence of a decaying corpse. During colonization the indigenous holiday celebrated in the summer was fused with the Catholic All Saints Day and All Souls Day as the Days of the Dead and moved to October 31, November 1, and November 2. With its celebrations of food, flowers, and festivities, the Day is, as Stanley Brandes argues in his *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the*

*Dead*, not a ritual confirming a stereotypical Mexican sense of morbidity and fear of death but rather a powerful affirmation of life and creativity (15).

After the Spanish colonizers set up large sugar plantations made profitable through the labor of African slaves, sugar became readily available. From the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century on, hand made sugar skulls became part of the *Día des los Muertos* festivities. Over the centuries, the skull design became more colorful, creative, and even extravagant. Today, they are hand- as well as mass-produced, turning a religious artifact into a commodity widely available for ritualistic purposes, souvenirs as well as for consumption (Brandes 19-67).

Because of the layering of Catholic practices ritualizing death, the corpse, and the belief in an afterlife, the narrator is not only fascinated but obsessed with the sugar skull. Adding Kahlo's image to the entries in his notebook, and buying a skull himself that he holds in his lap during his plane trip from Mexico to Klagenfurt, he continues his compulsive pursuit of funeral rites in all parts of the world. These artifacts are, as we have seen before, the expression of the authorial I's desire to participate ("teilnehmen") and partake ("teilhaben") in ritualistic performances as sources of creative energy. In the charged atmosphere of the jubilant city, he reimagines and relives the "Ur-participation," initiated by the imperative "Schau, Seppl, Schau!" now translated into the festive ritual of song, dance, and meals shared with dead ancestors. (*Wimper* 59). However, in contrast to the gloomy and morose Austrian tradition, the international scene is mitigated by the materiality of the merchandise, the consumerism practised by natives and tourists alike.

And the narrator participates and partakes in this mania, fully aware of it, yet anxious to aestheticize it as part of his creative process.

Whereas the “Totenkopf unter der Engelsbrücke” was the skull, removed from the catacombs in Rome to give impetus to the narrator’s failing creative energies, the sugar skull is what it is: a saccharine image of the organic bone, a simulacrum, a commodity to be enjoyed and consumed during the annual festivals. With or without the Benjaminian “aura,” the sugary artifact is dominating the narrator’s behavior, defines him as who he is. And at the moment, he is no longer the voyeur watching a cultural ritual but the participant in Kahlo’s understanding of mortality. With her name inscribed on the skull she holds, it is her life-experience. She has physically and mentally suffered the piercing of her body, while the narrator can only relive her encounter with death through her image and a commercially produced sugar skull.

When, as Baudrillard has argued, the object is converted into the systemic status of a sign, and the relationship between subject and object becomes one of consuming and being consumed, this relationship is “at once consummated and abolished” (218f.). Consequently, the object becomes its mediation and is ultimately replaced by the sign (218f.). Winkler plays with this notion of the absence of agency: once the material object is divested of its core, it becomes void, a powerless simulacrum. The failure of connectivity to the fetishized thing has its immediate effect on the narrator. Back in Austria, he becomes the tormented writer, in search of language that expresses in the materiality of a text what he is trying to grasp by holding the skull and conjuring up Kahlo’s image in ever more frantic incantations. He even links his loss of creativity to

other material objects, such as the Mexican inkwell, Handke's, Austen's and Mora's novels or the topographical location of his house in Mexico City.

Und ich fragte mich, ob ich vielleicht mit Peter Handkes *Bildverlust*, Jane Austens *Sinn und Sinnlichkeit* und mit *Alle Tage* von Terézia Mora nach Mexico City zurückfliegen und am Chapultepec in die fünf Meter hoch vergitterte Wohnung, ein ehemaliges Cinema [...] zurückkehren sollte, wo ich meine Sprache hatte liegenlassen, und sie wiederholen, zurückfliegen sollte mit Frida Kahlos großem weißem Zuckertotenkopf mit den grünen Augenhöhlen auf dem Schoß im Flugzeug, denn mir fiel ein, daß ich das mexikanische Tintenfaß, von dem ich jeden Tag Tinte abgesaugt, hatte stehenlassen, [...]. (54)

It is ironic that the simulacrum is resting in its materiality on his lap during the transatlantic flight, yet it cannot be transported, that is, it cannot be translated, even if it is part of the layering of indigenous and European Catholic ritualistic practices. It remains a mute saccharine artifact that does not even have the power to inspire the writer to peel Terézia Mora's sentences out of its glittering green eyes.

Auch den darauffolgenden Samstag, den 15. September 2007, empfand ich als sprachlosen Tag, bis Sonntag, der 16. September 2007 kam, ich mich an den Schreibtisch setzte, Sätze von Terézia Mora aus dem großen weißen Zuckertotenkopf mit den grünen glänzenden Augenhöhlen herausschälte und vor mir ausbreitete. (57)

The narrator regains his language only after "staging" albeit unconsciously, a traffic accident that links him to the boy in Klagenfurt and Kahlo in Mexico City. In contrast to

the boy who gets killed and Kahlo who survived but suffered excruciating pain, the narrator remains unscathed when crossing the street on a red light. Reading the passage in Mora's text as his own story, the narrator defines himself in terms of the protagonist:

[...] ich [...] zog wieder die Sätze und kleinen Geschichten aus dem Roman *Alle Tage* von Teréza Mora aus dem großen weißen Zuckertotenkopf mit den grünen glänzenden Augenhöhlen und las, [...]. "Heute habe ich einen Mann gesehen, der muß aus dem Himmel gefallen sein oder aus der Hölle gefahren, als er ... Und: 'Wie auch immer,' sagte sie schließlich. 'Er ist nicht tot. Sondern lebt und wirkt völlig normal, bis auf den Umstand, daß er daran festhält, im Himmel zu sein.'" (60)

By identifying with the fictional character in Mora's novel, the narrator defines himself in contrast to Kahlo, the boy, and the victim of a traffic accident in Mexico. Finding himself standing in the middle of the street while cars whiz by and drivers yell at him "Du Wahnsinniger!" he reacts with shame and cold sweat (59). After experiencing physiological and mental anguish, Mora's text can now be replaced by his own:

Ja, dachte ich, an einer Cola nippend, beim Wiederlesen der immerselben Sätze von Terézia Mora, ich bin nicht tot, kein Aufprall, ich wurde auch von keinem Stück Eisen durchbohrt, "wie ein Stier vom Degen," um die Worte Frida Kahlo's zu gebrauchen, lag auch nicht in einer riesigen Blutlache [...] nein, ich war nicht überfahren worden, ich lebe, niemand muß, um die Worte aus dem Roman *Alle Tage* zu gebrauchen, einem Skelett Kleider anziehen. (60-61)

Participating and partaking in the experience of possible bodily harm and death restores his creative energy; he can replace the Mexican sugar skull with a Cola, the brand known for its international recognition and equally high sugar content.

Juxtaposed to the intensity of the narrator's obsession with the Mexican sugar skull is the nonchalant attitude displayed in regard to the native Austrian confectionary imported to Mexico by his son Kasimir: the internationally marketed *Mannerschnitte*. Founded in 1890 by the Viennese confectioner Josef Manner, the *Schnitte* was introduced in 1898 in honor of the golden jubilee of Emperor Franz Josef. It consists of five wafers filled with four layers of hazelnut cocoa cream. Since the hazelnuts were originally imported from Naples, the bite-size *Schnitten* are also known as *Neapolitaner*. The image of St. Stephan's Cathedral, printed as the logo on the bright pink-orange package, indicates both the location of the business next to the cathedral and its cultural and national significance. Social history situates the wafer as consumer good in the upper classes, since chocolate was quite expensive at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—the cost of one kilogram being equal to two days' salary of an average worker. Similar to *Ovomaltine*, marketed as a nutritional drink for children, advertisers also targeted children with the wafer, as nostalgic reprints of early 20<sup>th</sup> century wrappers indicate. Contemporary wrappers are more non-descript in terms of their targeted consumers, emphasizing the brand name and its main ingredients: hazelnuts and chocolate. Although cheaper hazelnuts are now imported from Turkey, the company adheres to its branding as *Neapolitaner*, suggesting that the old recipe has never changed over the last century. The irony of the branding is not lost to Winkler: an “Italian” confectionary, mass-produced in

factories with Turkish ingredients, is not only marketed in Europe but also on a global scale. The ubiquitous symbol of Viennese coffehouse culture and lifestyle, characterized as “authentic” Austrian delicacy, has made its way to Mexico City in Kasimir’s suitcase to be distributed in Mexico as native ware.

It is ironic that the gift, intended for the indigenous Indians at the foot of the volcano Popocatepetl, was left behind in Mexico City, precluding the enactment of an exchange of foodstuff between colonizers and colonized, so often represented in the narrator’s favorite readings of Karl May. Since the *Manner Schnitten* were not to be consumed by the family but presented as gifts to the natives, they end up in the hands of a proxy, the uniformed Mexican guard at the *Nobelhaus* up the hill (54), who had calmed down the narrator during a power outage. As exchange in the barter, the watchman offers a sign indicating his understanding of the deal: by pointing his forefinger to his eyes, he signaled that he would provide security for the narrator’s children during their stay in Mexico City.

Although the *Manner Schnitten* do not figure as prominently in the discourse of brand items as the sugar skull in the “Himmelfahrtsgeschichten,” they still share common ground as tokens of national identity that are instrumentalized in the practices of ritualized consumerism. While the sugar skull is embedded in religious rites, the wafer serves as *Gastgeschenk* (“gift for the hostess”) and article of exchange for services rendered. Both articles are souvenirs, one an exotic object to an urban setting, the other a sign of Austrian lifestyle handed to a lower class Mexican worker. And both articles



expose their implicit marketing strategies: obtaining and consuming them allows participation in experiences that define the identity of those who own them.

Although emphasis has been on Winkler's explicit and implicit use of brand items, the text is not merely an explication or critique of mass-production, consumerism, marketing, or capitalist economy. Whereas the topic is his familiar obsession with material objects, their agency and influence on the subject exposed in his erratic behavior, the reader soon realizes that the narrative is a masterfully structured and brilliantly executed piece about the process of writing. While lamenting his inability to write, the narrator constructs a meticulously intricate network of allusions, symbols, intertextual references, quotes from other texts, and autobiographical elements that are both layered and linked in multiple ways. Precision in language and style accentuate the author's ingenuity by employing irony to challenge the reader's perception and understanding of his project. In this regard, "Himmelfahrtsgeschichte unter dem Antlitz eines Mexikanischen Zuckerhuts" is also a critical commentary on the manipulative techniques of brand items, their placement and medial iteration, exposing what is hidden in plain sight.

Whereas the exotic, even eroticized image of the young black woman on the wrapper of the *Moro Orange* remains within the religious and cultural context of Austria, the image of the *Mohrenkopf* on the package of *Meinl Kaffee* is taken out of its European territory and redefined in the vignette "Julius Meinl oder Leichenschleifen in Benares" (*Leichnam* 91). It is not in the form of a flashy advertisement importing the Viennese cultural icon into the culinary arena of Veranasi, nor is it the gold-colored foil preserving

the aroma of the product. On the contrary, it appears in ironic, even satirical juxtaposition on a soiled and tattered plastic bag, carried by some Viennese Hare Krishna girls. With the placement of the item, the message of the image—a dark-skinned youth smelling the aroma of the coffee intended to raise consumer appetite and need for the item—is perverted since it is questionable whether the product was even carried in the bag. The brand item is thus devalued, reduced to a simulacrum that, when exposed by the abuse as a tattered receptacle, is devoid of its meaning.

The *Meinl* brand of coffee originated in 1862, when Julius Meinl I opened a spice shop in the center of Vienna, selling green coffee beans, cocoa, spices, rice, and sugar. In 1877, Julius Meinl II developed a process of roasting coffee that freed the product from any aftertaste and released its full aroma. The company relocated to Vienna's 16<sup>th</sup> district, in the Julius Meinl Graben, named after Julius Meinl in 1954. The company soon became the largest coffee roaster and importer of coffee in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1924, the Viennese graphic designer Joseph Binder created the label depicting a dark-skinned youth who wears a fez, the head dress implying his connection to the court of an exotic Sultan. Although details of dress such as the tassel, the striped collar, buttons, and the earrings are drawn clearly, the image is stylized, implying Austria's nexus of international trade, its economic and political wealth as well as its sophistication in importing expensive luxury items to be consumed in its coffeehouses. The brand image represented the image of global industry and power.

During the following decades, the pose of the boy changed slightly: the head was less bent over, the hat was more relaxed, and the earrings disappeared. When the

company was accused of racism, the owner defended the image claiming that it was by no means a slave who bent over the coffee he had produced in an act of hard labor, but a connoisseur who represents the country of origin as well as his expertise about the quality of the merchandise. In 2004, the Italian designer Matteo Thun redacted the image into a more abstract design replacing the yellow background with a white surface. Although the brand image was modified, it maintained its original marketing decision to represent Austria's past global economic and political power. Today, the family still owns a high-end coffee shop and restaurant in the inner city of Vienna while the conglomerate of franchises was taken over by the supermarket chain Rewe.

Winkler's conscious manipulation of brand names exposes advertising strategies exploiting consumer gullibility for novelty, social status, and economic success. In his *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard argues that material goods are not objects of consumption but of needs and the satisfaction of these needs. To instigate, cultivate and satisfy particular notions of need, consumers have to be subjected "to a *systematic manipulation of signs*" (218) that integrate them into the system, making them receptive to said manipulation. Andree's understanding that products have been replaced by medial images that dispense with the salesperson behind the counter and communicate themselves, can be taken a step further when Winkler consciously dismisses the idea of consumption or even need of consumption of the actual product and satirically manipulates the mediality of the *Meinl Kaffee* logo.

The setting of "Julius Meinl oder Leichenschleifen in Benares" is the site of cremation in Benares or Varanasi, one of the seven holiest Hindu cities in India. While

bathing in the Ganges river absolves from sins, dying in the Kashi Vishwanath Temple secures release of the soul from the cycle of transmigrations. Whereas the narrator in the “Himmelfahrtsgeschichte” was an active participant in the festivities of the *Día de los Muertos*, he has now taken on the role of the observer who captures the images to be archived with the recordings of the events in his Indian notebooks. The site of the scene is the *Einäscherungsplatz* (“site of cremation”), filled with numerous bodies in various stages of cremation, decomposition, and fragmentation. It is the place of absolute abjection, filled with human and animal waste, a quagmire whose stench permeates the air. Those participating and partaking in the rites of burial are marked by the filth and odor and often infected with fatal diseases. In 16 pages of text, the narrator translates the spectacle of death into a powerful cascade of descriptions that represent the crowded and suffocating space:

Unter den nackten, schwarzen, faltigen Fußstumpen eines in einem Rollstuhl sitzenden und aufs elektrische Krematorium zufahrenden Leprakranken, der mit seinen beiden fingerlosen Händen einen Tonbecher Tee an seine Lippen drückte, lagen ein paar Holzkohleprügel. (91-92)

Aus dem Maul eines kauend am Flußufer hinter dem brennenden Scheiterhaufen stehenden Stiers, der einen Strick um den Hals trug, an dem ein Menschenknochen angebunden war, hingen ein paar Goldfäden vom ausgefransten Kunststoffleientuch. (95)

Although the narrator has taken the stance of the mechanical *Filmkamerakopf*, his recording of the subject-object interaction also affects him and determines the intensity of his composition and style.

Among those populating the area are a few Viennese Hare Krishna girls who are alternating their mantra “Hare Krishna! Hare Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! Hare! Hare! Hare Rama! Hare Rama! Rama! Rama! Hare! Hare” with the chants “*Meinl’s Fledermaus in der Julius Meinl am Graben Hutschachtel*” (italics in text 94); “*Meinl’s Madame Butterfly in der Julius Meinl am Graben Hutschachtel*” (italics in text 96); “*Meinl’s Rosenkavalier in der Julius Meinl am Graben Hutschachtel*” (italics in text 97); and “*Meinl’s Gourmet Weltreise im eleganten Julius Meinl’s Strohkoffer*” (italics in text 102). Whereas the Buddhist mantra is the call to cleanse the mind of anxieties and illusions, the Julius Meinl chant refers to the economic success story of the Meinl family. In her advertising campaign “Kunst des Schenkens” (The art of giving), Franziska Meinl had designed more than 3000 combinations of wrapping, among them those in the shape of pick-nick cases or the fez worn by the ubiquitous black boy on the logo. The promotion turned out to be a huge success bringing in an unforeseen windfall of profit. By referencing the *Hutschachtel* (“hat box”) and the *Strohkoffer* (“suitcase made of straw”) as packing material for high-end gifts, the narrator further emphasizes the ironic edge of the Buddhist and the Austrian advertising campaign.

If the subject-object relationship is one of fetishism (Böhme) or cult (Andree), the aura of the object is transferred to the voyeuristic eye creating the “auratischen Blick” (“auratic gaze,” Andree 107), which in turn assumes agency and determines behavior. In

his chapter “Identifikation, Markenkult, Fan-Konsum,” Andree argues that the staging of a product is most effective when it is not simply explained but dramatized on an imaginative-spectacular stage.

Es genügt nicht, ein Produkt zu erklären, sondern es wird interessant und faszinierend gemacht, indem man es theatralisiert, auf eine imaginär-spektakuläre Bühne stellt, es in einer hochverdichteten Exhibition zur Schau stellt (106).

Andree redefines the imaginative-spectacular stage as a secret space, where marketing is displayed in the form of a planned and controlled cult. By valorizing physical objects, the sacred is no longer an idea; it is tangible and visible, mediated by the layers of images on wrappings, bags, and boxes.

When recording the scene with his *Filmkamerakopf*, the narrator renders the images in almost breathless *Wortfluten*. By placing the Buddhist and Viennese chants into a contiguous relationship with each other, he satirizes religious and commercial obsession and fanaticism. Furthermore, he devalues the capitalist manipulation of the Meisl family that stands in for Austrian economic prowess, as is evident when he reduces the powerful Meisl image to the faded remnant on a tattered and soiled plastic bag at the Ganges in Varanasi. If sacrality is materialized as space that valorizes physical objects, the scene is a satire, a complete reversal of global marketing practices that rely on the mediality of images to communicate and advertise their products. Since the emphasis has shifted from the product to the image that mediates and communicates, the decoding of the language of the chants imaginatively inscribed on the logo is ambiguous. On the one hand, the need to purify seems to contradict the need to consume a caffeinated beverage;

on the other hand, the shrill chant of the Viennese Hare Krishna boys and girls is as meaningless as the logo on the tattered plastic bag that probably never enclosed the actual product.

Integrating brand items provides the narrator with an opportunity to manipulate this world by decoding their particular denotative and connotative meanings, thus exposing what is hidden and repressed. By peeling away the layers of medial interferences, Winkler not only exposes the agency of things on the actors of his stories, he also reveals the need of said actors to be manipulated to assume an identity that erases the boundaries between self and other. He does not exclude the narrator from this symbiosis but injects him into the fray, in some cases with hilarious results.

Like Winkler's work, the writings of Jelinek, Handke, and Bernhard, among others, is also characterized by a subtle, yet significant insertion of brands and visual imagery to complement the narrative. Whether this tendency in writing is, as it seems, part of a conscious embrace or mimesis of visual culture, or a personal strategy of representing memory comprises a larger question. Brands and their ubiquity in global culture have invaded texts because they are texts, a combination of narrative and symbol that possess a power to influence behavior and identity construction, despite their annoying nature. By inserting the authorial I into the subject-object relationship, Winkler's narrative strategies unmask the manipulation and the effect of mediality, marketing, and consumerism in often macabre, ironic, or satirical ways.

## Conclusion

Like the uncanny or abjection, materiality refers to a common, perhaps universal experience. Collectors, bibliophiles, philatelists, or plushophiles know the experience best. The draw of a rare specimen, the excitement of acquisition, and the satisfaction of placing it in its proper place behind glass to be seen and admired are perhaps the most obvious and relatable symptoms of this condition. If we are to concur with theorists such as Hartmut Böhme, this behavior cannot be relegated to the pre-enlightenment fanaticism of fetishists and totemists but is prevalent today, augmented by the appeal of marketing strategies and consumerism. The contemporary Austrian author Josef Winkler has amassed such a collection, not so much in his domestic space but in the gallery of his literary oeuvre. His works comprise an impressive curation of objects, an eclectic array of lived experience, encapsulated in objects of memory.

Through Winkler's ongoing quest for precision, experimentation, and ultimate aesthetics of form, it is possible for him to extract the materiality of these objects, the attractions and the revulsions, and the peculiar dichotomy of both at once through his precise and visual language. In this regard, his project is not merely a curation, nor is it simply a catalogue, designed to draw attention to his writing and to better understand the phenomenon of materiality as exposed in prose. His curation includes iterations and metamorphoses throughout various texts and contexts of objects close to the author/narrator, most prominently, the treatment of common household items, the living body as parchment of memory, the corpse, the relic, and brand names as materiality devoid of substance when appropriated by the splashy imagery of visual culture.



This project has not attempted to construct arbitrarily categories for objects, or endeavored to sort them through some artificial system of seemingly empirical qualities or characteristics. Attempts at categorization or a lexical enumeration of objects may be misleading or become only partially informative. However, an organized structure and scope has been necessary to approach an opus as vast and varied as Winkler's, and to compare the function and relationship of human and un-human objects in their position with the author/narrator. The chapters and their thematic content were organized with attention to the pitfalls of categorization systems. Instead of arbitrarily assigning objects to chapters, this dissertation is informed and structured according to the author's most significant and recurring themes. Organization is therefore dictated by prominence in the author's own works. Special attention was given to highlight relationships and connections within these thematic areas, though other approaches and organizational strategies would be possible and equally informative. Indeed, the concept of materiality is not limited to the discussion presented in this dissertation.

Since the process of writing and memory feature prominently throughout Winkler's work, the first chapter explored the function of domestic objects, preeminently the *Kalbstrick*, and their role in construction and reconstruction of memory and lived experience. It is plausible that Winkler's writing concentrates on the act of writing itself, and, ironically, on the inability or the difficulty with writing ("Schreibproblematik"). Since the narrating I and authorial self-representation share a body, this struggle with language is an imminent and omnipresent feature of the texts. The act of writing is wrought in fears and superstitions, frequently turning to objects to mediate or inspire

language. The arguments presented in this project have shown that certain objects are always present, either to rescue the authorial I from the inability to express in language (“Sprachlosigkeit”), or as mediators between memory and language (“Wort- und Bilderfluten”). The *Kalbstrick*, for example, is involved with these superstitions and compulsions to the point where it is treated as an animated being. The intersection of self-representation and materiality theory highlights compulsions present within the process of memory and the evocation of thoughts in the autobiographic-autofictional narrating I; it also focalizes on the importance of objects in the often cryptic or fatal act of writing.

This struggle with language and the act of writing is more than tangentially linked to the themes of death and abjection that distinguish Winkler’s works. The human body, its frailty, and its remains must therefore be treated in an analysis of Winkler. The second chapter explores how the human body and its disintegration are evoked in religious themes and polemics against social or political orders. The body, alive or dead, is shown to possess mediatative qualities similar to the inanimate objects reviewed in Chapter 1, and is equally relevant to the writing process. Fascination and revulsion with abjection reveals the power the process of death and dying has over the awareness of our own mortality. Participating and partaking in the gradual dissolution and decomposition of the body evoke our fears and superstitions by exposing its materiality. Capturing this fear in its materiality and its deterioration in language, that is, in a text, translates into the same fears about the powers and failures of language and writing.

While Winkler and the narrating I are unabashedly critical of the Catholic Church, he also displays precise knowledge of Catholic practices and rituals. Early texts accuse

the Catholic Church of complicity with the Third Reich, rebuke the Church's paternalism, and express vitriolic dislike towards hypocritical behavior and structural violence, condoned by practitioners and clergy alike. Later texts juxtapose sub-alpine Catholic practices with other world religions and interpretations such as Hinduism, Shinto, and Latino Catholicism. The human body and the treatment of the corpse are points of comparison among these religions. Burial rituals and the handling of death become leit-motifs in Winkler's work, further evident in his travels to India, Japan, and Mexico. To explicate Winkler's particular experience of rural practices of worship in Austria, the second chapter sets up the context of the philosophical framework of the body, particularly the Catholic conception of the body, in terms of devotion and belief about death and the afterlife.

Winkler scholarship has previously attracted the attention of theologians. A number of books and articles have been published and, critical or not, Winkler's works provide a good source of 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic practices due to his attention to detail, focus on the narration of ritual and on changing attitudes towards the practices. More work can certainly be done in regard to the study of theology and comparative religion, both within and outside of the Austrian context. Winkler's texts are no doubt of interest to those researching comparative religion, the burial ritual, prothesis, ekphoria, and veneration of the dead in contemporary prose. The treatment of the dead and end-of-life ethics are increasingly important questions in medicine and politics. Winkler's texts are an excellent gateway into these discussions, especially in their comparative handling of non-European cultures.

Given the history and expansive nature of the philosophy of the body, numerous other interpretations of Winkler's works are possible. The presence and thematic focus on the human body and the corpse also render Winkler's material a source difficult to exhaust. To select a segment for analysis, the chapter focalized on the authorial I's exposure to Catholic philosophy and notions of the body. Therefore, primacy was given to the Catholic body, the relic, and the treatment of the corpse.

The third chapter expands the discussion on materiality and questions the presence of brand names and brand iconography in Winkler's oeuvre. Again, the premise that brands, not simply the products they represent, recur within the narratives suggests that it is not just a whimsical attempt at adding specificity to the texts but a conscious effort to assign significance to these items within the intricate structures of the stories. Since brands are repeated in much the same way as other objects and memories, the question arises whether or not they fit into the same system of materiality theory discussed in previous chapters. Beyond repetition, they seem to possess a similar function of influencing human behavior, and show involvement in the narrating I's process of memory mediation, writing process, and ironic social as well as self critique.

Winkler's intercultural and intermedial engagement, reflected in his more recent works, invites a discussion of brand names and their role in 21<sup>st</sup> century Austrian culture as it is represented in advertisements, film and literature. Brands are unique in that they are recognizable on a global scale. They are designed to encourage not only consumption, but to evoke the experience associated with consuming that product. A brand offers not only a promise of quality or an invitation for the consumer to purchase, but also to

participate in the experience and emotion of a social class, a gender, an ethnicity, and to adopt certain promised qualities as one's own, even if just momentarily.

Brands and branding are not limited to simple logos and products. Branding can be seen in a broader sense as physical demarcation and performance. Indeed, the relationship between branding and performance is a strong one. Clothing can be integrated in this line of reasoning, since clothing itself consists of branded items, that is, cuts, colors, fabrics, and patterns, all contributing to the semiotics of fashion. The discussion of the materiality of clothing can be witnessed in the relationship between clothing and consumerism, clothing and performance, and clothing and gender, among other comparative categories. Although clothing plays a specific role in Winkler's narratives, it is more prominent for other authors such as Elfriede Jelinek and Thomas Bernhard who rely on the specifics of clothing for cultural criticism, characterization, and to illustrate the anancastic urges between agent and acquisition.

Tattoos and physical markers are also of interest, since they fall into the topic of personal branding. This illustrates the overlap between the chapters presented here, as well as the problems with categorization. An extension of the argument made in chapter two is that the concept of the human body has changed and continues to change. No longer trapped in Weber's "Eisernes Gestell," the body in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is mutable, modifiable, and disciplined. Body modification, transgender issues, and transhumanism are extensions of this argument. The body is now wrapped in the discourse of branding. Both skin and skeleton have become part of the self-identification process; they are billboards for one's preferences, abilities, suggested abilities, and behaviors.

Performativity is now joined by an order of semiotics not unlike fashion itself. Trans- and post-humanists are likely to argue that this process will continue with advances in technology and medicine and will subsequently become more common in culture.

While some of these arguments may not seem to apply to Josef Winkler, they are not without relevance. As demonstrated in the third chapter, Winkler employs brands and brand names in various combinations when he establishes and deconstructs the nexus to international trade, economic and political power with polemics, irony, and satire. Experimenting with the materiality of brands and brand names in the increasingly global settings of his texts allows him to pursue new venues of storytelling and critique.

My analysis of materiality in Winkler's work has repeatedly emphasized that visual elements are part and parcel of his pursuit of an aesthetics of language and form. Images captured with his *Filmkameraauge* become more intricate in *Leichnam, seine Familie belauernd*, *Roppongi*, and his latest work *Abel, Winnetou und Ich*. In his texts they function like material objects and literary quotes when they become structural elements of the narrative. Whereas his literary texts incorporate references to films and employ cinematic techniques, they remain semantic constructions evoking visual time and space dimensions.<sup>108</sup> Winkler's latest experiment with text and image is his collaborative film-project *Josef Winkler—Der Kinoleinwandgeher* "Literatur im Film," where he intersects film and literature in an innovative way.

The reader is familiar with the narrating I's *Filmkammerkopf* that shoots, curates, and finally archives the images of his mind in the repository of his notebooks,

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<sup>108</sup> A good example is the performance of the Vienna Hare Krishna girls in Varanasi, discussed in the third chapter.

secured with a string and packed away in his traveling bags. Despite the visual effect of these mental images, they remained language, materialized in text. Photographs, quite a few showing him in the location of the narrated texts, as well as the recent Karl May covers by Sascha Schneider, affirm his growing interest in experimenting with the materiality of photography and cinema. In his film, he is experimenting with images he actually produced with a camera, rendering them material objects to be cut, edited, and curated in literary structures now applied to digitized elements. A good example is the scene when Winkler steps in front of the projector to transfer the scene of Winnetou's death from the canvas of the screen onto the white fabric of his shirt. In other words, Winnetou does not die on the screen but literally on the writer's body. Experimenting with the intersection of word and image in his pursuit of an aesthetics of form opened an entire new venue in the field of intermediality.

Winkler's latest work, *Abel, Winnetou und Ich* (2014), is an experiment in intermediality, where literature (Karl May), cover images (Sascha Schneider), and film—Harald Reinl's successful cinematic interpretations starring Lex Baxter (Old Shatterhand), Pierre Brice (Winnetou), and Mario Adorf (Frederick Santer)—intersect with the narrator's autobiographical accounts of his voracious reading of the Karl May books and his fascination with the films that he watched in various movie houses, skipping school and stealing the money from his parents. Again, Winkler returns to his childhood, grounding the beginning of his writing career in the moment when his obsession with literature, cinema, and images led him to his typewriter, where he learned the “Zehnfingersystem am Tode Winnetous [...] schritt- und buchstabenweise [...]

Anschlag für Anschlag” (29). Whereas the “Hassliebe” between the narrating I and his older brother, the heir of the family’s farm, is a familiar theme, the playful indentification of the authorial self with May is new. The four parts, taken from May’s stories—at times verbatim— display an unusual sensitivity and affinity to his favorite author. A close analysis of the text, exploring the ironic interrelations of self and other, fiction and autobiography, word and image, would yield further insights into the genealogy of materiality in Winkler’s oeuvre.

Winkler is a living author. His writing demonstrates the ability to change and to pursue different projects and topics. While I have argued that Winkler uses repetition and writes familiar passages verbatim numerous times, this should not be interpreted as stagnation or absence of new material. Winkler’s project is one of language, a constant search for greater precision, and most prominently, one that is fascinated with the aesthetics of form. Though Winkler is an Austrian author whose material frequently returns to his rural Carinthian roots, his current work accomplishes more than valorize or critique Austrian culture. His travel writing and his embrace of visual and popular culture blur the borders of his native country with the shores of the river Ganges in Varanasi, the cemetery of the village Kamering with the Tokyo skyline, and the volcanoes of Mexico with the mountains of the Alps. Death, Austria, and latent fascism are present, but now handled with an awareness of a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective and the place of the country and literature in a globalized world. The passage from one millennium into the next highlights not merely a different style of writing, but also a more diversified attitude toward death itself. Innovations in media and communication have necessitated changes in law and



tradition influencing the burial ritual. The author's focus on death has captured those changes unlike any other literary source, and as such is pertinent to the study of texts and multiple other disciplines as well. Lastly, even in this hyper-modern world, the appeal of objects and their ambiguous powers are as present and as relevant as any fetish or totem. Whether in text, in media, or in the experiential domain, the materiality of objects invites further investigation.

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