

# Biography

**Hans Heribert Becker** (born August 10, 1942 in Opladen [Leverkusen]; died August 19, 2025 in Cologne-Ehrenfeld) was a German publicist, author, curator, and translator of predominantly surrealist or surrealist-inspired poetry and prose. He published almost 90 titles with numerous publishing houses.

## Family

He was born in Opladen, in the Rhineland, now a district of Leverkusen, in the Cologne administrative region, the middle of three brothers in a Catholic family of artisans. His father, Josef Becker (1907–1984), came from Opladen and was a master distiller at a grain distillery in the Bergisch Neukirchen district of Leverkusen (known as "Grundermühle"). His mother, Anna, née Maag (1911–2002), a housewife, came from Cobbenrode in the Hochsauerland district of North Rhine-Westphalia. His brother Heinz (born 1938) worked for 40 years as a foreman in a shoe factory ("Ara") in neighboring Langenfeld after completing an apprenticeship as a shoemaker. The youngest brother, Wilfried (born 1943), a trained typesetter, worked for many years as a graphic designer and advertising manager at two renowned Munich publishing houses (including "Bertelsmann") after studying graphic design, photography, and art history.

## Life & Work

Heribert Becker attended elementary school in the Lützenkirchen district, and from 1954 the Landrat-Lucas-Gymnasium (a secondary school specializing in modern languages) in Opladen, from which he graduated in 1963 (as did three other students from Bayer who graduated in 1963): René Adler (born 1985), Kai Havertz (born 1999), and Florian Wirtz (born 2003). One of his classmates was the composer York Hoeller, who was also born in the chemical industry town in 1944 as Georg Höller.

In the following decades, his sporting activities would be limited to extended hikes with his brothers in Bavaria and with friends in his Rhineland homeland and the nearby Eifel region.

From the summer semester of 1963, he studied theater studies, German studies, and Romance studies at the University of Cologne (North Rhine-Westphalia), and at times also art history, philosophy, and ethnology. His studies of Romance languages and literature brought him into contact with translation work for the first time, which he "must describe in retrospect as a good training ground because great emphasis was placed on [...] good German" (H. Becker).

During these years, he regularly attended theater performances, author readings (Max Brod [1884–1968], Heinrich Böll [1917–1985], Siegfried Lenz [1926–2014], Alfred Andersch [1914–1980], Peter Rühmkorf [1929–2008], and many others), and the Cologne Opera. In 1967, he interned at the Berliner Ensemble (East Berlin, GDR) and the Schiller Theater in Berlin. The following year, he attended a language course in Lyon, France, and became enthusiastic about the student revolt of those years, whose affinity with Surrealist ideals he recognized. He distanced himself from Catholicism and left the church.

In 1969/70, he resumed his studies in theater studies at the University of Nancy, continuing them until 1973 at the University of Paris-Nanterre. In the French capital, he earned his living as a secondary school teacher (assistant d'allemand). Here, where he would live for the following years, he sought contact with Surrealist artists and writers (Jean-Claude Charbonel [1938–2016], Guy Ducornet [1937–2025], Jacques Lacomblez [\*1934], Her de Vries [1930–2021], Jérôme Savary [1942–2013], and many others), whom he invited to participate in the planned exhibition "Imagination" at the Bochum Art Museum. He would maintain lifelong friendships with some of them.

He interrupted his dissertation (on Fernando Arrabal [\*1932]) without ever finishing it. He returned to the Rhineland in 1973 and lived in Hürth, Rhein-Erft district near Cologne, until 1979. After his return to Cologne, Becker still envisioned a career in theater, a dream he finally abandoned in 1977 (H. Becker).

In Cologne, on New Year's Eve 1977, he met his life partner, Edith Huber, a kindergarten and music teacher, and flautist born in Danzig in 1943, who had grown up in Dresden and later in Bavaria. He would live with her for more than 30 years in the student- and academically oriented Cologne district of Sülz, "in a common-law marriage," as he often liked to emphasize. She died in March 2011 at the age of only 67. He dedicated his book *Surrealism in Belgium* to her in 2019.

Between 1973 and 1977, he worked as a freelance teacher at secondary schools in the area surrounding Cologne, also occasionally as a night editor and driver for WDR (West German Broadcasting), where he "ran into many celebrities" (H. Becker). At the same time, he began his freelance work, primarily as the author of forewords and afterwords to his books and as the editor of several anthologies. He also wrote numerous articles for magazines in Germany and abroad, as well as translations of poetry and prose, mainly from French, and later also from Arabic, English, and Czech. He produced numerous radio features for public broadcasting corporations in German-speaking countries.

In 1977, he was an assistant at the Schauspielhaus Bochum (North Rhine-Westphalia) under Peter Zadek (1926–2009) on a production of the French-Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal, whose work he greatly admired and would later translate into German. During this time, he increasingly specialized in Surrealism. It was here that he occasionally encountered a young and unassuming theater pianist named Herbert Grönemeyer, who would later make a name for himself as an actor, composer, and singer.

## **Curator & Collector**

### **Museum Bochum**

In 1978 and 1993, Heribert Becker co-organized two important German Surrealism exhibitions at the Museum Bochum (now: *Kunstmuseum* Bochum). In addition, he was jointly responsible for a solo exhibition in 1986 and another in 1984 at Haus Kemrade in the Blankenstein district of Hattingen, Ennepe-Ruhr district, North Rhine-Westphalia, an external branch of the museum.

### **Imagination – International Exhibition of Visual Poetry** (August 26 to October 8, 1978):

The exhibition, organized jointly with the Czech Milan Nápravník (Nápravník himself was represented with several works in word and image), featured works by more than 70 international artists, including Jean Benoît (1922–2010), Camille von Breedam (born 1936), Jorge Camacho (1934–2011),

Marie Carlier (1920–1986), Jean-Claude Charbonel (1938–2016), the Breton artist Aube Elléouet (\*1935), Anne Éthuin (1921–2009), Wilhelm Freddie (1909–1995), H.R. Giger (1940–2014), Rik Lina (\*1942), Mimi Parent (1924–2005), Louis Pons (1927–2021), Woldemar Winkler (1902–2004) and Ludwig Zeller (1927–2019). The partly German-French texts of the more than 300-page catalogue (all illustrations in black and white!) are by Peter Spielmann (then director of the museum [1935–2020]), Édouard Jaguer (1924–2006), Jean Schuster (1929–1995), Jindřich Štyrský (1899–1942), Jean-Louis Bédouin (1929–1996) and others. Heribert Becker contributed his own texts and translated others into German.

### **Mimi Parent** (Haus Kemnade, June 23 to September 2, 1984):

The Montreal-born French-Canadian painter, draughtswoman, and object artist Mimi "Marie" Parent, who had lived in Paris with her partner, the artist Jean Benoît, since 1948, exhibited only rarely. This was "due to the painter's [...] aversion to engaging with the often repulsive and degrading mechanisms of the bourgeois art world" (H. Becker). He had met the artist at the Imagination exhibition and maintained an intensive correspondence with her until her death. This enabled him to persuade her to hold her first solo exhibition on German soil at the Bochum Museum's branch in the idyllic Haus Kemnade, where she was represented with 58 works. As co-organizer, Becker contributed translations of works by José Pierre (1927–1999), Breton, Nápravník, and Annie Le Brun (1942–2024) to the slim exhibition catalog (18 illustrations, some in black and white). In 2001, she was awarded the Woldemar Winkler Foundation Prize in Gütersloh. Becker was responsible for the concept and texts of the small catalog.

### **Dimitris Yeros: Paintings, Objects, Graphics, Photo Series** (May 31 to July 20, 1986)

Becker became acquainted with the artistic works of the Greek painter, graphic artist, photographer, and poet Dimitris Yeros not long before the exhibition opening. Yeros was born in 1948 in Levadia, Boeotia, in central Greece, and was represented in the major solo exhibition with 70 paintings, objects, graphics, and several photo series. "Yeros's imagery is both attractive and repulsive in a way that is not easily disentangled at first glance, although the repulsive, or rather, the frightening, even terrifying, quickly gains the upper hand. What is seductive about these interiors and especially these landscapes is the Mediterranean atmosphere emanating from them: radiant skies, perpetual sunshine, magnificent light..." According to the catalogue, he was involved in the preparations and responsible for the catalogue text "Cul-de-sac Phantasy: Subjective Comments on Yero's Paintings." Most catalogues were signed by the artist in advance.

### **Latin America and Surrealism** (May 22 to July 18, 1993):

The exhibition, which he curated together with Sepp Hiekisch-Picard (director of the museum until 2022) and Peter Spielmann, was originally scheduled to open in 1992, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America in 1491. However, it had to be postponed for organizational reasons.

The exhibition brought him into contact with Argentinian artists such as Jorge Kleiman (1934–2013), Roberto Aizenberg (1928–1996), Victor Chab (1930–2024), Catalina Chervin (born 1953), Virginia Tentindó (born 1931), the Cuban Jorge Camacho (1934–2011), the Chileans Suzanna Wald (born 1937) and Ludwig Zeller (1927–2019), as well as the Brazilians Floriano Martins (born 1957) and Zuca

Saldanha (born 1933). The latter worked for his home country in the diplomatic service for an extended period, most recently in Germany, and settled in Hamburg. Furthermore, works by Wifredo Lam (1902–1982), Roberto Matta (1911–2002), César Moro (1903–1956), Mario Murua (born 1952), Wolfgang Paalen, and their friends Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) and Remedios Varo (1908–1963) were also represented. The texts are by Spielmann, Paalen, Octavio Paz, Hiekisch-Picard, Benjamin Péret (1899–1959), Sylvia Valdéz (born 1948), and others, translated by Heribert Becker.

## **Travel**

During his studies up until the late 1990s, Heribert Becker undertook numerous trips abroad, often by car. During his studies, he visited Norway, Sweden, and Italy (Tuscany). From 1980 onward, he traveled to Scotland, the Soviet Union, Kenya, and the USA (New York City). In 1987, he toured Mexico and Oceania (Fiji, New Zealand, Cook Islands).

According to his partner, Becker returned from his trip to Mexico "a different person" ("The surrealist country par excellence," Breton). Scotland, which he visited in 1988, also became a place of longing for him; he "preferred it to the South Seas" (H. Becker), quite unlike his Parisian mentor, Breton.

Furthermore, he maintained a lifelong connection to Paris and frequently visited the French capital until the late 1990s. He was unable to fulfill one last travel wish: a visit to the Scottish Hebrides.

## **Collector**

Heribert Becker brought back numerous paintings, prints, sculptures, and a multitude of books and illustrated volumes from his travels to his Cologne apartment on Euskirchener Straße. Over the years, these formed a small but exquisite art collection and an extensive library. A variety of ethnological art objects from South America, Oceania, and Africa were also part of his private gallery (including Makonde sculptures, Akuaba dolls, and various masks). In addition to works by Mimi Parent, Jean Benoît, Woldemar Winkler, Egon Günther (born 1953), Karina Raeck (born 1938), Rik Lina (born 1942), Frieder Schellhase, and Louis Pons (1927–2021), the collection also included works by many South American and Czech artists (Milan Nápravník, Ladislav Novak [1925–1999], Alois Nožička [born 1934], Jan Švankmajer [born 1934], and Mikuláš Medek [1926–1974]). He met many of these artists during his exhibitions in Bochum.

The collection also included works by many South American and Czech artists (Milan Nápravník, Ladislav Novak [1925–1999], Alois Nožička [born 1934], Jan Švankmajer [born 1934], and Mikuláš Medek [1926–1974]). He met many of these artists during his exhibitions in Bochum. According to the donation agreement, the surrealist section of his book collection, comprising 500 titles, was intended to be housed in the collection of the LVR Max Ernst Museum in Brühl, just outside Cologne, before his move to Ehrenfeld. However, due to capacity constraints, and with the author's consent, it had to be relocated to the library of the LVR State Museum in Bonn.

He had previously sent his collection of nearly 600 autographs from numerous correspondences with Arabal, Benoît, Camacho, Gascoyne, Parent, the Rosemonts, and many other Parisian, Brussels, and South American Surrealists to Infosurr in Orléans, France. Richard Walter (born 1967), the editor, had offered to donate these documents ("four boxes of letters," R. Walter) to the French National Archives.

Most of the artworks were auctioned off in October 2021 at the Jens Scholz auction house in Cologne; a remaining portion is currently in the possession of the family in Potsdam and Berlin.

## Publications & Unpublished Works

From the 1980s onward, Heribert Becker translated numerous texts, primarily by French-speaking authors, into German. Besides the aforementioned Arrabal, he also translated works by Jacques Prévert (1900–1977), Benjamin Péret, André Breton, Joyce Mansour, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Michel Leiris, Aimé Césaire, Roland Topor, and Leonora Carrington from English and Spanish. Becker also worked with Arabic authors such as Khalid al-Maaly, Mahmoud Darwish, and Unsi al-Hajj, as well as the Congolese author Tchicaya U Tam'si.

He was a member of the VdÜ (Association of German-Language Translators).

### Fernando Arrabal

The encounter with the Franco-Iberian author Fernando Arrabal at the Bochum Schauspielhaus in 1977 marked a turning point in the development of the then 34-year-old translator. The sovereign, indomitable spirit of resistance of the highly gifted playwright of the Theatre of the Absurd and co-founder of the Parisian group Panique in 1962 decisively influenced Heribert Becker. Arrabal was at one time a member of the Parisian Surrealist group and later of the 'Pataphysicians,' which, as he later recounted, encouraged Becker to engage more intensively with Surrealism.

Arrabal himself directed the production of the 16-scene play *The Tower of Babel* (original title: *La tour de Babel*) and cast the Austrian-Swiss actress Maria Schell, already an international star at the time and a longtime acquaintance of Arrabal's, in the lead role of *Duchess Latida*. The world premiere took place on October 12, 1977.

As a research assistant, Becker naturally had only a minor role in the production itself. Nevertheless, this year profoundly influenced him and inspired him to engage with Arrabal's work and translate it in the following years.

In 1981, he began work on *Kloaken der Macht* (Sewers of Power), Arrabal's texts on fascist Francoist Spain (Karin Kramer Verlag, Berlin). The following year, he translated the film book *Viva la muerte—Es lebe der Tod* (Long Live Death), which he published in 1982 with the Heidelberg-based publisher Das Wunderhorn. With *Im Schatten der roten Inquisition* (In the Shadow of the Red Inquisition), an open letter to Fidel Castro, translated and published in 1984 under the pseudonym G.A. Bécquer (after the Spanish Romantic writer Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer), again with Karin Kramer Verlag, he concluded his Arrabal trilogy, but not his engagement with Arrabal's work. The "nickname" had been given to him by Arrabal "to avoid possible trouble because of the content of the book—a sharp indictment of Fidel Castro & Co." (H. Becker).

### André Breton

If you wanted to incur Heribert Becker's wrath, you simply had to refer to André Breton as the "Pope of Surrealism," unforgivable in the eyes of the Rhinelander. Without being a dogmatist, this was where Becker drew the line, even though he didn't agree with all of Breton's preferences: Breton's turn to occultism and mysticism, especially in his later years, always remained alien to Becker; he was not a spiritual person.

As a self-proclaimed Surrealist, he naturally also published texts by the movement's leading thinker (Breton's early collaborators Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, and Paul Éluard had, after all, fallen away early on and embraced Stalinist or anti-communist extremism, thus holding no interest for Becker).

Thus, in 1982, his annotated translation of Breton's *Ode to Charles Fourier* was published by Karin Kramer Verlag. Surrealism and utopian socialism from 1945, with which Breton sought to "rescue the early socialist, who was also an early advocate of free love, from the stream of oblivion" (Breton). The cover was designed by Becker's brother, Wilfried Becker, using two photographs by Milan Nápravník. A Japanese edition, including the German-French texts, was published in 1993.

*Arknum 17* (Arcane 17, enté d'ajours) was first published in 1947 in Paris by Sagittaire. Heribert Becker translated the "poetic manifesto" into German in 1993 for Matthes & Seitz in Munich.

In 2003, he joined the protests against the dissolution of Breton's collection. Breton's private museum, located in his former apartment on the fourth floor of the rear building at 42 Rue Fontaine (9th arrondissement), was slated for auction. He lived in this house, with interruptions, from 1922 until his death in 1966. The objects—5,500 items with an estimated value of 30 million euros—were largely auctioned off starting April 1st (Calmels Cohen) and acquired by museums and private collections worldwide. The remaining documents and artworks were transferred to the *Association Atelier André Breton* (Breton Archive), headed by his daughter Aube Elléouët (born 1935). Previously, his correspondence had already been bequeathed to the Fondation Doucet, now the Musée Angladon in Avignon, as part of his will. For Becker, among others, this event signified "the final burial of André Breton." The government of Jacques Chirac had refused to protect the legacy of its unloved son and to preserve the collection, for example, by establishing a foundation.

In 2008, Heribert Becker published a German translation of Breton's later texts from the years 1952–1965 entitled *Bindestrich*, followed in 2013 by *Pont Neuf*, a compilation of writings from the years 1945–1954, both of which were published by Rimbaud in Aachen.

### **Leonora Carrington**

In 1982, Heribert Becker translated the first of four works by the British-Mexican artist Leonora Carrington from English into German for the Frankfurt-based Qumran Verlag: *Die ovale Dame, Erzählungen* (The Oval Lady, Stories). She had also written some of her texts in "a bizarre French" (H. Becker) and Spanish (during her time in Mexico), and had developed an early passion for Irish fairy tales and Celtic mythology. He remained particularly enthusiastic about her narrative work throughout his life "and was convinced of its quality" (Becker).

This was followed by *Ein Flanellnachthemd. Theaterstücke* (A Flannel Nightgown. Plays) (Qumran, 1985), *Das Haus der Angst. Erzählungen* (The House of Fear. Stories) (Suhrkamp, 2008), and most recently, *Die Windsbraut. Bizarre Geschichten* (The Tempest. Bizarre Stories) (Nautilus, 2010, with Elaine Charwat, also available as an e-book) and, in April 1997, a radio feature on SWF about the multifaceted artist (*The Funeral of the Patriarchs: The Mysterious World of Leonora Carrington* on her 80th Birthday). Becker was particularly interested in a new edition of the 1985 plays: the title has long been out of print, even among antiquarian booksellers, and interest in the artist remains high. But this never came to pass.

For an opera about Carrington (*The Baa-Lambs Holiday*, 1940 [Bählamms Fest], a music theater piece in 13 scenes), Elfriede Jelinek wrote the libretto for the Vienna Festival in 1999, based on a translation by Becker. The artist wrote the piece in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, while her then-partner, Max Ernst, was imprisoned in France.

For a long time, he also tried to obtain the rights for a complete edition of Carrington's literary works, but failed, particularly due to what Becker considered to be the "exorbitant copyright demands of her New York agent" (H. Becker).

He also published several of Carrington's texts in the Berlin art magazine *Herzattacke* between 1996 and 1998.

Becker recounted several near-encounters with the artist: Before his visit to New York in 1986, he had received her address from Édouard Jaguer, a member of the Paris Surrealist group. Upon arriving in the metropolis, he rang her doorbell but did not find her there: She was out of town at that time. She had fled to the USA shortly before, escaping an earthquake in Mexico City. A later attempt to contact her by mail, to Becker's regret, went unanswered.

### **Benjamin Péret**

The French poet and novelist Benjamin Péret also enjoyed high esteem among Heribert Becker, who devoted considerable attention to his work. "I would give the entire oeuvre of Paul Éluard for a single poem by Péret!" Philippe Soupault once remarked, and Heribert Becker would certainly have agreed.

In 1985, he translated Péret's prose, poetry, and letters into German under the title *The Shame of Poets* (*Le Déshonneur des poètes*, Mexico 1945). With this text, critical of totalitarianism, Péret had incurred the wrath of the Stalinist establishment in France (including Aragon and Éluard) and temporarily isolated him. This was followed in 1988 by the surrealist stories *When the Green Minna Drove By* and in 1994 by *The Moon of Záparo: Myths and Fairy Tales of America*. All titles were published by Edition Nautilus in Hamburg. Between 1988 and 1999, Péret's poetic work was the subject of several radio features.

In 2010, the bilingual poetry collection *Ich esse nicht von diesem Brot / Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là* (cover: Peter Schneider-Rabel) was published by Karin Kramer Verlag in Berlin. The volume includes a short survey (on the occasion of the German publication) about this work in German, addressed to, among others, José Pierre, Claude Courtot (born 1939), Bernd Straub-Molitor (born 1954), Rik Lina, and Fernando Arrabal. A French version was published in the same year by Becker at Éditions Syllepse in Paris.

### **Jacques Prévert**

Heribert Becker shared with Jacques Prévert not only a fondness for the blue haze of cigarettes (he was a heavy smoker until his fall in April 2023 and the subsequent hospitalizations), but also Prévert's "politically motivated poems against militarism, Catholic doctrine, and bourgeois conventions" (Wikipedia). This resonated deeply with Becker; they were kindred spirits. He was also impressed by the populist nature of Prévert's poetry, particularly evident in his numerous chansons.

However, he had little interest in Prévert's work as a screenwriter. Becker had always felt alienated from the medium of film; for him, images didn't necessarily have to be moving. Exceptions included the early films of Luis Buñuel and the animated films of the Czech director Jan Švankmajer.

[The text abruptly ends here, so the translation stops as well.] In 1981, Qumran in Frankfurt published his translation of Jacques Prévert's 60-page novel, *Befehlsverweigerung* (Refusal to Order). The first 50 copies were published in a numbered edition. That same year, Edition Tiamat in Nuremberg published his translation *Rebellen, Prosa, Szenen, Verse* (Rebels), a collection of prose, scenes, and verses. In 1983, *Der Skandal des Glücks* (The Scandal of Happiness), a collection of poems, was published by Heyne in Munich.

In 1971, the Parisian publisher Maeght released Prévert's *Fêtes*, a prose poem in which he paid tribute to the work of Alexander Calder (1898–1976), the inventor of the mobile. Becker translated this text into German in 1982 under the title *Feste* (Galerie Maeght, Zurich). His last translation of Prévert's work, the poetry collection *Das sanfte gefährliche Antlitz der Liebe* (The Gentle Dangerous Face of Love), was published in 1991 by the Berlin-based Karin Kramer Verlag.

### **The Surrealist Poem**

In 1985, Becker, together with the Czech publicist Petr Král (1941–2020) and the French art theorist and founder of the Phases artists' association (Paris, Brussels, 1952–2008), Édouard Jaguer (1924–2006), published the highly acclaimed anthology *The Surrealist Poem* (Das surrealistische Gedicht) with Zweitausend-eins Verlag in Frankfurt. The idea for this project originated during the planning phase of the Bochum exhibition *Imagination* in 1978. Accordingly, the volume was planned as the second catalogue volume and was intended to emphasize the close connection between word and image poetry in Surrealism.

The final volume, comprising over 1,800 pages and measuring only 12 x 9 x 6 centimeters (Becker: "a small brick"), became his most commercially successful publication. Bound in glossy red linen, with red edges, endpapers, and two ribbon bookmarks, the book saw a second edition in 2000, expanded to include 40 additional authors. A revised edition followed the next year, and a fourth in 2005. Besides poems by Breton, Carrington, Péret, Prévert, and the Rosemonts, the anthology contains over 200 poems by authors from Europe, the Americas, and Japan. Each contributor is introduced with a short biography, supplemented by individual bibliographies at the end of the book.

A corresponding literary companion volume, *The Surrealist Narrative* (Die surrealistische Erzählung), remained unfinished (translated by Lydia Becker, Fritz Rudolf Fries, Gerda Schattenberg, and others). He had already compiled the relevant material in 225 pages and submitted it to a publisher, without success. The volume was intended to be published in the same format, entirely in green, as a complementary work. He would have dedicated this title to the late Mimi Parent.

### **The Hot Predator Love**

Another highlight in his oeuvre, not only visually and tactilely, is the anthology *The Hot Predator Love* (Das heiße Raubtier Liebe). Bound in carmine velvet, this 128-page book, published in 1998 by Prestel in Munich and New York, bears the subtitle *Eroticism and Surrealism* (Erotik und Surrealismus) and captivates with its wonderful illustrations (Man Ray, Hans Bellmer, Salvador Dalí, Paul Delvaux, Wifredo Lam, Jean Benoît, Clovis Trouille, and others) and its exquisite selection of texts, including works by Prévert, Cabanel, Pierre, Éluard, Breton, and Desnos. The successful layout also deserves mention.

Despite all this, the book proved to be rather unsuccessful from the publisher's perspective. For Heribert Becker, however, it was an important project, especially since the book's theme ran like a red thread

through his bibliographical work (Divided Nights; The Omnipotence of Desire; The Englishman; Passion is Reason, etc.).

### **Shared Nights**

Again bound in red, but considerably more modest in appearance, *Shared Nights—Erotica of Surrealism* (Geteilte Nächte—Erotiken des Surrealismus) was published in 1990 by Nautilus in Hamburg. This slim paperback volume, comprising fewer than 100 pages, contains numerous black-and-white illustrations (by Ernst, Freddie, Toyen, Trouille, Bellmer, Graverol, and others) as well as erotic texts by, among others, the early Surrealists (Breton, Aragon, Soupault, Éluard, Péret, Desnos, and many more). This anthology went through four editions by 2007 and became a success for both Heribert Becker and Nautilus: "The erotica of Surrealism brings to light what had almost been forgotten: the entirety of Surrealism was a singular art of eroticism," wrote the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

### **Milan Nápravník**

The preparation of the "Imagination" exhibition at the Bochum Art Museum in 1978 brought Heribert Becker into closer contact with the painter, photographer, and poet Milan Nápravník, who had fled Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Nápravník had studied and earned a doctorate in film and television studies (FAMU = *Filmová a televizní fakulta Akademie múzických umění*) in Prague, but never used his doctoral title. Until 1966, Nápravník was a member of the banned Prague Surrealist group (*Skupiny surrealistů v ČSR*) and had a significant influence on Becker's subsequent Surrealist socialization, as Becker would repeatedly emphasize later. They had first met shortly after Becker's escape. After a stopover in Paris, he lived in Cologne's Südstadt district from 1970 onward, and later in the Niehl district in a former elementary school. This apartment had been made available to him by the then-head of cultural affairs, Kurt Hackenberg (1914–1981), with whom Nápravník was also friends. He lived there with his wife, Doddy The-Nápravník, of Indonesian descent, who settled in Deventer, Netherlands, after his death.

Becker and Nápravník, who from 1970 onwards worked intermittently for Deutsche Welle and later Deutschlandfunk (German Broadcasts, both based in the south of Cologne), were "kindred spirits" (H. Becker) from the very beginning and undertook many trips together (Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe, among others), visiting artists for the planned exhibition in Bochum.

At a New Year's Eve party at the Czech man's home in 1977, Becker met his life partner. For the Rhinelander, Nápravník was "what one would call a secretive person." Like a conspirator, he always kept many things to himself" (Becker). He had a strong affinity for the occult, which repeatedly led to tensions between them, and was a member of a Freemason lodge, something Becker only learned long after Nápravník's death.

In 1980, he translated a selection of Nápravník's poems into German for the first time, titled *Der Wille zur Nacht* (The Will to Night, LCB Editions, Berlin). In return, the Czech translator assisted Heribert Becker with the translation of Czech Surrealists for the poetry anthology *Aus den Kasematten des Schlafs* (From the Casemates of Sleep, Heyne, Munich) in the same year. This was followed in 2006 by the publication of Nápravník's *Surrealistische Protokolle: Am Ufer* (Surrealist Protocols: On the Shore) by Karin Kramer Verlag in Berlin. They had already translated the title into Becker's native language before the turn of the millennium.

Milan Nápravník was the first recipient of the *Woldemar Winkler Prize*, awarded by the Gütersloh-based foundation of the same name, in 1997. His poems are also featured in the anthologies *Das surrealistische*

*Gedicht* and *Das heiÙe Raubtier Liebe* (Assimilation). At the end of 2001, Becker had a falling out with the artist, who was active in a Cologne SPD (= Social Democratic Party) local group, and they did not reconcile. Milan Nápravník died in Cologne in October 2017.

### **Khalid Al-Maaly**

In the mid-1990s, Becker began a highly productive, yet also quite challenging, collaboration with the writer and publisher Khalid Al-Maaly (Arabic: *خال المعالي*). Al-Maaly was born 1956 in as-Samawa, Iraq. After fleeing his homeland from Saddam Hussein's henchmen, he came to Germany as a political refugee in 1980 and has been a German citizen since 1993. He lived in Cologne until 2008, before moving to Beirut, Lebanon, where he founded the publishing house Manschurat al-Djamal.

In the following years, they jointly translated poetry and prose from the Middle East into German, which presented a problem: Becker didn't speak a word of Arabic. While Khalid Al-Maaly had by then become quite fluent in German, he was not a native speaker. The solution: Since the German-Iraqi man speaks French very well, he translated the more difficult passages into that language, and Becker translated them from French into German—a lengthy production process. In some cases, they also enlisted help from Becker's circle of French friends. For several years, Heribert Becker regularly commuted between the Cologne districts of Sülz and Deutz, located on the eastern bank of the Rhine (the "Schäl Sick"), where Al-Maaly lived with his family near the river.

A dozen translations of poems by Khalid Al-Maaly himself (1997, 2012, 2015), the Iraqi Fadhil al-Azzawide, and the Lebanese poet Unsi al-Hajj (1998) were produced, along with the anthology *Arabic Poetry since 1945* (2000), poems by Abdulwahab al-Bayyati (Iraq, 2003, 2018), *New Palestinian Poetry* (2003), *Poetry by Saadi Yussef* (Iraq, 2004), *Recent Poetry from Iraq* (2007), *Poetry by Arab Women Poets from the 5th Century to the Present* (2008, 2017 [new German-Arabic edition]), and *Love and Eroticism in Arabic Poetry from 500 to the Present* (2008). These were predominantly published by Das Arabische Buch, later Verlag Hans Schiler. Titles were also published by Manesse in Zurich and by Kirsten Gutke Verlag, Cologne – Frankfurt/Main.

Even if the connection to Surrealism in these book projects is rather vague, Heribert Becker was fascinated by the colorful, opulent, and sensual metaphors of Arabic poetry, which differ significantly from European poetry. This presented a new challenge for the Surrealism expert, and he continued to seek challenges until the very end.

### **Egon Günther**

Since 1989, Becker had maintained a long and close friendship with the Bavarian painter, poet, and translator Egon Günther (born 1953, *Bayerische Enziane* [2005], *Watschenbaum* [2012], *Birkenrindenschriften* [2025], among others), a friendship that Becker cherished until the very end. They had first met as authors of a special Surrealism issue of the magazine TRAFIK (Mülheim/Ruhr). Becker frequently visited him in Riederau near Dießen am Ammersee, edited several of his books, and was something of a mentor to him. The translator also owned several of Günther's paintings.

From 2015 to 2020, three issues of the magazine *Feuerstuhl* (Medienstreu, Ostheim/Rhön), edited by Günther, were published. For issue No. 2, he was actively supported by Heribert Becker, who was allowed to "fill this issue with content according to his own taste," namely "a diverse selection of surrealist texts and artworks, with a focus on the poetic commonality of Surrealism with the May 1968 revolt, which had taken place exactly fifty years prior to the magazine's publication" (E. Günther). Issue No. 1 already included, alongside surrealist billets by Achille Chavée, Paul Nougé, Fernand Dumont, Irène Hamoir, Christian Dotremont, Joyce Mansour, and others, the texts *How the Mole Was Invented* and *Cabbage Is a Rose*, translated by Becker together with Elaine Charwat. The covers were designed alternately by the artists Peter Schneider-Rabel and Bernd Straub Molitor.

The cover designs were created alternately by Peter Schneider-Rabel and Bernd Straub Molitor. Without Heribert Becker's "inspiration, occasional advice and above all his translations I would probably not have become a 'poet'" (Egon Günther).

### **Rik Lina**

Heribert Becker and Milan Nápravník first visited the well-traveled Dutch painter Rik Lina (born 1942) in 1975 at his studio on Prinseneiland in Amsterdam. At that time, Lina was an active member of the *Bureau de recherches surréalistes en Hollande*, which existed in the Dutch capital until 1978. He contributed to their magazine *Brumes Blondes* (Blonde Mists) together with the artists Laurens Vancrevel (born 1941) and Her de Vries (1930–2021).

Becker and Nápravník invited him to participate in the planned Surrealism exhibition in Bochum, where he then contributed two works (*Pyramide flottante*, 1973; *Mobile immobile*, 1974). They met again in 1993 at the Latin America exhibition, once more in Bochum. In the following years, they remained in contact and actively exchanged information about their respective activities. In 1991, Rik Lina, along with other artists, founded the Dutch-Portuguese art project *Collective Automatic Painting Amsterdam* (CAPA), which merged into the *Cabo Mondego Section* (together with Jan Giliam [born 1965]) in 2022. In both projects, he demonstrated his "true love of all kinds of collaborations, especially collective painting" (Lina), resulting in large-scale collaborative projects involving several painters. Most recently, he collaborated with Becker on the magazine *Feuerstuhl*, edited by Egon Günther. Becker and Lina remained in contact until the end.

### **Woldemar Winkler**

In 1971, Becker discovered the visual art of Woldemar Winkler, born in Dresden in 1902. He was introduced to Winkler's work by the artist Karina Raeck (born 1938), who, like Winkler, would participate in the 1978 *Imagination* exhibition. He was quickly captivated by the diversity of Winkler's oeuvre and its sometimes archaic poetics. From that time until Winkler's death, he maintained a close friendship with the artistic outsider, recognizing him as a widely underestimated artist in Germany.

In 1987, Becker wrote several texts for the catalog of Winkler's exhibition at the *Städtische Galerie Albstadt* in Baden-Württemberg. Four years later, together with the Berlin painter and graphic artist Frieder Schellhase, he published the comprehensive monograph on the Winkler exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bochum, which was released by Nautilus. He contributed the text "On the Position of Woldemar Winkler's Work" to this publication. In 1991, Winkler exhibited drawings, collages, and paintings at the Galerie Alphonse Chave in Vence, Alpes-Maritimes, France. Becker contributed to the catalogue, among other works, the text *Woldemar Winkler, à mi-chemin entre romantiques allemands et surréalistes* (Woldemar Winkler,

Halfway Between German Romantics and Surrealists). In 1998, the artist's book *Die Leidenschaft ist die Vernunft* (Passion Is Reason), featuring Winkler's graphic works and texts by Surrealist female artists, some of which Becker translated into German, was published in a limited edition by Edition Maldoror in Berlin. Winkler died in 2004 at the age of 102 in Gütersloh, Westphalia, where he had lived since 1949. His extensive body of work has been part of the Woldemar Winkler Foundation of the Sparkasse Gütersloh since 1994. Since 1997, she has awarded the Woldemar Winkler Prize, endowed with €5,000, every two years. In 1997, 1999, and 2001, Becker was a member of the jury alongside Woldemar Winkler, and in 2007 together with his son Christoph Winkler (born 1952).

### **Franklin Rosemont**

Before the aforementioned auction of Breton's estate was scheduled for April 2003, the American anarchist, author, and co-founder of the Chicago Surrealist Group, Franklin Rosemont (1943–2009), and several associates wrote a corresponding pamphlet in 2002. In it, he attacked "the usual grave-robbing gang" of dealers and supposed collectors, as well as what he considered a disrespectful article in the New York Times from December 17, 2002, about the auction (*Surrealism For Sale, Straight From The Source; André Breton's Collection Is Readied for Auction*). The title of his publication in German translation is *Surrealism Is Not for Sale!* The phrase *The Gold of the Age in the Age of Gold* was likely borrowed from the Breton quote from the 1920s, "Je cherche l'or du temps – I seek the gold of the age," which can be read on the gravestone of Elisa and André Breton in the Batignolles cemetery. The text was circulated in the Forum of Poetic Cultures run by the artist Peter Schneider-Rabel, a friend of Becker's.

The previous year, the jointly authored polemic *Another Stupid War* was published, in which the pacifist and his associates reacted to and denounced "the imperial ambitions of the Bush alliance" in Iraq. Heribert Becker also served as co-author and translator of this work.

In Becker's *Das surrealistische Gedicht* (The Surrealist Poem), both Franklin and his wife, the artist Penelope Rosemont (born 1942), are represented with several poems, translated by the Berlin lyricist Richard Anders.

He maintained an intensive correspondence with the American until the latter's death. His connection to his widow and the *American Surrealist group*, which later renamed itself *The Surrealist Movement in the United States*, also endured. He introduced Penelope Rosemont to the German photographer Floris M. Neusüss (1937–2020), who exhibited her photograms at the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1990. Furthermore, he supported her work on the book *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, published in 1998 by the University of Texas Press in Austin. Heribert Becker and the Rosemonts "unfortunately never met in person" (P. Rosemont).

### **Karin Kramer Verlag (= Publishing House)**

Since the early 1980s, many of Becker's books (including works by Mariën, Césaire, Topor, Arrabal, and Nápravník) were published by the anarchist Karin Kramer Publishing House, which was located in the West Berlin district of Neukölln for almost 35 years. He remained friends with the publishers, Karin (1939–2014) and Bernd Kramer (1940–2014), until their deaths, even though he was sometimes dissatisfied with the quality of the titles published there: their occasional laissez-faire approach to production and Heribert Becker's perfectionism were diametrically opposed. Their deaths in quick succession—they both suffered from cancer—devastated him. A circle of friends, Bernd and Karin Kramer e.V., initiated in April 2015 by,

among others, the Berlin author and anarchist Jochen "Knobi" Knoblauch, aims to preserve the legacy of the Kramers and maintain their publishing website and the memory of the publishing couple.

### **Edition Nautilus**

In the mid-1980s, Becker began his collaboration with Edition Nautilus, which was based in Hamburg-Bergedorf and, since December 2008, in Altona. It was founded in 1972 as *Spartakus Book Distribution* by the anarchist-leaning publisher and former APO (= extra-parliamentary opposition) member Lutz Schulenburg and the French literary translator and poet Pierre Gallissaires (*The Paris of the Surrealists*, Nautilus 1981). In 1973, the author and translator Hanna Mittelstädt joined the company. In 1974, the publishing house changed its name to its current one (after Jules Verne's submarine from 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea* and the cephalopod nautilus). Several of Becker's translations (by Perét, Carrington, Woldemar Winkler, Max Ernst, and others) were published by Edition Nautilus, for which he often also wrote prefaces or afterwords.

Since 2006, at least according to Becker, the focus of the publishing program shifted noticeably towards literature with broader appeal. He attributed this to the publisher's unexpected success with a crime novel and the deaths of Lutz Schulenburg in 2013 and Pierre Gallissaire in 2020. Despite these setbacks, he could rely on the support of his long-time editor and co-publisher, Katharina Picandet: in 2023, a third, corrected and updated edition of the Carrington title *The Bride of the Wind* was published, which had first appeared in Becker's translation in the "kleine bücherei" series in 2009. To mark the centenary of Surrealism and this new edition, Deutschlandfunk broadcast an interview with Heribert Becker on February 6, 2024. Since Schulenburg's death, the publishing house has been managed collectively.

### **Rimbaud Edition**

Several titles by Heribert Becker were also published by Rimbaud Publishing House in Aachen, founded in 1981 and named after the French poet and adventurer Arthur Rimbaud. He offered the surrealism-loving and never profit-oriented founder and publisher Bernd Albers (born 1951) the translation of two Breton books, which were subsequently published there (*Bindestrich*, 2009; *Pont Neuf*, 2013), as had previously been two titles by Péret (*Das große Spiel*) and Tchicaya U Tam'si (*Buschfeuer*).

After the death of Becker's partner in 2011, the publisher commissioned him, "as a distraction" (B. Albers), to translate the horror novel *Belphégor, the Phantom of the Louvre* (Belphégor, Le fantôme du Louvre) by the French writer Arthur Bernède, which is far removed from surrealism and was subsequently published in German translation in 2013. A short time later, an audiobook version was produced, narrated by Jens Wawrczeck. Becker was unaware of the 13-part French TV series of the same name, starring Juliette Greco, which aired on ARD in 1967.

### **Schiler & Mücke Publishers**

Founded in 2001 by the lawyer and orientalist Hans Schiler (Tübingen) and the ethnologist Tim Mücke (Berlin), the publishing house (originally *Das Arabische Buch* since 1977) specialized, among other things, in feminist literature and poetry from the Arab world. In addition to titles published with Khalid Al-Maaly, Becker's much-discussed 300-page anthology, *Surrealism in Belgium*, also appeared here. "With his book on Belgian Surrealism, Heribert Becker has created a new standard work [...] which offers a magnificent

overview of this topic, not least because Becker descended into the catacombs of archives and collections to unearth all these literary treasures..." Jochen Knoblauch in: *Feuerstuhl* No. 3, p. 131

### **Alexander Publisher**

Around the turn of the millennium, Heribert Becker's frustration with the West German publishing and broadcasting landscape intensified, as it had changed to the detriment of Surrealism in his eyes. He increasingly struggled to find a literary home for his desired projects: the Kramers had passed away, other publishers had largely abandoned Surrealism or had run into financial difficulties. This is where Alexander Verlag, founded by the Berlin-based publisher Alexander Wewerka (born 1959), came into play. The son of the architect, designer, and artist Stefan Wewerka (1928–2013), had been publishing literature in Berlin since 1983, specializing in books on theater and film, and soon developed an interest in Surrealist literature as well. Two of Becker's last books were published by Alexander Verlag (Jean-Claude Carrière: *Buñuel's Awakening*; Aimé Césaire: *On Colonialism*, 2017, 2023 [new editions]). Further publications were planned, but these never came to fruition.

### **Kunstverein Herzattacke (Art Association)**

Shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the *Herzattacke* group emerged from the East Berlin artists' group *Maldoror* (1985), which initially focused on surrealism. The group was founded by the Rostock-based author Maximilian Barck and the artist Michael Würzberger (born 1960). After Barck's death, Herzattacke was established as a registered association and managed by Simone Katrin Paul, Heike Willingham, and his son Malte Barck. To this day, the association publishes its eponymous artist's book periodically. This DIN A4-format book features original prints, some of which are signed, and is published in a numbered edition. Heribert Becker contributed essays to almost all of these volumes, right up until the end. Consequently, he amassed a considerable collection of copies, most of which were sold to a Cologne antiquarian bookseller. The 100th anniversary issue was published in January 2018, followed by a special issue commemorating 100 years of Surrealism in April 2024, marking the thirty-sixth year of publication. The 114th issue is currently (November 2025) in preparation.

### **Infosurr**

In 1997, Heribert Becker was one of the first contributors to *Infosurr—Actualités du surréalisme et de ses alentours* (Current Events on Surrealism and its Context), a bimonthly, 12- to 16-page magazine published by Richard Walter (born 1967) in Orléans, France, since February 1996. "He was a correspondent for exhibitions and German-language publications on Surrealism, especially for everything related to Max Ernst. He paid tribute to the great and lesser-known artists who had crossed paths with Surrealism and, moreover, did not hesitate to denounce the political or artistic excesses of Surrealism" (R. Walter).

He wrote numerous articles in French (including on Catalina Chervin, Jan Švankmajer, Ted Joans, Wolde-mar Winkler, and Jacques Lacomblez) and consistently proved himself to be a connoisseur and critic of the Surrealist movement and its history. He was thus one of the most important chroniclers internationally, and perhaps the most important in Germany.

### **Antlogonis**

From October 1998 to May 1999, Heribert Becker and Milan Nápravník were interested observers of the post-surrealist group project *Antlogonis*, initiated by the artist Bernd Straub-Molitor, in Cologne's Belgian

Quarter. He attended many of the weekly meetings of the participants (Peter Schneider-Rabel [born 1957], Kristóf Szabó [born 1968], Jean-Louise Clement [born 1952], Rachel Hüwel [born 1948], among others) and also traveled to the small group's only exhibition at the Galerie Marielle in Liège, Belgium. Two issues of the journal *Antlogonis infek*t were published, but Heribert Becker did not contribute to them. He provided intensive support from the outset to Peter Schneider-Rabel's online project *Antlogonis infek*t, *Forum poetischer Kulturen* (Antlogonis infek, Forum of Poetic Cultures), which emerged from the journal in October 2001, offering advice and information from the Surrealist milieu. It will celebrate its 25th anniversary in October 2026.

He contributed to the second and third issues of Straub-Molitor's follow-up project, *Surrogat* (1999–2003, 4 issues).

### **Max Ernst Museum**

From 1980 to 2009, the Max Ernst Cabinet on Brühl's Bahnhofstrasse housed the artist's donation of prints, paintings, and objects to his hometown on the southern outskirts of Cologne. He himself had laid the foundation stone. In September 2005, the extensive collection moved to the larger Max Ernst Museum, just a few streets away, whose changing exhibitions in the new building on Comestrasse Heribert Becker regularly visited. He maintained a particularly close relationship with its academic director, Dr. Jürgen Pech, even after Pech's retirement in 2021. Pech was also responsible for preserving Becker's surrealist library.

For the exhibition *Der Arp ist da! Der Max ist da!* (Arp is Here!) Heribert Becker contributed the transcription of the collaborative text *The Man Who Lost His Skeleton* from the 1938/39 issue of the journal *Plastique* to the exhibition "The Max Is Here!", which was shown in 2014 at both the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck and the LVR Max Ernst Museum Brühl. He also contributed to the 2021/22 exhibition *Surreale Tierwesen* (Surreal Beasts), curated by Jürgen Pech and also held at the Brühl Museum, with loans from his collection and translations.

### **Surrealism + Antifascism**

In 2024, after intensive discussions, he provided numerous translations for the extensive catalog of the exhibition *Aber hier leben? Nein Danke. Surrealismus + Antifaschismus* (But Live Here? No Thanks. Surrealism + Antifascism) at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau in Munich (including translations of works by Aimé Césaire, the Contre-Attaque group, and the Manifesto of 121, Paris 1960). The comprehensive exhibition was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Parisian Surrealist group around André Breton. The Lenbachhaus invited Heribert Becker to Munich for the exhibition opening in October 2024. However, Becker was already physically unable to undertake the rigors of the long journey and reluctantly declined, although he felt a certain pride in his contribution to this decidedly political exhibition.

"This exhibition works against the cliché of the out-of-touch, eccentric Surrealist." It showcases the diversity of an art movement and its political unity—across media, from masterpieces to manifestos. And it serves as a warning of what happens when fascists seize power: then it's not just art that is in mortal danger.—Julian Ignatowitsch, Deutschlandfunk Kultur.

### **Constellations**

Another of Becker's favorite projects was also sadly never published during his lifetime: the 23 gouache paintings on paper entitled *Constellations*, created by Joan Miró in 1940/41 in Varengeville, Normandy, France, among other places, were intended to be published in book form, supplemented by André Breton's last prose poems from late autumn 1958. These paintings, considered among the finest works of the Catalan painter, graphic artist, and sculptor, were only published in 1959 as facsimile reproductions of individual sheets in their original format (approximately 38 by 46 centimeters) in a slipcase lined with raw linen. They were first published in a deluxe edition by the New York Gallery Pierre Matisse, from which they received their now familiar name.

Unfortunately, none of the interested publishers were willing to publish under the conditions stipulated by Miró's heirs: The *Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró* in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, declined to publish the largely completed project (129 pages, 41 illustrations, Breton's 23 poems [French/German], glossary and additions by Becker [preface], Breton, et al.) in its original size, fearing the risk of forgery. Heribert Becker, together with the publisher Dieter Kohler from the Frankfurt-based Zweitausendeins publishing house, was permitted to view copy number 114 on July 1, 2001, at the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, Lower Saxony.

In 2019, Bloomsbury Publishers in London published the three-volume *International Encyclopedia of Surrealism*, edited by Steven Harris, Dawn Ades, Krzysztof Fijałkowski, and Georges Sebbag, among others. In September 2014, Becker was asked by the project's initiator, Michael Richardson, to contribute one long essay or three short essays (6,000 characters each) in English. However, as he considered his English skills insufficient, the collaboration unfortunately did not materialize.

## Miscellaneous

Heribert Becker often had to personally secure funding for his book projects, sometimes through grants from institutions like the German Translators' Fund or from sponsors. Finding an interested publisher was also part of his job in these cases. Furthermore, he was frequently tasked with the time-consuming process of obtaining the necessary word and image licenses for each publication. The resulting, ultimately rather modest, income was then reinvested in the next title, leaving little to live on. His unwavering dedication was essential.

In 2014, journalist Janine Paskamp spoke with Heribert Becker about his work at Café Balthazar on Auerbachplatz. This article appeared on December 27, 2014, in the *Kölnische Rundschau* under the title *Nicht mehr mit Schere und Kleber* (No Longer with Scissors and Glue).

His relationship to his native language was rather puritanical; in his writings, the Francophone Germanist steadfastly avoided Anglicisms—you won't find any in his texts.

Despite living with an instrumental musician, his relationship to music remained detached throughout his life, much like Breton's. Heribert Becker practically never sang or performed songs, not even during Edith Huber's lifetime, although the necessary equipment was always available.

He occasionally published in the local press: short articles, often on the letters page of the Cologne newspaper, the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*. These were never polemical, often provocative, and written in collaboration with his partner. He remained a daily, and ultimately loyal, reader of the paper's print edition until the very end.

## Death

In 2016, Heribert Becker, who already had pre-existing health conditions, was diagnosed with cancer but initially managed to overcome it. After a fall in his stairwell in April 2023, he suffered multiple injuries and was forced to move, as he could no longer reach his apartment on the third floor of an old building without an elevator. In May 2024, he moved into the assisted living facility Theo-Burauen-Haus in the Ehrenfeld district, thus being forced to leave his beloved neighborhood where he had spent almost half his life. This was detrimental to him: Heribert Becker had become like an old tree that shouldn't have been transplanted.

In June 2025, his condition deteriorated again. He died in his apartment in the early morning of August 19, a few days after his 83rd birthday. His urn was interred on October 14 in the Becker family grave at the cemetery in Leverkusen-Lützenkirchen.

His last book, a French-German poetry collection by Jacques Prévert (working title: *Quicksand—Poems, Songs and Other Texts*), comprising over 200 pages and already largely available digitally, was to be reduced by the publisher to a mere 120 pages, thus preventing its publication during Becker's lifetime.

Throughout his life, Becker was a committed atheist, a freethinker, a humanist, and an anti-fascist cosmopolitan, uninterested in material possessions; all forms of vanity were alien to him. With his passing, Germany, a kind of surrealist no-man's-land, loses one of its most important experts and most ardent advocates of the movement, who, through his numerous publications, popularized its ideas and their unique significance even within Germany.

Translation: Peter Schneider-Rabel