

THE ETHICS OF SEEING

PHOTOGRAPHY AND
TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN HISTORY



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The Ethics of Seeing

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The Ethics of Seeing: Photography and Twentieth-Century German History
Edited by Jennifer Evans, Paul Betts and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann

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INTRODUCTION

Photography as an Ethics of Seeing

Jennifer Evans



Fig. 0.1: ‘Berlin Nazifrei – Racism not welcome anywhere’. Photographer: PM Cheung, <https://flic.kr/p/nmTGTf>

On 26 April 2014, six thousand citizens took to the streets of Berlin to block a planned neo-Nazi march through the district of Kreuzberg. Armed with his professional-grade digital camera, PM Cheung was there to snap photographs of members of the NPD (National Party of Germany), who had organized the march, according to their signs, to ‘free’ the neighbourhood of ‘multiculturals,

Notes from this chapter begin on page 16.

criminals and slum denizens'. Upon returning home from the demonstration, he uploaded his memory card to the photo-sharing programme Flickr and organized the images via hashtag so they might easily be searched by anti-fascist adherents or journalists following his account. His photos document the spectre of neo-Nazi activity that haunts today's Germany. Read another way, his archive also pictures the augmented presence of the police, who, on this occasion, had used pepper spray and batons against all those assembled, irrespective of their political leanings. In the end, at least according to Cheung's sidebar comments on Flickr where this single image would be viewed as many as three thousand times, order was restored – but only after fifty people had been arrested, four of whom it turns out were actual neo-Nazis.

For historians, this photo poses a host of methodological challenges. Like any source, it needs to be situated in its various analytical and interpretative contexts. One might be sociohistorical and include the history of demonstration culture, social movements, the challenge of the far right and the long history of street skirmishes in German history. Another might pay mind to the technological apparatus itself, how pixilation and reproduction crafts a politics of persuasion. How different is photojournalism when in the hands of amateurs (note the smartphone in the frame) versus those who (like Cheung) claim semi-professional status? A final approach might focus on the authority of the image itself in occasioning an emotional response from the viewer, perhaps outrage at police inactivity (or aggression) or the quelling of dissent. As visual anthropologists tell us, it is not the image's inherent meaning that is as important as how it intervenes in the world, how it helps to shape notions of community, subjectivity, political engagement and empathy by bringing to the surface a range of emotions and reactions that reflect the sentiments, fears, hopes and aspirations of the time.¹

Along its various pathways of production, consumption, circulation and display, a photograph trains the eye to identify what it sees while provoking the mind to judge. Unlike other kinds of texts, however, visual evidence is particularly tricky. Often, as with the photo above, multiple possible interpretations are at play simultaneously. At other times the image might appear straightforward and simple, lulling us into thinking its meaning is transparent or obvious. As this volume will demonstrate, once the camera shutter opens and a subject is captured on film and later emerges in chemicals on paper (or in pixels), what that image stands for and means is as much a technical problem as it is an aesthetic or social one. Given the violence of the twentieth century, it is also a historical one where the interpretative stakes are especially high, raising a host of concerns about how we might see this past, not just photographically but ethically.

This volume aims to explore the role and centrality of documentary photography as a source of historical knowledge over the course of the last century. To what extent did photography capture the experiences of Germany's dramatic

century in photographs? How did photographers chronicle social worlds in radical transformation, serving as both witnesses and reformers across various contexts? Germany is a particularly revealing site to broach these issues, given the dizzying series of regime changes over the course of the last century and the role that photographic images have played in capturing these political and social upheavals. Poverty and injustice, for instance, were favourite themes among photographers from the late nineteenth century onwards, but their meanings changed significantly depending on political regime and social context – ranging from leftist agitprop in the interwar years to inter-German photographic rivalry during the cold war. Likewise, the representations of crime, urban life and domesticity shifted fundamentally over the decades, and the same goes for pictures of soldiers' lives, be it in combat during both world wars or as peacetime soldiers in West and East Germany after 1949. Official photographs could shore up state power while hastily shot images from protesters and photojournalists might cast doubt on the government's moral authority to govern.

One approach might be to think about images for the way they construct and mobilize an ethics of seeing – that is, a way of viewing and engaging the world as both mediated and delimited by the camera. But this is no simple task. Writing at different ends of the last century, Walter Benjamin and Susan Sontag were sceptical of photography's ethical potential. Both agreed that images brought abstract issues into sharper relief, providing people with an awareness of the world around them due to new ways of documenting it, and, critically, through new ways of seeing and perceiving it.² However, the camera's magic in rendering aspects of everyday life discernible for a wider audience was also its greatest undoing. With so many copies possible, visual reproduction threatened to undermine its independent authority.³ Not just losing its aura, it also lost its uniqueness – that special something that for Roland Barthes, writing much later, stirred a response in the viewer, spurring cognition, memory and action.⁴ Benjamin and Sontag thought people became increasingly alienated from photographic meaning making; they were susceptible instead to what passed as authoritative, which in the age of mass politics could have dire consequences. The eyes still see, but they are overcome with impressions, unable to discern the difference between truth and fabrication so as to form judgment.⁵ In effect, this 'blizzard of images', as contemporary Siegfried Kracauer would call it, overwhelms the viewer with endless possibility, incapacitating them – or worse, inuring them – to the whimsy of the reigning culture industry.⁶

Sontag – like many critics of the New Left who rediscovered Benjamin in the 1960s – shared his lament that, as a mass practice, photography masked deep-seated imbalances between photographer and subject, image and viewer and, crucially, between event and engagement. To her, a photograph – 'one of the most mysterious of all the objects that make up and thicken the environment we recognize as modern' – was 'experience captured'. It was more than that too.

An image did not simply mirror reality or the intentions of the photographer, it ‘appropriate(s) the thing photographed’. Presaging some of the concerns of photography theorists like Allan Sekula and John Tagg, who focused on the image’s disciplinary and regulatory effects, Sontag warned that photography had become a social rite, a ritual, and as such ‘a tool of power’.⁷ In the now famous passage at the beginning of *On Photography* – her discussion of Plato’s cave – she argues that photography’s power lies not in what it depicts but in its grammar and changing visual codes, and the impact they have in mobilizing a response in the viewer.

To use photographs constructively in our history writing requires that we recognize that we are already participating in – and perpetuating – an ethics of seeing, a value-laden form of perception and critique that is historically rooted, technologically determined and aesthetically defined.⁸ Images are anything but neutral reflections of the wider world or simple traces of a present past.⁹ They tell us ‘what is worth looking at’ – that is, what is photogenic and worth capturing for posterity in the first place.¹⁰ In other words, they call into being a way of perceiving the world photographically, but our perception is already always selective and fragmentary, subjective and piecemeal, framed (literally as well as metaphorically) by differences of power, taste, convention and status, to say nothing about what the technology makes possible in the first place.¹¹ Despite its limitations and shortcomings as an unadulterated window into the past, photography creates possibilities for seeing and relating to history ethically, provided we devise ways of using it mindfully. We have excellent examples in the work of Marianne Hirsch, Barbie Zelizer and Tina Campt, who have encouraged us to think about the differing ways in which a photograph’s meaning is shaped from the moment of its instantiation and viewing in private company to how it gets taken up and changed in subsequent narrative frameworks.¹² The question then becomes, what might such an ethically minded photographic history of twentieth-century Germany look like? And how have historians navigated this terrain thus far?

While there is a highly developed analysis of photography in critical theory, from Benjamin to Brecht, Kracauer to Adorno, we German historians have struggled with how to use photographs in our writing.¹³ This is not solely a German problem; according to W.J.T. Mitchell, this deep-seated scepticism towards visual evidence has marked much of the Western philosophical tradition these last thirty years.¹⁴ Lynn Hunt and Vanessa Schwarz see it as connected to epistemological issues unleashed by the cultural turn, especially regarding how to interpret subjective, multisensory sources and texts that work on the level of emotion.¹⁵ How do we disentangle the strands, particularly when our own subjectivities are bound up with the source’s meaning? Perhaps even more troubling is the transience of photography, how it plays with time and historical distance, capturing a moment in the past only to give it over to new interpretations in subsequent viewings. By their very essence, images disrupt the ‘pastness’ of the

past.¹⁶ When photographs are used as documents of political violence and genocide, sometimes years after the fact, the problem of subjective reframing becomes particularly vexing.¹⁷

The chapters in this volume take up these questions in suggesting ways we might view photography as a document but also as a source of aesthetic opposition, civic virtue, and a structure of feeling. Drawing widely on art photography alongside medical, vernacular, queer, colonial, amateur and institutional images, the authors explore the ways in which photographs help to constitute the world historically and scientifically, as well as emotionally, while also shaping – and sometimes limiting – individual as well as collective perceptions and ways of seeing. Photographs record history, but they also are themselves a record of history making and re-making. Given their inherent fluidity, and the way they take on new meaning when divorced from their original frames, the historian must be doubly mindful of the ethics of seeing the past photographically.

While it would be foolish to suggest that images have failed to play an indelible part in how German history has been visualized and interpreted, it is important to historicize photography's changing power in making this happen. Although images played an indelible role in how the past has been viewed and interpreted by historians, photographs themselves did not always enjoy absolute authority over what counted as knowledge. As Andrew Zimmerman tells it, nineteenth-century anthropologists, confronted with the possibility of using this new technology to help to record the composition of human remains, were sceptical about whether it could capture an object's composition better than sketches. Despite the great documentary potential of photography, they failed to believe that images held the capacity to render scientific observation truthfully, so as to extrapolate meaning. They preferred geometric measurements to ensure the correctness of proportion and detail, something they felt sketches did with far greater accuracy since a photograph made the object visible through the prism of the viewer's perspective, while geometric projection appeared more surgical, connecting points on the object to opposite points on the page. Putting their professional trust in Lucaeian geometric rendering over the ocular power of the camera, anthropologists sought a form of scientific knowledge that was perspectiveless – that is, untainted by the subjective position of the viewer. This stance had reverberations beyond the discipline of anthropology, and is particularly striking when contrasted with the work of scholars like Wilhelm von Humboldt, who underscored that 'the more deeply the historian comprehends, through genius and study, humanity and its deeds, or the more humane he is made by his circumstances, and the more purely he lets his own humanity reign, the more completely he fulfills the task of his profession'.¹⁸ In failing to accept photography for the way it disrupted their belief in the realism that only sketches might afford, anthropologists refined their own social and professional roles and practice by denying their own subjectivity. Not only does this anti-humanist strain in early anthropology aid us in historicizing

the place of photography in the visualization of scientific norms, it underscores the limited ability of some nineteenth-century social scientists to relate critically, perhaps even ethically, towards their own research subjects.¹⁹ It also serves as a cautionary tale for us in how we periodize the impact of photography in the humanist project.

If images were of little use to how early anthropologists made sense of the remains of indigenous peoples, a shift in visual perception by the late nineteenth century created a space for documentary realism in encounters with the Other. As Amos Morris-Reich has shown, turn-of-the-century race scientists made explicit use of photography to aid them in crafting scientific definitions of racial difference.²⁰ Indeed, they made wide use of the technology, focusing on image composition, subject placement and arrangement of photos in relation to written exposition. Taken together, whether as composites or single individual frames, images were drawn upon to help to refine and delimit the look and definition of race. Echoing the language of celebrated art historian John Berger, these image-rendering practices created new ways of seeing race: literally, in terms of the technology's ability to capture difference, and figuratively as well, for what it meant for Wilhelmine society struggling to negotiate its imperial and global aspirations. Claudia Siebrecht takes up this issue in her contribution to this volume, exploring the contents and reverberations of colonial images from the 1904–8 war with the Herero and Nama peoples in German South West Africa for the way they provided Germans new modes of seeing and hence understanding claims to rule in the imperial setting. For Siebrecht, the colonial camera must be read on multiple levels, for the relationships it helps to capture and categorize, for the explicit logic and intentions of German documentarians, and for the photograph's 'double exposure' – that is, the social and material conditions that lie beyond the frame and make these renderings possible in the first place.²¹ If we limit our analysis to 'the presentational' as Julia Adenay Thomas puts it later in this volume, and neglect to analyse the blindness of the colonial camera to questions of authority and power, we lose an opportunity to bear witness to a more fulsome history of colonization from below, one marked by subalternity, agency, and diverse forms of resistance.²² Not only is our own vision of the past piecemeal; we overlook photography's ethical potential in staking out distinct political positions vis-à-vis the past.²³

While the vast array of images made possible in the second half of the nineteenth century unleashed what French filmmaker Jean-Louis Comolli called a 'frenzy of the visible', technological innovation also brought with it the urge and ability to realize evermore minute categorizations of difference. And yet, consequently, historical work tends to adopt the perspective of the observer (and not the observed), emphasizing how images were used and deployed to buttress state, police, legal, medical and scientific interests, and not how they were experienced. While this has led to important work on the role of photography in the

regulation of identity, much remains to be done in thinking about the points of view of the subjects in front of the lens, whether colonized peoples, social, sexual and political minorities, or ordinary men and women.²⁴ Jonathan Crary has pointed out that photographic renderings had a profound impact beyond the explicit or implicit intentions of the photographer. Images changed how people understood themselves, and conditioned how they related to their world, their bodies and selves.²⁵ In the twentieth century, amateur documentarians as well as professional photojournalists were drawn to images for precisely these reasons, because it allowed them to shed light on the human condition, to explore the impact of war, race, social dislocation and poverty, and the emotions these photographs stirred. Although humanist photography, as a genre, would emerge out of the shadows of the Second World War as a largely post-1945 phenomenon, its antecedents extend as far back as the 1920s, as Europeans – Germans among them – sought ways to draw attention to moments of great social upheaval.

This change in emphasis in using images to elicit an emotional response in the viewer and to capture the subjectivities of the viewed did not solely animate the practice of photojournalists. It was also taken up by institutions of the state, law and medicine to harness the technology's potential to garner popular support for social policies and of course for war. Nowhere is this more evident than pictorial policies during the First World War, which were designed as early as 1914 to reinforce the heroism and sacrifice of front soldiers.²⁶ War photography's emotional currency was bound up with efforts to stage-manage particular ways of seeing the good fight and those caught up in it. It linked the battlefield to the home front, and involved all citizens in the common struggle. While adopting the format of documentary realism, images of war were anything but value neutral, especially in the waning years of the campaign with the increasing number of war wounded. Although photographs give the appearance of mirroring what they depict, as heavily coded texts their meaning also hinges on how they are captured, ordered and displayed. War photography is particularly adept at exposing the logics at work in wartime pictorial policies. Whether laid out for public consumption in magazine spreads or education campaigns designed to manage expectations once the men return home, images from the final years of the war centred around the state's commitment to rehabilitation and what normalcy might look like once the guns had stilled.²⁷ As might be expected, their unambiguously didactic function – to encourage a particular way of seeing (and sensing) the war and its aftermath – far outweighed claims at realism and neutrality.

As Annelie Ramsbork argues in her contribution to the volume, the meaning these images communicate relies not just on their composition but on when and how they are displayed and the context in which they are consumed. Photographs of the facially wounded are a perfect case in point. Originally published in medical journals to showcase advances in surgical treatments, they first surfaced for a wider post-war public as emblems of the atrocious results of modern warfare and

mechanized killing, rather than as demonstrations of medical acumen. When cast purely as medical sources, these images were fraught. During the war, they were unable to live up to expectations of bodily rehabilitation, and hence occupied an ambiguous position, sequestered from public view. When extracted from their original context and exhibited as part of a mid-1920s anti-war campaign, however, they served an entirely different function. Recast as spectacle with the express purpose of soliciting a generalized sense of moral outrage, these photographs were easily adapted to various anti-military protest movements throughout the ensuing decades. Decontextualized from their original medical frame and aided by highly sensational explanatory paratexts, these images transcended time, finding new ways of resonating emotionally with different audiences. In other words, not only do photographs of the facially wounded convey different visual and emotional economies depending on how and where they are staged, they provide different conditions of visibility and empathy as well. As a vehicle for seeing the past ethically, they indicate the importance of analysing images on a variety of levels, compositionally as well as delimited by the spaces of consumption and display.

As in the late nineteenth century, the interwar years were marked by an explosion in visual formats and genres, and in the spaces and places of consumption and display from art photography to the image-heavy boulevard press. A degree of voyeurism marked the circulation of images in mass culture. Drawing on the work of John Tagg and Allan Sekula, many historians have emphasized the corrosive role of photography in measuring, surveilling, classifying and controlling those brought into its orbit, hence the emphasis on images produced in hospitals, barracks, penitentiaries, asylums and urban slums. Even portraiture was not value free, as anthropologists, ethnographers, race scientists and, of course, the police, used images of the poor, destitute, infirm, criminal and the Other to reinforce broadly held and increasingly national notions of health and purity, diseased and inferior.²⁸ Both the power and pleasure of the camera resided in the hands of the image producers. Photographic practices, to say nothing of the traffic in the spectacular, made images of ordinariness for ordinariness's sake a rarity, until the advent of New Objectivity and the *Neues Sehen* movements in the 1920s, with their interest in the matter-of-factness of everyday life. It is here that August Sander's portraits of farmers and neighbours in the village of Westerwald, outside Cologne, stand out for their documentary originality and also for their rejection of poetic and painterly style. His monumental 'Man of the Twentieth Century' project, comprising over six hundred images, was a deliberate attempt to situate portrait photography within a humanist lens as an antidote to the atomization of mass culture. As Walter Benjamin himself noted in his 1931 'A Short History of Photography', drawing on a reference from Goethe, inside Sander's photographic objectivity was a certain intimacy, a kind of 'tender empiricism – scientific but humane'.²⁹

However laudable, this practice was not neutral, as photographers across the political spectrum revivified nineteenth-century physiognomy theory in the

service of mapping out the face of the modernizing nation.³⁰ They used photo essays and books as the vehicle for their creative endeavour, reflecting the belief shared by many Weimar cultural critics that for citizens of the future, images would herald new forms of visual perception and cognition.³¹ Like the fractious politics of the besieged republic, approaches to portrait photobooks varied. Progressives and reactionary forces thought physiognomy theory might help them to articulate explicit social messages around identity and national character.³² Published in 1929 and meant to publicize his larger 'Man of the Twentieth Century' project, Sander's *Face of Our Time* reflected the widespread belief among artists and intellectuals that the symptoms of social and political discord and harmony were identifiable in the faces of everyday people. Physiognomic ways of seeing were not the preserve of right-wing anthropology; rather, photobooks and essays underscored that social mapping was a fundamental feature of the modern project. Weimar photographers employed portrait photography to carve out new spaces of social criticism with which to respond to the widespread sense of social malaise and fragmentation. As Sabine Hake puts it, 'physiognomy provided a visual vernacular for firming up the boundaries between the visible and the hidden, between tradition and innovation, between self and other'.³³ The loss of certainty around class, gender and racial differences necessitated a return to the body as the locus of truth and identity.³⁴ The imagistic study of typology did not just record changes in facial features. Sander's photobook served as a primer for how to countenance wider societal shifts in power: 'Whether one is on the Left or Right, one will have to get used to being looked at in terms of one's provenance'. *Face of Our Time* was more than a picture book: '[i]t is a training manual', educating the eye how to see, and the mind how to judge.³⁵ In photobooks, which would serve the Nazis well in their quest to further their vision of the authenticity of racial Otherness, photographers carved out new ways of seeing, reading, and relating to the aesthetic, cultural and political debates of the day. In so doing, they created an ethics of seeing national difference in quasi-metahistorical terms, providing an antidote for the corrosiveness of modernity.³⁶

Maiken Umbach has most recently shown that the tradition of photobooks continued apace during the Third Reich.³⁷ While the genre of portrait photography remained the stylized domain of semi-professional photographers and artists during the Weimar Republic, greater access to image making and development provided new opportunities for private photography. Viewing these images not simply as documents but as performances of self-representation, Umbach has argued that they serve as a barometer of how average Germans felt about National Socialism. And, vice versa, when we witness how commercial photography evolved in response to private photographic practice, we see that the regime anticipated and reacted to changing depictions of leisure, experience and taste as much as it sought to shape it. Everyday photographic practices aid us in visualizing the spaces, places, and circulatory networks where subjective experience and

ideology meet. They provide visualizations of power, agency and resistance well below the level of official media representations, creating important micro or counterpublics, sometimes reinforcing dominant photographic and ideological trends, other times resisting them.³⁸ Like images taken by the colonial camera, everyday photos might have the appearance of being overtly political or completely mundane; they were complex sites of negotiation between civil society and the state, where ways of visualizing the push and pull of everyday life took on added ethical dimensions under dictatorship.

While there has been a great deal of scholarship on Nazi anti-Semitism in film and the popular press, only recently have scholars begun to take heed of the role of photography in practices of racial inclusion and exclusion. Michael Wildt and Alon Confino, for example, have drawn attention to representations of anti-Semitic parades, physical violence against Jews and the public burning of the Torah in many German towns and villages in the 1930s, exposing the brutal workings of a 'Nazi conscience' that mobilized community solidarity by inciting ethnic violence.³⁹ Interest in the relationship between the Holocaust and photography has also inspired new pioneering scholarship, be it concerned with the surreptitious images taken by Jewish photographers in the ghettos, Georges Didi-Huberman's study of four iconic images from Auschwitz, photographs of Wehrmacht and SS participation in genocide, or the photojournalism of war's end when photographers attached to Allied units sought evidence of atrocity.⁴⁰ It is only relatively recently that historians have turned to amateur soldier photography as an entry into the everydayness of life in extremis. The chapters by Elizabeth Harvey and Julia Torrie explore what happens in the places where official Nazi pictorial practices meet amateur leisure photography during the resettlement of ethnic Germans in the East and the occupation of France. On the one hand, they show photography's role as a kind of soft power, a tool for legitimating elements of National Socialist hegemony through the field of vision and image reproduction. On the other, though, the 'Nazi gaze' turns out to be more ambiguous, providing entry into a subjective realm that resists politicization. In both their studies, in different contexts of occupation, the camera is deeply enmeshed in the process of identity formation, in the present moment, when the images are captured, and also in the future, as historians pore over them for examples of past mentalités.⁴¹ Photographs like these are thus sources of memory and of the self; they reflect as well as construct ways of seeing oneself as an occupier. But they can also be slippery. To sit for, stage, and collect these images is to affirm an ethics of viewing oneself and others within the ideological signifiers of what was, for participants, a justifiable war. And yet, as subjective entry points into the private sphere, they must also be read for their ambiguity, for the way they might also reflect leisure as something ubiquitous as much as ideological – in effect troubling facile characterizations of a National Socialist worldview. In other words, they construct a multilayered popular memory of

the war, at once strange and familiar, not always conforming to traditional timelines.

There is an explicit tension in this volume and in the history of photography generally between analyses of photographs as more or less reflective of standard historical periodization and those that draw attention instead to the mobility of images in creating modes of seeing multiple, coexisting pasts, often in a state of flux or overlap. As Harvey and Torrie demonstrate in their chapters, leisure photography carries certain similarities of staging and genre that can transcend time periods. If private photography as a series of conventions bears similarities across different socio-spatial contexts, to what extent do material conditions shape changes in visual perception? After all, historians have shown quite convincingly that changes in technology – in shutter speed and film preparation – played a huge role in delimiting just what emotions might be captured on film.⁴² Did the physical ruination of war's end leave an indelible mark on how the visual field was experienced and represented? As traces of past experiences, images are imbued with the visceral emotions let loose in the aftermath of the Second World War. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann argues in his chapter that photographs of human suffering at war's end gave voice to new articulations of suffering and pity as universal experiences of violence. But what such photographs showed was likewise coloured by different hues that varied according to positionality and the conditions that shaped particular ways of seeing. In the ruins, post-war German photographers initially saw mournfulness and sorrow connected in some instances to long-standing romantic visual tropes that some historians claim afforded an escape from moral responsibility for Nazi crimes.⁴³ While photography was used (mostly by the Americans) in the immediate aftermath of the war to document atrocities, cast judgment and (where possible) capture contrition,⁴⁴ this changed dramatically in the early post-war years when, at least in American and British photojournalism, images of suffering German women and children among the ruins became more commonplace. This ethics of seeing Germans as victims not just of Nazi aggression but of Soviet lawlessness as well, mirrored the larger geopolitical conflict, both in terms of what was depicted and how.

But as much as images of reconstruction-era Germany are documents of changing sentiment and sensibility, so too are they tangible, physical objects with a life course of their own. They meander along pathways of consumption, reproduction and display, each heralding new configurations of viewership and emotion. At the same time that images are expressions of the age in which they are set, so too must they be framed within diverse historiographies, not all of them centred around questions of national importance. Images house diverse influences, folding past iconographic styles into ways of visualizing the social.⁴⁵ Alongside photojournalistic accounts of reconstruction and rebuilding lay another form of ruin gazing in the post-war period; the photography of Herbert Tobias, as Jennifer Evans shows, mixed amateur, ethnographic portraiture with iconographies from

the turn-of-the-century queer canon. At once offering a glimpse into the hidden world of cruising and the sex trade, Tobias's photographs suggest that an ethics of making visible queer desire must take seriously the emotional work of images for the way they call into being select subjective responses in the historically situated viewer. In so far as Tobias's images of rent boys serve as erotic talismans in a time of illegality before being taken up as high art, they show the significance of photography in forging a sense of shared male erotic kinship, part of a queer archive of feeling.⁴⁶ Although photography played a vital role in the underground East German scene, as Josie McLellan has shown recently, Tobias's photos suggest the importance of thinking beyond the nation for ways in which the emotional traffic in images helped to construct and sustain a simultaneously German and transnational sense of queer alterity through visual cues and sub-cultural referents.⁴⁷ To see queerly as well as ethically requires that we look at images as constitutive agents in their own right, as things that condition distinct emotional communities as much as they reflect them.

Where historians seem intent on fixing images in time, drawing on differences in genre or aesthetics to deepen contextual meaning, art historians come at these questions slightly differently. In her submission to the volume, Sarah James is more intrigued by the radical disjuncture presented by the experimental portrait photography of Edmund Kesting, which bears more affinity with avant-garde photographers in the 1920s than to East German documentary realism. Instead of viewing his images statically, as documents of a particular time and place, she asks how such an ambiguous photographic practice might shed light on a variegated ethics of seeing in a socialist way. As with other authoritarian moments in German history, photography acquired importance in East Germany for the way in which it was to help citizens visualize the collective struggle. Following the Bitterfeld Conference of 1964, amateur and professional photography would be harnessed even more explicitly to the ideological imperatives of the state. But even well before Bitterfeld, photographic clubs, artist circles, and societies were monitored by the *Kulturbund* and later the *Zentrale Kommission Fotografie* (ZKF, or the Central Commission for Photography) so as to assure that they conformed to dictates of genre, which resoundingly revolved around documentary realism as a style that might best promote the state's vision of humanism and morality. To see photographically was thus to see socially as well – to perceive and reproduce didactic images of socialist transformation.

As with the racializing function of the early twentieth-century camera in creating distinct typologies, the socialist lens was to focus on social archetypes to communicate the collective struggle. This flew in the face of the turn towards subjective photography in 1950s and 1960s West Germany, with its emphasis on personal experience and emotionality. It also contradicted the East German state's jettisoning of 1920s formalism and the German and Soviet avant-garde. Despite Kesting's visual non-conformity, his cinematic and experiential portraits

were not only being tolerated but celebrated by the 1970s as revivifying a dialectical, progressive strand of Bauhaus-era photography, suggesting that the visual construction of socialist personhood was much more malleable than had previously been thought. Kesting provided East Germans with an opportunity to return to the progressive impulses at work in Weimar-era modernity. When we view the past visually, as an ethics of seeing the world in microcosm through the camera's lens, we see that conventional temporal pivots are not always in keeping with technological or aesthetic ones.

Despite official proclamations, there was no singular East German way of seeing the world. Of course there were the massive archives of Stasi surveillance photographs of citizens under watch, as well as the official photographs celebrating the pageantry of GDR events, industrial work, agricultural harvests and a celebratory 'socialist realism' of various kinds; but other, more amateur genres – such as the brigade scrapbooks and nude photography – were also part and parcel of GDR visual culture.⁴⁸ Nor was the GDR as blocked off from outside influence as once presumed, especially in light of international modernist trends. Recent work has shown that West and East German 'photographic cultures' were not so dissimilar from one another, and that their relation remained tense throughout the cold war.⁴⁹ Even so, there were a number of photographers in the GDR that tested the limits of the photographic subject. This is apparent when we consider the iconoclastic portraiture of Gundula Schulze Eldowy, who captured some of the GDR's most vulnerable people, the sick and the poor. Like Kesting, she drew selectively on past photographic practices – in this case the socially conscious portraiture of Sander – to challenge the idealized, state-centred vision of humanity and personhood. Along the same lines as James, Candice Hamelin argues that East German photography retained an ambiguous place for artists seeking to pierce through the veneer of the worker's paradise. While out of step with official cultural practices in the GDR, Schulze Eldowy's work was very much in keeping with other photographic trends developing worldwide, suggesting the need to think mindfully about how we situate analyses of a photograph's ethical possibilities. When viewed on the level of aesthetics, there were similarities in the 1970s and 1980s that transcended state boundaries – those between East and West Germany – but also transnationally, as photographers turned towards grittier subjects and previously obscure themes. In the United States, Larry Clark and Nan Goldin aimed their lens at drug-addicted teens and club kids, capturing some of the first images of rural gun play and heroin addiction.⁵⁰ The sense of social stagnation percolated across borders. In the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg, it animated amateur photographers hard at work self-publishing in magazines to document challenges to the squatting scene. Just as Clark and Goldin's images humanized the plight of disaffected youth while cementing a sense of place in the minds of their audience (in this case Tulsa, Oklahoma and New York City), so too did neighbourhood photographers document West

Berlin's efforts at gentrification in the eastern-most *Bezirk*, as Anna Ross explores in her contribution, creating in the process new opportunities to identify with the subjects under view. In Kreuzberg, local journalism and exhibitions promoted images of the long history of alternative communal values espoused by people in the neighbourhood. They created a visual language of place, hooking into past narratives of the *Kiez*'s history and linking them to present endeavours to reclaim uninhabited spaces. These images expanded notions of democratic urban renewal, while providing neighbours with a visual vernacular with which to challenge more exclusionary city-state driven tropes of urban renewal.

To look at the world, to see and visualize, it is to stake an ethical response to it. In so far as images capture moments for future use, they offer a claim to history and to memory. Beyond simply acting as a repository of knowledge, what is important about photographs is not just what is pictured, but how it is seen by particular spectators conditioned to look in particular ways.⁵¹ In the autumn of 1989, the groundswell of opposition to the East German regime that eventually became a mass movement was not covered visually in newspaper reportage. Instead, average citizens documented the day-to-day events in Leipzig, at great risk to themselves should the situation not have borne out as it eventually did. In his analysis of the *Demontagebuch* and the way it covered the events in photos, Paul Betts demonstrates the importance of images of civil unrest, both as a chronicle of events and a new claim to civic oppositionality and community. Images of the police out of Leipzig, ordered for posterity in the *Demontagebuch*, were emboldened acts of protest in a country that may have tolerated alternative artistic expression but still followed strict censorship of the public media. Images of demonstrator resolve in the face of what could very well have been violent reprisals provide visual evidence of righteousness of purpose, reinforcing a sense of moral engagement amidst great risk. This is an ethics of seeing the reform movement as a political moment and a practice of self-narration that occurred both in real time and in historical memory. This dual temporal dimension, the two trajectories intertwined, reflects the photograph's ability to capture the unfolding past, and construct it at the same time. How to read these registers together and apart, grounded in their respective literatures, is one of the great challenges of photography as well as its great contribution to how we might see this century in new ways.

As will be clear in the essays in this volume, an image-driven history of twentieth-century Germany questions established periodizations and pivots, suggesting new moments of rupture and continuity. It draws attention to 'how' a photograph depicts historical personages, emotions and events, in addition to 'what' issues or events are deemed worth capturing at select moments in the past. Reading photography as providing a way of seeing the past and staking a claim to what is represented there means paying attention to image composition alongside

authorial intention and circulation. If thinking about the specific grammar of photography forces new estimations of how change happens and is represented, it bears asking, as this volume does, what is in fact new and unique about how photos manifest emotional responses, positionality, and ethical responses compared to other kinds of visual sources, past and present? What is distinctive about how photographs manipulate space and time, how they marshal and generate subjectivities and experiences?⁵² What kind of power is afforded those wielding the camera, and what remains occluded from sight despite the advent of new actors, agents and technologies of visual history making? Is there indeed something particularly German about how the events of the twentieth century are visualized by photographers in Wilhelmine, Weimar, Nazi, East and West Germany, or is it the resonance of these images, the way they construct new ways of negotiating ‘self’ and ‘other’ that is uniquely modern, and perhaps, only parenthetically German?⁵³

It is not without significance that the chapters in this volume are bounded by two interpretative chapters by scholars whose work in visual anthropology and the history of atrocity revolves around the question of how to think through photography as an ethical visual practice. Elizabeth Edwards argues that photographs destabilize disciplinary conventions but in so doing force historians to be more aware of the assumptions that animate our work. She cautions against the impulse to turn to context as the chief explanatory device. Instead, like Sontag and Benjamin, she directs attention inside and outside the frame, to the ways in which images work as systems of meaning making in their own right, as well as being determined by outside forces beyond the purview of the photographer. Images do not just document the past, but create the very conditions for understanding it in the first place. Julia Adeney Thomas takes up this idea and suggests three different registers that might guide our analyses of ethical seeing: the presentational, the contextual and the aesthetic. Despite the problems inherent in the potential fragmentation of photographic meaning, Thomas claims it is historical practice itself – organized along these axes – that holds the potential to stabilize photography’s shifting meaning, around which ethical judgements and positions might coalesce. In this sense, the ethics of seeing can be an invitation to transform what is being seen, or simply to look more cautiously, more carefully. It can serve power or challenge it. It can conserve or undermine community. But when all is said and done, what it always implies is a will to focus and act.

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among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin (2011). She recently edited a special issue of *German History* entitled ‘Queering German History’.

Notes

1. Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
2. This idea is already introduced in Walter Benjamin, ‘Little History of Photography’ (trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter), in M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 507–530.
3. Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Reproduction’, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 1–26.
4. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
5. Susan Buck-Morss, ‘Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered’, *October* 62 (1982), 18.
6. Benjamin’s essay was not without its critics. One of the most ardent was Theodor Adorno, who argued that even with mass reproduction, there remained a possibility for the transcendent power of visual art. See Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, ‘Letters to Walter Benjamin and Reply’, in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977), 110–41. For a recent discussion of the root of Adorno’s criticism, see Yvonne Sherratt, ‘Adorno’s Aesthetic Concept of Aura’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 33(2) (1970), 155–77.
7. Allan Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984); John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
8. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 10.
9. Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
10. Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Die Photographic’. First published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 28 October 1927, and reprinted in *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 21–39.
11. Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989).
12. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eye* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
13. Two special issues of journals have tackled this reluctance among historians. See ‘The History Issue’, *Journal of Visual Culture* 9(3) (December 2010), co-edited by Vanessa Schwartz and Lynn Hunt; and ‘Photography and Historical Interpretation’, *History and Theory* 48 (2009), edited by Jennifer Tucker. A recent special issue in *Central European History* co-edited by Maiken Umbach and Elizabeth Harvey seeks to rectify this. See the articles in *Central European History* 48, Special Issue 3 (September 2015).
14. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

15. Lynn Hunt and Vanessa R. Schwartz, 'Capturing the Moment: Images and Eyewitnessing in History', *Journal of Visual Culture* 9(3) (December 2009): 259–71.
16. Mark Salber Phillips, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); see also the special issue of *History and Theory* 50 (2011), 'Historical Distance: Reflections on a Metaphor', edited by Jaap den Hollander, Herman Paul and Rik Peters; and *Rethinking Historical Distance* edited by Mark Salber Phillips, Barbara Caine and Julia Adeney Thomas (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). See also Hirsch, *Family Frames*.
17. Omer Bartov, Atina Grossmann and Mary Nolan (eds), *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 2002), especially the Bartov and Boll chapters.
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Chapter 1

THOUGHTS ON PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE PRACTICE OF HISTORY

Elizabeth Edwards



Photographic technology belongs to the physiognomy of historical thought ... there can be no thinking of history that is not the same as thinking of photography
—Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light*

The anatomical and structural resonances of Eduardo Cadava's comment on Walter Benjamin's interest in the philosophy of history and the philosophy of photography provides a useful starting point for the focus of this chapter – that is, the historiographical disturbance that photographs cause. What troubles me, and has done for some time, is how photographs seem to be sort of 'bolt-ons' within a wider landscape of historical method and historical thinking, when really photography and history, as that assessment of Benjamin suggests, belong to the same – or at least related – project. Little attention is given to what photographs actually do to historical method, and more particularly to the commonplaces of history's disciplinary apparatus. This is remarkable given the saturating degree to which access to the past itself is increasingly texted by its visual other, and has been for at least a hundred years.¹ I want to open up the relationship between photography and how we do history. This has profound implications for the ethics of seeing, especially the historiographical density offered by twentieth-century German history, and I hope that it will resonate with the other contributions to this volume. I want to take a step back and consider what happens when we look not at how we might or might not use photographs as historical sources, but what happens when we allow photographs to intersect with the commonplaces of historical apparatus – by which I mean the categories and assumptions that translate into practices. These practices

Notes from this chapter begin on page 32.

have, of course, been extensively critiqued over the years – from the Annales school, through constructivism, post-modernism, post-post-modernism and so forth, not to mention the influences in and out of anthropology. My intention is simply to position aspects of these arguments in relation to photographs, because these historiographical commonplaces continue to resonate through the ways in which the past is accessed, photographs being no exception. I shall argue that these commonplaces are the sites of central methodological and historiographical anxieties around photographs; ‘how’, as Alan Trachtenburg puts it, ‘to make random, fragmentary, and accidental details of everyday existence meaningful without loss of the details themselves, without sacrifice of concrete particulars on the altar of abstraction’.² Thus one must ask: what is the effect of photographs, and how do they destabilize the deep-held categories and assumptions of historical practice? This is clearly a huge question that sprawls over philosophy, theory of history, historiography and visual theory, so what follows is inevitably only a sketch that raises questions rather than gives answers. Yet I hope there is just enough to rattle a few cages a little bit.

Photographs are, as historical sources, strange and different. Indeed photographs are, perhaps, the discipline of history’s Other, as indicated by the way in which, in books on historiography and historical methods, they are sequestered on the margins as ‘alternative’ sources.³ As such, photographs as historical sources are subject to the familiar cultural processes of othering: typifying, fetishising, normalizing and pathologizing. They are dynamic, difficult, slippery, ambiguous, incongruous and contradictory. It is easier to say what they are not, than what they are. Mitchell has described the engagement with photographs as a ‘double consciousness’, as photographs vacillate ‘between magical beliefs and sceptical doubts, naive animism and hard-headed materialism, mystical and critical attitudes’.⁴ Julia Adeney Thomas has expanded this repertoire, describing photographs as flirtatious. They lead on seductively. They reveal in ways texts never could. But they also face us with the dualities of the relationship with history – visceral yet discursive, instinctive yet interpretative, sensuous yet cognitive, voluptuous yet analytical.⁵

So how is the historian to think with and through photographs? What is it to write history in a world in which photographs exist? What do they do to our categories of understanding? Indeed the methodological fear of the photograph, as it resonates through ‘how-to’ advice for historians, perhaps indicates at a deep-seated unease lurking within the practice of history itself.⁶ Up against such a historiographical security alert, it is perhaps small wonder that many take an uncritical, illustrative, even careless approach to photographs, at the very margins of analysis, rather than engage with them in an intellectually creative way that places them at the centre. In attempting to grapple with this, historians have tended to look to photography itself, and the theorizing of photography, to help with historical explanations. This is, of course, useful and necessary, and

photographic theory has much to recommend it in formulating certain questions and critical positions about photography and photographs.

However I would argue that when grappling with photographs as historical sources, photographic theory can only take us so far. This is because the problems that confront the historian when addressing photographs are not contained within medium specificity alone but grounded in the relationship between medium specificity and the apparatus and practices of history itself. I argue instead that it is necessary to think through the work of photographs at the intersection of photography and the historiographical and philosophical categories that cluster around a sense of the past, its sources and its articulation. How can we cope with the Janus face of history itself, and the frightening force of photography's reality effect, that these intersections with history's Other reveal?

Photographs and History's Tools

Photographs have, of course, that Rankeian reach into the past, to tell it as it really or essentially was.⁷ They intersect temporal and spatial spheres. They have a 'proximity effect' – the there–then / here–now – the appearance of a direct experience of the past, not a merely glimpsed experience beneath the textual document.⁸ This is their historical seduction. There is a very substantial body of critical theory, from Baudrillard to Tagg, that has argued why this cannot or should not be so.⁹ Yet the promise of seduction remains – what kind of history, what kind of photography can allow us access to that physiognomy of the past in a comprehensible way? So in order to resist seduction and apply a more ordered response – and this is the core of my argument – it is necessary to explore more closely the way in which photography disturbs the core nodes of historical relations and the practice of history: the nature of event, happening, occurrence; the nature of context, narrative, temporal distance; the spatialization of time; fragmentation; and, above all perhaps, the concept of 'presence'. How can thinking through photographs 'stretch the habits of the discipline'?¹⁰ But this question demands that photographs are treated not merely as evidence 'of' something, but as think-spaces in the relations between the present and its pasts.

Such a position does not dispose of photographic categories, such as index, icon, trace and representation, but rather complicates them in an attempt to escape the methodological conundrum which is perhaps the basis of academic history's uneasy relationship with photographs – that they are too raw, too visceral, too subjective, too fragmentary, too slippery. Indeed, there is a particular 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that has marked historians' relationship with photographs, which has some similarity to the kinds of anxiety that afflict photography more generally.¹¹ For as Didi-Huberman has argued, in the context of Holocaust photographs, we expect too much of photographs and too little. Ask the whole

truth and we will be disappointed, for photographs are messy and inexact; or ask too little, and we ‘immediately relegat[e] them to the sphere of the *simulacrum*’.¹² The net result is the same: an inattention to photographs, because they are found somehow inadequate for the task of doing history.

The idea of experience, and its correlate ‘presence’, is, I would suggest, central to the function of photographs as historical players. It intersects with the basic tenets of historical practice, as past experience is inscribed and traced in photographs. Integral to this is the ontological scream of photography – ‘it was there’ – from which can be argued, as Ulrich Baer does, that a photograph is an experience that someone lived through, however banal.¹³ This is surely a point of connection not alienation, because history is an essentially realistic discourse that is expected to convey ‘a certain notion about the nature of past [or present] reality’.¹⁴ However, despite its realist aspirations, historical knowledge and experience are also ‘impressionist’ in that they are acts of translation that must, at the same time, remain credible in relation to sources and practice. Thus if historical documents function as evidence of what the past might have been like, photographs allow us perhaps to reach further into that past in new ways because of the illusion of historical experience that exceeds other historical sources. That is their seduction, their flirtatiousness, their magic.¹⁵

Returning to ‘historical apparatus’, perhaps a primary disturbance is in relation to event and its temporal inflections. Photographs change the rhythm of the past, they destabilize what has conventionally been thought of as historically significant. If, as Reinhart Koselleck argued, event – a happening at a specific time and place – is separated from the infinity of circumstance, photographs still that infinity causing the separation on which event depends.¹⁶ But photographs challenge the sense of ‘event’; they do not simply provide happenings to be grouped, but constitute the very happening itself. However banal and inconsequential the subject matter, the photograph frames the fleeting instant. It heightens, projects, performs and pushes the moment into significance and analytical possibility. Photographs give the moment a stability and definition, identifying it as a ‘minimal unit ... in historical discourses’.¹⁷ It thus gives these fleeting moments the look of ‘event’ or ‘happening’, as the trace is inscribed without hierarchy on the picture plane as spatial and temporal are intensified within the frame.

Consequently, in terms of history, the photography is part of the translational processes from non-event to event – indeed it arguably obliterates, or at least confuses, the distinction. Georg Simmel argued that there was ‘threshold of fragmentation’ below which event dissolves, while Martin Jay asks of an event, ‘How do photographs record and preserve what can justifiably be grouped under this rubric?’¹⁸ But the photograph contests this by holding the atomic structure of experience and happening clearly in place. It shapes a moment, giving the appearance and equivalence of an event to happenings that otherwise have ‘no properties, physical or otherwise: it is a null or non-event’.¹⁹ Defined in this

way, all photographs become events in the historiographical sense, because they bestow the appearance of completeness and coherence of experience as historical detritus forces itself into the domain of present/past relations. They form links between the event of the everyday and the shape of epoch. In its immediacy, photography offered not only the minutiae of scale in its random inclusivity, but affective and ideological proximity that disturbed traditional hierarchies of significance.²⁰

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the massive expansion of foci for historical study, which effectively began with the Annales school, although there were earlier resonances, emerged from the photographic age. For it is in the photographic age that time, space, experience and memory have been refigured and have served to ‘direct our attention away from structures, processes, and synthesis toward how ordinary people in the past experienced the world’.²¹ Likewise it is no coincidence that the rise of visual histories in ‘old photographs’, of the kind tracked by Raphael Samuel, emerged at the same historical moment as the social and cultural destabilisations of the 1970s and 1980s.²² Photographs shift the scale of historical attention. They allow, as Paul Ricouer has noted of scale and microhistorical technique, new interconnections; because ‘what becomes visible are not the same interconnections, but rather connections that remained unperceived on the macrohistorical scale’.²³

However, the fragmentation of photographs and their creation of micro-events is the major challenge for the historian. Even if working serially with groups of photographs, it is difficult to build a synthetic view from these units and fragments of past experience. The response here is often to collapse into a greater reliance on another of those commonplaces, context – perhaps disproportionately so when compared with other sources. Arguably one of the problems found working with photographs, and a point to which I shall return, is the uncertainty of what kind of history is being presented through photographic inscription and its semiotic energy. Thus there is an overemphasis on simplistic notions of context as if this will contain the meaning of an image or give us an automatic conduit to a set of truths through assigning one or other particular arrays of framing attributes.²⁴

So it is to context that I now turn. There is, like other commonplaces, a huge theoretical literature on context, which I cannot begin to address here, so it is not as if historians or anthropologists are unaware of the problem, as patterns of connection and indeed disconnection are woven around photographs.²⁵ For, of course, ‘context’ is not naturally constituted but an act of interpretation or framing used to contain and give meaning or coherence to a happening. But with photographs that critical position tends to give way to a sense of the self-evident – as something potentially ‘stable, clear and self-sufficient’.²⁶ In this process the apparent coherence of a context derived from the content of the image, entangled with the naturalism of the photograph, seems to create an assumed set of

external relations. As Kracauer has argued, we ‘tacitly assumed that our knowledge of the moment at which an event emerges from the flow of time will help us to account for its occurrence’.²⁷ Hence the problems encountered, for instance, with a generic ideological explanation for photographs (for instance, the category ‘colonial photography’) is perhaps created by the contradictory tensions in which photographs function: between micro- and macro-analysis (between what Pinney has been termed *corps* and *corpus*), between micro-event and macro-meaning, between singularity as presented in the image and the generality of history and lived experience, within an overdetermining notion and application of ‘context’.²⁸ For as Ankersmit has argued, the ‘gravitational pull’ of context has the effect of draining the object or the subject of content to the extent that the thing itself, and its statement, will be left with little to say, emptied of other possible contents.²⁹ This also means, as Ulrich Baer has argued, that ‘we paste the image into a particular type of historical understanding’, using it to demonstrate, or even illustrate, what is already known from other sources rather than admit a history worked out from the traces that present themselves from the image itself.³⁰ Such persistent processes have repeatedly rendered photographs historiographically inactive.

The point, as Brian Axel argues of historical anthropology, ‘is not to abandon the notion of context [such an action would indeed be foolhardy], but generate a critical analysis of contextualisation, from which we might illuminate disparate cultural forms of creativity, subversion or collective identification’.³¹ Thus by simply approaching images by wrapping them up in a predetermined explanatory model, generated by an uncritical application of the notion of context, there is a danger that what they have to tell us as historical sources is overlooked.³² Of course photographs can be those things – ideological, contextualizing and so forth – but those things are not all they carry and they cannot be reduced to them, because that flirtatiousness renders them semiotically dynamic, recodable, and carriers of multiple meanings, alternative narratives and contested histories. At the same time, however, it should be noted that not all photographs have the same density of possibility, as they carry different political and social weight. Thus it is necessary to think about photographs as sources more flexibly, taking account of their historiographical energy. They are not on this account, simply ‘truth’ or ‘not-truth’, but carry a ‘data-ratio’ as nodes of historical experience in which time, place, ideology, experience, expectation and instrumentality intersect in the varying and shifting relations that can take account of the transtemporal movements and affective resonance of photographs.³³

Photography’s temporal dynamic, on which I have already touched, is perhaps the most compelling in terms of historical commonplaces. Time is the essential experience of both history and photographs, and which shapes historical experience of those photographs. These temporal inflections are well documented and theorized, blurring the idea of distance and a separation from the past, as that which ‘has been’ appears ‘present’.³⁴ Conventionally photographs have been conceptualized

as ‘frozen moments in time’ as the cliché has it, as fragments extracted from a linear flow of time – random moments from an imaginary continuity. This sense of the contained and isolated fragment has also tended to emphasize the semiotic and representational aspects of the image and its visual affect. However, as Jan Baetens argues, thinking about photography must move beyond the singularity of time. For the image can accommodate ‘new readings of time aspects … which is never just a slice of time’.³⁵ If the possibilities for thinking about photographs’ relation to the past are to be expanded, and responsive to the kind of pasts that might be encountered, it is necessary, as Baer argues, to reconceptualize photographs temporally. ‘Only if we abandon or substantially revise the notion of history and time as inherently flowing and sequential will we recognize what we see or fail to see in … photographs’.³⁶ In other words, how do concepts of time and history, as they intersect with the ontology of the photograph, cause photographs to be understood, misunderstood or misknown? Conversely, how are temporal disturbances to be factored into photographically generated historical narratives?

The discussion of time is, of course, entangled with that of historical distance. The historical distance of photographs is a ‘conceptual distance, which can be diminished or augmented in ways that can fundamentally change our sense of what history represents’.³⁷ Temporal distance, which has always been a prerequisite of the historical endeavour, is rendered invisible to the extent that, as Mark Phillips has argued, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the concept of historical distance and the idea of history itself.³⁸ But photographs cut across this; they blur analytical categories. Photographs are distance effects, in that they are ineffably ‘of the past’, in all senses. Yet they also have far-reaching closeness effects, in that they carry a sense of immediacy. Benjamin calls this ‘aura’ – ‘a strange web of time and space: the unique appearance of distance, however close at hand’.³⁹ As such, photographs modify and refigure the temporality of historical accounts in an irresolvable tension between distance and closeness. They shape every part of historical engagement, offering as they do an ‘entire continuum from proximity to detachment’.⁴⁰

With photographs, these ideas of distance, proximity, space and time are manifest through the idea of presence, which has become increasingly central to debates in the interstices of historiography, philosophy and photography.⁴¹ What mitigates against the dominance of temporal distance – the gap between past and present, fact and narrative – is the spatial immediacy and ‘proximity effect’ offered by photographs, with which the temporal is entangled.⁴² If presence is marked by temporal contemporaneousness, photographs also offer a spatial dimension to presence; ‘the more you press on space, the more the notion of time will return with a vengeance – and vice versa’.⁴³

Photographs’ reclaiming of presence, an individualizing of the past, is, in historiographical terms, related to questions of agency and affect. Important for my argument here is Ankersmit’s claim that such a position constitutes a move

from the centrifugality of meaning in deconstruction, to the centripetal intensity of the contemporary fascination with experience, which pervades both anthropology and history.⁴⁴ That individualizing of the past is something to which photographs contribute so markedly – it is another effect of their fragmenting propensities that I noted earlier. This position also privileges the potential of the subjectivities of the photograph. These have long troubled historians, but they have emerged more forcefully within the frames of the new affective and subjectivist histories that have marked recent years. Here a sense of presence is shaped not by context, but rather by the photographic trace itself. Photographs carry an almost pre-discursive recognition that privileges content and the power of trace over, for instance, context and questions of ‘representation’. It brings us back to photography’s primal scream – ‘it was there’. But this is not a naive realism. Rather it is a return to the close analytical reading of the object in ways that form a critical forensic of photographic engagement and thinking through the implications historiographically.⁴⁵

One can connect this too, especially in relation to photography, to the ways in which Eelco Runia has attempted to track the shifts in historiographical desire from meaning to those of experience. He argues that despite the search for meaning and the understanding of the mechanics of meaning (perhaps, in the case of photographs, the fixation with linguistically derived semiotic models), what is actually wanted is something else.⁴⁶ That thing, Runia argues, is ‘presence’. As he puts it: ‘[P]resence is being in touch, either literally or metaphorically, with people, things, events and feelings that made you the person you are’. It is the ‘desire to share the awesome reality of people, things, events and feelings, coupled to a vertiginous urge to taste the fact that awesomely real people, things, events and feelings can awesomely suddenly cease to exist’.⁴⁷ Photographs, I would argue, are at the centre of this vertiginous historical tension between presence and non-presence; as I noted earlier, they trace moments that people lived through – their presence. It is the root of their historiographical flirtatiousness and ambiguity but it is also the root of their power to disturb.

Closing Thoughts

I have tried here to suggest that our understanding of photographs and their relation to history involves not only an address to photographic theory, but more importantly a consideration of ‘doing’ history itself, represented through deep-seated assumptions and practices. I have tried to indicate ways in which some of these assumptions and practices might be destabilized by bringing photographs into the centre of that thinking.

Ankersmit has argued, possibly overstating the case a little but still good to think with, that ‘the lingualism of the philosophy of language, of hermeneutics,

of deconstructivism ... of semiotics, and so on has become by now an obstacle to, rather than a promoter of, useful and fruitful insights. The mantras of this [are] now so oppressive ... [that] the notions of presence [and a few others I would argue] may help us to enter a new phase of theoretical reflection'.⁴⁸ This might, as he argues, loosen ties with some of the theoretical models on which we have relied, including those, as I have suggested, in photographic analysis. At the same time, we can expand the possibilities of cultural and narrative meanings of photographs through revisiting the critical concepts and apparatus from history itself. What does the existence of photographs 'do' to history?⁴⁹

There is ample scope I would argue for history's 'Other', photography, being brought into the centre of both historical analysis and theory as a prism through which to think about the very physiognomy of history and its practices. For photography is an unacknowledged shaper of the shift in theoretical interest from practices of narration and representation to questions of experience and memory. It can be crucial in analytical attempts to recover the category of experience as a historical modality, not merely as a vehicle and prompt with memory work, but for the very shaping of what it is to think about the past. But photographs are seldom recognized as such, never mind applied as such.

This address becomes even more pressing in the face of the hyper-flows in images in the digitally linked world in which historians face a veritable tsunami of possible sources. Within this, photographs are repurposed, remediated, refigured and reinterpreted in an uncontrollable flow in which the sense of the image and its historical potential is understood as increasingly unstable, whether in the atomization and individuation of history as a practice or the demands of geopolitical validation being placed on photographs. This is beyond the scope of this short chapter, but I mark it because this hyper-flow of photographs is rapidly changing, complicating all that I have described and raising heightened methodological, historiographical, epistemological and indeed ethical questions for the apparatus and practices of history.⁵⁰ It follows that there are, in relation to photographs, further and more complex challenges to questions of veracity, distance, proximity and credibility, because photographs, and indeed other visual media, are profoundly entangled with these processes. Yet the basic tenets of questions that I have explored in the relationship between photographs and historical apparatus do not go away, they simply become more urgent in the face of potential fragmentation and centrifugal force, and where the technologies of historical thought, its physiognomy, are challenged at a profound level.

Both photography and history are 'citational structures', always referring, through their permeability, to something beyond and of perhaps limited knowability, despite all appearances to the contrary. Photographs seep into almost every corner of historical endeavour. So what happens when we address the challenges I have outlined and stop treating photographs as history's Other? What happens when we bring photography into the centre of our method and

analytical arsenal, entangle them productively with other kinds of data and think through other interpretative possibilities that, to use Walter Benjamin's wonderful analogy of linguistic translation, 'envelope their content like a royal robe with ample folds'.⁵¹

Faced with the challenge of the photograph as a mediator of the past, we are returned to that 'struggle of the document', which dogs all historical endeavour.⁵² But this is not merely an extraction of evidence; and as I have noted, the struggle for the document takes on a new dimension in the digital age.⁵³ Perhaps photographs within the historical domain should be thought of as scientific experiments, in which each experiment has the power to overturn established knowledge and open up another space.⁵⁴ But we cannot begin to address photographs as historical sources without integrating them into our whole notions of what it is to do history, recognizing that history itself is saturated with, yet unnoticed by, photography.

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Notes

1. Patricia Hayes, 'Santu Mofokeng, *Photographs*: "The Violence is in the Knowing"'. *History and Theory* 48(4) (2009), 36.
2. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History. Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hall and Wang, 1989), xiv.
3. S. Barber and C.M. Peniston-Bird (eds), *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).
4. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 7–8.
5. Julia Adeney Thomas, 'The Evidence of Sight', *History and Theory, Theme Issue: Photography and Historical Interpretation* 48(4) (2009), 151–52.
6. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History', in G. Pasternak (ed.), *Handbook of Photography Studies* (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).
7. Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, trans. P.O. Kristellen (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publications, 1995), 50.
8. Mikael Petterson, 'Depictive Traces: On the Phenomenology of the Photograph', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69(2) (2011), 185.

9. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984); John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2009).
10. Ludmila Jordanova, 'What's in a Name? Historians and Theory', *English Historical Review* CXXVI (523) (2011), 1468.
11. Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson, 'Photography's Double Index (A Short History in Three Parts)', in B. Stimson and R. Kelsey (eds), *The Meaning of Photography* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008), xxii.
12. George Didi-Hubermann, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. S. Lille (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 33.
13. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 8.
14. Ewa Domanska, 'Frank Ankersmit: From Narrative to Experience', *Rethinking History* 13(2) (2009), 179.
15. Of course film, the long quotation as opposed to photography's short quotation, shares some characteristics, notably temporal construction, representation and immediacy, but it lacks the temporal and spatial density of photographs. As Christian Metz put it, if film 'lets us believe in more things', photographs allow us to 'believe more in one thing'. See Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish', *October* 34 (1985), 88.
16. Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 105.
17. R. Fogelson, 'The Ethnohistory of Events and Non-Events', *Ethnohistory* 36(2) (1989), 134.
18. Quoted in Koselleck, *Conceptual History*, 106; Martin Jay, 'Photography and the Event', in O. Schevchenko (ed.), *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 2014), 91.
19. Fogelson, 'Ethnohistory of Events', 134.
20. Mark S. Phillips, 'Distance and Historical Representation', *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004), 128.
21. Domanska, 'Frank Ankersmit', 181.
22. The rise of visual anthropology as a sub-discipline can also be traced to this moment of textual and representational crisis. See Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 315–33.
23. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 210–11.
24. Rita Felski, 'Context Stinks', *New Literary History* 42 (2011), 577; Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 133–38.
25. Roy Dilley, *The Problem of Context* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), x.
26. *Ibid.*, 2.
27. Kracauer, *History*, 141.
28. Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: British Library, 2009), 25–26.
29. Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 279. Felski, writing of literary studies, makes a very similar argument about the overpowering claims of context 'stopping the description' and thus understanding. See Felski, 'Context Stinks'.
30. Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 3.
31. Brian Axel, 'Introduction: Historical Anthropology and its Vicissitudes', in B. Axel (ed.), *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 22.

32. Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *The Dilemma of Context* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 1–2.
33. Pinney, *Photography in India*, 8–9; Felski, ‘Context Stinks’, 574.
34. This has most famously been explored by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida*, trans. R. Howard (London: Fontana, 1984) and over a range of photographic forms. See, for instance, Jan Baetens, Alexander Streitberger and Hilde van Gelder (eds), ‘Introduction’, in *Time and Photography* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010).
35. Ibid., viii.
36. Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 1.
37. Phillips, ‘Distance’, 124.
38. Ibid., 128.
39. Walter Benjamin, ‘A Small History of Photography’, in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 25.
40. Phillips, ‘Distance’, 126.
41. Haidy Geismar and Christopher Morton (eds), ‘Reasserting Presence, Reclamation and Desire’, *Photographies* special issue 8(3) (2015).
42. Petterson, ‘Depictive Traces’, 185.
43. Baetens, Streitberger and van Gelder, ‘Introduction’, vii.
44. Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*, 1.
45. Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 10; Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Der Geschichte ins Antlitz blicken: Fotografie und die Herausforderung der Präsenz’, in H. Wolf (ed.), *Aufzeigen oder Beweisen? Die Fotografie als Kulturtechnik und Medium des Wissens* (Zurich: Institute of Art History, 2016), 311.
46. Edwards, ‘Photography’.
47. Eelco Runia, ‘Presence’, *History and Theory* 45(1) (2006), 5.
48. Frank Ankersmit, ‘Presence and Myth’, *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 336.
49. Edwards, ‘Photography’.
50. Lara Putnam, ‘The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast’, *American Historical Review* 121(2) (2016), 377–402.
51. Walter Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator’, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 76.
52. Ricouer, *Memory*, 172.
53. Shawn Graham, Ian Milligan and Scott Weingart, *Exploring Big Historical Data: The Historian’s Macroscope* (London: Imperial College Press, 2015).
54. Jan T. Gross with Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.

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Chapter 2

SEEING THE ‘SAVAGE’ AND THE SUSPENSION OF TIME

Photography, War and Concentration Camps in German
South West Africa, 1904–1908

Claudia Siebrecht



In 1905, the widow Else Sonnenberg published a book on the history of the Herero uprising in what was then the German protectorate of South West Africa (Deutsch-Südwestafrika, DSWA).¹ The book is an autobiographical collection of stories in which the author takes stock of her life and experiences since her marriage and subsequent emigration to Africa in 1903. Sonnenberg and her husband owned a farm and a store in the Waterberg area and were taken by surprise when the uprising began in January 1904. When Sonnenberg's book was first published in 1905, the war between the Herero, who were the largest of the African population groups inhabiting the territory, and the German colonial troops was ongoing. It had escalated from localized acts of rebellion to a war that spread across the territory and was waged by the German military with excessive force.² By the time the war ended in 1908, genocidal warfare and the establishment of concentration camps had reaffirmed German rule and left the Herero and Nama greatly decimated and dispossessed.³

Sonnenberg's account does not focus on the uprising as such; rather, the events of January 1904 form the culmination of her book as they also led to the end of Sonnenberg's time in South West Africa. Sonnenberg's husband was among the German settlers killed in the early phase of the uprising, and Sonnenberg herself left the territory with their one-year-old son to return to Germany a few weeks later. The publication of her African memoirs in the following year, however, was not simply or not only a literary endeavour, as we learn from the foreword provided by the colonial politician Dr Emil Theodor Förster: ‘the necessity of our culture for the land and people of Southwest Africa has rarely been established more convincingly than by the simple narration of this author’.⁴ Förster goes on to criticize the government and parliament for failing to award adequate

Notes from this chapter begin on page 51.

compensation to settlers who had suffered material losses during the uprising in South West Africa and, ‘deeply moved by the truths told by the author’, further demanded that benefits should also be offered to widows and orphans. For colonial supporters, settlers were crucial to the imperial venture and they lobbied on their behalf to secure the future of the German colonial project. Even though most of Sonnenberg’s book is a descriptive account of her encounters with the land and its people, it presents an interpretative context for the events of 1904, and, as Förster’s endorsement demonstrates, the book served to make a case for the continuation of a civilizing mission overseas. Selected photographs included in the publication reiterate that point.

Photographs, Time and Ethics

The aim of this chapter is to address examples of the photographic visual culture that emerged against the backdrop of the war in South West Africa, and to consider some ways in which photographs can offer insights into contemporary understandings and rationalizations of the conflict. Photographs from colonial writing, contemporary colonial journals and colonial albums form the basis to consider the manner in which visual tropes were framed and interpretations of the war were visually communicated. As seminal events in national and personal experience, wars have a tendency to inspire contemporaries to reflect on and attempt to explain related social changes and political upheavals. The long tradition of the military memoir, a form of narrative that was particularly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reveals the degree to which individuals identified with conflicts that were understood as being fought in defence of territory, culture and power.⁵ What stands out in typical testimonial accounts of the war in South West Africa is the surprise, shock and sense of betrayal that, the tone of these publications suggests, turned the war into a moment when the colonist’s identities as deliverers of civilization had to be renewed and reaffirmed. This reimagining went hand in hand with a closer and renewed look at the ‘other’ in the territory, facilitated largely by photographic anthropology carried out by both amateurs as well as more professional practitioners. The camera, subject choices and interpretive angles had been part of the colonial relationship between the Germans and the African inhabitants of the region since the original conquest of the territory in 1884, but the war that erupted in 1904 provided a framework in which existing photographs could be read in a different way. Now, colonial photographs were supplemented with new thematic subjects and new contexts that emerged in the atmosphere of wartime change. The manner in which witnesses to the colonial conflict in South West Africa employed and rearranged existing photographs, along with the frames and perspectives that were used to capture new ones, essentially amount to an

affirmation of what was considered to be ‘savage’ on the one hand and ‘civilized’ on the other.

Sonnenberg’s book is one example of the way in which the 1904 war, or more specifically the challenge to colonial rule, led protagonists of the German imperial project on the ground to re-examine the nature of their relationship with the territory, to consider their attitudes to the African inhabitants and also to assess their own place in the imperial project.⁶ Several other female émigrés, alongside and in a similar fashion to Sonnenberg, wrote about the challenges of setting up home in the colony and described their experiences during the conflict. Many of these publications employ photographs throughout their writing. Members of the military also published numerous accounts and memoirs of their service in South West Africa in which descriptions of the land, the physical strain of colonial warfare and encounters with the enemy dominate the narrative.⁷ Again photographs, often scenes from the campaign, were reprinted in these publications.

The consistent – often even extensive – use of photographs in these colonial war accounts and memoirs is an intriguing feature of their composition: too common to be inadvertent and too deliberately chosen and placed to be merely illustrative. The authors certainly capitalize on the ability of photographs to document ‘foreign’ features of the region and its inhabitants. The inclusion of self-portraits is also a common example of the manner in which the writers present their own role in the imperial mission, indicating the different functions invested in certain sets of images. Scholars of visual anthropology have pointed to the multiple layers of both content and meaning that are inherent in photographs as historical sources and that have a particular angle in imperial contexts.⁸ The notion to understand photographs as material objects whose significance does not necessarily rely on context is particularly valuable, and has been thoroughly demonstrated by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart.⁹ Paramount to understanding the significance and power of a photograph, the authors argue, is to account for it as an object in and of itself, whose meaning is not tied to the intent of the photographer or perspective of the viewer. The German colonial examples show that, beyond their role in colonial writing, photographs present a meta-narrative for which their natural ability to suspend temporal restrictions is of particular importance.¹⁰ The relevance of these colonial photographs, I argue, lies in their power to determine notions of savagery and civilization through their ability to communicate such ideas without constraints of time or chronology. As objects as well as through image contents, the photographs relate the violent events of the period of the war very unambiguously to the larger civilizing project and long-term goals of German imperial rule in South West Africa. They become markers of time and evidence for progress, locating the photographic moment within a broader vision of development and, here, presenting an underlying rationale for the German presence and rule in the territory.

The manner in which colonial authors employed photographs to visualize cultural difference, stage otherness and ‘savagery’ on the one hand, and present scenes of education, instruction and training on the other, manifest the existence of an imperial value system that rewarded cultural adaptation, domesticity and productivity as progress and in which acts of cruelty and violence could be framed as a means to an end. The photographs thus not only show but also constitute part of the development of an imperial ethical seeing that was rooted in the assumed merits of the larger colonizing project. As photographs were understood to have an inherent documentary character and the camera was viewed as a truth-transmitting instrument in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this was a powerful means to determine what constituted normative cultural values.¹¹ Importantly, here, the images were an affirmation of the necessity of a civilizing mission, but did not represent a critique of the methods of German colonial conduct or rule. Of course, the ‘colonizing camera’, employed by those who had access to the technology, bore out the unequal power relations in the colonial context.¹² Nonetheless, even in the hands of colonials, the chosen subject and execution of photographs potentially revealed more than was seen or intended by the photographer. The actual image contents here are key, as they provided sufficient indicators to potentially inspire a humanitarian critique of practices of war or to elicit an ethical objection to colonial rule and the treatment of African civilians. In the case of South Africa, for example, the circulation of photographs of emaciated Boer children in concentration camps was highly influential in mounting protest at home. Moreover, the layer of the image contents remains central to a seeing of the historical experiences that are behind any photograph, as discussed by Elizabeth Edwards in this volume. In the case of German colonial images, it enables us to address aspects of historical experiences that are difficult to recover; in addition, much of it remains fragmented, such as the situation and treatment of Herero and Nama in concentration camps.

Images of Africans

Historians have increasingly addressed the visual dimension of German colonial relationships in the wider sense, with topics ranging from advertising and exhibitions to the environment, and have focused in particular on the role of photographs in Namibian history. Key examples include the comprehensive volume *The Colonising Camera*¹³ and Patricia Hayes’ work on war and photography in Southern Africa.¹⁴ Studies such as Joachim Zeller’s discussion of photographs of the concentration camps during the colonial war,¹⁵ and Jens Jäger’s analysis of the manner in which a colonial power’s relationships were reconstructed visually,¹⁶ demonstrate that photographs were widely employed by political observers, journalists and anthropologists throughout the colonial period in South West Africa

and the 1904–1908 war, and point to their relevance in creating and maintaining a colonial order.¹⁷ These scholars employ different approaches in their work but address questions relating to power relationships and processes of representation that are particularly pertinent for the analysis of images emerging from colonial contexts, as demonstrated in the work of numerous scholars on colonial photography more broadly.¹⁸ The content-critical approaches from these scholars analyse the meaning of staged scenes and the agency of the photographed subject, and understand depicted postures and gestures as purposeful social acts that respond to the camera.

In several examples of women's colonial publications, Africans feature as regular and important photographic subjects. In most cases the authors themselves, generally female farmers and settlers, had taken pictures of their domestic servants and farmhands, as detailed captions and in-text references indicate. There are many similarities in the way in which the different authors portrayed Africans and combined the photographs with a textual commentary that focused on work ethic and assessed personal qualities. Many of the images are close-up portraits, zooming in on facial features, hair, teeth, headdress, or jewellery. In style they resemble anthropological shots, though privately, rather than professionally executed.¹⁹ The gaze of the camera in these examples is an intimate one, enabled through the proximity to and familiarity with (and also subordination of) someone in a service role. Yet the photographed subject also remains distinct and different as the camera exposes rather than portrays. Interesting examples can be found in a book written by the female farmer Mia Karow. Her descriptions of the Africans portrayed in her book also focus on both physical and character traits, and the photographs present 'successfully domesticated' Herero.²⁰ One striking portrait photograph features a young Herero woman named Ella whose picture has been taken from a full frontal perspective. Ella herself appears to be responding with an uneasy body posture and a half-hearted smile, pointing to the invasive nature of the act. The photo was printed with the following caption: 'Our kitchen maid, the Herero Ella, with filed teeth'.²¹

The appearance and conduct of African personnel would have been understood as reflecting the orderliness and manner in which the estate was kept, a task that primarily fell to the female settler. The notions of cleanliness and manners that informed the German overseas household were based on the bourgeois practices and ideals in the motherland. Colonial women's associations and interest groups considered this a prime cultural export, and arranged training sessions and published leaflets that offered advice on how to maintain the culture of a German home abroad. This served to reinforce the bourgeois values that many of the female settlers had themselves been brought up with. As a consequence, female farmers had specific expectations and concerns regarding the obedience, orderliness and personal hygiene of their African labourers.²² The relationships between the German employers and African workers were complicated by power,

race, gender and status, and in their writing the authors are generally neither hostile nor overtly racist, but keen to refer to their own benevolence in their dealings with their domestic staff and workers. There is no self-evident reason why portraits of domestic servants and workers should be included in women's autobiographical accounts of the war in South West Africa, but in the colonial context and in particular during the moment of crisis, they perform a particular function and can be seen as encoding and thereby adding a clear subtext to the narrative, which asserts the decidedly unequal nature of power and race relations in the territory. The photo of Ella is placed in a chapter in which Karow describes how she successfully trained Herero to work in and around the house. Her photographs of the servants and workers thus demonstrate the useful contribution that she personally made to the colonial project. On the one hand, the cultivation of the land realized an important dimension of the imperial imagination. On the other hand, the education of the colonial subjects with the aim of turning them into – from the settler perspective – useful members of the colony was also part of women's imperial ideas.²³ These photographs can thus be seen to indicate the value of Karow's own emigration as well as the entire colonial project, showing that the territory in South West Africa was becoming civilized and productive.

Photographing the Enemy

Representations of the African enemy are especially indicative of the manner in which photographs allowed for the presentation of a version of events that required and justified a particular military, political or even personal response. Photographic depictions of the enemy form a distinct thematic group in wartime colonial photography; they expose the limits of the documentary character of the medium by indicating the manner in which contemporaries employed photography to communicate both 'myths' and 'truths'. In the first weeks of the conflict, the response of the military authorities in the region appears to have been directly influenced by the spreading panic and hysteria among German civilians and soldiers in the territory. After details of the first casualties among farmers were reported, the Herero were instantly cast as 'treacherous savages' who were 'ungrateful and disloyal', killing the settlers with a 'beastly cruelty',²⁴ and who 'had conspired to savagely murder all the whites'.²⁵ Inflammatory descriptions, combined with accusations of alleged atrocities, were repeated over and over in newspaper articles, pamphlets and personal correspondence in both South West Africa and Germany. Language that dehumanized the Herero population was regularly used to present the picture of a barbarian enemy, and created an emotional distance between ordinary German civilians and soldiers and the African population.²⁶ Yet the documentary character of such photographs also meant that, actually, they provided poor evidence to sustain the image of the barbarian

African enemy that had emerged from the atrocity stories. Although German farmers had been killed and property destroyed, the image of the extremely dangerous and extraordinarily cruel enemy who had challenged German rule in South West Africa could not be substantiated by facts; and so over time, it seems, this had to be created and choreographed in photography.

The idea of the barbarian enemy was enhanced by images that focused on the destruction of buildings and farms that had occurred over the course of the first weeks of the conflict in January 1904. Photographs of the material destruction were taken in the aftermath of such events, and the enemy is invariably absent. Yet the photographic documentation of the enemy's handiwork allowed for the projection of all sorts of fears and characteristics onto the Herero. One such example is a photograph of a burnt-out shop in Okahandja, which was published in the newspaper of the German Women's Association for Nursing in the Colonies, *Unter dem roten Kreuz* (Under the Red Cross) in Berlin in January 1905, one year after the beginning of the conflict and by which time the character of the conflict had changed completely.²⁷ The caption of the photograph reads 'Shop in Okahandja, set ablaze by Herero', but does not provide a date.²⁸ It shows a fairly large stone building with smoke marks, though the shop owner's name, Voigts, is still legible. An empty and unused horse-carriage in front points to the disruption of the business, and the lone figure on the right, possibly the shop owner, appears to be inspecting the ruins of his livelihood in the colony. Although the material destruction of property of German settlers had occurred, this had happened in a fairly concise time period in January 1904. Without a date, however, the photograph allows for an assumption that it might have been a more recent occurrence and that the German settlers were continuing to be targeted by the Herero. It is an example of the manner in which depicted wartime events, presented outside a temporal framework, could allow for a different reading and a different sense of their immediacy. This also applied to photographs of the African population, whether taken before, during or after the conflict; regardless of the original moments in time when the pictures were taken, they were all employed and presented as comprehensive anthropological evidence for the apparently inferior cultural or character traits of the African inhabitants of South West Africa.

The image of a cruel, barbarous enemy created by German soldiers and settlers in South West Africa was substantially based on fabricated accounts of the merciless killing of German settlers and the destruction of their property. What made such stories convincing in the eyes of the contemporary audience is that they appeared to fit both with racial stereotypes and with the narratives of real incidents. Groups of armed Herero had indeed raided farms and stores, taken cattle and destroyed property, and by early February 1904, German losses amounted to '26 soldiers and 47 murdered settlers', according to military correspondence.²⁹ Actual events, however, were often exaggerated and combined with rumours of

torture, mutilation and rape. In a number of cases, farmers who were reported to have been killed reappeared alive. Some of the most lurid stories that were circulated told of the ‘butchering and disfiguring’ of numerous German women. Such stories were later proved to have been based on false accusations, and even military reports rectified a number of such charges. For example, two sisters who were counted among those killed actually emerged alive in early February 1904, but the Herero were subsequently accused of having violated the two women.³⁰ On 22 March 1904, the conservative weekly *Reichsbote* reported seven cases in which women, some with their children, were believed to have been ‘slaughtered, disemboweled and beheaded’ by the Herero, but had actually not been harmed.³¹ Contrary to accusations and newspaper reports that highlighted particular mistreatment of German women and children, they had generally been spared and escorted to safety by the Herero themselves. The Herero sub-chief, Daniel Kariko, declared that only German males were viewed as enemies and that it had been a conscious and unanimous decision of the Herero chiefs not to wage war against the German women, children or missionaries.³² The Herero visibly adhered, moreover, to certain codes of conduct and made written references to the manner in which such behaviour was inspired by Christian thought, yet their image as marauding barbarians persisted in the minds of both settlers and soldiers.³³ The continued publication of photographs that evoked the hysteria of the first weeks of the conflict contributed to perpetuating the sense of emergency of the early days of the conflict.

Precisely because the idea of the indiscriminately violent enemy was a construction, photographs were used to convey both the threat posed by the Africans as well as the force required to restrain them. Naturally, this was a visual demonstration of the Germans’ superior equipment and power, but, importantly, the images can also be seen to support the case for military intervention. If the threat to German settlers and the future of the territory was unambiguous, then resorting to a heavy military campaign as well as the usage of brutal force was justifiable. Interestingly, in these photographs the physical characteristics or attributes of the African enemy do not actually show the ‘dangerous barbarian’. Such imagery was created by staging particular scenes or by adding objects. The following photograph (Figure 2.1) of a captured Herero illustrates this. It is modelled on big game hunting snapshots, in which the hunting party assembles around their prey to create a lasting testament to their skill, superiority and conquest. In the photograph, the prisoner is presented like a trophy, surrounded by his captors in the uniform of the German colonial forces.

The impression of a successful hunt is further emphasized by the contrast created between the enemy and the captors. The Herero is crouching on the ground and tied in an ape-like posture. The rags he is wearing also indicate the cultural gulf between himself and his captors; and no fewer than seven men are guarding him, as if he presents a very significant threat indeed. The image is from



Fig. 2.1: 'Unser gefangener Herero in Ekupa' ('our captured Herero in Ekupa'), 1904–5. Bildarchiv der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, 082-2990-405.

the collection of Jan Bantz, and the use of the possessive in the caption is notable, indicating a sense of triumph, ownership and authority.

The way in which the photograph has been composed thus reasserts the idea of the savage enemy. It also affirms the threat posed by the African enemy, which was necessary to justify the war and the methods by which it was being waged. It is notable, however, that photographs of enemies do not, in and of themselves, actually convey the 'dangerous' enemy, but the way in which the photographs were staged clearly does. Even when dealing with a defeated and disarmed enemy, a sense of threat was kept alive, and numerous photographs of captured and chained Africans convey and maintain the image of a subhuman adversary, now tamed and controlled. A typical example is the following photograph (Figure 2.2) taken by a member of the German colonial army. It shows a carefully arranged group of prisoners standing in a half-circle in front of the camera.

The material objects added by the German photographer emphasize the alleged threat and danger presented by the prisoners. The bulky metal chains that have been fastened around the men's necks present a stark contrast on their naked skin. The bony and half-naked bodies of the Herero would, without chains, probably not appear particularly intimidating. Nonetheless, the way in which the men have been chained to each other adds to the impression of what would have been seen as 'uncivilized', different and threatening members of the African



Fig. 2.2: Herero prisoners in chains, 1904 war. National Archives of Namibia, 02506.

population. Here, the prisoners have been chained together as a group, preventing individual movement and enhancing the sense of their potential threat before capture. In the end, what is documented and communicated here is the power and superiority of the colonizer, who, ultimately, would prevail. The men are wearing prisoner tags and have already been classified, counted and numbered by the German military authorities.

The conflict in South West Africa was an unexpectedly difficult war for the German army, who had underestimated the African enemy and had planned for a short and decisive crushing of the revolting Herero and Nama. The war radicalized, culminating in the genocidal pursuit of the Herero in the wake of the failed victory at the battle of the Waterberg in August 1904.³⁴ This was followed by the infamous statement by von Trotha that sanctioned the indiscriminate killing of the enemy at a time when the hostilities had declined and become incidental. In December, under orders from Chancellor Bülow, concentration camp imprisonment was introduced.³⁵ In the growing historiography, the function of the German colonial camps has been evaluated differently, ranging from instruments in a genocidal war, to places of punishment and economic exploitation.³⁶ The camps can be seen to have had different functions at different times of the war; existing photographs of prisoners in the concentration camps indicate that, for contemporaries, camp imprisonment was not only compatible with, but actually could be seen to promote, the German mission in South West Africa.

The capturing and imprisoning of enemies meant that much more frequent and much closer contacts between the German colonizers and the Africans occurred. African men, women and children were imprisoned in camps under both military and civilian control. In addition, the Otavi rail company, business owners and well-off private shopkeepers and farmers also cooperated with the authorities and were keen to make use of the cheap labour force of the prisoners. The German colonials and their cameras gained a much more intimate view of the routines, bodies, and daily lives of the African population when they were in captivity. The camp exposed the subjects to the glare of the camera, erasing boundaries of intimacy that more conventionally would regulate how close a camera could get to capturing and documenting the private space of individuals. As many of the scenes suggest, there was a particular interest in framing 'native' customs, though of course these would have been determined by the surroundings of the camp, an environment that had been created by the German captors. The camp scenes often show groups of Africans, and very often groups of women, sitting on the floor half naked or wearing rags. In some examples, they are photographed cooking with very basic utensils. The female prisoner appears to have been an object of particular fascination as African women feature prominently in the photographs. The nature of the photographs suggests that this cannot simply be explained with a reference to their large numbers among the prisoners. The camera shows little unease in capturing cultural difference, documenting and exposing what would have been perceived as primitive.

The following scene (Figure 2.3), taken at the concentration camp on Shark Island, shows this very clearly. Conditions on Shark Island were particularly bad and there was a mortality rate of over 50 per cent.³⁷ Other photographs present German officers walking through quite a haphazard array of prisoners on the ground of the camp, in close physical proximity to one another, the absence of shelter and facilities, for which the camp was known, is evident. In these images, the contrast of the uniformed officers walking through the camp holding sticks and the often bare-chested women is particularly stark. In the image below, a Herero woman stares grimly, if not directly, at the viewer. On one level, these photographs portray the defeated enemy nation, including women and children who were now imprisoned and at the mercy of their German captors. A very clear image of the power of the German military is presented, which was also neatly merged with a message about the cultural superiority of the colonizers. This becomes evident if contrasted with representations of German colonial domesticity, examples of which demonstrate the manner in which cultural hierarchy could be constructed.³⁸

The second scene is very similar, and depicts female Herero prisoners in what appear to be very improvised surroundings, possibly a makeshift concentration camp without any visible shelter or transport stop. Here, the women have some basic kitchen utensils, and the steaming pot on the fire suggests that they are in the process of preparing a meal. Similar to the first scene, the intrusive gaze of the



Fig. 2.3: ‘Gefangene Herero Weiber’ (‘captured Herero women’), 1904–5. Bildarchiv der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, 082-2990-418.

camera on the semi-covered women is obvious and their responses vary between ignoring the camera and staring at it. It becomes clear that, in an unsheltered concentration camp, there is nowhere to hide from the camera. The forced nature of the situation and neglect of the prisoners is evident, and, somewhat ironically, the colonial camera itself contributes to document some aspects of the prisoner experience in the camps.

There is an underlying assumption conveyed in the visual imagery that a civilizing influence was necessary. Indeed, the debates in the German parliament on the future of the territory revolved heavily around the idea of establishing reservations in which the Herero and Nama would be trained for work – something that was understood to be within the remit of the wider colonial mission.³⁹ Although the reservations as such were not realized, the African prisoners were soon seen as a key resource and labour force that would be necessary for developing the economic potential of the territory. In the contemporary understanding, labour merged neatly with the idea of re-education, civilization and also punishment. The prisoners experienced different types of labour: some were forced to work on the railway, others were working for the military or civilian authorities, and others again for private individuals. In each case, the prisoners represented a cheap labour force, as can be seen in the photograph below (Figure 2.4), in which a farmer is shown with four chained prisoners, constructing a brick kiln. The group has interrupted their work for the photograph, yet the prisoners are all



Fig. 2.4: ‘Gefangene Hottentotten beim Ziegelofen setzen’ (‘captured Hottentots building a brick kiln’), no date. Bildarchiv der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, 013-2069a-05.

shown in mid-action, holding blocks of brick and looking quite unabashedly at the camera. Their posture is not particularly submissive, but their bonds visibly demonstrate the power relations in the scene, and make it very clear that they were not free to leave and abandon the project. It is a demonstration of the civilizing process in action, as the idea of improvement and re-education through work was also widely advocated in Germany, and also reflects plans and principles from the penal system and welfare politics. In particular, the creation of ‘workers colonies’ (based on the theories of the theologian Friedrich von Bodelschwingh) between 1880 and 1914 throughout Germany combine the idea of re-education with economic utility for a society.⁴⁰ Since the first acquisition of the colonies in 1884, church and state authorities were concerned with the development of means and schemes for ‘work education’.⁴¹

The idea of the civilizing potential of a camp is also conveyed in the following photograph (Figure 2.5), which depicts a group of naked children gathering around a newspaper. The image suggests that the transmission of knowledge and education was something to aspire to.⁴² The contrast between the idea of culture and civilization symbolized by the newspaper is brought out, for example, by the lack of clothing of the children. Most of them are naked and without shoes or any of the material goods that would have been recognized as cultured and valuable. The timid postures of some of the children hint at the intruding power



Fig. 2.5: ‘Wißbegierige Hererokinder mit Gefangenenaabzeichen’ (‘inquisitive Herero children wearing prisoner of war tokens’). National Archives of Namibia, 23422.

of the camera, which, along with the caption, also highlights their status as prisoners of war, as most of them wear prisoner tags. The contradictory nature of the scene and the degree to which the captivity of children questions the idea of a civilizing mission does not seem to present any concern. The scene also brings out questions regarding the nature of the German interests in the territory. The plans the German colonial authorities had for the territory centred on the economic profit and cultural prestige of a flourishing colony. This vision depended on the labour force of the Herero and Nama; but the treatment of the Herero and Nama during the war, especially their imprisonment in concentration camps, did not suggest that their future rule would place any emphasis on education or on the potential of the future generation as ‘civilized and cultured’ inhabitants of the territory. Rather, the caption that describes the children as ‘greedy for knowledge’ appears patronizing, and disparages the children’s curiosity, whose role in the colonial order of South West Africa had already been decided. They were to be the labour force that the German colonials needed to fulfil their vision of the future of South West Africa.

Conclusion

The photographs from both colonial writing and albums present the war in South West Africa as a conflict in which broader interests were at stake. By projecting notions of what represented cultural progress on the one hand and savagery on the other, contemporaries thus believed the war to be justified and a worthy civilizing mission. Whether female farmers or members of the military, their experiences and sacrifices in the colony often led to a deep personal investment in the

success of the overseas mission. This vision of progress and development for the territory, however, was based on inequality, disenfranchisement and economic exploitation. The visual culture played a key role in helping to communicate and document both progress and success of the so-called German civilizing mission in South West Africa.

Importantly, besides offering insights into contemporary understandings of the colonial conflict, photographs also allow different ways to study some aspects of the prisoner experience, which is very difficult to recapture and is mostly done through military records, mortality figures and missionary reports. The value of the photographs is in part due to the subjectivity of the photographed people, which cannot be completely controlled by the photographer. While the environment can be staged, and a wider cultural context determines the perspective taken by the photographer, the subject itself can never be fully passive in the process. As sources, photographs thus have the potential to reveal much more than simply the perspective of the photographer. It is, of course, also important to be aware of the blindness of the colonial camera, the averted gazes, as well as the suffering and violence that have not been recorded. In light of the high mortality rates, the poor hygiene, and the medical and nutritional neglect the prisoners suffered, the camera as a medium faced a particular challenge. The documentary character of the medium meant that, in most cases, a blind eye was turned to what would have created severe ethical issues. With regards to German South West Africa, however, the story of the colonial camera goes further, as a number of photographs documenting German mistreatment of the Herero and Nama were used in 1918 to discredit German rule in the aftermath of the war, exposing German colonial violence as evidence in a process to transfer rule over the territory.⁴³

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Notes

1. Frau Else verw. Sonnenberg, *Wie es am Waterberg zuging. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Hereroaufstandes* (Berlin: Wilhelm Süsserott, 1905).

2. Horst Drechsler, *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft: Der Kampf der Herero und Nama gegen den deutschen Imperialismus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966), 150–98; Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2005), 5–69.
3. Jürgen Zimmerer, ‘Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika: Der erste deutsche Genozid’, in Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller (eds), *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika: Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) und seine Folgen* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004), 45–63.
4. Emil Theodor Förster was the founder of the Neuen Südwest-Afrikanischen Siedlungsgesellschaft and the Deutschvölkischen Kolonialvereins.
5. Mark Hewitson, “‘I Witnesses’: Soldiers, Selfhood and Testimony in Modern Wars”, *German History* 28(3) (2010), 310–25; Michael Epkenhans, Stig Förster and Karen Hagemann (eds), *Militärische Erinnerungskultur: Soldaten im Spiegel von Biographien, Memoiren und Selbstzeugnissen* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schöningh, 2006), ix–xv.
6. See, for example, the publications by the settler Carl Schlertwein, including *Deutschlands bisherige Kolonialpolitik und die augenblicklichen Zustände in Deutsch Südwest Africa* (Berlin: Verlag der Kolonialen Zeitschrift, 1904). The war writings by missionaries, by contrast, did not rely on photographic evidence to interpret the ongoing conflict, but they, too were concerned for the future of the territory, and anticipated fundamental changes regarding the relationship of rulers and the ruled. See, for example, the publication by the Rhenish missionary J. Irle, *Was soll aus den Hereros werden?* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1906).
7. Examples include: Paul Leutwein, *Meine Erlebnisse im Kampf gegen die Hereros* (Minden: Köhler, 1905); Helmuth Auer von Herrenkirchen, *Meine Erlebnisse während des Feldzuges gegen die Hereros u. Witbois nach meinem Tagebuch* (Berlin: R. Eisenschmidt Verlagsbuchhandlung für Militärwissenschaften, 1907); Heinrich von Bülow, *Deutsch-Südwestafrika: Seit der Besitzergreifung die Züge und Kriege gegen die Eingeborenen* (Berlin: Büsserott, 1904).
8. Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press and The Royal Anthropological Institute, London, 1992); Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).
9. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (eds), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
10. Graham Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24; ‘Introduction’, in Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.
11. Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, 21–26.
12. See, for example, Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy (eds), *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1997).
13. Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998).
14. Patricia Hayes, ‘Vision and Violence: Photographies of War in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia’, *Kronos* 27 (2001), 133–57.
15. Joachim Zeller, “‘Wie Vieh wurden hunderte zu Tode getrieben und wie Vieh begraben’: Fotodokumente aus dem deutschen Konzentrationslager in Swakopmund/Namibia 1904–1908”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 49(3) (2001), 226–43.
16. Jens Jäger, ‘Bilder aus Afrika vor 1918: Zur visuellen Konstruktion Afrikas im europäischen Kolonialismus’, in Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Visual History: Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 134–48.
17. See also, Jeremy Silvester, Patricia Hayes and Wolfram Hartmann, “‘This Ideal Conquest’: Photography and Colonialism in Namibian History”, in *The Colonising Camera*, 11–16.
18. For example: Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (eds), *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Anne Maxwell, *Colonial*

- Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000); Jane Lydon, "Behold the Tears": Photography as Colonial Witness, *History of Photography* 34(3) (2010), 234–50; see also: Terence Ranger, 'Review Article: Colonialism, Consciousness and the Camera', *Past and Present* 170 (2001), 203–15; David Killingray and Andrew Roberts, 'An Outline History of Photography in Africa to ca. 1914', *History in Africa*: A Journal of Method 16 (1989), 197–208.
19. Brent Harris, 'Photography in Colonial Discourse: The Making of "the Other" in Southern Africa, c. 1850–1950', in *The Colonising Camera*, 20–23, including an example of an anthropological photograph on page 23.
 20. Mia Karow, *Wo sonst der Fuss des Kriegers trat: Farmerleben in Südwest nach dem Kriege* (Berlin: Siegfried Mittler, 1911).
 21. Original caption in German: 'Unser Küchenmädchen, die Herero Ella, mit ausgefeilten Zähnen'. *Ibid.*, 15.
 22. Nancy Reagin, 'The Imagined Hausfrau: National Identity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in Imperial Germany', *The Journal of Modern History* 73(1) (2001), 54–86; Katharina Walgenbach, *Die weiße Frau als Träger deutscher Kultur: Koloniale Diskurse über Geschlecht, 'Rasse' und Klasse im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005). Birthe Kundrus, 'Weiblicher Kulturimperialismus: Die imperialistischen Frauenverbände des Kaiserreichs', in Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds), *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2004), 213–35.
 23. Lora Wildenthal, "She is the Victor": Bourgeois Women, Nationalist Identities and the Ideal of the Independent Woman Farmer in German Southwest Africa', in Geoff Eley (ed.), *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 371–95.
 24. BArch MA Freiburg N103/77 NL Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, p. 14.
 25. Report by Oberleutnant Zürn, BArch Berlin R1001/2113, 19.1.1904, p.7.
 26. On the creation of a 'colonial' enemy, see also: Medarus Brehl, '(Ein)Geborene Feinde: Der Entwurf existentieller Feindschaft im Kolonialdiskurs', in Medarus Brehl and Kristin Platt (eds), *Feindschaft* (Munich: Fink, 2003), 157–77; Trutz von Trotha, "The Fellows Can Just Starve": On Wars of "Pacification" in the African Colonies of Imperial Germany and the Concept of "Total War", in Manfred Boemeke et al. (eds), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 416–18.
 27. Deutscher Frauenverein für Krankenpflege in den Kolonien, *Unter dem roten Kreuz*, 1, January 1905.
 28. The original caption reads: 'Kaufmannsladen in Okahandja, von den Hereros ausgebrannt'.
 29. These figures were telegraphed by Commander Gudewill of the ship *Habicht* on 6 February 1904, BArch Berlin R1001/2111.
 30. BArch Berlin R1001/2112 Kaiserliches Gouvernement, Windhuk – Kolonialabteilung, Bericht über den Aufstand 8.2.1904.
 31. *Der Reichsbote: Deutsche Wochenzeitung für Christentum und Volkstum* (Berlin, 22 March 1904).
 32. Quoted in Drechsler, *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 167.
 33. Adam Pienaar, nephew of old Chief Willem Christian, quoted in Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald (eds), *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia. An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 170.
 34. Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 70–90.
 35. Bundesarchiv Berlin (BArch Berlin) R1001/2089, Bülow-Trotha 11.12.1904, 54.
 36. Casper W. Erichsen, 'Zwangsarbeit im Konzentrationslager auf der Haifischinsel', in Zimmerer and Zeller, *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, 80–85; Joachim Zeller, "Ombepera i koza – Die Kälte tötet mich": Zur Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers in Swakopmund (1904–1908)', in *ibid.*, 64–79; Benjamin Madley, 'From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West

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 42. This photograph was printed in the German press, for example in *Unter dem roten Kreuz*, 5 May 1907.
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Chapter 3

THE ‘FACE OF WAR’ IN WEIMAR VISUAL CULTURE

Annelie Ramsbrock



In her book-length essay *Regarding the Pain of Others*, published in 2003, Susan Sontag deals with the question of how pictures of war victims affect their viewers. She challenges the notion that these images create an ‘illusion of consensus’ and are therefore just ‘a species of rhetoric’, suggesting instead that there is no shared experience, no ‘we’ when regarding the pain of others.¹ While the sight of war victims may very well engender a fundamental rejection of war, it can also incite people to even more violence, at least against those held responsible for the atrocities depicted. She notes, moreover, that photographic images as a form of evidence and conveyors of truth have increasingly become a matter of debate. Soldiers ostensibly killed by shellfire could have just as well died some other way. A photograph cannot disprove this. It also cannot prove that the victims were soldiers at all, that the scene was not intentionally staged in order simply to give the impression that the victims were soldiers, killed in a certain way by a certain foe in a particular place. In other words, Sontag concludes, photographs are limited in their ability to document the events of war, employing as they do an ‘epic mode’ and usually being ‘depictions of an aftermath’.²

And yet the belief that photography can be used as ‘shock therapy’³ does have its place in history, as Sontag points out: ‘For a long time some people believed that if the horror could be made vivid enough, most people would finally take in the outrageousness, the insanity of war’.⁴ In any case, photographs are ‘a trace of something brought before the lens’, and are therefore ‘superior to any painting’⁵ in terms of their effect on the viewer. She was thinking here specifically of the photo volume *Krieg dem Krieg!* (War against War!), published by the German pacifist Ernst Friedrich in 1924 – exactly ten years after mobilization – with the aim of showing the ‘soberly true, the vulgarly realistic image of war’, and thus

Notes from this chapter begin on page 74.

preventing future wars.⁶ He chose the pictures accordingly: bombed out castles, churches and buildings, obliterated villages, decimated forests and devastated landscapes, hanged men, raped women and starving children, bodies decomposing in the trenches, charred corpses, horse cadavers on the battlefield, and badly wounded soldiers whose pain and suffering the viewer could not fail to see. It is hard to disagree with Sontag when she stresses: ‘Almost all the sequences in *War against War!* are difficult to look at ... But surely the most unbearable pages in this book ... are in the section titled ‘The Face of War’, twenty-four close-ups of soldiers with huge facial wounds’.⁷

The following will investigate why Friedrich’s photo volume was able to shock large parts of the public in Weimar Germany and is still perceived today, especially the photos of the facially wounded, as a paradigmatic documentation of the brutality of modern mechanized warfare. Keeping in mind that the power of photography is not limited to its aesthetic imagery,⁸ I will attempt an ‘archaeology of photographic documents’, as suggested by Georges Didi-Huberman. In this sense, the photos of the facially wounded will be examined as evidence of social, scientific and political developments, shedding light on the conditions in which they were produced, their contemporary use, what they convey, and how they do so.⁹

That no report about the past can be completely independent of the manner in which it is conveyed is not a matter of debate among historians, at least with regard to written documents. The latter have always been recorded by historians or scribes and arranged by archivists, and thus in a certain way conveyed by intermediaries, which is why the term ‘source’ is, strictly speaking, misleading. The same goes for visual documents. They, too, are not sources in the proper sense, but, as Peter Burke called it, “traces” of the past in the present’, which can only really be understood when the manner of their conveyance is investigated as well.¹⁰ In other words, photographs only become bearers of meaning when they come with certain instructions or frameworks.¹¹ This can include the choice of subject matter, which only ever shows a part of reality – the reality to be communicated. But it can also be paratexts such as commentaries or captions, which often have a considerable influence on reception. And when Sontag writes, with regard to paratexts, that ‘all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions’,¹² she calls attention to the supposed truthfulness of photographic documents and, closely related to this, the particular importance of the representation for the interpretation of photographs.¹³

Political Frameworks: Photographs of War between Soft Focus and Scandal

Even Friedrich did not seem to wholly trust in the power of pictures alone. He explained to his readers in the preface to *War against War!* how the book was to

be used: 'Show these photographs to anyone who can still think! Those who still say yes to this mass murder should be locked into an insane asylum'.¹⁴ And as if that were not enough, he gave each photo a caption (in four languages) with the aim of unmasking the perfidy of military ideology and lampooning those responsible. Few words were needed to do so. Thus, below one photo depicting a charred corpse with arms raised, it says: "Salute" to a job well done¹⁵ (Figure 3.1). The photograph of a group of dead soldiers lying crosswise on top of each other he entitled 'How glorious the soldier's life!'¹⁶ (Figure 3.2), whereas the photo of a facially injured man he entitled: "War becomes me like a spa treatment". (Hindenburg)¹⁷ (Figure 3.3).

Both the publication of these photos and the choice of captions represented a radical break with official state pictorial politics in the war and post-war years, which implies, by way of inversion, that large parts of the public sphere in Weimar Germany had never before seen photos like the ones in *War against War*.¹⁸ While the state and military did use photographs to convey an impression of the soldierly life to those back on the home front, the primary purpose here was to reassure relatives and loved ones. This was the 'emotional' function of the technical image, as one photographer described it in a 1915 issue of *Photographische Chronik*. War photography, he continued, was so important because it served alongside the written word as an 'intermediary between home,



Fig. 3.1: 'A burned body', in: Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (1924), Munich 2004, p. 75.



Fig. 3.2: 'Dead soldiers in a trench', in: Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (1924), Munich 2004, p. 97.

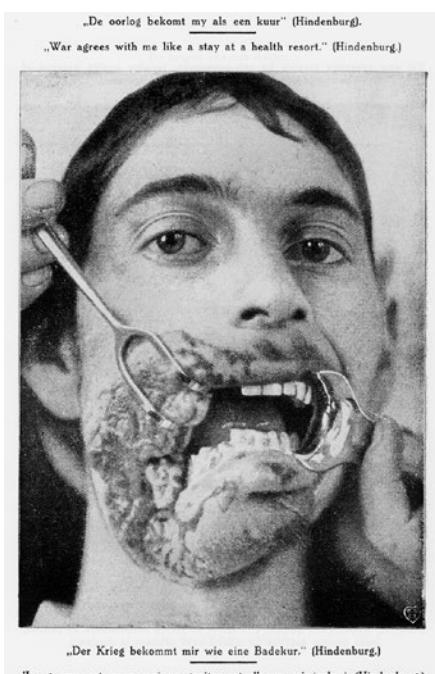


Fig. 3.3: 'Disfigured soldier while undergoing treatment', in: Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (1924), Munich 2004, p. 216.

battlefield and hospital'. '[T]he picture of a soldier in a military hospital allays suspicions; it dispels fears and gloomy thoughts: He's alive, he is doing well in the care of nurses, orderlies and doctors'¹⁹ This was also the impression conveyed by the photographs that were published to propagate an image of the daily life of healthy soldiers. The latter were always depicted as being well fed, well provided for and in high spirits, as part of an intact social fabric together with their fellow soldiers. 'One sees him cheerfully busy, going about his daily business in times of war, obliging and friendly in his dealings with a foreign people, interested in art and culture, but also vigilant and, of course, victorious all at once. He was presented as being masterful in handling the technology of war, and entirely bohemian when it came to the heroes of the sky'.²⁰ In short, the soldier's life, with the aid of photography, was reduced to a kind of 'gentlemen's outing',²¹ as Gerhard Paul aptly put it. The actual act of war was never depicted. At most, there were pictures of German troops marching to the front, or of weapons and captured goods. If death was portrayed, which was rarely the case, it was in the form of carefully tended graves, symbolizing the final resting place of fallen German heroes. The only corpses of soldiers ever shown were those of the enemy, and only when the victims' faces were not visible.²²

These pictorial policies remained in place in the post-war years. The warmongers persisted in their efforts to soften the image of war, or the memory of it,²³ only now it was no longer a matter of reassurance and moralizing, but of uplifting a 'broken nation' and restoring its 'belief in itself', as George Soldan, director of the Reich Archives, put it in his *Geschichtsschreibung des Weltkriegs* (Historiography of the World War).²⁴ To this end, photographs – of the kind shown by Franz Schauwecker or Ernst Jünger in their nationally minded photo volumes *So war der Krieg*²⁵ (This is how the war was) and *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges*²⁶ (The face of World War) – gained in importance.²⁷ Though perhaps not idyllic, the pictures nonetheless showed the German soldier not as a victim but as a heroic fighter, mounting a charge through a 'storm of steel', unfazed by his potentially imminent death. The perspectives of gunner, photographer and viewer are synchronized on a single visual plane,²⁸ with the aim of glorifying battle and popularizing the 'stab in the back' legend.²⁹

That state and military had endeavoured since the start of the war to only disseminate images of the conflict that left no doubt about the enemy's material superiority, and always portrayed an unbroken fighting spirit in their own ranks; but that did not mean they entirely ignored the physical effects of war on soldiers. With the battles of attrition at Verdun and the Somme in 1916, decision makers could no longer deny that the war, apart from causing mass death, had produced huge numbers of disfigured soldiers, around 2.7 million on the German side alone.³⁰ As early as January 1915, Konrad Biesalski, secretary of the German Orthopaedic Society (DOG), estimated that thirty thousand soldiers 'have suffered a severe restriction of their freedom of movement and posture', which he

took to be a ‘problem of considerable ethical and economic significance’ lying in store for Germany.³¹ One year later, the DOG and the German Association for Cripple Care (DVK) convened several ‘extraordinary congresses’ to discuss the medical treatment and social care of the war-disabled. These congresses were attended not only by physicians but also by representatives from the military, homes for the disabled, and heavy industry, as well as by insurance workers and engineers. The result was a programme for the rehabilitation of the war-disabled, the core of which had already been addressed by Biesalski in 1915: ‘1. No charity – but work for crippled soldiers. 2. Return them home to their old surroundings, if possible to their former workplace. 3. Disperse them among the mass of the working population as if nothing had ever happened. 4. There is no such thing as being crippled if the iron will persists in overcoming the handicap to free movement. 5. Therefore educate as broadly as possible all estates, first of all the wounded themselves’.³²

The educational work referred to here was served by film,³³ but especially by photography, usually black-and-white shots created for medical information purposes of the war victims’ relief service. Photos of bloody stumps were no longer to be seen, however. Instead they depicted men with multifunctional metallic prostheses, made to ‘replace or restore in the most perfect and practical manner possible the function of lost extremities’.³⁴ The ‘universal working arm’ of Siemens-Schuckert was just one of many. Attached by means of a shoulder strap, it consisted of a steel tube with a socket at the end. Any number of tools – ‘hands’, as Siemens called them – could be screwed into it. The prostheses, but also the photographs, each had a certain function. According to Sabine Kienitz, the photos showed the fragmented bodies of the war-disabled, including the prostheses developed for them, in such a way as to associate even these mutilated bodies with male-connotated values such as utility, able-bodiedness and industriousness, and to make the wearing of artificial limbs a normal part of social life.³⁵ The pictures were publicized at information events in large military hospitals, at training courses for war invalids, or at exhibitions of the war-wounded relief service (in the form of travelling exhibitions from 1914 to 1918, and even as a permanent exhibition at the Berlin Workers’ Welfare Association and the National Hygiene Museum in Dresden).³⁶ Why these developments were given so much attention was explained in 1916 by Hermann Gocht, director of the Orthopaedics Department at Charité Hospital, in *Zeitschrift für orthopädische Chirurgie*. The possibility of working again and ‘accomplishing’ something, he claimed, was not only extremely important ‘for the man with severely damaged limbs and for his will to work’ but likewise ‘for the general public, for the entire nation, for the state’.³⁷ Along with the war-disabled and potentially affected soldiers, an apprehensive population, too, was not to lose faith in a ‘humane war’ and a state that provides for its people, even if confronted with massively disfigured bodies.

Just how limited this broadly conceived and visually organized ‘discourse of reassurance’³⁸ was can be seen in the approach to the facially wounded. Victor Klemperer, who recorded in his diary a visit to the ‘Heimdank’ exhibition of the war-wounded relief service in Leipzig’s Crystal Palace, notes how the wax models of mutilated faces exhibited there were anything but reassuring. ‘The jaw wounds, in particular,’ he writes, ‘were often a hideous sight. The worst heads, jawless, with raw meat, hacked to pieces, dismembered and swollen, lay half-concealed under cloths, in display cases labelled “For doctors only”. But half of these ghastly models were open to the viewing public, and the fact that they were veiled only made them all the more horrifying’.³⁹ Horror at the sight of disfigured faces might be one reason why the war-related objective of an ‘economy of the body’,⁴⁰ as Heather R. Perry calls the physical enhancement of mutilated limbs, could not be achieved with the facially wounded. The latter were not employed in the war industries, though some of them could have taken on these jobs much more easily than those with artificial limbs. Nor were they sent back to the front, like many ‘war neurotics’.⁴¹ Instead, the facially wounded were categorically discharged. Decision makers deemed the risk too great that the ‘psychological effect’ of these physiognomies would jeopardize ‘discipline’ on the battlefield and working morale on the home front.⁴² This might also explain why the facially wounded had to forego being publicly honoured as ‘national war heroes’.⁴³

Why those with facial injuries were treated differently in various respects from those with disabled limbs can be partly explained by the face’s importance in the overall manifestation of human beings. According to American cultural scientist Daniel McNeill, the face is ‘our social identity, compass, and lure, our social universe’.⁴⁴ And therein lies the reason that contemporaries such as Kurt Tucholsky considered the photographs of the ‘war-mutilated’ shown by Friedrich in *War against War!* to be among the ‘most horrific documents’ he had ‘ever seen’, ascribing them a unique power in the arsenal of images used by the anti-war movement. There is no ‘criminological work, no publication’, he wrote in a review, that ‘could offer anything similar in terms of gruesomeness, of ultimate truth, of instructiveness’. For they alone show the ‘true face of war’, which is why he welcomed Friedrich’s book as a ‘counterweapon’ to the official publications of the Reich Archives, which were ‘utterly in the hands of warmongers’.⁴⁵ Not only Tucholsky recognized that *War against War!* was a battle cry against the increasing militarization of Weimar society; nationalist organizations as well realized its potential, and treated the book accordingly. The Bavarian Veterans’ League (Bayerischer Kriegerbund), for example, wanted to ban it upon publication, and similar organizations even advocated deporting Friedrich.⁴⁶ Although the government ultimately rejected such petitions, as Friedrich thought they would, thanks to the vehement protests of the ‘pacifist press and public’,⁴⁷ bookstores were nonetheless prohibited from putting the book on display. Just how serious the state was would later be seen in its dealings with the Anti-War Museum,

founded by Friedrich in 1925, which hung the images in its display windows regardless of the decree. '[T]wo Prussian policemen and a detective came and removed the pictures *forcefully, with bayonets* [emphasis in original, A.R.]', wrote Friedrich in *War against War!*, but they did at least have enough sense of order to leave a receipt for the goods they had confiscated.⁴⁸ Despite (or because of) such intervention, all seventy thousand copies of the book's first printing sold out in a matter of months. By 1930 it had been printed ten more times and translated into more than forty languages.⁴⁹

The fact that *War against War!* made tempers flare in both left-wing and conservative camps and was indeed perceived as a 'counterweapon' to the official pictorial policies of the state, cannot be attributed to the subject matter of the photos alone. After all, national-conservative journalism had been showing photos of the dead, hanged and wounded since the mid-1920s.⁵⁰ Rather, it was the manner in which Friedrich chose to present the pictures, especially the captions and his explanatory foreword, that had created a frame of reference that would lose none of its force of argument throughout the twentieth century. It was therefore no coincidence that *War against War!* – having all but disappeared from public awareness in the Federal Republic – attracted attention once again shortly after the NATO Double-Track Decision, in the formative phase of the peace movement. The book was reissued in 1980, and by November 1982 it had reached its fourteenth printing. (A small press in the United States even published a reprint in 1987.) The experience of subsequent wars, especially the Second World War, meant that reader response was similar: the images were still interpreted as being 'emblematic of the anti-war movement'.⁵¹ Even in the early twenty-first century, *War against War!* is still considered an 'epochal document of militant pacifism' against the 'militarized society of the Weimar Republic',⁵² indeed an epoch-spanning indictment of war itself.

Medical Frameworks: Attempts to Visually Delimit Violence

Such a reading is certainly warranted, and it is not my aim to discount it here. And yet the example of the facially wounded shows how and to what extent the meaning ascribed to these photographs in a specific historical context is determined by the respective representation as well as by the intended purpose. We realize this when pictures are taken out of the political context they have usually been placed in and we view them for what they originally were: photographs of patients. While it is true that numerous historians have pointed out that the photos were medical documents of reconstructive surgery – at least those historians concerned with *War against War!* in the framework of visual history – this fact has yet to be perceived as an opportunity to historicize and interpret the pictures accordingly.⁵³ Instead, their historical interpretation and meaning has

usually been limited to pointing out the violence and the brutality of modern mechanized warfare or the ignorance of military leaders and their lack of accountability for the fate of individual soldiers. In other words, historians have generally focused on the historical reception of these images and their contextualization in the *Erinnerungskultkampf*, the ‘culture war of remembrance’, of the Weimar Republic.⁵⁴

But the historical interpretation of these photos is blind to alternative readings as long as the conditions they were produced in are not taken into account. The photos, at any rate, were not made for political purposes in the narrow sense, but to illustrate the advances and capabilities of surgical medicine. In this respect, they conformed to contemporary notions of medical photography, and were anything but sensational. As seen in other patient photos, they reveal first and foremost a diagnostic viewpoint, the ‘isolation of the subject’, which corresponds in many ways to the view through the camera lens. Although this medical perspective had been developed long before the invention of photography,⁵⁵ visualization techniques in medicine acquired a new quality with the advent of photography, at least with regard to the question of evidence. ‘Photography’, Berlin orthopaedist Heimann Wolff Berend emphasized as early as 1856, was ‘a path to the most infallible and indisputable verification of surgical facts’, and could ‘currently be seen as the most valuable method for the illustration and, as it were, plastic representation of surgical subjects’.⁵⁶ And yet it was by no means ‘inconsequential if a patient was shown *en face* or *en profil*; one had to always be mindful of how the deformity could be “presented in the proper light”’.⁵⁷

If one of the key aims of early medical photography was to illustrate the respective clinical condition as clearly as possible and with professional detachment, the photographs of disabled First World War veterans were also embedded in a process of constructing social meaning and were certainly employed strategically, as Sabine Kienitz has concluded. ‘The photographs’, she elaborates, ‘were part of a ritualized act of coping, which by means of a medically based photographic documentation of war injuries likewise attempted to contain the horror’.⁵⁸ If untreated wounds were banned from the official stock of images because of their demoralizing effect, treated ones, by contrast, signalled that the wound victims were now in the hands of medical specialists, whose efforts and techniques were helping as best they could to reconstruct shattered body parts. The ‘monopolizing of the war-disabled by the system of medical care and technology’ had effectively ‘limited the problem’. The photo had become a ‘document of medical treatment’, aiming to ‘create a picture of war and at the same time make it invisible by relegating it to the apolitical field of medicine’.⁵⁹

It might seem problematic at first to speak of making war invisible in the case of the facially wounded, even those who received treatment. Yet the logic of medical photography identified by Kienitz applies to this group of victims

as well. The many photos of facial injuries reproduced even during the war in scientific and more popular contexts attest to this, revealing that Friedrich was by no means the first to publicize photos of the facially injured. While it is true that censorship prohibited the photographic depiction of the wounded except in the case of the enemy,⁶⁰ photographs of the war-disabled were exempt from this rule if they were for medical purposes. The *Zensurbuch für die deutsche Presse* (Censor's Book for the German Press) from 1917 read as follows: 'Depictions of wounded or maimed German soldiers shall be approved for publication if it is evident that their purpose is less to depict the suffering of such war-invalids than their care and well-being, and provided their names are given'.⁶¹

This regulation meant, for example, that a 1916 edition of the popular weekly *Die Umschau*, which served as a showcase for the latest developments in technology, science and medicine, could publish photos of facial wounds using three 'before and after' sequences to praise the 'success of plastic surgery'.⁶² That the authors did not try to gloss over a 'special characteristic of this type of invalidity', pointing out that the 'losses in aesthetic terms' were 'undeniably a severe impediment in *every* profession [emphasis in original, A.R.]', was rather the exception in this case.⁶³ It was the exceptional achievements of reconstructive surgery that were usually highlighted – in the *Zeitschrift für Krüppelfürsorge* (Journal of Cripple Care), for instance, the best proof of this was the technical photo. If 'horribly gaping wounds' and surgical techniques could hitherto only be portrayed using wax models, as a commentator on the 'Kölner Kriegsfürsorgeausstellung' (Cologne War Relief Exhibition) noted in 1916, then photography offered far more conclusive evidence of new medical capabilities. The layman could 'scarcely grasp how the chaos of blood, skin folds and bone fragments becomes a human face again, one that is bearable to look at. Wax is patient!, the sceptic might say. But photography is merciless, and shows us more than anything the many cases of exceptional therapeutic success'.⁶⁴

Perhaps no other publication bespeaks these therapeutic successes better than the documentation *Bilder von der Arbeit des Düsseldorfer Lazarets für Kieferverletzte* (Pictures from the Work of the Düsseldorf Hospital for Jaw Wounds), published in 1917.⁶⁵ It, too, showed before-and-after shots of facial injuries, complete with captions indicating the military rank and the date of the 'before' and 'after' photos (Figures 3.4–3.6 below).

Yet the book is of interest to us for another reason as well, for it shows like no other medical publication the extent to which the perception of photographs is determined by the way they are used. It was these very pictures that Friedrich republished in *War against War!*, albeit with wholly different paratexts and minus the 'after' photos, thus withholding from the reader the 'limitation of the problem' that had taken place years before with the aid of medical procedures.

The state's efforts to 'uncripple all invalids as best as possible',⁶⁶ as Biesalski described the aim of the war-wounded relief service, had already commenced



Figs 3.4–3.6: ‘Disfigured soldiers before and after treatment’, in: *Bilder von der Arbeit des Düsseldorfer Lazaretts für Kieferverletzte* (Abt. des Kgl. Reservelazarets I), Düsseldorf c. 1916–17.

before the war in the case of the facially wounded. German doctors treated the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 and the First Balkan War of 1912–13 as welcome opportunities to prepare their own country for military conflict. But the medical reports of European colleagues and visits by German doctors to foreign military hospitals were apparently not enough to guarantee the skills required in the event of a full-scale war. Thus, on the eve of the First World War, the Medical Department of the Ministry of War ordered that test rounds be fired into corpses in order to assess the destructive force of modern steel-jacket bullets. The tests were conducted using different weapons and at various ranges. They concluded that a projectile fired from a distance of 1,000 metres caused a rough splintering of the jaw, whereas a hit ‘to the head of a corpse from a distance of 200 metres smashed the lower jaw into a total pulp’.⁶⁷ No photos of these experiments were published, not even in medical journals. The authors merely pointed out that ‘in no previous war was one so well prepared and equipped with regard to the injuries in question’.⁶⁸

Such statements may have encouraged *Die Umschau* to ask rhetorical questions like the one it posed in 1914, namely, whether wars had become ‘more dangerous’. It answered by saying that wars were in fact becoming ‘increasingly harmless’, and this not only because military medicine had simulated the types of wounds to be expected.⁶⁹ ‘Germany – as always a model in every regard – has taken excellent *precautions* for its soldiers sustaining jaw and dental injuries [emphasis in original, A.R.]’. Its dental and orthodontic care extended ‘into the trenches’, not to mention ‘specially equipped hospitals in the hinterland’ with more than three thousand beds exclusively reserved for facial injuries. The job of these clinics in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Strassburg, Freiburg, Hannover, Bonn and Bremen was to prevent deformation of the face by means of ‘appropriate treatment’ and to ‘lead the wounded to recovery’.⁷⁰ That modern weapons technology went hand in hand with a meticulously organized military medical corps was taken to be the ‘best proof’ that the ‘rather curious-sounding notion of a humane war’ had found its ‘justification’ at last. At least ‘our era knows how to heal the wounds it inflicts’.⁷¹ Even after the war some doctors still held this view; for example, in the *Handbuch der ärztlichen Erfahrungen im Weltkriege* (Handbook of medical experiences in the World War) from 1920, which claimed that we ‘marvel at the successes of plastic surgery – facial surgery and the healing of gunshot wounds to the jaw having left the most significant impression, representing as they do the arguably greatest therapeutic advances in the war’.⁷²

Of the 2.7 million psychically and physically wounded evaluated in 1934 in the *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer* (Medical report on the German Army) – a figure by no means exhaustive – more than three hundred thousand had suffered head injuries, usually caused by rifle or artillery fire.⁷³ According to these figures, one out of every eleven wounded had suffered facial injuries. By comparison, ‘gunshot wounds to the face’ in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 were still a ‘relatively seldom’ occurrence, with a total of 42,660 invalids according to a military medical publication from 1907. They comprised 3.4 per cent of all wounded men, which works out at 1,450 soldiers.⁷⁴ Although the number of soldiers with facial wounds increased with the technical modernization of the First World War, and the type and severity of these injuries was distinctly different from those in previous wars, the mortality rate of these victims dropped. Whereas 48 per cent of the soldiers sustaining facial wounds in the Crimean War died, their death rate in the Franco-Prussian War declined to 9.3 per cent. Commenting on this development in 1917, German military doctors concluded that ‘better transportation and advances in wound treatment would most likely continue to reduce mortality caused by gunshot wounds to the jaw’.⁷⁵ Thus, contrary to the claims of Gerd Krumeich, the state and military were not completely unprepared for the facial injuries to come.⁷⁶

The logic behind this assessment shall be illustrated by way of the following concrete example of a facially wounded soldier. His profile is familiar from *War*

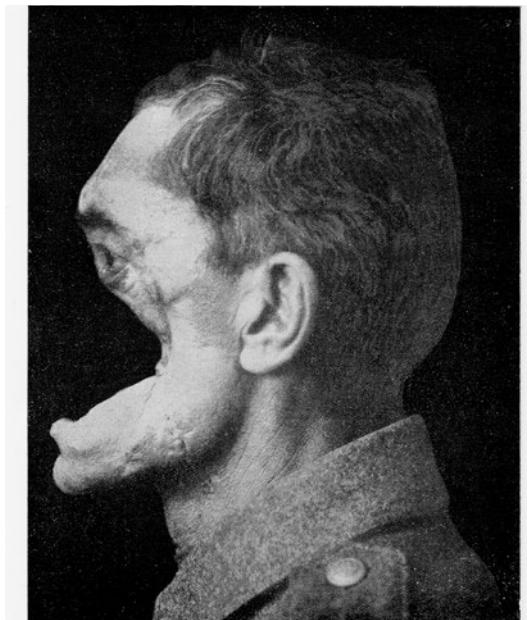


Fig. 3.7: 'Disfigured soldier before treatment', in: Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (1924), Munich 2004, p. 217.

against War! (Figure 3.7). It is the case of Turkish lieutenant Mustafar Ipar from Constantinople, who lost both cheek bones, his nose and upper jaw, both lips, his right eye, both lower eyelids and his tongue from a shrapnel wound in a battle at the Dardanelles. All that remained of his face was his left eye, his forehead, and the lower jawbone.⁷⁷

Since the 'specially equipped hospitals' enthused about in *Die Umschau* before the great battles of attrition were often not able to treat wounds of this severity, Ipar was taken to the Department for Plastic Surgery at the Royal Ear and Nose Clinic of Charité Hospital in Berlin, which was set up by Army Command on 20 June 1916 and received the status of an army reserve hospital.⁷⁸ The department was headed by 'the well-known surgeon for facioplasty, Sanitätsrat [Councilor of Medicine] Joseph, MD', as it said in a letter of 13 May 1916 from the Ministry of War to the directors of Charité.⁷⁹ According to the first annual report, submitted by Joseph on 1 July 1917, the latter had conducted 210 plastic surgeries on sixty-seven patients up to this point, ten of whom were civilians. In the course of twelve months, thirty patients had been released, including five of the civilians. Joseph had operated 98 times on these men, the civilians having needed only one operation each.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, the annual reports from 1918 to 1921 were destroyed during the Second World War, and so we can no longer calculate the total number of facial operations. But the department was more concerned with

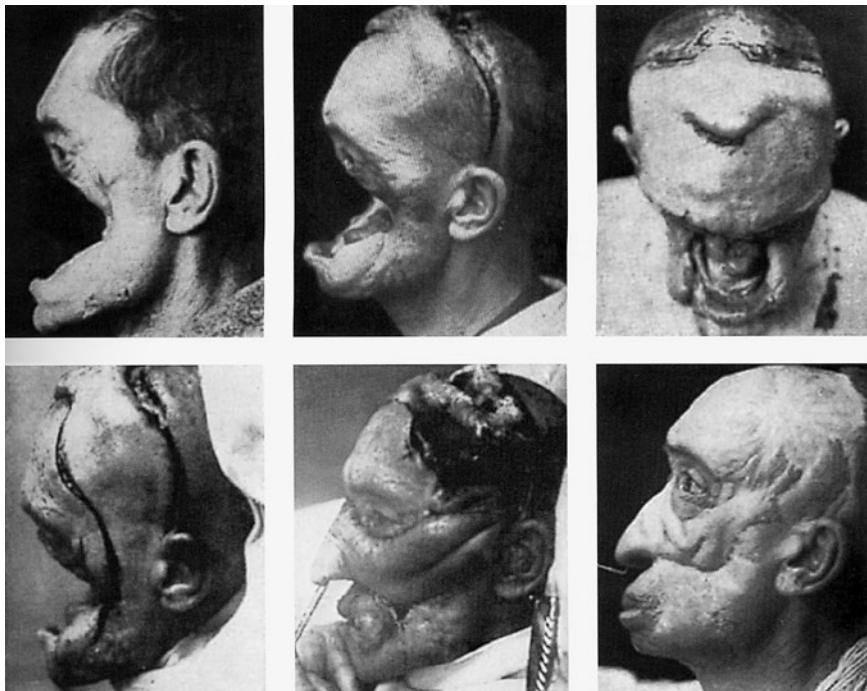


Fig. 3.8: 'Surgical treatment of Mustafar Ipar', in: Jacques Joseph, 'Ungewöhnlich große Gesichtsplastik', *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 25 April 1918, pp. 465–66.

the quality rather than the quantity of the wounded, 'the majority of cases' on whom he had to perform 'major plastic surgical procedures' with 'transplantations from the forehead, the leg, and the arm', Joseph explained, having 'already been operated on by other surgeons with little or no success'.⁸¹

Ipar, who had already undergone multiple operations in Turkey, none of which had been successful, was brought to Berlin with the help of the Red Cross on the evening of 20 January 1918,⁸² writes Joseph, and operated on three days later, each step being documented photographically (Figure 3.8). Joseph made an incision across the shaved scalp, from one ear to the other, with a curve towards the back in the middle of the head. The latter would later serve to form a new nose. He then detached the skin from the skull and folded the flap of skin over the forehead. On the wound surface of the folded skin flap he implanted a fold of epidermis removed from the skin of the buttocks for the subsequent formation of an oral and nasal mucous membrane. He likewise transplanted skin from the buttocks to the exposed skull. Ipar then had to wait four weeks until the next procedure. The second operation took place on 25 February. Joseph detached the newly grown scalp flap from the forehead and thus obtained a so-called 'visor

flap', which he then pulled over the eyes to the mouth area. In this way, Joseph writes, 'both cheeks and the skin of the nose were created in one go'.⁸³ The nose was shaped with the help of a 'palate-nasal-bone prosthesis', which he implanted under the skin; the mouth was formed accordingly.⁸⁴ These operations were conducted with local anaesthesia. Only during removal of the skin from the buttocks was general anaesthesia used.⁸⁵ Four weeks after the second operation, the patient was able to leave Germany. Ipar now had a face. Perhaps not a 'normal' one, but at least a reconstructed face, which the readers of *War against War!* never saw. We can therefore assume that only by extracting patient photos from their original discursive (i.e. medical) context could contemporaries like Friedrich modify the documentary function of these photos and use them in a public debate about the politics of war and who has the power to define them.

The Limits of Medicine and the Order of the Visible

Even though the medical framework puts the photographs of the facially wounded in a wholly different light from *War against War!*, and shows quite clearly how the manner of presentation determines the interpretation of a photo, it has still not managed to be the definitive frame of reference for viewing and interpreting these photos. This is due to at least two factors, which should be outlined here.

Most obviously, the success of reconstructive surgery (which is precisely what the 'before and after' sequences were trying to convey) is belied by reports on the facially wounded who had to live for many years sequestered from the public eye in special care units – either because their faces could not be reconstructed, or because they had to be artificially fed due to massive damage to the jaw and throat. One of these reports stems from the pen of Erich Kuttner, the founder of the War Widows' and Orphans' Fund (Kriegshinterbliebenenfürsorge), who in 1920 visited a hospital for the facially wounded on Thüringer Allee on the west side of Berlin, and published his impressions in the newspaper *Vorwärts* in an article entitled 'Forgotten! The War-Maimed in Berlin Hospitals'.

Prompted by the hospital commission, a man with a bandage across the middle of his face steps into the small office belonging to the commission. He takes it off and I stare into a round hole the size of a man's palm, which extends from the base of the nose to the lower jaw. The right eye is destroyed, the left one half closed. While talking to the man, I notice that the entire interior of his oral cavity is opened up before me: larynx, esophagus, trachea, like an anatomical specimen. Even someone who has seen the battlefield can barely stand the sight of this. But what is this curiously hairy lump of flesh dangling in the cavity from a couple of tendons and ligaments like a bell clapper? They explain to me it is a nose gone wrong, which they had tried to fit onto this unfortunate man. The chunk had been chiselled out of the left temple ... and implanted in the cavity. But, having used a piece of scalp, the nose, which had just begun to grow

in place, was covered with a thick growth of hair. It had to be detached again and is supposed to be replaced by another chunk. This process will probably take another five years. Another five years! Meanwhile the man has weathered his eighteenth surgery. But this is no record. I would soon meet people who had weathered thirty and sixty surgeries.⁸⁶

On the one hand, Kuttner's description expresses the limits of surgical intervention, and on the other – if only indirectly – the difference between text and image as media. Although his report is no less horrid than the photographs of facial wounds, and contains much more concrete information about the fates of some of these men, it did not attract nearly as much publicity as *War against War!* That pictures have a stronger impact than written documents, and the facially wounded therefore have to be *shown*, had been emphasized by contemporaries years before Friedrich ventured his picture documentary. The writer Joseph Roth, who likewise visited a special care hospital in 1920 and wrote about it in the *Neue Berliner Zeitung*, is one example:⁸⁷

I was at the garrison hospital, and paid a visit to the 'jaw-wounded'. Do you know what that is, the jaw-wounded? It is people whom God created in His own image and whom War then remodelled in its own image. This is where you see the ugly face of the Great Era [*die Fratze der Großen Zeit*]. This is what the war looked like:

The chin is blown away, and nose and upper lip hang freely in the air. Or just half a chin is missing. And in return half a nose, lengthwise. Or a shell that went for a stroll in someone's face, and whose rotating band got stuck in the image of God, in the countenance of a white man. Or someone is missing a mouth, no lips, lips he could use to kiss or whisper. ...

The jaw-wounded should be put on view in every illustrated magazine in the world, in every museum, on every advertising pillar. ...

And if the whole world followed this example, a League of Nations would soon materialize whose chairman would be the soldier without lips.

A League of Nations like this would not need many declarations to speak...⁸⁸

The difference between text and image, which Roth addresses here explicitly, has been much discussed since Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766). Lessing differentiated between the discursive and the iconic, between telling and showing. Lessing attributed this to the distinctly different time structure of painting and poetry: the literary work is linear, he claimed, and achieves its aims through a sequence of words; the individual elements of a painting, by contrast, can all be seen at once.⁸⁹ Whereas Lessing concluded from this that images, unlike texts, cannot develop a complex line of argument,⁹⁰ his hypothesis would be reversed in the course of the twentieth century. It is precisely because the components of visual forms are not taken in successively but simultaneously, Susanne K. Langer argues, that their 'complexity is not limited,

like a discourse is, by what the mind can retain from start to finish'.⁹¹ Closely related to these deliberations is the assumption of a varied media efficiency of image and word, as observed by semiotically oriented approaches. According to this notion, images are more emotively effective precisely because they can be perceived in a single act, whereas the effect of words, whether spoken or written, is more cognitive in nature. Images can therefore be more quickly apprehended, are more likely to attract attention, and have a higher emotional power.⁹²

The juxtaposition of text and image, and the implicit drawing of boundaries between the visible and the articulable, can perhaps explain why the photographs of the facially wounded have figured much more prominently than written reports about the lives of these soldiers. And yet this perspective blinds us to the question of why Friedrich's manner of presenting the pictures has eclipsed their original medical frame of reference, and made it nearly invisible. It has been noted many times before that assumptions about the graphic nature of images or the written nature of writing, if monomedial, have turned out to be untenable essentializations,⁹³ as seen not least of all in the case of *War against War!* Here we can see in particularly vivid fashion what Wilhelm Voßkamp and Brigitte Weingart have concluded for the visible in general: 'It is the object, scene and result of regulations, restrictions, exclusions and revisions, of power processes, in other words, that are hardly something we perceive, let alone at first glance'.⁹⁴ Looking at the pictures presented in *War against War!*, viewers could not see that they had been subject to regulations. However, at second glance, and against the background of the medical discourse, attentive observers could recognize that Friedrich's pacifist agenda was driven by an ethics of seeing at the expense of medical assessments.

Not only the trimming of pictures and the deletion of the 'after' shots can be considered an ethical practice. Captions like 'War becomes me like a spa treatment' challenged the limits of the visible, and rendered the original medical context invisible. 'The text constitutes a parasitic message', or so we might describe this procedure in the words of Roland Barthes, 'designed to connote the image, to "quicken" it with one or more second-order signifieds'.⁹⁵ It is questionable to say the least, given the nature of the photos, if it was indeed the captions that helped to make *War against War!* famous, or whether the pictures ultimately spoke for themselves. Faces were brutally destroyed and sometimes patched back together again with variable success, but even the photos of surgical 'successes' – to the extent these were seen at all by contemporaries – were shocking in their own way. And even if the discursive context chosen by Friedrich made the original, medical frame of reference all but invisible, perhaps it was this very approach that allowed him to articulate the visible horror that even today leaves viewers speechless.

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Notes

1. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 6f.
2. Ibid., 20.
3. Ibid., 14.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 24.
6. Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (Berlin: Verlag Freie Jugend, 1924), 5. Friedrich published a second volume of *Krieg dem Kriege!* two years later, with different texts and different photos. Otto Dix's cycle *Der Krieg* (The War), with etchings depicting facial wounds, was also published in 1924, the so-called anti-war year. See Dietrich Schubert (ed.), *Otto Dix, Der Krieg – 50 Radierungen von 1924* (Marburg: Jonas, 2002). On the life and work of Ernst Friedrich, see Thomas Kegel, “Kriege dem Kriege!” Ernst Friedrich – Anarchist und revolutionärer Antimilitarist’, *Graswurzelrevolution* 115 (1986), 22–23.
7. Sontag, *Regarding*, 15.
8. For a detailed discussion, see Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). See also Gottfried Boehm, Sebastian Egenhofen and Christian Spies (eds), *Zeigen: Die Rhetorik des Sichtbaren* (Munich: Fink, 2010); Peter Geimer (ed.), *Ordnungen der Sichtbarkeit: Fotografie in Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002).
9. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 67.
10. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 13.
11. See also Habbo Knoch, ‘Unerträglich: Moderne Gewalt und die Suche nach dem rettenden Bild’, in Torsten Hoffmann and Gabriele Rippl (eds), *Bilder: Ein (neues) Leitmedium?* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 206.
12. Sontag, *Regarding*, 10.
13. See also, for example, Boehm, Egenhofen and Spies, *Zeigen*; Geimer, *Ordnungen*; David Gugerli, ‘Soziotechnische Evidenzen: Der ‘pictorial turn’ als Chance der Geschichtswissenschaft’, *Traverse* 3 (1999), 131–59.
14. Friedrich, *Krieg*, 6.
15. Ibid., 75.
16. Ibid., 97.
17. Ibid., 216.
18. On official pictorial politics, see Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges, Krieg der Bilder: Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges* (Munich: Fink, 2004), 113–32; Bernd Hüppauf, ‘Fotografie im Ersten Weltkrieg’, in Rolf Spilker and Bernd Ulrich (eds), *Der Tod als Maschinist: Der indust-*

- trialisierte Krieg 1914–1918* (Bramsche: Rasch, 1998), 109–23; Thilo Eisermann, *Pressefotografie und Informationskontrolle im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Kämpfer, 2000); Gerd Krumeich, 'Kriegsfotografie zwischen Erleben und Propaganda: Verdun und die Somme in deutschen und französischen Fotografien des Ersten Weltkriegs', in Ute Daniel and Wolfram Siemann (eds), *Propaganda, Meinungskampf, Verführung und politische Sinnstiftung 1789–1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1994), 116–32; Bodo von Dewitz, 'Zur Geschichte der Kriegsphotographie des Ersten Weltkrieges', in Rainer Rother (ed.), *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit: Bilder des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1994), 163–76.
19. Paul, *Bilder*, 109.
 20. See von Dewitz, *Geschichte*, 170.
 21. Paul, *Bilder*, 120.
 22. Ibid., 172–75.
 23. See Gerhard Paul, 'Der Kampf um das "wahre Gesicht" des Krieges: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Bildpublizistik der Weimarer Republik', in Diethart Kerbs and Walter Uka (eds), *Fotografie und Bildpublizistik der Weimarer Republik* (Bönen: Kettler, 2004), 49–79.
 24. George Soldan, *Die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung des Weltkriegs – Eine nationale Aufgabe* (1919), in Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 1056, no. 41, 49–89, here 64.
 25. Franz Schauwecker, *So war der Krieg: 230 Kampfaufnahmen aus der Front* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1927).
 26. Ernst Jünger (ed.), *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges: Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten: Mit 200 photographischen Aufnahmen auf Tafeln, Kartenanhang sowie einer chronologischen Kriegsgeschichte in Tabellen* (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1930).
 27. On German photobooks of the First World War, see Thomas F. Schneider, 'Narrating the War in Pictures: German Photo Books on World War I and the Construction of Pictorial War Narrations', *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 4 (2011), 31–49.
 28. Paul, *Bilder*, 141.
 29. See Gerhard Paul, 'Der Dolchstoß: Ein Schlüsselbild nationalistischer Erinnerungspolitik', in idem, *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder 1900–1949* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 300–307.
 30. For a detailed account of the state's approach to the war-disabled, see Sabine Kienitz, *Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914–1923* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008); see also Bernd Ulrich, "... als wenn nichts geschehen wäre": Anmerkungen zur Behandlung der Kriegsopfer während des Ersten Weltkriegs', in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich (eds), *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch ... Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen: Klartext, 1992), 115–29; and Maren Möhring, 'Kriegsversehrte Körper: Zur Bedeutung von Sichtbarkeit von Behinderung', in Anne Waldschmidt and Werner Schneider (eds), *Disability Studies, Kultursociologie und Soziologie der Behinderung: Erkundungen in einem neuen Forschungsfeld* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 175–97; for more detail on Britain, see Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); for a comparative perspective, Deborah Cohen, *Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).
 31. Konrad Biesalski, 'Die ethische und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Kriegkrüppelfürsorge und ihre Organisation im Zusammenhang mit der gesamten Kriegshilfe: Vortrag im Rahmen der Ausstellung für Verwundeten- und Krankenfürsorge im Sitzungssaal des Reichstags gehalten am 13. Januar 1915, Leipzig 1915', *Beilage zur Zeitschrift für Krüppelfürsorge* 8 (1915/16), 3.
 32. Konrad Biesalski, 'Wer ist der Führer in der gesamten Fürsorge für unsre heimkehrenden Krieger?', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 18 January 1915.
 33. See Kienitz, *Helden*, 194ff.
 34. Herman Gocht, 'Bericht der ausserordentlichen Tagung der Deutschen Orthopädischen Gesellschaft', *Zeitschrift für orthopädische Chirurgie* 36 (1916/17), 209–71, here 215.

35. See Kienitz, *Helden*, 212f. Kienitz points out that the photographs were sometimes of civil accident invalids, who were often held up as models for the war-wounded and their (yet to be mastered) fates.
36. Kienitz, *Helden*, 197ff. See also Christine Beil, *Der ausgestellte Krieg: Die Präsentation des Ersten Weltkriegs in deutschen Museen und Ausstellungen zwischen 1914 und 1939* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 2004).
37. Gocht, 'Bericht', 215.
38. Kienitz, *Helden*, 195.
39. Victor Klemperer, *Curriculum Vitae: Erinnerungen eines Philologen 1881–1918*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1989), 609.
40. Heather R. Perry, 'Brave Old World: Recycling der Kriegskrüppel während des Ersten Weltkriegs', in Barbara Orland (ed.), *Artifizielle Körper – Lebendige Technik* (Zurich: Chronos, 2005), 147–58, here 154.
41. See Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
42. Adalbert G. Bettmann, 'The Psychology of Appearances', *Northwest Medicine* 28 (1929), 182–85, here 184.
43. On the hierarchization of war victims based on the type and degree of their wounds, see Kienitz, *Helden*, 103f.
44. Daniel McNeill, *The Face: A Natural History* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1998), 4.
45. Kurt Tucholsky, 'Waffe gegen den Krieg', *Die Weltbühne* 8 (23 February 1926), 312–13, here 312.
46. See Dora Apel, 'Cultural Battlefields: Weimar Photographic Narratives Of War', *New German Critique* 76 (1999), 68f.
47. Friedrich, *Krieg*, 234.
48. Ibid. The book shows a receipt for 77 confiscated photos. The Anti-War Museum was closed in 1933 by the Nazis and reopened in 1982 in West Berlin, fifteen years after Friedrich's death. See <http://www.anti-kriegs-museum.de>.
49. See Apel, *Battlefields*, 53.
50. See Paul, *Bilder*, 137ff.
51. Michael Hagner, 'Verwundete Gesichter, verletzte Gehirne: Zur Deformation des Kopfes im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Claudia Schmölders and Sander Gilman (eds), *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik: Eine physiognomische Kulturgeschichte* (Cologne: DuMont, 2000), 78–95, here 78.
52. For example, in a review by Christian Jostmann in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from 3 August 2004 on the occasion of the book's reissue as a reprint of the original edition.
53. This approach was merely suggested in Hagner, 'Gesichter'.
54. Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914–1956* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), 248.
55. For a detailed discussion, see Bernhard Kathan, 'Objekt, Objektiv und Abbildung: Medizin und Fotografie', *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 80 (2001), 3–16, here 5.
56. Heimann Wolff Berend, *Ein orthopädischer Lehr-Apparat für die Kaiserl. Russ. Universität Kiew* (Berlin: Hirschwald, 1865), 21.
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58. Kienitz, *Helden*, 214; See also, for example, Gunnar Schmidt, 'Ästhetik des Schreckens: Zu einigen Aspekten der medizinischen Fotografie im 19. Jahrhundert', *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 56 (1995), 23–36.
59. Kienitz, *Helden*, 215.
60. See, for example, Paul, *Krieg*, 134; Apel, *Battlefields*, 52; Oster, *Gesicht*, 24.

61. *Zensurbuch für die deutsche Presse* (Berlin: Oberzensurstelle des Kriegspresseamts, 1917), 70.
62. H. Salomon, 'Kriegsinvalidität nach Kieferverletzungen', *Die Umschau* 20(1) (1916), 148–50, here 149.
63. Salomon, 'Kriegsinvalidität', 149f.
64. Walter Trojan, 'Die Ausstellung für Kriegsfürsorge in Köln 1916', *Zeitschrift für Krüppelfürsorge* 9 (1916): 404–8, here 404. On the importance of wax models for documenting the results of plastic surgery in the First World War, see Hagner, *Gesichter*, 81f.
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66. Konrad Biesalski, 'Die ethische und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Kriegskrüppelfürsorge und ihre Organisation im Zusammenhang mit der gesamten Kriegshilfe. Vortrag Hamburg 1915', *Beilage zur Zeitschrift für Kriegskrüppelfürsorge* 8 (1915–16).
67. R. Klapp and H. Schröder, *Die Unterkieferschlußbrüche und ihre Behandlung* (Berlin: Meusser, 1917), 17.
68. Ibid.
69. Hanns Günther, 'Sind die Kriege gefährlicher geworden?', *Die Umschau* 18(2) (1914), 808–13, here 808 and 810.
70. Salomon, 'Kriegsinvalidität', 148.
71. Günther, 'Kriege', 813.
72. Otto von Schjerning, *Die Tätigkeit und die Erfolge der deutschen Feldärzte im Weltkriege, zugleich Einleitung zu dem 'Handbuch der ärztlichen Erfahrungen im Weltkriege'* (Leipzig: Barth, 1920), 1–17, here 10.
73. See *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer (Deutsches Feld- und Besatzungsheer) im Weltkriege 1914/18, bearbeitet von der Heeres-Sanitätsinspektion des Reichswehrministeriums*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Mittler, 1934), 68–71. With a total of 4.3 million invalids, the actual number of facially wounded is certainly much higher than the number cited here.
74. Ernst Graf and Otto Hildebrandt, *Die Verwundungen durch die modernen Kriegfeuerwaffen, ihre Prognose und Therapie im Felde* (Berlin: Hirschwald, 1907), 154.
75. Klapp and Schröder, *Unterkieferschlußbrüche*, 1.
76. Krumeich, *Vorwort*, in Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2004), XV.
77. See Jacques Joseph, 'Ungewöhnlich große Gesichtsplastik', *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* (25 April 1918), 465–66.
78. The department was shut down on 22 January 1922. See Humboldt University Archives, Charité-Direktion, no. 890/1, Schreiben zur Auflösung der Abteilung für plastische Chirurgie an der Charité vom 10. Dezember 1921.
79. Humboldt University Archives, Charité-Direktion, no. 890/1, 1V.
80. Humboldt University Archives, Charité-Direktion, no. 890/1, Jahresbericht vom 1. Juli 1917, 23R.
81. Humboldt University Archives, Charité-Direktion, no. 890/1, Jahresbericht vom 1. Juli 1917, 24V.
82. See Joseph, 'Gesichtsplastik', 465.
83. Ibid., 466.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., 467.
86. Erich Kuttner, 'Vergessen! Die Kriegszermalmten in den Berliner Lazaretten', *Vorwärts*, 9 September 1920, 1–2, here 1.
87. Kuttner, too, in his report on the facially wounded, demanded that 'One should show them to young people so they learn and experience what war is'.

88. Joseph Roth, 'Die Fratze der Großen Zeit', *Neue Berliner Zeitung – 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 31 August 1920, cited in idem, *Berliner Saisonbericht: Unbekannte Reportagen und journalistische Arbeiten 1920–39*, ed. Klaus Westermann (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1984), 89–90.
89. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 6, *Kunsttheoretische und kunsthistorische Schriften*, ed. Herbert G. Göpfert, revised by Albert von Schirnding (Munich: Hanser, 1974), 29 and 102ff.
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95. Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message' [1961] cited in Vicki Goldberg (ed.), *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 521–33, here 529.

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Chapter 4

DOCUMENTING *HEIMKEHR*

Photography, Displacement and ‘Homecoming’ in the Nazi
Resettlement of the Ethnic Germans, 1939–1940

Elizabeth Harvey



Fig. 4.1: Latvian Germans being filmed by *Wochenschau* (newsreel) cameraman boarding bus in courtyard of premises of Frauenbund in Riga, c. November 1939. Photographer: Alexander Frankenstein. Archive of the Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft, Lüneburg. (Captions to photographs in this chapter without inverted commas are the author's own; original captions are in inverted commas)

The group of men and women dressed in winter clothes, carrying suitcases and waiting to board a bus parked in a courtyard do not present an obviously noteworthy spectacle. But our attention is caught by the cameraman in the foreground: something significant is clearly being filmed, and this act of recording

Notes from this chapter begin on page 101.

has itself been captured by a photographer. According to the caption provided for the photograph, now held in the archive of a Baltic German cultural association, the image shows a newsreel cameraman from Germany filming in the courtyard of the building of the German Women's League (Frauenbund) in Riga, where Latvian Germans about to be resettled to the Reich gathered to board a bus taking them to the harbour. The photographer, Alexander Frankenstein, had published before 1939 in the *Rigasche Rundschau*, and his work had included documenting the activities of increasingly Nazi-oriented Baltic German youth groups.¹

Frankenstein's photograph is one example of the efforts to create a photographic record of the mass transfers of ethnic Germans from eastern and south-eastern Europe to the Reich from October 1939 onwards, under the aegis of Himmler as 'Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom' (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, or RKF). The bulk of this documentation covered three waves of supposed 'homecoming' (*Heimkehr*) in particular: the Baltic Germans from Latvia and Estonia between October and December 1939; the Volhynian, Galician and Narev district Germans from Soviet-occupied eastern Poland between December 1939 and February 1940; and the Bessarabian, Bukovina and Dobrudja Germans from Romania between September and December 1940 (of the Romanian territories from which Germans were transferred, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina had been annexed by the Soviet Union at the end of June 1940).² The first two of these transfers were improvised at speed following the Nazi–Soviet pact and attack on Poland. Up until 1939, the German Reich had regarded areas of German settlement in eastern and south-eastern Europe as outposts of 'Germandom' and sources of potential leverage in foreign policy. Now, Hitler declared in a speech to the Reichstag on 6 October 1939 that eastern and south-eastern Europe were 'full of unsustainable fragments of German ethnicity' ('mit nichthaltbaren Splittern des deutschen Volkstums gefüllt'), who were to be resettled to achieve a 'reordering of ethnic conditions'.³

As early as the 1940s and 1950s, studies of the resettlement programme highlighted the way in which the settlers were a manoeuvrable mass of human material, uprooted, screened and then selected or rejected as potential colonizers for the conquered territories.⁴ More recent studies have located the resettlement programme within the wider context of racist population restructuring in Nazi-occupied Europe, in which native non-Germans were displaced, expropriated, deported, exploited as forced labour, and murdered.⁵ As the settlers arrived in successive waves, planners and occupation authorities were under pressure to screen and select them, and to seize space and resources to accommodate them.⁶ By the end of 1942, nearly 630,000 ethnic Germans had been transferred to the Reich from different areas of German-speaking settlement in eastern and south-eastern Europe; of these, around 60 per cent had been resettled, with the

rest remaining in resettler camps as part of Nazi Germany's expanding 'camp society'.⁷

Other portrayals of resettlement have focused on the specific consequences for particular resettler groups. These have brought out the mixed motives as well as external pressures that underlay the decision by different minority groups to agree to resettlement, and the ambivalent role that resettlers ended up playing if settled as colonizers in occupied Poland.⁸ While they felt discriminated against in comparison to 'Reich Germans', and while young male resettlers were pressured into joining the Waffen-SS, the different groups of resettled ethnic Germans became de facto beneficiaries, however reluctant, of the policies that plundered and persecuted Poles and Jews, and some were enthusiastic Nazi supporters and activists. This complex and ambivalent picture is something with which community organizations of former resettlers have come to grapple, even while other new findings – for instance the uncovering of evidence that sick and elderly resettlers became victims of euthanasia – have in turn reinforced a memory of victimization.⁹

In the research hitherto on resettlement, photographs feature mainly as illustrations, and are rarely commented on.¹⁰ But the sheer quantity of photographs taken for official purposes alerts us to a phenomenon worth exploring in its own right. The official photographic record included images published at the time in newspapers, illustrated periodicals and picture volumes, along with texts and captions portraying the population transfers as a 'Heimkehr ins Reich' ('homecoming to the Reich') or, even more grandly, as a modern *Völkerwanderung* ('migration of peoples').¹¹ Other photographs were not immediately destined for publication but for the archive. Images of the resettlers in their former homelands, on the move and in the process of resettlement in territories annexed by the Reich, above all in Poland, were acquired by Himmler's RKF agency and by the Deutsches Ausland-Institut (DAI) in Stuttgart, which was commissioned by Himmler to document the resettlement.¹² In light of this profusion of images, both published and stored, it is worth asking what made the taking of photographs such a vital part of the resettlement operation, and what it was about photography that might have rendered it such a compelling medium for National Socialists in their effort to control how contemporaries – including resettlers themselves – viewed the resettlement programme.

Here, it is worth briefly considering some wider issues relating to the interpretation of such visual documentation. The chapters in this volume share a concern with documentary photography (and/or with photographs as documents more generally) and with the nature of photographs as a record of radical transformations in recent German history. They probe the ways in which photographs, with their apparent 'raw' immediacy – their 'proximity effect'¹³ – have a propensity to shock, stir or haunt the viewer. As such, these documentary photographs could and can be used as tools for political or moral ends: they may have been

intended to induce in viewers at the time of their production and dissemination a response of empathy or engagement, and they may still trigger such responses in historians analysing them today. Historians may thus ponder an ‘ethics of seeing’ in the sense of formulating an appropriate ethical response to viewing certain photographs of past events from today’s perspective. In the case of the official documentation of the Nazi resettlement programme, the viewer today faces several challenges. On the one hand, the photographs have to be analysed as a legitimisation of dictatorial politics that masqueraded as care, support and welfare. The photographers’ choices of subject matter, the clichés and compositional devices that constituted this manipulative visual communication have to be teased out. On the other hand, the viewer today can also consider the situation of the resettlers in front of the lens. Using other sources, it is a major challenge to reconstruct the diverse and shifting responses of different groups of resettlers: their attitudes ranged from zealous and willing collaboration with Nazism to resigned or grumbling compliance with the regime’s orders. In light of that, how appropriate or fruitful is it to try and decipher official photos as evidence of resettlers’ responses to their uprooting at the time?

The photographic effort to capture the resettlement operation also needs to be seen in the wider context of photography during National Socialism. Photography was harnessed to the purposes of the regime in myriad ways, whether this entailed taking heroizing shots of Nazi leaders, staging and recording mass events and communal rituals, presenting military campaigns as a dramatic spectacle, producing reassuring images of timeless German landscapes or creating a taxonomy of human types designed to underpin messages about racial quality and inferiority.¹⁴ But there may be more specific reasons why it was crucial for the agencies involved in resettlement to generate the right sort of photographs of the operation. Wilhelm Fielitz, in examining the media accounts of the resettlement of the Volhynian Germans, notes the portrayal of resettlement as a quasi-military operation or ‘victory’.¹⁵ He also finds a process of ‘image management’ at work in which sceptical or indifferent ‘Reich Germans’ were to be persuaded that the incoming resettlers were not only ‘real’ Germans (contrary to the impressions created by the unfamiliar speech or outlandish appearance of some resettler groups) but ‘exemplary’ Germans.¹⁶ Fielitz’s suggestions are a point of departure for exploring how official photographs of resettlement reflected the regime’s response to the dual challenge of justifying the abandonment of historic areas of German settlement and ‘selling’ the resettlers to a possibly prejudiced public. At the same time, the images may also have been intended to reassure, motivate and flatter the Party faithful, who were called upon to realize the vision of an ‘expanding *Volksgemeinschaft*’ in wartime. In exploring photographs taken as part of the official record, it can be asked what conventions and traditions – for instance, the striking or unusual ‘human interest’ images characteristic of the illustrated pictorial, or those of ethnographic, ‘*Heimat*’ or ‘racial’ photography

– may have influenced the photographers' choice of subject matter and the way they composed their images. But it is also important to explore how cameras magnified the power of the technocrats in charge, and how visual scrutiny was part of the apparatus of control over the settlers.¹⁷

If taking photographs was an indispensable part of the resettlement operations, the impressions they provided were slippery and prone to be read in contradictory ways. For all the 'authenticity effect' that makes photographs such vivid documents of past events, they can yield more than one meaning.¹⁸ A published image of an elderly or traditionally clad resettler, or a nurse looking after small resettler children, might be read by contemporaries in different ways, even if captions and layouts were used to 'fix' the meaning for readers/viewers. How far such cross-cutting readings might have suggested themselves to those who looked at these images at the time is impossible to say, but in the following I highlight some of the jarring or ambiguous elements in photographs and photoreportages that are visible to an observer today. These include cases where a photograph contains odd or seemingly extraneous elements that confound a straightforward reading of its content, contradicts the caption attached to it, or jars with another juxtaposed image. This is not to suggest that there is a 'real' history to be uncovered from photographs through a process of unmasking, but to emphasize the possibility of alternative readings.

Heimat, Community, Race

The official photographic record of resettlement had a number of strands. Professional and skilled amateur photographers who belonged to German minorities abroad and who before 1939 had been documenting 'German life' beyond the borders of the Reich found new subject matter in the preparations for departure and the process of resettlement. Photographs by Wilhelm Holtfreter and Alexander Frankenstein from Riga appeared in an article series on the 'homecoming' of the Baltic Germans in *Der Angriff*, the newspaper of the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront or DAF) in November 1939 as well as in the illustrated volume *Der Führer ruft*.¹⁹ Photos of resettlement taken by the Protestant church official Arthur Kräenbring from Tarutino in Bessarabia were collected by the DAI.²⁰ Other documentary photos were taken by members of the 'resettlement commandos' of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. These included reserve policemen such as Hans Richter, who produced an illustrated souvenir volume celebrating his contribution to a series of different resettlement operations,²¹ but also 'ethnographic experts' who had established themselves in the burgeoning organizations concerned with German '*Volkstum*' in the interwar period. They included the Austrian Lothar von Seltmann, head of the Vienna branch of the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland (VDA), and Karl

Stumpp, himself from Bessarabia but based since 1933 in Stuttgart as the head of the local branch of the VDA and then as head of a research unit on Russian Germans initiated jointly by the VDA and DAI.²² With the switch in Nazi policy after August 1939 towards German minorities in areas within or bordering the Soviet sphere of influence, such *Volkstum* experts were now mobilized to secure ‘their’ Germans abroad as a transferable resource for the Reich.

Another important strand of the official photographic record was provided by press photographers and photojournalists, whose work appeared in newspapers and the illustrated press, in illustrated volumes (for instance, in the series ‘Volksdeutsche Heimkehr’), and at exhibitions. Copies of their photographs, sometimes accompanied by draft captions indicating a prospective propaganda message and notes about where they were published, also fill the photo archive collections of the DAI and the RKF.²³ Many professional press photographers were by now working for the propaganda corps (Propaganda-Kompanien, or PK) of the Wehrmacht or SS,²⁴ but women photojournalists, notably Liselotte Purper, also became involved in documenting resettlement. Purper travelled to Belgrade in October 1940 to document the transfer of the Bessarabian and Dobrudja Germans, and in particular the ‘womanly work’ involved in caring for the settlers en route.²⁵

Several themes recur in the photographs of resettlement that were published in newspapers, periodicals and illustrated volumes and that can also be found in the collections of the RKF and DAI. One is the (rural) homeland before departure: here, photographers drew on the genre of *Heimat* photography to show farmhouses and village life as indicators of the peasant identities of the resettled Germans from eastern Poland and from Romania. *Heimat* photographs with their captions could show how traditional customs prevailed even in the upheaval of departure: the DAI photo collection contains images from German villages in Bessarabia of the last washday, the last slaughter of a pig, the last service in the local church, and farewell ceremonies at graveyards. A second major theme of the official photographic record was the ‘community on the move’: the collective departures and journeys made by the settlers and the progressive stages of their supposed integration into a widening community of Germans. Images of the moment of departure evoked Baltic German enthusiasm for Nazi Germany – for example, in a photo showing a number of passengers giving the Hitler salute on board a ship en route from Riga, and in one displaying the festive atmosphere of departure from Bukovina with an image of a young woman decorating a train carriage with flowers.²⁶ In November 1940, Liselotte Purper photographed Dobrudja German settlers walking up the gangway at Cernavoda to embark on a ship travelling up the Danube to Belgrade bound for the transit camp at Semlin (Figure 4.2). According to the information accompanying the print in the DAI archive, the photo was shown at an exhibition organized by the Nazi women’s organization, the NS-Frauenschaft, in Stuttgart in October 1941.



Fig. 4.2: Dobrudja German resettlers walking up the gangway at Cernavoda to embark on a Danube ship bound for Belgrade and the transit camp at Semlin, November 1940. Photographer: Liselotte Purper. Bundesarchiv Bild 137-071224.

Purper's photo is shot in sunlight against a backdrop of rural landscape: it includes resettlers with elements of traditional dress (in the figures at the front, the man's hat and the woman's headscarf), as well as the white registration labels that feature in many resettlement photos.²⁷ The upward movement of the procession towards the point of embarkation aligns with the smiling face of the woman in the foreground to signal a confident mood and willing departure.

Among the images of departures and journeys, one outstanding motif that caught the eye of photographers and picture editors was that of the wagon treks.²⁸ These featured in some of the resettlement operations, notably that of the Volhynian and Galician Germans from eastern Poland and that of the Bessarabian, Dobrudja and Bukovina Germans from Romania. For resettlers, the trek option had the straightforward purpose of allowing them to transport as much of their belongings as would fit on a wagon (for those who travelled by train, the baggage allowance was limited).²⁹ But for the purposes of resettlement documentation and published propaganda, the trek evoked much grander meanings associated with peoples in history setting out to new lands and frontiers.³⁰ If a single covered wagon with a family perched on top – as in the cover image from Hans Richter's *Heimkehrer* – could evoke pioneer individualism, a wagon train could suggest the 'organized migration of peoples' (*organisierte Völkerwanderung*), the synchronized movement of a community united in a



Fig. 4.3: ‘The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, Heinrich Himmler, greets homecomers on the bridge at Przemysl’ (transl. of original caption), from Hans Richter, *Heimkehrer: Bildberichte von der Umsiedlung der Volksdeutschen aus Bessarabien, Rumänien, aus der Süd-Bukowina und aus Litauen* (Berlin: Eher, 1941).

quest for a better land.³¹ Likewise, trek photographs conjured up the toughness of the Volhynian and Galician Germans in the face of subzero temperatures, as well as the resettlement commandos’ mastery over space: the efficient dispatch and arrival of a trek could be seen as applying lessons from the most recent military campaign, while anticipating the next. Seltmann’s trek narrative emphasized moments of drama where he and his comrades came to the rescue of settlers, less so the accidents and mortality associated with the treks from Volhynia and Galicia in midwinter: his photos of the trek correspondingly stressed the battle against the weather.³²

Border-crossings at significant staging points were made into ‘news’ shots capturing the moment of transition from one world and epoch to another. One much-photographed scene showed Himmler at the end of January 1940 welcoming the final treks crossing the bridge at Przemysl from Soviet-occupied Poland into the General Government (Figure 4.3).³³



Fig. 4.4: Archive caption: 'Homecoming of the Bessarabian Germans: A resettler transport crosses the bridge over the Pruth, which forms the border between Russia and Romania' ('Heimkehr der Bessarabiendeutschen: Ein Umsiedler-Transport passiert die Brücke über den Pruth, der die Grenze zwischen Russland und Rumänien bildet'), 13 October 1940. Photographer: unknown. Bundesarchiv Bild 183-L09719.

Photographs of this scene appeared in *Das Schwarze Korps*, in the *Illustrierter Beobachter*, in Hans Richter's *Heimkehrer*, and in the VDA picture calendar for 1941.³⁴ Another commonly photographed border-crossing was at the bridge over the Pruth river from Soviet-occupied Bessarabia into non-occupied Romania.³⁵ The image shown in Figure 4.4 was archived in the RKF photo collection and published in a 1942 illustrated volume in the 'Bücher der Heimkehr' series.³⁶

Photographs taken in camps and collection points conveyed the sense of communities not only on the move but also being forged in new ways through the experience of resettlement. The enforced communal living, eating and sleeping on the decks of ships and in transit camps made the resettlers appear as a collective. This was a gift to photographers, who seized on the variety of 'human interest' in camp life to capture scenes that fitted the genre of photoreportage while suggesting the intensity of new encounters and relationships. The photos in Richter's *Heimkehrer* include several shots of uniformed members of the Order Police helping in the transit camp Semlin near Belgrade, carrying a laundry basket full of clean dishes, holding a baby and helping to feed small children. In a camp that presented itself as one big family, policemen could assume the guise of indulgent fathers. More typically, women were pictured as the 'helping hands' that demonstrated the German community spirit supposedly unleashed by the resettlement programme, and resettler mothers and children were the preferred motifs chosen to represent grateful recipients. Figure 4.5 shows two



Fig. 4.5: Female resettlers and helper. Caption on archive record card: 'Verpflegung während der Fahrt' ('Food being served during the journey'), October/November 1940. Photographer: Liselotte Purper. Bundesarchiv Bild 137-071225.

resettlers, presumably mother and daughter, probably Dobrudja Germans, being served food by a female helper, with two boys in the background looking into the camera: the archive record card notes that this was another photo to be used in the NS-Frauenschaft exhibition in Stuttgart in October 1941. Figure 4.6 shows a photo that was published in the DAI journal *Deutschland im Ausland* at the end of 1940 showing a Bessarabian German mother and baby with a nurse.³⁷ The journal provided the caption, 'We leave the graves behind but bring the cradles: A nurse's hands tend one of the youngest German resettlers from Bessarabia' ('Die Gräber lassen wir zurück, aber die Wiegen bringen wir mit: Schwesternhände betreuen einen der jüngsten deutschen Umsiedler aus Bessarabien').

In these and similar images, resettlers are shown in the communal facilities of transit camps en route to the Reich, encountering helpers who served them food, handed out clothing and tended to their children. Such images emphasized the mobilization of a larger 'community of action' ('Volksgemeinschaft der Tat') and the resources being poured into the welfare of the resettlers in the midst of war.³⁸

A third motif in official resettlement photography was physiognomy as an indicator of the resettlers' resilience and 'racial' quality. Such photographs followed in a tradition of ethnographic photography from the interwar period,



Fig. 4.6: Bessarabian German mother with baby and nurse, published in *Deutschbum im Ausland* 23(11/12), November/December 1940. Photographer: unknown. Bundesarchiv Bild 137-061927.

when academic ethnographers and (after 1933) racial biologists headed to areas of German settlement abroad to study the customs, environment, health, and physical features of 'Germandom' in eastern and south-eastern Europe.³⁹ Such projects sometimes included photographing farmhouses and the layout of villages, but also the features of the people they encountered as part of the study of racial types.⁴⁰ Published portraits of settlers mixed images of youth and age, with captions highlighting the settlers' value as additions to the population of the Reich. Figure 4.7 shows a Volhynian grandfather and grandson: the striking features of the photo are the old man's white beard and bushy eyebrows, his traditional fur collar and cap, and his intense gaze (not into the camera). It was published in Lothar von Seltmann, *Tagebuch vom Treck der Wolhyniendeutschen*, and a virtually identical shot was published in the VDA-Bildkalender for 1941. Figure 4.8 is a portrait by Erich Märzt of Jochen Bippus, the son of the headmaster of the school in Tarutino in Bessarabia.

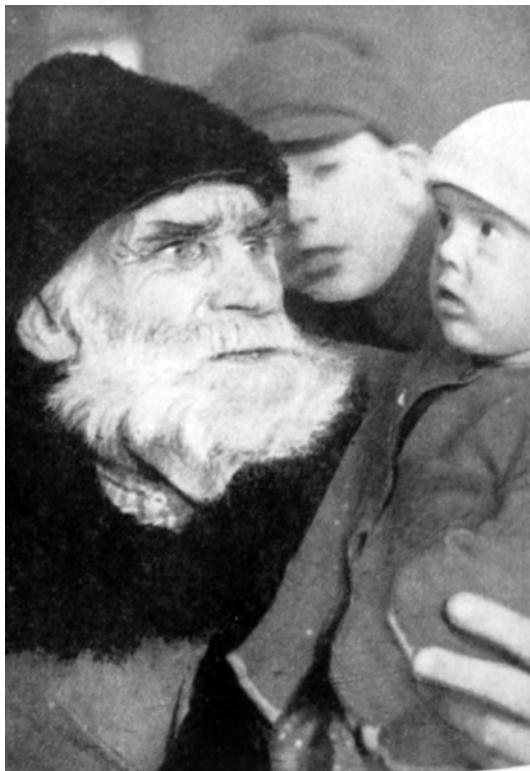


Fig. 4.7: ‘Grandfather and grandson – returned home to the great Reich of their people’ (trans. of original caption). From Lothar von Seltmann, *Tagebuch vom Treck der Wolhyniendeutschen* (Potsdam: Voggenreiter, 1941).

Such portraits could convey either the message that the incoming Germans were already visibly identical with the Germans in the Reich, or that the scattered islands of ‘Germandom abroad’ included people who appeared ‘other’ but were still capable of integration into the expanded ‘Volksgemeinschaft’. The photograph of the Volhynian grandfather is an example of the iconography of settlers as distinctive but ‘authentic’; in the case of the portrait of Jochen Bippus, by contrast, the boy’s features could have been slotted into any propaganda image of the Hitler Youth. Whether the photographer himself ‘saw’ in racist categories or not, it is clear from the caption added to the back of the photo that the boy’s features were to be presented to readers of *Das Schwarze Korps* as evidence of ‘racial quality’. A nearly identical portrait of Bippus from the same series was published as a group of four in *Das Schwarze Korps* in September 1940 in a feature entitled ‘They have remained German’ (*Sie sind deutsch geblieben*), with the caption: ‘The face of the Bessarabian Germans has remained as purely German as their



Fig. 4.8: Portrait of Jochen Bippus from Tarutino in Bessarabia. Index card information notes that photo was to be published in *Das Schwarze Korps*; typed caption on back noted that he was the son of a headmaster ‘at the intellectual heart of the ethnic German colony, Pomeranian descent. A real German boy’s face – a sign that the Bessarabian Germans have kept themselves racially completely pure and unmixed over four generations’ (‘Er ist der Sohn eines Direktors aus dem geistigen Mittelpunkt der volksdeutschen Kolonie, pommerscher Herkunft. Ein echtes deutsches Jungengesicht, ein Zeichen dafür, dass sich die Bessarabier rassistisch ganz rein und unvermischt über die 4. Generation erhalten haben’). Photographer: Erich Märtz. Bundesarchiv R49 Bild-0406.

whole way of life’ (‘Das Gesicht der Bessarabiendeutschen ist so rein deutsch geblieben wir ihre ganze Art’).⁴¹

The official photos documenting resettlement deployed established photographic genres and themes of *Heimat* photography, news photography, ‘human interest’ photos and ‘racial’ portraiture to support a narrative that attached familiar Nazi propaganda messages about homeland, community and ‘blood’ to novel and newsworthy stories of ‘homecoming’. The repetition of these narratives in illustrated periodicals, calendars and picture volumes – first the Baltic Germans, then the Germans from eastern Poland, and then the Germans from Romania (other resettlements involving the South Tyrol Germans and the Lithuanian Germans got less coverage) – tended to flatten out the differences between the individual episodes of resettlement. A pictorial feature in *Das Schwarze Korps* in January 1941 entitled ‘Magnet Grossdeutschland’ showed graphics of treks converging on the Reich, and close-up portraits of resettlers with a caption explaining that 1940 would go down in history as the year of ‘great treks’, which brought nearly half a million ethnic Germans ‘back to the Reich’. Photographs with their easily repeated, easily grasped motifs of confident faces and human columns in motion lent themselves to this homogenized vision of the Nazi reordering of ‘blood’ and ‘space’. However, a closer look at some of these images and how they were used also reveals some potentially discordant messages.

Mixed Messages?

Photographs were chosen and captioned in order to underpin key propaganda messages about resettlement, but in some cases it seems unlikely that their effect would have been so straightforward. Resettlement had to appear as the inevitable unfolding of destiny, a logical end to the German ‘cultural mission’ in a number of settlement areas abroad. It could not be presented as a policy contingent upon the Reich’s demand for human resources and Hitler’s power-play with Stalin: at this stage of Nazi–Soviet relations it was out of the question to refer in the press to resettlement measures as a response to impending or actual Soviet occupation.⁴² This was a difficult message to convey visually. Photographs that made the ‘*Heimat* abroad’ look idyllic – images that had been the common currency of organizations such as the VDA up to that point – might prompt the viewer to ask why all this was being abandoned. In September 1940, *Das Schwarze Korps* published, as part of its reportage on the resettlement of the Bessarabian Germans, a photo of the village of Leipzig in Bessarabia with the caption, ‘A German village that in its landscape and layout looks like a piece of Germany’ (*Ein deutsches Dorf, das in Landschaft und Anlage wie ein Stück Deutschland anmutet*). The text declared that the act of creating such German settlements abroad would somehow remain as a ‘lasting cultural achievement’ (*unvergängliche Kulturtat*), even though many such communities were now ‘returning home’.⁴³ ‘For a hundred years this was *Heimat*’ (*Hier war hundert Jahre Heimat*) ran the caption for one of the images in a photo reportage in *Der Angriff* in October 1940, showing the village of Kulm in Bessarabia. The caption went on to explain that ‘German peasants had founded 150 such villages in a foreign land’: now, ‘the Reich had called them and they were returning home’.⁴⁴ Here the texts seem to be straining to counteract the impression given by the photos. Still more incongruous was the continuing reproduction of such pre-departure photographs in celebratory accounts of resettlement, as in the volume by Andreas Pampuch on the ‘homecoming’ of the Bessarabian Germans, where the text and photo captions were written in the present tense. The photographs heightened the impression that here was a world immediately present and accessible, whereas typically the photos were all that remained of settlements that were gone. ‘The sunlit realm by the sea bears a rich harvest’ (*Das Sonnenreich am Meere trägt reiche Frucht*), read the caption to a lavish colour photograph of maize, peppers, grapes and melons from the Black Sea region, as if the Bessarabian Germans were still there to harvest them.⁴⁵

Portrayals of the settlers themselves could also produce contradictory effects. Their image, as Fielitz has observed in relation to the Volhynian Germans, had to be managed to emphasize the resilience and potential that could be harnessed to the new project of colonizing the conquered territories.⁴⁶ But other ideas were

also being conveyed: the boundlessness of Nazi welfare and the superiority of Nazi organization. In the case of the Baltic Germans from Latvia and Estonia, there were some mixed messages in the Party press. Alongside reports on the 700-year tradition of German culture in the Baltic region and the intellectual traditions and cultural contributions the resettlers brought with them,⁴⁷ a series in *Der Angriff* emphasized the vigour of a Nazified ‘younger generation’ of Baltic Germans in contrast with the supposedly class-ridden patrician elite, and pointed disparagingly to the Baltic Germans’ ageing population and low birth rate.⁴⁸ It was thus a double-edged decision by the *Illustrierter Beobachter* to illustrate its piece on the ‘homecoming’ of the Baltic Germans with photographs of elderly and ailing Baltic Germans transported on stretchers. The captions repeated the well-worn message that the Reich was now reclaiming Germans abroad who up until now had ploughed their efforts into their host countries, and declared that age and sickness had not prevented these elderly Baltic Germans following the ‘call of the Führer’. The photos, however – one showing seven soldiers carrying an elderly woman on a stretcher onto a train – suggested that the Reich was generously taking on a burden of care.⁴⁹

Some photo reports on the Bessarabian Germans pictured them above all as a foil for the efforts of the resettlement teams and volunteers from the Nazified Yugoslav German organization, which had donated food and clothing for the resettlers and helped to staff the Danube ships and the transit camp at Semlin. A report in the *Münchener Illustrierten Presse* in October 1940 (Figure 4.9) praised the discipline and performance of the Yugoslav Germans in a text alongside photos of a crowd of Bessarabian German resettlers spilling haphazardly through the camp. In one image, captioned ‘resettlers in conversation with a Red Cross nurse’, the tall, white-clad figure of the nurse looks down at a hidden figure beneath her, while a black-clad woman with a headscarf in the foreground is seen only from behind, an anonymous ‘type’, coded above all through her clothing.⁵⁰

Looking at figures 4.5 and 4.6 again, the photo composition here too underlines the hierarchy between helpers and resettlers. Figure 4.6, the image of the Bessarabian German mother and baby, might be read as a Madonna and child motif, but the dyad of mother and baby is doubly disrupted, firstly by the camera – the mother is not looking down at her baby but into the camera – and secondly by the nurse. The viewer’s eye is drawn in several directions: to the mother’s face, to the arrangement of six hands at the bottom of the picture, and upwards to the right to the nurse’s face, hair and cap. The disruptive visual effect of the nurse is highlighted still further by the way her waved blonde hair and uniform cap contrast with the traditional clothing and dark colouring of the young mother. While the caption highlights the work of the nurse, implying that her care is appreciated, that meaning is undercut by the wary and slightly disgruntled expression of the mother, whose hands are only loosely cradling the baby on her lap; the baby in turn grasps the nurse’s thumb. The photo renders the mother as

Am Lager der Bessarabendeutschen

Im freiwilligen Abschied der Volksdeutschen Auslaufen wird, in ein schässiger Weise des isolaten Schaffens im neuen Deutschland und deutscher Organisationsmöglichkeit. Es besteht aus mehr als 100000 Siedlern. Mittlerweile können alle diese Deutschen einen Aufenthalt in den USA nicht mehr für Betreuung ihrer Kinder, besonders der jüngsten Kinder, nötig ist.

Aufnahme: Simeck (Mach)

Durchgangslager Belgrad-Semlin

Vor den Toren der jugoslawischen Hauptstadt, am Zusammenlauf der Save und der Drina, entsteht sich jetzt ein gewaltiges Lager, entstanden durch die helligen Hände des freiwilligen Arbeit-

bündes der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien. Die Zeltstadt dient der vorübergehenden Unterbringung von rund 125 000 Deutschen aus Bessarabien, die nach Deutschland umgesiedelt werden.

Ein Wohnplatz

Den Abgang bei Bliduschke, das durchschnittlich nur 25 kg schwer ist, entfällt nur die notwendigsten Dinge

Mutter mit einer deutschen Roten-Kreuz-Schwester

Fig. 4.9: 'Durchgangslager Belgrad-Semlin'. *Münchner Illustrierte Presse* 17(42), 17 October 1940. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ac 8058-17.1940.

passive: the expert care is being provided by the nurse, seemingly undistracted by the camera, and focused on the baby. While the young Bessarabian German mother is unknown, the nurse can be identified as Rosemarie Lorenz, daughter of Werner Lorenz, the head of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle: she worked at the transit camp in Galatz.⁵¹

Other images supposedly showing the authorities' concern for the health of resettlers also seem, in hindsight, to communicate other meanings. They show – as Susanne Schlechter has pointed out – mothers being sidelined by nurses attending to their babies, babies and children being undressed and washed in public, and the small figure of an elderly woman, addressed as 'Mutter', facing a doctor in a sick bay, with three nurses looming over her.⁵² Such images point to the wider context of Nazi biopolitics. Photographs of resettlers being inspected by medics and other 'experts' – such as the photograph published in a reportage in *Das Schwarze Korps* in January 1940 of a small Volhynian German boy stripped to the waist and standing before a desk under the gaze of Himmler and a host of other men – captured the way resettlers were scrutinized as part of the 'sluicing' (*Durchschleusung*) procedure. This process, which also involved a photographic unit taking pictures of the resettlers, was the selection mechanism through which resettlers received citizenship and were accepted or rejected as colonists for the occupied East.⁵³ The Immigration Office (*Einwandererzentralstelle*), part of the RKF apparatus and the agency in charge of 'sluicing', tried to keep out of the press the nature of the 'racial' checks that were part of this process and conducted under the guise of medical examinations, but knowledge of them quickly spread.⁵⁴

Staging

Photographs were supposed to capture resettlement as an experience, the 'Erlebnis' much featured in Nazi propaganda.⁵⁵ But photographers were also orchestrators of the action: each moment of taking a photograph was in itself an event, often the result of interaction between a photographer and the people placed in the shot.⁵⁶ The presence of press photographers and resettlement officials wielding cameras represented, in a larger sense, the regime's mastery of the whole process. The taking of photographs also underlined the significance of what was happening by signalling that it was a spectacle worth recording. More immediately, photographers could use the camera to marshal settlers already subject to the bureaucratic machinery of registration and transport. Resettlement gave photographers singular opportunities to get at their subjects: resettlers were 'on display' during their journey, exposed collectively to the camera, their privacy suspended for the duration. At the same time, they looked back at the camera and arranged themselves in shot, with or without the expected demeanour.

While the photos that were published normally showed the resettlers 'looking right', there is an occasional surprising exception (Figure 4.10). The photo of the group of Bessarabian Germans looking out of the train window, showing two small boys, a girl half concealed by the window, and four adults – two in the foreground, another half hidden – shows a variety of facial expressions to the point that the caption jars with the photograph.



Fig. 4.10: ‘The long-awaited moment: The departure for the Greater German fatherland, the great trek reaches its end’ (‘Der heißersehnte Augenblick: Die Abfahrt ins großdeutsche Vaterland, der große Treck geht zu Ende’). From: *Deutschstum im Ausland*, November/December 1940, Bildteil. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Zsn 1057-23/24.1940/1941.

Some clues that can illuminate the process of staging resettlement for the camera can be gained from the images themselves as well as from contemporary texts and memoirs. The ubiquity of cameras and photographers, included in shots on the bridge at Przemysl and at the border-crossing over the Pruth (figures 4.3 and 4.4), became part of the visual narrative of resettlement. These knowing pointers to the all-pervasive media presence at key moments and locations add a dimension of staginess to already highly staged images. For Hans Richter, the ‘embedding’ of photography in the resettlement programme was a theme of both his text and pictures. A photo of the propaganda corps photographer ('Der PK.-Mann') featured in *Heimkehrer*, and Richter put himself among the media crowd when he described the press pack waiting at the hotel in Eydtkau for the arrival of the Lithuanian Germans. When the moment came, they joined the crowd flooding onto the marketplace to watch the barrier at the border being lifted and the first wagon of the trek approaching, at which point, as Richter notes, he began taking his pictures.⁵⁷

Some involved in organizing and documenting the resettlement made wry comments about resettlers reacting to the camera. Alfred Karasek, the

ethnographer turned resettlement technocrat, and veteran of the resettlement of the Volhynian Germans in the winter of 1939/40, was in the autumn of 1940 overseeing the resettlement in the Beresina district of Bessarabia. In a private account quoted by Ute Schmidt, he described the filming of a settler trek for the *Wochenschau*: his recollection was of settlers becoming acutely self-conscious and ‘freezing’ in front of the camera, dropping the horses’ reins in their eagerness to give the Hitler salute, horses bolting and the whole ‘take’ having to be repeated five times.⁵⁸

Patronizing comments about settlers’ responses to being photographed can also be found in the diary kept by the photojournalist Liselotte Purper of her assignment documenting ‘womanly work’ in the resettlement of the Bessarabian and Dobrudja Germans – a rare first-hand account of documenting resettlement by one of the photographers involved. Much of this diary is concerned with Purper’s impressions of ‘the Balkans’, her search for Reich German company, her entertainment, her shopping expeditions and her physical comfort or lack of it. This account of sightseeing and self-gratification sits alongside her expressions of admiration for the efficiency of the resettlement operation and enthusiasm about its significance for the Reich. Having spent a few days at the camp in Semlin in early November, she travelled to Romania to photograph Dobrudja Germans in their home villages as they prepared to depart, and accompanied them by boat up the Danube. She expressed some curiosity about and sympathy for the settlers she encountered in the village of Cugealac as they packed up their final possessions before departure. Visiting one family in their home, she recorded the wife’s worries about when she would sleep in her own bed again – ‘it is such a journey into the unknown’.⁵⁹ However, on the boat back up the Danube Purper spent her time with the ship’s crew and regarded the settlers as the most likely source of the fleas that were plaguing her.⁶⁰ Back in Semlin, she was dismayed to find that she would once again have to travel in the company of settlers on the train to Austria (‘Fleas again!'): her only consolation was that she would be able to disguise her extensive purchases as settler baggage.⁶¹ Purper’s real enthusiasm was for her fellow Reich Germans and for their efforts and sacrifices devoted to building a ‘common German Reich, the Greater Germany of A.H. [Adolf Hitler]’.⁶² Composing her shots of settlers in the camp at Semlin, she regarded them as something of a nuisance to be managed. She complained about having to take pictures without the help of an assistant to direct operations because her colleague from the Reich Women’s Leadership press department had not yet shown up:

Today I took some photos in the camp, in the kitchen and in the catering tent. But without an assistant this is scarcely possible. A great crowd (*Völkerschar*) immediately forms and takes up position. I cannot direct the huge horde and at the same time manage the camera and the image. The people are like children who have been much photographed by their parents and who cannot escape from stiff poses into moving freely.⁶³

However childlike or naive the resettlers may have seemed to Purper and resettlement ‘old hands’, some resettlers remembered being quite knowing themselves about the process of staging pictures. One Bessarabian German, interviewed a few years ago by Susanne Schlechter for her oral history project on the fate of the sick and elderly resettlers, recalled being kept out of a picture because she did not ‘fit’: her hair was too dark.⁶⁴ Whatever the truth of this, it suggests an awareness on the resettlers’ part (that may admittedly be stronger in hindsight) about the importance of their physical appearance for the story being told about resettlement to the Reich. And Renate Adolphi from Riga, whose parents were friends of the photographer Wilhelm Holtfreter, remembered him calling on them in their new quarters in Posen/Poznań to document how Baltic German families were settling into their new homeland in the Warthegau, and deciding that a visiting cousin should be added to the picture as an honorary sibling to make up a ‘model’ family of four children for the camera.⁶⁵ Here, resettlers collaborated in a performance in line with prevailing notions of the ideal.

References to artifice were strikingly evident in Hans Richter’s inclusion of a mock-up wagon trek from the film *Heimkehr* alongside his ‘real’ photos of resettlers.⁶⁶ En route via the General Government to East Prussia for his fourth and final resettlement assignment, Richter took a detour to visit Chorzele, where they were filming. There, he chatted with the film crew and took pictures for his ‘collection’ of the film star Paula Wessely, of the covered wagons on the market-place in Chorzele, and of the mock-up of the Przemysl bridge. As he remarked in the text of *Heimkehrer*, ‘In my photo collection I must have reality and the illusion of reality placed next to each other’ (‘In meiner Bildersammlung muß doch Wirklichkeit und Scheinwirklichkeit nebeneinander stehen’).⁶⁷

For all the emphasis on resettlers entering a ‘German world’ of order in the transit camps en route to the Reich, the comments of the resettlement teams and the self-conscious references to the staging of key moments in the resettlers’ journeys point to the nature of the performance being enacted for their benefit, which emphasized planning, order and welfare. As would become clear when the resettlers remained in camps for months and sometimes years, this was a show that could at best only be maintained for a short period, and while the cameras were near.

If the resettlers had found themselves in the spotlight during their journeys to the Reich, they subsequently became, in a bizarre twist, a target audience themselves for propaganda featuring their own recent experiences. A film showing of *Heimkehr* was organized free of charge for resettlers in Litzmannstadt/Łódź, while the illustrated volumes that may have appealed particularly to Party activists were also handed out to resettlers themselves.⁶⁸ Photos of resettlement also appeared in the periodical *Wir sind daheim*, published from November 1940 onwards for Bessarabian resettlers in camps in Saxony (and subsequently for resettlers more generally in camps across the Reich). A two-part feature in March

1941 entitled ‘Heimkehr ins Vaterland’ was illustrated with photos showing the registration and transport of resettlers and a scene from the transit camp at Galatz.⁶⁹ This reminder of their journey was accompanied by a series of articles in which resettlers preached the line to their fellow countrymen that looking back was futile, that their former homelands were not ‘*Heimat*’ at all (‘The place where we were until now was not our *Heimat*’ (‘Dort, wo wir bisher waren, war unsere Heimat nicht’), and that it was time to draw a line under the past and look to the future.⁷⁰ That message was in turn somewhat undercut by a report illustrated with photographs taken by Wilhelm Holtfreter, formerly of Riga and now based in Posen/Poznań, of farmhouses in the Warthegau. One was captioned ‘Almost like in Bessarabia’ (‘Fast wie in Bessarabien’), urging readers to think that such visible echoes of the places they had left behind would make it easier for them to settle down in Poland.⁷¹ Overall, however, the contributions to the periodical stressed to those immobilized in camps the vision of continued forward motion, underpinning this with photos evoking the ‘final’ trek that would take them to their allotted farmsteads.⁷²

Conclusion

The photographic documentation of resettlement can be seen as reflecting the extraordinary effort required to legitimate resettlement as a policy. The hasty evacuation of German minority groups had to be interpreted as a historically inevitable ‘homecoming’, part of a grander plan for the consolidation and protection of ‘German life’ within the expanded borders of the Reich, rather than the result of power-political machinations and improvised decision making behind the scenes of the Nazi–Soviet pact. Propaganda had to gloss the bewildering shift in a policy that up to 1939 had celebrated areas of German minority settlement in eastern and south-eastern Europe as outposts of German culture, but that now suddenly decreed that key parts of the ‘*Heimat* abroad’ be abandoned. It is hard to know if this propaganda had the intended effect. The diarist Friedrich Kellner was sceptical, noting on 19 October 1939 that it was an ‘act of cruelty’ to ‘ship people around … like goods within artificially drawn “Reich borders”’. He did not believe that the resettlers would stay put: ‘[T]hey will take the first possible opportunity to find a new “homeland” that is to their taste’.⁷³ But Kellner was an outstandingly scathing reader of the Nazi press.

The varied range of resettlement photos published suggested the ‘action’ of resettlement, the dynamic of a community in motion, and the technocratic ‘order’ into which the resettlers were supposedly being received. Photographs captured newsworthy ‘historic moments’ and gave the viewer the sense of witnessing events: departures, embarkations, border-crossings, encounters and arrivals. They suggested moods and emotions associated with ‘homecoming’ through

motifs such as the provision of food, shelter and care. Photographers could deploy long-established aesthetic conventions of picture composition to make potentially banal scenes showing the transport of people and their luggage into something grander and more monumental. Furthermore, in the context of a visual culture infused with Nazi ideas on race, photographs could convey messages about physiognomy and ‘belonging’. Meanwhile, the other side of this visualization of an expansive ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ was exclusion and exploitation. Jews are not part of the published imagery of resettlement, even if they were compelled to assist in the process – for instance, when ‘Jew commandos’ were deployed to dig trains carrying Volhynian German resettlers out of the snow in January 1940.⁷⁴ Nor are the raids on Jewish and Polish property or the forced evictions of Polish and Jewish families part of the visual narrative. But it is no great leap to suggest that photos of displaced German families might help to legitimate coercion and violence against the Jews and Poles whose homes were seized for the incomers’ benefit. Moreover, it is conceivable that repeated images of ‘peoples on the move’ shepherded by teams of Germans in uniform accustomed the German public to the idea that any and every form of organized ‘resettlement’ was an event made normal by wartime conditions.

The published record of resettlement focused on the resettlers’ initial journey and arrival; their subsequent journeys – for example, the later-resettled groups often shuttled from one resettler camp to another – are more sparsely recorded. Images of resettlers looking glum or resentful nearly always remained in the archives unpublished, as did the occasional documentary photo of Poles being evicted from their farms prior to the resettlers’ arrival. But also underplayed in the published record were photographs of the Nazi-inspired community organizations in Bessarabia and Bukovina welcoming the resettlement teams or marshalling people for departure: such images featured relatively rarely in published reports, which emphasized instead the ‘spontaneous’ homecoming under the guiding hand of Reich Germans.

What, if anything, can photographs show about the experience of resettlement? First, they reveal the peculiar circumstances brought by the situation of uprooting and transfer: resettlers were exposed to the curious and intrusive gaze of strangers, which included having cameras pointed at them. Moreover, if the shots taken in public during transit were generally intended to flatter the settlers, it is important to recall that a further sequence of photographs would be taken behind closed doors during the battery of ‘racial’ tests that awaited them. Second, analysing photographs may reveal something about the reactions of resettlers and the interactions between commissioned photographers and their human subjects. Photographs are traces of something that was there, however momentary and whatever else was going on outside the frame.⁷⁵ This constitutes the power of the photograph, in that it conveys the impression of ‘experience’ and ‘presence’. For this reason, a photograph challenges us as present-day viewers to respond to

it and judge it as historical evidence.⁷⁶ But what are we seeing in these faces and gestures? Looking repeatedly at these photographs at the very least suggests the complexity of the moment. We should not assume that the cheerful expressions of the settlers, the Hitler salutes, the flag waving and flower strewing, were all elicited under duress. There was willing self-mobilization involved in resettlement alongside the pressures and anxieties that prompted people to accept it. At the same time, photographers compose their images, and people typically react to a camera if they are aware of it. We can assume that the camera's presence did often secure the 'correct' responses: gestures and expressions signalling confidence and optimism. And if hopeful expressions were merely fleeting or forced, it did not matter: the photo was lasting evidence that could be endlessly repeated and recycled as the war effort faltered and the resettlement programme ground to a halt. That said, as the image of the Bessarabian settlers in the train carriage indicates, photographers were not always able to coax people into 'looking right'. And even the photos that met propaganda requirements sometimes betrayed other subtexts, revealing power relations within the expanded '*Volksgemeinschaft*', the scrutiny and control to which settlers were subjected, and the signals that the settlers' journey was knowingly staged as a performance.

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Notes

1. Miriam Y. Arani, *Fotografische Selbst- und Fremdbilder von Deutschen und Polen im Reichsgau Wartheland 1939–45*, 2 vols (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2008), 838.
2. On resettlement generally, see Robert Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); Valdis A. Lumans, *Himmler's*

- Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German Minorities of Europe 1933–1945* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Isabel Heinemann, 'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut': Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003).
3. Michael Wildt, "Eine neue Ordnung der ethnographischen Verhältnisse": Hitlers Reichstagsrede vom 6. Oktober 1939', *Zeithistorische Forschungen / Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, 3 (2006), Heft 1.
 4. Joseph Schechtman, *European Population Transfers, 1939–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946); Koehl, RKFDV.
 5. Götz Aly, *Final Solution: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (New York: Arnold, 1999); Heinemann, 'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut'; Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationale: Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2012).
 6. Markus Leniger, *Nationalsozialistische 'Volkstumsarbeit' und Umsiedlungspolitik 1933–1945: Von der Minderheitenbetreuung zur Siedlerauslese* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2006); Andreas Strippel, *NS-Volkstumsarbeit und die Neuordnung Europas: Rassenpolitische Selektion der Einwandererzentralstelle des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011).
 7. Leniger, *Volkstumsarbeit*, 227–28.
 8. Lars Bosse, 'Vom Baltikum in den Reichsgau Wartheland', in Michael Garleff (ed.), *Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 297–388; Stephan Döring, *Die Umsiedlung der Wolhyniendeutschen in den Jahren 1939 bis 1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001); Dirk Jachomowski, *Die Umsiedlung der Bessarabien-, Bukowina- und Dobrudscha-deutschen: Von der Volksgruppe in Rumänien zur 'Siedlungsbrücke' an der Reichsgrenze* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1984); Ute Schmidt, *Die Deutschen aus Bessarabien: Eine Minderheit aus Südosteuropa (2014 bis heute)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 127–254.
 9. Michael Garleff, 'Deutschbalten in Auseinandersetzung mit der Weimarer Republik und dem Dritten Reich', in *idem* (ed.), *Deutschbalten*, vol. 1, 1–10; Arnulf Baumann, 'Vorwort', in Stefanie Wolter (ed.), *NS-Einfluss auf die Deutschen in Bessarabien: Eine Pressedokumentation* (Stuttgart: Bessarabiendeutscher Verein e.V., 2013), 9–10. On the fate of sick and elderly resettlers, see Maria Fiebrandt, *Auslese für die Siedlergesellschaft: Die Einbeziehung Volksdeutscher in die NS-Erbgesundheitspolitik im Kontext der Umsiedlungen 1939–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); Susanne Schlechter, 'Verschwundene Umsiedler. "Heim ins Reich" im Schatten nationalsozialistischer Biopolitik 1940–1945: Eine Spurensuche mit den letzten Zeitzeugen aus Bessarabien', unpublished ms (Oldenburg, 2010).
 10. Photos of resettlers being screened in Heinemann, 'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut'; photos of evicted Poles interned in Posen in Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationale*; also photos of Bessarabian German resettlement in Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabien: Deutsche Kolonisten am Schwarzen Meer* (Potsdam: Deutsches Kulturforum Östliches Europa, 2008).
 11. Schriftenreihe 'Volksdeutsche Heimkehr', Nibelungen-Verlag, seven volumes; Andreas Pampuch, *Heimkehr der Bessarabiendeutschen* (Breslau: Schlesien-Verlag, 1942). On the use of the term 'Völkerwanderung', see Wilhelm Fielitz, *Das Stereotyp des wolhyniendeutschen Umsiedlers: Popularisierungen zwischen Sprachinselforschung und nationalsozialistischer Propaganda* (Marburg: Elwert, 2000), 122–23.
 12. On the DAI's role in documenting resettlement, see Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 161–79.
 13. See Elizabeth Edwards' chapter in this volume.
 14. Rolf Sachsse, *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat* (Dresden: Philo, 2003).
 15. Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 118–19.
 16. *Ibid.*, 150–57.

17. On reactions to the camera in a situation of extreme duress, see Brad Prager, ‘Leben heisst posieren: Bilder aus dem Warschauer Ghetto – mit Susan Sontag betrachtet’, *Fotogeschichte* 32 (2012), Heft 126, 37–48.
18. Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 5–6; Ulrike Pilarczyk and Ulrike Mietzner, *Das reflektierte Bild: die seriell-ikonografische Fotoanalyse in den Erziehungs- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2005), 40–41. See also Jennifer Evans’s introduction to this volume.
19. ‘Von der Düna zur Weichsel. Baltendeutsche im Aufbruch – Erlebnisse und Gespräche in Riga’, in *Der Angriff*, 27 November 1939 (Holtfreter and Frankenstein photos), 28 November 1939 (Holtfreter) and 30 November 1939 (Holtfreter); Heinrich Bosse (ed.), *Der Führer ruft: Erlebnisberichte aus den Tagen der grossen Umsiedlung im Osten* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, 1942). On Frankenstein and Holtfreter, see Arani, *Selbst- und Fremdbilder*, 838, 858–59.
20. On Arthur Kränenbring, see Cornelia Schlarb, *Tradition im Wandel: Die evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in Bessarabien 1814–1940* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 290–91. On the DAI and its photo archive, see Rainer Hofmann, *Findbuch: Deutsches Ausland-Institut Bestand Bild* 137, 4 vols (Koblenz: Bundesarchiv, 1994), Einleitung vol. 1.
21. Hans Richter, *Heimkehrer: Bildberichte von der Umsiedlung der Volksdeutschen aus Bessarabien, Rumänien, aus der Süd-Bukowina und aus Litauen* (Berlin: Eher, 1941); Lothar von Seltmann, *Tagebuch vom Treck der Wolhyniendeutschen* (Potsdam: Voggenreiter, 1941).
22. On Lothar von Seltmann, see Claudia Brunner and Uwe von Seltmann, *Schweigen die Täter, reden die Enkel* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006); on Karl Stumpf, see Erich J. Schmalz and Samuel Sinner, ‘Karl Stumpf’, in Ingo Haar and Michael Fahibusch (eds), *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2008), 678–82.
23. On the photo archive of the RKF, see ‘Information zum Bestand R49 Bild’, Bestandsakte B198/3733, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
24. On the PK photographers: Sachsse, *Erziehung zum Wegsehen*, 194–98; Rainer Rother and Judith Prokasky (eds), *Die Kamera als Waffe: Propagandabilder des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Edition Text & Kritik, 2010).
25. On Liselotte Purper, see Katja Protte, ‘Bildberichterstatterin’ im ‘Dritten Reich’: Fotografien aus den Jahren 1937 bis 1944 von Liselotte Purper’, *DHM Magazin* 7 (1997), Heft 20; Elizabeth Harvey, ‘Seeing the World: Photography, Photojournalism and Visual Pleasure in the Third Reich’, in Pamela Swett, Corey Ross and Fabrice d’Almeida (eds), *Pleasure and Power in the Third Reich* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 177–204.
26. Holtfreter, ‘Abschied von der alten Heimat’, in Bosse (ed.) *Der Führer ruft*, facing 81; ‘Der Heimkehrerzug wird geschmückt’, in Richter, *Heimkehrer*, photo section (unpaginated).
27. Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 110, 129–30.
28. ‘Heimgekehrt ins Grosse Deutsche Reich’, *Illustrierter Beobachter* 15(7), 15 February 1940; ‘Blick auf die “Wagenburg” der Rückwanderer in Galatz’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Ausgabe Gross-Berlin, 15 October 1940, p. 8; ‘Wir kehren heim’: Begegnungen mit Bessarabien-Deutschen’, *Der Angriff*, 24 October 1940, p. 3.
29. Döring, *Umsiedlung*, 68.
30. Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 148–50.
31. ‘Organisierte Völkerwanderung’, *Das Schwarze Korps*, 3 October 1940, p. 2.
32. Seltmann, *Tagebuch*, 59; on mortality figures during the trek and afterwards, see Döring, *Umsiedlung*, 124; Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 137–39; Valdis O. Lumans, ‘A Reassessment of Volksdeutsche and Jews in the Volhynia-Galicia-Narew Resettlement’, in Alan E. Steinweis and Daniel E. Rogers (eds), *The Impact of Nazism: New Perspectives on the Third Reich and Its Legacy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 90.
33. Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 113, 128; Katrin Himmler and Michael Wildt (eds), *Himmler privat: Briefe eines Massenmörders* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2014), 222–23.

34. 'Der letzte Treck', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 8 February 1940, p. 3; 'Heimgekehrt ins Grosse Deutsche Reich', *Illustrierter Beobachter*, 15 February 1940; Richter, *Heimkehrer* [photo section, unpaginated]; VDA-Bildkalender 1941, 'Deutsche in aller Welt'.
35. Willibald Jenzowski, 'An der Pruthbrücke bei Galatz: Ankunft und Weiterreise der heimkehrenden Deutschen aus Bessarabien', *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 October 1940, p. 3.
36. *Der Zug der Volksdeutschen aus Bessarabien und Nordbuchenland*, mit einem Geleitwort von Werner Lorenz (Berlin: Volk und Reich, 1942).
37. *Deutschum im Ausland: Zeitschrift des Deutschen Ausland-Instituts Stuttgart* 23(11/12), November–December 1940, cover.
38. Spaeth, Lagebericht Jugoslawien: Volksgemeinschaft der Tat: Der Bau der Umsiedlungslager, undated. BA Berlin, R57 neu, 31; Richter, *Heimkehrer*, 13.
39. On ethnographic photography in Nazi Germany, see Ulrich Haegle, 'Die Visualisierung des Volkskörpers: Fotografie und Volkskunde in der NS-Zeit', *Fotogeschichte* 21 (2001), Heft 82, 5–20; Sachsse, *Erziehung zum Wegsehen*, 154–60; Falk Blask and Jane Redlin (eds), *Lichtbild – Abbild – Vorbild: Zur Praxis volks- und völkerkundlicher Fotografie* (=Berliner Blätter: Ethnographische und ethnologische Beiträge 36.2005). On ethnographic photographs taken of Volhynian Germans in the 1920s, see Elke Bauer, 'Zwischen Inszenierung und Authentizität: Kontextualisierung ausgewählter Bildzeugnisse zum Alltagsleben der Deutschen in Ostmitteleuropa vor 1945', *Jahrbuch für deutsche und osteuropäische Volkskunde* 52 (2011), 137–64.
40. For example, Karl Pesch and W. Schürmann, 'Gnadenfeld: Ein Bericht über bevölkerungsbiologische, hygienische und gesundheitliche Untersuchungen in einer deutschen Siedlung in Bessarabien (Rumänien)', *Auslandsdeutsche Volksforschung* 2(2) (1938), 169–218. On student research projects in Yugoslavia and Romania before 1939, see Elizabeth Harvey, 'Mobilisierung oder Erfassung? Studentischer Aktivismus und "Volkstumsarbeit" in Jugoslawien und Rumänien, 1933–1941', in Carola Sachse (ed.), *Mitteleuropa und Südosteuropa als Planungsraum: wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 363–90.
41. 'Sie sind deutsch geblieben', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 12 September 1940, p. 3.
42. See the comment by the director of the DAI in November 1939: Dr Czaki, 'Das Umsiedlungswerk der Balten, 27 November 1939', in BA Berlin, R57/neu/25: 'Wenn auch in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit (Presse) aus naheliegenden Gründen ein Zusammenhang der baltischen Aussiedlung und dem russischen Vordringen in Estland und Lettland abgestritten wird, so stehen natürlich beide Ereignisse doch in ursächlicher Verbindung.' ('Even if in German public outlets, notably the press, the connection between the Baltic evacuation and the Russian penetration into Estonia and Latvia is denied for obvious reasons, of course the two events are causally linked.')
43. 'Sie sind deutsch geblieben', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 12 September 1940, p. 3.
44. 'Heimkehr aus Bessarabien', *Der Angriff*, 12 October 1940, p. 8: '150 solche Dörfer hat das deutsche Bauerntum dort in fremdem Land gegründet. Jetzt rief das Reich – die Bauern kehren wieder heim.'
45. Andreas Pampuch, *Heimkehr der Bessarabiendeutschen* (Breslau: Schlesien-Verlag, 1942), frontispiece.
46. Strippel, *NS-Volkstumspolitik*, 98–116; Leniger, *Nationalsozialistische 'Volkstumsarbeit'*, 175–213.
47. *Völkischer Beobachter* reports cited in Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 104–5.
48. Four-part report 'Von der Düna zur Weichsel: Baltendeutsche im Aufbruch – Erlebnisse und Gespräche in Riga', *Der Angriff*, 27, 28, 29 and 30 November 1939.
49. 'Baltendeutsche kehren heim', *Illustrierter Beobachter* 14(49), 7 December 1939, p. 1742.
50. 'Durchgangslager Belgrad-Semlin', *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* 17(42), 17 October 1940, p. 3.

51. Reference to both Lorenz daughters working at Galatz: R.G. Waldeck, *Athene Palace* (New York: Robert McBride and Co., 1942), 304–5.
52. Examples in Heinrich Reister (ed.), *Das große Aufgebot: Bildbericht 1. Herausgegeben vom Landespropagandaamt der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien* (Novisad: Druckerei- und Verlag-AG, 1941), images including ‘Reinlichkeit zierte alle Zeit’, ‘Große Wäsche der Kleinsten’, ‘Wollen mal sehen, Mutter, wo es fehlt’. For comments on such pictures, see Schlechter, ‘Verschwundene Umsiedler’, Ordner A, 8–14.
53. ‘Die große Heimkehr’, *Das Schwarze Korps*, 25 January 2014, p. 11. Caption: ‘Während der Aufnahmeforschungen, die einen unvorstellbar guten Allgemeinzustand unserer heimgekehrten Volksgenossen feststellen ließen: Die Jahre der Not, die Trecks durch Frost und Schnee haben die abgearbeiteten Männer und Frauen nicht zu erschüttern vermocht’. On the photographs taken as part of the ‘sluicing’ process, see Strippel, *NS-Volkstumspolitik*, 102.
54. Strippel, *NS-Volkstumspolitik*, 171–73. For an explicit reference to ‘völkische und rassische Bewertung’ in a publication targeting settlers: Waldemar Löbsack, ‘Im SS-Ansiedlungsstab Posen-Litzmannstadt’, *Wir sind daheim* 16, 16 March 1941, p. 9.
55. Gerhard Paul, *Krieg der Bilder, Bilder des Krieges: Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 226.
56. Susan Sontag, ‘In Plato’s Cave’, in *On Photography* (New Work: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 11.
57. Richter, *Heimkehrer*, 31.
58. Schmidt, *Deutsche aus Bessarabien*, 156.
59. Liselotte Purper, Tagebuch, 12 November 1940. Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Rep. 1 / 2 Wk./F1/M11. ‘Es ist doch so eine Fahrt ins Dunkle’.
60. Liselotte Purper, Tagebuch, 15 November 1940. Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Rep. 1 / 2 Wk./F1/M11.
61. Ibid., 1 December 1940.
62. Ibid., 12 November 1940.
63. Ibid., 4 November 1940.
64. Schlechter, ‘Verschwundene Umsiedler’, Ordner B (‘Krankentransporte nach Schlesien’), p. 26 (recollections of Klara F.).
65. Interview with Renate Adolphi, Lüneburg, April 2013.
66. On the film *Heimkehr*, see Gerald Trimmel, *Heimkehr. Die Strategien eines nationalsozialistischen Films* (Vienna: Werner Eichbauer, 1998).
67. Richter, *Heimkehrer*, 30.
68. Fielitz, *Stereotyp*, 158.
69. *Wir sind daheim: Mitteilungsblatt der Umsiedlungslager Bessarabien im Gau Sachsen*, subtitle later changed to ‘Mitteilungsblatt der Umsiedler aus Bessarabien – Buchenland – Dobrudscha’ and then to ‘Mitteilungsblatt der volksdeutschen Umsiedler im Reich’. ‘Heimkehr ins Vaterland’ Teil 1, *Wir sind daheim* 14, 2 March 1941, pp. 8–9; ‘Heimkehr ins Vaterland’ Teil 2, *Wir sind daheim*, 9 March 1941, pp. 8–9.
70. Rudolf Weiss, ‘Unsere Heimkehr ins Großdeutsche Reich’, *Wir sind daheim* 1, 24 November 1940, p. 2; ‘Vorwärts den Blick’, *Wir sind daheim* 1, 24 November 1940, p. 3; cf. also Paul Franz, ‘Blut und Boden sind erwacht’, *Wir sind daheim* 17, 23 March 1941, pp. 8–10.
71. The picture of the farmhouse was taken by Wilhelm Holtfreter. ‘Deutscher Osten, Lebensaufgabe der deutschen Volksgruppe aus Bessarabien’, *Wir sind daheim* 13, 23 February 1941, pp. 8–9.
72. ‘Der Treck zur neuen Heimat’, *Wir sind daheim* 8, 19 January 1941, pp. 9–10.
73. Friedrich Kellner, ‘Vernebelt, verdunkelt sind alle Hirne: Tagebücher 1939–1945’, ed. Sascha Feuchert et al., Vol. 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 41. ‘Ist es nicht eine Rohheit, Menschen aus ihrer 2. Heimat (Südtirol, Baltikum) wo ihre Vorfahren sich vor Jahrhunderten seßhaft gemacht

haben, einfach wie eine Ware nach irgendwohin innerhalb künstlich gezogener "Reichsgrenzen" zu verfrachten. Ich glaube nicht daran, daß diese Leute für alle Ewigkeit auf dem ihnen zwangsläufig angewiesenen Wohnplatz ausharren. Sie werden die erste beste Gelegenheit wahrnehmen, um sich nach ihrem eigenen Geschmack eine neue "Heimat" zu suchen".

74. Döring, *Umsiedlung der Wolhyniendeutschen*, 142.

75. Sontag, 'In Plato's Cave', 5.

76. See the chapters by Elizabeth Edwards and Julia Adeney Thomas in this volume.

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Chapter 5

VISIBLE TROPHIES OF WAR

German Occupiers' Photographic Perceptions of France, 1940–44

Julia Torrie



An exhibition of occupiers' amateur photography called 'Soldiers photograph and film' was held in Paris in 1942. Its self-proclaimed objective was to bring together the best photographs taken by members of the German military stationed in France. 'Of course everyone would like to hold on to what he has experienced in what is surely the most meaningful segment of his life, and take it home as a visible memento for later', wrote Heinz Lorenz, an administrator responsible for military support services and editor of the exhibition's companion volume.¹ The vast numbers of soldiers' photographs that have survived from France suggest that Lorenz was right. Many occupiers did want to hold on to what they had experienced, to take it home as a 'visible memento' or, perhaps more aptly, as a visible trophy of war. Hitler's regime encouraged photography, seeing it not just as a leisure activity for soldiers but one that perpetuated images of France that aligned with National Socialist goals.

The resulting photographs raise various questions. Their most striking feature is their apparent banality (Figure 5.1).² Images of landscapes, soldiers' leisure activities, and historical monuments predominate, while photographs referring openly to war, let alone showing violence or atrocities, are rare. No doubt partly for this reason, images from France have not received the same scholarly attention as those taken on the Eastern Front.³ Yet photographs from France are worth examining for several reasons. The fact that soldiers took so many pictures invites us to consider the purposes of photography in the context of a military occupation. Despite the fact that the French occupation seemed 'strange' and 'peaceful' compared to German fighting elsewhere, the discordance between what soldiers were actually doing – occupying a neighbouring country militarily and oppressing the population – and the ways they represented their role through

Notes from this chapter begin on page 131.



Fig. 5.1: Anonymous Album, p. 35 (Deutsch-Russisches Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, KH 203442).

photography, was stark. What motifs were favoured, and why? Beyond the question of what they actually photographed, what made photography so appealing to occupying soldiers? Once taken, how did these images work together with other material to shape ideas about, and memories of, German experiences in France?

Studying occupiers' photographs suggests that photography played an important role in occupiers' attempts to come to terms with their position. Amateur photography and official publications interacted to sketch the contours of this occupation for contemporaries, and to shape memories of it for the future. For the individual, photography filled spare time, documented interesting life experiences, smoothed over the transition from soldier to occupier, and may have offered a way to distance him from violence. For the regime, it was a means of teaching soldiers how to see occupied France, and it planted the seeds of memories for the future. Identifying key themes, and probing the alignments and divergences between the photographs that occupiers were 'encouraged' to take and those they actually took offers new opportunities to understand not only how official views were propagated, but also how German soldiers constructed themselves as occupying men. With this goal in mind, this chapter first establishes major themes for discussion, briefly surveying historiographical and methodological issues, and outlining the basic parameters for occupiers' photography. Then it examines photography from the perspective of the individual, and moves on to explore published images and the regime's attempts to exploit and influence amateur photography. It concludes with a discussion of the complex interplay between amateur and official photographic visions of the German occupation of France.

The German occupation of France was characterized by a curious contradiction between the superficially 'pleasant' aspects of occupying a country with many opportunities for leisure and pleasure, and the violence and oppression inherent in a military takeover. This contradiction manifested itself in soldiers' letters and diaries, and was particularly obvious in photographs. The predominance of photographs of seemingly 'harmless' occupier activities, like sightseeing, underlines the role that leisure played in soldiers' attempts to come to terms

with their experience. As soldiers' photographs documented leisure activities, the putative 'truth-telling' function of the medium made them particularly effective in helping to create and disseminate the illusion that the Germans' presence in France was harmless – that they were guests or tourists rather than warring men.⁴

At the same time, occupiers' snapshots reveal how intimately their photographed leisure was linked to everyday systematic oppression. The happy group of soldiers depicted in Figure 5.1 was clearly sitting around a French table, having displaced a local family from its requisitioned home. Table, chairs and refreshments had doubtless also been requisitioned, or plundered outright. On the same album pages, two other images show the front of the manor house with a German pillbox, and its rear gardens. On one level, an occupier had simply documented where he was staying and recorded a celebration with his comrades. On another, photographs like these constituted the occupier's experience as pleasurable even as they exposed the fundamental indignity and brutality of being occupied, and laid bare the takeover of other people's domestic space. By taking and keeping such snapshots, a soldier was capturing, and preserving for eternity, images of a stranger's home in his own album of souvenirs.

Not only did photographs record the intimate details of occupation, but photography itself extended possession and exercised dominance. Each time a soldier admired and then snapped a picture of a French landscape, he exercised both the privilege of looking at conquered land, and a freedom to photograph out of doors that had been denied to the French population since mid-September 1940.⁵ Photographs also served as an important way to see and come to terms with France as a foreign country and oneself as an occupier. Amateur photographers imitated and disseminated visual themes drawn from official sources; in turn, amateur images were picked up and reused by the regime, which thus exploited the perceived 'veracity' of soldiers' photographic productions. Photography functioned during the occupation (and continued to function after 1944) as a delivery system for a story that deliberately occluded the occupation's darker aspects. Exploring how photography was used in this context speaks to broader debates about the power of images, the interaction of leisure and violence, occupying soldiers' perceptions, and wartime mentalities.

Although some images may have been shared privately, the albums and boxes containing German soldiers' amateur photographs often lay in attics or storage rooms, untouched for decades. In the 1970s, social historians began to contemplate these images as historical sources, but it took until the 1990s and the rise of a new interest in the role of photography in processes of remembering and memory formation for public discussion of images, including those of amateur photographers, to take place.⁶ Perhaps because photographs are artefacts at the limit between material history and written texts, much of the initial research addressing them came from outside 'traditional' scholarly history. Some of the most thorough explorations of soldiers' photographs, moreover, have taken the form of museum

exhibits.⁷ The controversial *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht* (Crimes of the Wehrmacht) exhibit brought discussions about the authenticity and uses of amateur photographs as historical sources into the public domain.⁸ Later, the Deutsch-Russisches Museum Berlin-Karlshorst developed exhibits on wartime photography, including one about amateurs called *Foto-Feldpost: geknipste Kriegserlebnisse 1939–1945* (Photo Field Post: Snapshots of war experiences, 1939–1945). Contributors to the accompanying catalogue addressed key questions about how images might be used to understand soldiers' attitudes and perceptions.⁹ Most recently, Petra Bopp assembled a significant collection of soldiers' photo albums in *Fremde im Vizier* (Strangers in the viewfinder), an exhibit that explored how soldiers formulated their war experiences in photographs and photo albums, and looked at the role that amateur images played and continue to play in the shaping of memories.¹⁰ Bopp emphasized that soldiers' private images can primarily be used to understand 'how war was seen – not how it was', and she used interviews to learn more about the context of soldiers' photographs, recovering important background details that would otherwise have been lost.¹¹ Her focus was on perceptions and mentalities, and the exhibit's richest moments juxtaposed images of violence and brutality with superficially banal photographs of leisure pursuits and the everyday lives of soldiers. The most striking single element was a probing examination of a treacherously beautiful image that actually shows a local woman being driven across a river as a human minesweeper. This image highlighted the ambiguity of soldiers' photographs, their openness to (mis-)interpretation, and the way that their meanings can change depending on the context.¹²

If early studies used photographs as evidence of the past, and images were subsequently discussed as reflections of attitudes and perceptions, today, historians are increasingly aware that, as Gerhard Paul has put it, '[i]mages are not simply reflections of reality, but also influence the historical process'.¹³ This chapter develops Bopp's inquiries about mentalities and perceptions, examining not only how photography was used as a tool to exercise power, but also how individuals deployed it to construct their experiences as occupiers visually. It highlights the specific problems of apparently 'harmless' images from the occupation, which because of their immediacy and the familiarity of their form, and because they were often taken by amateurs, worked particularly effectively to disseminate a 'white-washed' vision of the occupation of France. While recognizing the specificity of these visual sources, the chapter also places occupiers' amateur photography alongside other 'ego-documents' like letters and diaries, and contextualizes them further by using contemporary publications and ephemera. The act of photography and the images that emerged shaped occupiers' understanding of their role, influenced the tenor of the occupation, and formed memories of it to the present day.

By 1939, amateur photography was widespread in Germany, and perhaps particularly so among soldiers. Cameras and photography had become standard

tools for viewing and understanding new places, as well as preserving memories of one's experiences for later. In the Second World War, a significant number of soldiers, especially officers, went to the front with the tourist's talisman, a camera. Since according to photo historian Timm Starl, some seven million Germans had cameras at the beginning of the war, and young men were among the most enthusiastic photographers, photo historian Bernd Boll estimates that over 10 per cent of soldiers probably had a camera. Those who did not initially own one often 'acquired' such a device through plunder in the occupied territories.¹⁴ On the day the French asked for an armistice, American journalist William Shirer commented that 'most of the German troops act like naive tourists ... it seems funny, but every German soldier carries a camera'.¹⁵ If, as Susan Sontag contends, 'to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed', what were the implications of such widespread photography by soldiers beginning an occupation?¹⁶ For these occupiers, photography became an essential part of seeing the land, and of 'capturing' it in the figurative and literal sense.¹⁷

Despite the ubiquity of photography and photographs, historians uneasy about the distinctive aspects of visual sources have neither analysed them consistently, nor used them as a window into how Germans saw (and were encouraged to see) occupied Europe.¹⁸ Basic questions about authenticity complicate analysis; and the subject, photographer, location and date of a photograph are often unknown. Certainly, many soldiers went to the front with a camera, but even more ordered photographs from their friends or from the propaganda companies, which had so many requests for reprints of their shots that, as early as the end of 1939, they were allowed to claim 10 pf. per picture to cover their costs. Soon, the 10 pf. became 20 pf., and by spring 1940, distributing photos had become such a big part of the propaganda companies' job that the OKW had three photo labs in Berlin working exclusively to fill soldiers' orders for prints.¹⁹ Photography may thus allow us to glimpse a broader range of occupiers' perspectives than traditional written media. Moreover, because photography and album compilation were separate acts, and the photographs found in soldiers' albums had not necessarily been taken by the men in whose collections they appear, reading these images requires sensitivity to their mobility and to the ways their meanings and purposes may change depending on context.

Even when they are not direct duplicates, soldiers' photographs often repeat themselves, with similar themes and compositions appearing across dozens of shots. As Maiken Umbach has pointed out with regard to amateur photographs from the Third Reich more generally, these images often 'resemble similar scenes photographed in the decades before and after the Nazi period, as well as comparable photographs in British and American albums of the same era'.²⁰ Although, on the one hand, such repetition suggests they may not tell us anything at all about what the occupation was 'really' like, the insistence with which certain themes and tropes appear and reappear demands attention, as does a photographer's

decision to omit other possible subjects. Probing precisely the repetitions and absences in occupiers' photography offers a window into the factors at play in forming soldiers' perceptions of their experience at the intersection of inherited forms, official propaganda, and group and individual impressions.

Moreover, even in anonymous and repetitive albums with few titles or explanations, the choice of images to preserve is significant, as is the thematic or chronological organization of the shots. Historians working with such photographs seek what Helmut Lethen has described as the order 'of the private memory warehouse'. They try to determine how this order functioned and what it may indicate about soldiers' attitudes and perceptions.²¹ Given the ubiquity of photographs and the role they played in how Second World War soldiers perceived and interpreted foreign lands, photographs are key sources. Our understanding of soldiers' attitudes and perceptions, and the regime's attempts to influence these, would be as distorted by *not* using these materials as it could possibly be by including them.²²

Unsurprisingly, there were rules about what a soldier could and could not photograph. Briefly summarized, it was forbidden to photograph anything directly related to fighting or defence, or anything at all in areas controlled by the navy, including bridges, locks and ports. Photographs that would damage the 'reputation' of the Wehrmacht were not allowed, nor were those depicting executions.²³ There could be no amateur photographs of accidents or war damage on the German side, and in Paris a specific prohibition was issued in March 1942 against photographing bomb-damaged parts of the city.²⁴ These rules notwithstanding, the images soldiers took and interviews with veterans both suggest that Wehrmacht members were poorly informed about the regulations, and that these were not heavily enforced.²⁵

The lack of enforcement was indicative of the Third Reich's larger desire to encourage and exploit, rather than discourage, soldiers' photography. In theory, anyone could pick up a camera, and any subject might thereby be captured. Aware of the inherent freedom in photography, British poet W.H. Auden viewed 'amateur snapshots' as 'the only decent photographs', and praised photography as 'the democratic art'.²⁶ Particularly in the context of an occupation, when it was easy for a German to acquire a camera, photography became remarkably accessible and widespread. The very 'democracy' of the photographic medium might have been problematic for an authoritarian state, a circumstance underlined by the fact that the Soviet Union forbade photography by individual soldiers (though it used many propaganda photographers).²⁷ Instead of forbidding amateur photography, however, the National Socialists preferred to intervene in and direct photographic practice, exploiting amateur photography as a leisure activity, a documentary medium, and a way to exercise power.

It is clear, then, that individual German occupiers photographed extensively while in France. Apart from the ready availability of cameras and the men's own

fascination with technology, why did they do so? What purposes did photography serve? Regrettably, soldiers only rarely explained why they took photographs. In the case of anonymous and undocumented albums, moreover, there is no way to evaluate whether soldiers took more (or different) photographs as occupiers than they might have taken in civilian life. Nevertheless, by drawing on the consciously composed photographs themselves in the context of other contemporary sources, one can begin to unravel not only why soldiers recorded specific images, but also what photography in general 'gave' occupying soldiers and the occupation regime.

First, and most obviously, photography was a form of leisure, a hobby and a type of entertainment. As in peacetime, it took men's thoughts away from their obligations, offered a distraction and made them members of a 'club' with its own technical expertise and arcane knowledge of apertures and shutter speeds. Photography opened up a fraternal world of exchange and camaraderie to which not only those who owned a camera, but also those who purchased and collected others' snapshots, might belong.²⁸ At home on leave, compiling photographs into albums filled a soldier's time, maintained a link with fighting comrades, and fostered a sense of satisfaction about the things one had seen and done. Soldiers on active duty could not carry large numbers of photos with them, yet they sought to preserve these keepsakes and memories for later. They sent film negatives and prints home to their (often female) relatives with specific instructions to develop the negatives and save the prints. In this way, women too shared in men's experiences, and participated in the production of war memory through photography.

Not only was photography itself a leisure activity, but a good number of the soldiers' photographs also document leisure time. Men photographed themselves sitting around relaxing with friends, celebrating a birthday, promotion, or other event. Sometimes, the photos depict a prank or joke that reflects enlisted men's jocular humour. In many ways, these photos are no different from those young men might have taken at home in peacetime. They draw on a repertoire of image types and conceptual frames that pre-dated 1939, and even 1933, raising questions about the degree to which the Nazi regime was able to change representational paradigms, given soldiers' familiarity with other conventions.²⁹ For Peter Jahn, the soldiers' ongoing need to feel connected to 'normal' civilian life motivated these images, making it 'not surprising that the largest part of the photos looks like the continuation of the family album in military life'.³⁰ Ordinary and embedded in convention as they may seem, these photographs show the value soldiers placed on leisure time, even in the service – an effort Jahn is surely right to connect with the desire to retain a sense of normalcy in the face of war.³¹

Photography was, however, not only a leisure activity. It also served to document. Satisfying a collector's urge, photographers accumulated snapshots as



Fig. 5.2: 'Peacefully rests the lake' (*Still ruht der See*), Johann Wetjen, Album 1, Frankreich 1940, Wetjen family.

records of their activities, testaments to their exploits. As suggested above, the many images of men enjoying a good meal are, on the one hand, reminiscent of 'normal' peacetime depictions of family or other celebrations. On the other hand, they confirm that plundering France of food, drink and other goods was seen to be part of an occupier's experience, even his duty.³² A remarkable photograph in the *Fremde im Vizier* exhibit shows a quiet lake, captioned 'Still ruht der See' (Peacefully rests the lake) (Figure 5.2). Only an interview by Bopp with the album's owner revealed that this lake hid goods that occupiers had stolen while searching houses in a nearby village. Their unit commander had apparently got wind of the theft, and so the men jettisoned the items in the lake before they could be caught red-handed.³³

The theme of plunder is likewise present in photographs of damaged weaponry: an obvious allusion to the French defeat, and at the same time a celebration of German victory. Soldiers' photographs depict individual French defences and military hardware, and they show whole fields full of captured tanks or other vehicles. The mood of some of these shots is documentary, while others evince a spirit of triumphalism. Figure 5.3, for instance, depicts satisfied and confident members of the German forces standing next to damaged equipment, with the title caption 'booty' (*Beute*).³⁴

Images with directly war-related themes do not, however, make up the bulk of the snapshots taken by occupiers in France. Rather, the leisure-time photos



Fig. 5.3: 'Booty' (Beute), Friedrich Siebert, Album 'Bilder zum Westfeldzug 1940' (BArch: N 586/8).

described above, and a subcategory of what might be called 'sightseeing' photographs, predominate. These images are present in albums from other theatres of war as well, but they seem especially prevalent in the albums from France. The duration of the occupation, its relative 'peacefulness', and France's position, even before the war, as a desirable tourist destination, helped to ensure that this was so. The predominance of non-violent images from France also points to the unique aspects of this occupation: the relatively high standing (at least initially) accorded to the French; the rhetoric and real efforts made towards collaboration with them; and the desire on the Germans' part to characterize the status quo in France after 1940 as 'permanent'. Together, these elements fostered a freer and more open relationship with France and the French than was characteristic of most other occupied areas. The 'sightseeing' images, moreover, suggest a deepening rift between the apparent tranquility of the French occupation (a vision that these photographs themselves helped to create and perpetuate) and its increasing brutality as time went on.

On one level, soldiers' photographs of historical monuments simply signalled their curiosity about the foreign areas they 'visited' during their service. At the same time, through these images, one can observe a kind of transposition of soldier to tourist. Shirer made his comments about Germans seeming like 'naive tourists' at the very start of the occupation, but the tendency for the soldiers to behave as tourists persisted. The regime encouraged it, for it provided soldiers with a convenient framework for perceiving themselves and relating to a foreign environment. With a camera in hand instead of a gun, they could imagine themselves as welcome visitors rather than hostile invaders. Sontag has noted that for tourists, '[t]he very activity of taking pictures is soothing and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel'. 'Unsure of other responses,' she comments, 'they take a picture'.³⁵ Sontag's assertions about the comforting value of photography ring true for anyone abroad, including occupying soldiers, who may, ironically, have felt rather vulnerable. Taking pictures was a way to disguise this unease, part of a transformation from perceiving oneself as a soldier to imagining oneself as a tourist.³⁶ In most images, France came across not as a recent battleground or hostile enemy land, but as a pastoral and even peaceful place, full of quaint peasants and stately historical monuments. Seeing themselves as tourists, and France as an object of aesthetic consumption, helped to define both in ways that rendered occupation easier. Soldiers could distance themselves from the inherent violation and violence of their presence on foreign soil. They photographed less what was actually happening than what they wanted to see; less what they may actually have been doing, than what they wanted to imagine they were doing.³⁷ Occupiers' photographs were thus more than signs of curiosity – they postulated an alternate interpretation of the German presence in France, and perhaps served as a coping mechanism for men facing and trying to come to terms with 'foreignness' and unease.

The 'touristic' photographs taken by occupying soldiers also expressed their dominance. As Bernd Hüppauf has pointed out: 'In principle, the photographer finds himself in a privileged position of power vis-à-vis his target'. Hüppauf draws attention to the way photographs of victims of German brutality in the East underlined the inequality inherent in these power relations and increased the privileged position of the photographer.³⁸ A similar phenomenon was at work in the superficially more benign photographs from the Western occupation. Each time they pressed their shutter releases, occupying soldiers 'captured' France and its inhabitants anew, reinforcing the power relations inherent in a military takeover. A favourite theme, for instance, was that of soldiers standing on the Eiffel Tower or other high point, with defeated Paris literally at their feet.³⁹ Being able to photograph out of doors, when the French were not allowed to do so, was itself a mark of occupiers' dominance.⁴⁰ Each photographic event created or reinforced a relationship of subjugation between the photographer and his subject. The French were not at liberty to remove themselves from Germans'

photographs any more than the land itself was able to avoid being claimed.⁴¹ Only the conditions of war had brought these men to France, and each image they captured was a form of tribute paid by the defeated. Through photography, Germans created themselves as occupiers, and the French people, landscape and historical structures as objects of occupation.

Photography, then, enabled soldiers to position themselves as conquerors. As a leisure activity, it fostered a sense of normalcy and connected them to civilian life. Taking its value as a coping mechanism, a way to remove the ‘disorientation’ of travel, discussed above, one step further, photography surely also offered a way for soldiers to distance themselves from the violence inherent in their position. In the context of perpetrators’ photos of German violence in the East, Hüppauf has established the concept of an ‘emptied gaze’ (*entleerten Blick*) behind the camera, arguing that ‘images taken from the perspective of nowhere are an expression of the hope of duplicating, with the camera, a reality from which the photographer is distanced by a clear line of separation, and upon which his camera can therefore impose its own order. The desire to maintain a space for the self that remains unaffected by the documented horrors creates the necessity of emptying the gaze by desensitizing and de-corporealizing it’.⁴² In Germans’ amateur photo albums from occupied France, photographs of outright violence are rare to non-existent. The violence inherent in the occupiers’ position expresses itself in other ways. In the East, Hüppauf suggests, soldiers tried to create a world on the other side of the camera from which they were separate, and to which they did not belong. In France, on the other hand, occupying soldiers sought to create an alternate reality behind the camera to which they imagined they might belong. This was a fabricated world of peaceful sunlit landscapes and friendly peasants, in which a soldier might feel as welcome as he did in his own homeland.

When it came to overt violence, putting themselves behind the camera may have allowed soldiers to believe that they were merely observers, rather than participants in oppression. In France, therefore, even as it expressed dominance, photography may also have revealed soldiers’ longing for a less hostile environment. This longing was occasionally expressed in writing, for example by future author Heinrich Böll, who wrote home in late September 1942, after two years as an occupier, about how he yearned to return to civilian life ‘and to take a trip, to experience the beauty and unsettling foreignness of other lands and peoples, ... these are all human pleasures that are granted to thousands and thousands, but our generation, it seems, will know no Sunday, not to mention the pleasure of going abroad in peacetime’.⁴³ Admittedly, the literary Böll may not have represented a typical occupier, but his words suggest that, at some level, soldiers’ photography was not just an expression of dominance. It may also have reflected a deep desire to return to a peacetime existence.

Perhaps, however, the peaceful and apparently ‘harmless’ quality of most soldiers’ photographs from France was simply due to the way many amateur

photographers practise photography. Amateurs are not typically interested in realistic or dispassionate documentation. They photograph what is striking, shocking or beautiful, what stands out, and often what they are supposed to see, rather than what may actually be there. In Eastern Europe, German soldiers took pictures that reflected and reinforced their racist worldview. They sometimes also documented shocking scenes of violence in images that were circulated privately or kept hidden after war's end. In France, probably because the real violence of the occupation was less apparent to many occupiers, at least initially, and because this oddly peaceful-seeming occupation seemed less distant from their 'normal' existence, soldier-photographers readily fell back on standard forms. Photographs intended for broader viewing depicted only the pleasant aspects of the men's military service, in the same way that letters from the field were not only censored by the military authorities but by the soldiers themselves, who did not consider it appropriate to share the full horrors of war with their families.⁴⁴

Sightseeing images feature often in albums from France, compared to those from other fronts, partly because, with the exception of some major cities where a historical German influence could be traced, Eastern Europe was simply not seen by the Third Reich to be 'worthy' of touristic interest.⁴⁵ Albums from France were also shaped by the fact that between the armistice and mid-1941, open violence in France was relatively rare; by the time the deportations, the aerial bombings and the resistance attacks had grown difficult to ignore, many amateur photographers were probably out of film. Instead of depicting open violence in their photographs, war's brutality and death were abstracted to the level of a gravestone, a dead friend's portrait, or a funeral notice from a newspaper.

When violence did appear, its treatment in occupiers' photographs was often quite subtle. For example, 'official' pictures taken by propaganda company members during the razing of the Vieux Port district of Marseilles show the evacuation of the population and the removal of household goods before the area was levelled.⁴⁶ The images aimed to document and also justify the destruction of a neighbourhood that the occupiers had perceived as a haven for dangerous elements. Deliberately restrained, these photos were centred on German soldiers and the orderly removal of household furnishings, not on individual French faces or fates. Photographs of internment camps in France also survive, but those that do not stem from propaganda company photographers were most likely taken by sympathetic bystanders, or perhaps the internees themselves, rather than occupiers.⁴⁷

Hints of a darker story emerge from amateur soldiers' photographs, too, sometimes reinforced by occupiers' own comments on their snapshots. Infantry General Friedrich Siebert, for example, revelled in Germany's victory in 1940 with mocking photos of 'French "obstacles"' (*Französische Hindernisse*) composed of old farm equipment. Undisguised racism is apparent in Siebert's use of captions that were intended to be ironic like 'France's fighters' (*Frankreichs*



Soldaten.



Fig. 5.4: 'France's fighters' (Frankreichs Kämpfer), Friedrich Siebert, Album 'Bilder zum Westfeldzug 1940' (BArch: N 586/8).

Fig. 5.5: 'Soldiers' (Soldaten), Friedrich Siebert, Album 'Bilder zum Westfeldzug 1940' (BArch: N 586/8).

Kämpfer) and 'Frenchmen' (*Franzosen*) for pictures of French African troops, seemingly purposeless and disempowered as prisoners gazing hesitantly into the camera (Figure 5.4). 'Soldiers' (*Soldaten*) is reserved for Germans (Figure 5.5), uniformed and busy, keenly planning their next moves.⁴⁸ Later in the same album, an apparently pastoral image shows a group of Frenchmen relaxing on a grassy knoll next to a shelter surmounted by a kind of windmill (Figure 5.6). The subsequent shot depicts one of them cracking open an oyster with his pocket knife, and a sign above the men reads 'Moulin du Bon Heure [sic]' (Mill of the Happy Hour or, punning, of happiness). Without the caption added by the occupier who snapped these images, there would be no way to discern their full import, but Siebert noted that the men were 'Frenchmen on cable watch' (*Franzosen auf Kabelwache*) – in other words, they were Frenchmen requisitioned to guard German communications cables against sabotage. This was no 'happy hour', but dangerous work – the men, like the cables, constantly vulnerable to resistance attack.⁴⁹

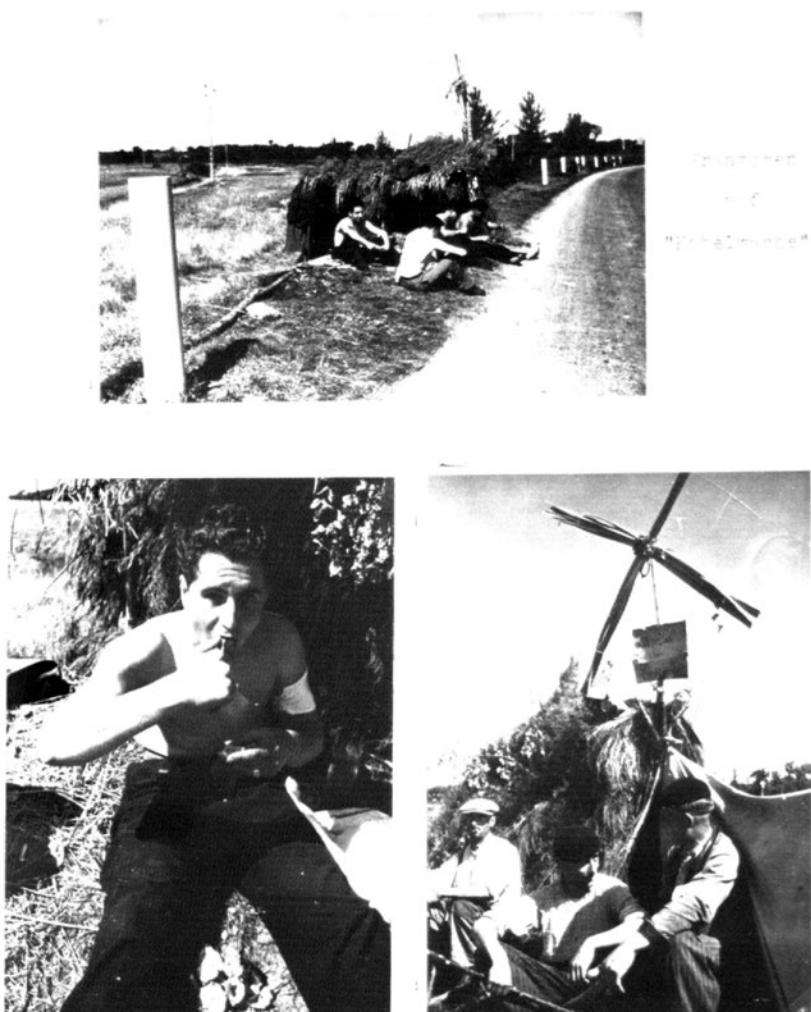


Fig. 5.6: 'Frenchmen on "cable watch"' (Franzosen auf 'Kabelwache'), Friedrich Siebert, Album 'La Rochelle 1940–41' (BArch: N 586/9).

The deceptively 'harmless' quality of some of Siebert's photographs serves as a reminder of the darker story underlying many of the occupiers' apparently 'innocent' images. What did it mean to take such a photograph, and to add it to an album as if this were just another picturesque 'sight' to see? Once captured, such an image was domesticated, literally rendered in black and white, in a way that enabled the viewer to ignore its underlying violence. The whole problem of being an occupier could be simplified, made manageable and liveable. In later years, it was easy to forget that anything brutal had ever been going on.

This kind of selective forgetting was encouraged by the National Socialist regime, which deliberately constructed the occupation of France as a visual experience that would nourish memories. As occupiers recorded images for themselves, their relatives and the nation as a whole, photography became self-consciously constitutive of the memory of the occupation, and also of its history. Rolf Sachsse has explored the ways that the National Socialists used photography to create positive memories for Germans.⁵⁰ In France, the preservation of personal memories was linked to the larger project of constructing a history of the occupation era. Rather than relying on anyone else's version, soldiers were to write (and 'capture') their wartime history themselves. Only in this way, the regime contended, would the 'true' story be told.⁵¹ Photographs of Wehrmacht members admiring French historical monuments, for example, not only reminded people that Germans in uniform had been 'everywhere' in France. Such images were also deployed as evidence of the culture, discernment and education of the aggressors, to counter the long-standing notion, amplified by propaganda during the First World War, that Germans were barbarians.⁵² Photographing each other in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier reinforced the Germans' victory, and allowed them to demonstrate their chivalrousness before the conquered enemy.⁵³

There was a reciprocal relationship between published and casual amateur photography, between books modelling how to see France and the ways that soldiers photographed it.⁵⁴ In 1942, Imprimerie Défossés-Néogravure produced a compilation of photographs by Uffz (Sergeant). Norbert Windfelder in *An der Kanalküste: Foto-Erinnerung* (On the English Channel coast: photo-memento). According to its introduction, Windfelder's work aimed to be 'a lively remembrance of German soldiers' service on the Channel coast'.⁵⁵ Beginning with photographs of captured weaponry, the book offered a narrative of the German invasion and occupation of France. In a depiction of war-damaged Dunkirk, the caption drew the reader's eye to a large church tower, where 'the German flag flies'. Subsequent photos alluded to the tragedy of war by showing the burial of a British corpse and a makeshift cemetery for British military personnel. Later, the theme of Franco-German collaboration emerged from an image of German soldiers at the graves of unknown German and French soldiers. A lighter section followed, with pristine dune and beach landscapes, one showing a French woman knee-deep in seawater fishing for shrimp under the watchful eye of a uniformed soldier. Close to the end of the book, images of German defensive positions on the Channel coast alluded to the 'true' reason for the German presence on French soil: defending it against the British. The book exemplified the standard themes of such works – German dominance, French submission, 'unavoidable' war damage and a kind of uneasy admiration of selected French landscapes and historical monuments. The overall message was clear: Germans had fought a hard battle in 1940 that had also, unavoidably, killed enemy soldiers and damaged France. Now, they were chivalrously protecting the country, working together with it to

defeat the ‘hereditary enemy’, Britain.⁵⁶ Books like this one provided templates for soldiers who snapped their own shots of France, while also giving those who did not take photographs a way to constitute their ‘own’ experiences visually.

The regime exploited soldiers’ desire to document their experiences through photography. It solicited their contributions through photo contests, and then reused them as propaganda. Frances Guerin has pointed out that ‘when amateur photographs demonstrated a commitment to [the] ideals [of National Socialism] through their depictions of idyllic landscapes and industrious, productive workers, it was common for the unofficial image to be appropriated, manipulated and reproduced as official propaganda’.⁵⁷ A process of collecting, digesting and then regurgitating amateur images was part of the arsenal used to reinforce a German view of the situation in occupied France, particularly as it grew more tense in 1941.

In the autumn of that year, as the barbarity of the regime became evident on the Eastern Front and resisters in France began directly attacking members of the occupation forces, the Wehrmacht sponsored an exhibition of soldiers’ paintings in Paris. This was followed in the spring by a show of occupiers’ photographs and films. Ernst Schaumburg, commander of Greater Paris, defined the art exhibition in a companion volume as ‘nothing less … than the visible expression of the thoughts and feelings of every German soldier who has served on French soil since the signing of the armistice at Compiègne’.⁵⁸ As noted above, Heinz Lorenz, who edited the companion books for both exhibitions, wrote in the preface to the work on photography that, ‘everyone would like to hold on to what he has experienced … and take it home as a visible memento for later’.⁵⁹ For Schaumburg and Lorenz, photography was an essential documentary tool for everyman. Indeed, the exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues were intended to unify and bring soldiers’ individual experiences of the occupation into focus, and to shape how they and their families would look back on them in the future. In assembling amateur photographs by occupiers of all ranks (including one woman), they rewarded the ‘right’ sort of photograph, and helped to disseminate appropriate motifs.

Both the 1941 ‘Kunstausstellung der deutschen Wehrmacht’ in Paris, and the 1942 photography exhibition were intended to underline that Germans were civilized beings who appreciated fine art, and were capable of producing it themselves using traditional and highly modern techniques. The regime used these events to harness the potentially threatening individuality of photography, ensuring that a few selected images would stand in for the experience of the whole. The exhibitions filled the leisure time of soldiers on weekend trips to Paris, and implanted the ‘right’ kinds of images in their minds.

Soldiers’ photographic choices were also steered by regime-sponsored tour guides and glossy coffee-table volumes in which the regime’s professional photographers laid down the visual rules of the game.⁶⁰ Having seen well-publicized

portraits of Hitler visiting Paris, for example, occupiers readily photographed themselves in the same, or similar poses, hands folded to the front, looking intently into the distance, with the Eiffel Tower behind them.⁶¹ Their self-assured stance and raised central position in relation to modern France's most famous monument underlined their confident authority, as did the vast scale and near-emptiness of the geometric scene behind. The visual resonance of such images was heightened for contemporaries by the fact that the Palais Chaillot, where the soldiers were standing, had been built as the centrepiece of the 1937 Paris Exposition. Many viewers would have been familiar with what Karen Fiss has called 'the most reproduced and the most infamous image of the exposition', a photograph taken from the same vantage point that depicted the Soviet and German pavilions facing one another below the great tower (figures 5.7 and 5.8).⁶² Now, the Soviet pavilion was gone and the Germans were in charge of the whole.

Shots in front of and atop the Eiffel tower were not only a shorthand for dominance, as indicated above, but also an example of the way that instead of demonstrating eclectic individuality, occupiers' photographs depict similar themes over and over again. If there is one shot of soldiers at the beach, in front of the Paris Opéra or at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, there are hundreds. Part of the reason had to do with earlier habits of photographing 'events seen as significant, either because they are milestones in a life narrative ... or because they open up new experiences and perspectives, such as a trip away from home'.⁶³ Another reason, however, was that guidebooks sponsored by the regime encouraged soldiers to think of themselves as tourists and to take advantage of their remarkable opportunity to admire France's grand historical monuments. Primed with this reading material, or as participants in one of the sightseeing trips organized by specific units or the central military administration, soldiers readily included among their photographs the French castles and cathedrals to which they were steered.⁶⁴ Together, books, guided tours and exhibitions contributed to a kind of 'Gleichschaltung' of the eyes that helped to propagate regime-sanctioned views of occupied lands.⁶⁵

As the challenges Germans faced in France grew, administrators began to express concern about Germans' fascination with French sights. In a file note about the rather positive depiction of France in books like *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich*, German embassy staff in Paris commented in 1943: 'These publications certainly serve a purpose for the German soldier and his relatives, yet at the same time, they represent cultural propaganda for France', and suggested that in the future, the publication of books 'that carry on one-sided French cultural propaganda' should cease.⁶⁶

In fact, the effort to reshape Germans' visions of France more aggressively had already begun, notably through tour guides. While many occupation-era guides were little different in content from standard peacetime guides, others were more

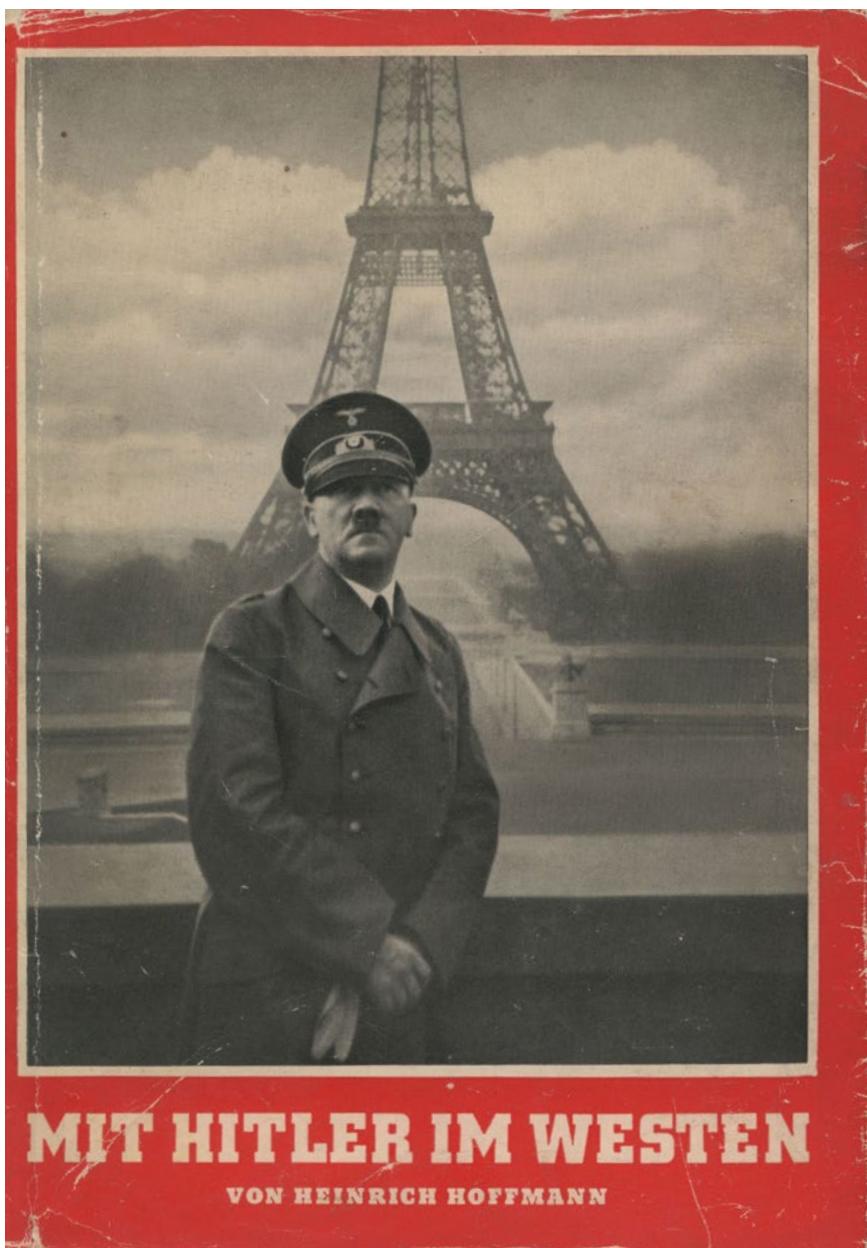


Fig. 5.7: 'With Hitler in the West' (*Mit Hitler im Westen*). Cover of a book of photographs by Heinrich Hoffmann (Munich: Zeitgeschichte Verlag, 1940).



Fig. 5.8: ‘Soldiers standing in front of the Eiffel Tower’, anon. Album ‘Ehren-Chronik’ (Deutsch-Russisches Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, KH 206542).

ideologically driven. In particular, a pocket guide called *Paris: deutsch gesehen* was published by the Strength through Joy (Kraft durch Freude) organization, with the approval of the commander of Greater Paris. This work provided a propagandistic rendering of Paris history and contemporary sights. Its most striking segments referred to a rampant Jewish ‘problem’ that the French had been unable to master by themselves. The guide noted that recognition of this ‘problem’ had ‘led, during the occupation by the Wehrmacht, to the first serious measures of racial protection [des Rassenschutzes]’. ‘It was not possible to clamp down using the usual instruments of police power’, the guide continued; ‘therefore, from the spring of 1941 we intervened more sharply through legal measures. Jews without French citizenship were sent to French concentration camps’.⁶⁷ Armed with a gloss like this one on how to ‘see’ France and its inhabitants, not to mention German policies towards them, a soldier could, in the words of the book’s introductory poem signed by Paris commander Schaumburg, ‘shape’ his many impressions of Paris into ‘a lasting memory’.⁶⁸



Fig. 5.9: 'Paris 1940, Montmartre', anon. Album, author's collection.

It is clear, then, that the regime made concerted efforts to influence how soldiers saw and photographed France. Yet when amateur and 'official' portrayals of similar scenes are compared, a striking contrast sometimes emerges. Indeed, amateur photos are among the few sources that may allow us to gauge the distance between officially mandated views and soldiers' own perceptions. For example, a photograph of Montmartre, taken by an 'ordinary' occupier, shows German soldiers meandering without apparent purpose, perhaps simply curious or seeking the seamy underside of Paris life (Figure 5.9). Another, captured by a propaganda photographer, shows the same district, soldiers in conversation with what are presumably respectable German women, rather than French dancing girls (Figure 5.10). The first photo seems casual, disordered; the second depicts the daylight, cleaned-up version of Montmartre propagated by occupation officials.⁶⁹ Another album reflects the distance between official and unofficial visions of the occupation by separating physically photographs having to do with service and sanctioned leisure-time activities, and those involving French civilians, women in particular, which are collected at the back of the album.⁷⁰

The tension between official and 'unofficial' visions of the occupation is also evident in the photography of Lothar-Günther Buchheim. Buchheim, the author of the 1973 novel, and later film, *Das Boot*, served as a Wehrmacht reporter and propagandist during the war. Although his propaganda work primarily involved



Fig. 5.10: ‘German soldiers with women in front of the Moulin Rouge’ (BArch, Bild 101I-129-0480-26 / Heinz Boesig).

writing and sketching, he also took many photographs. Buchheim was not a trained photographer, but since his role was that of a professional reporter, his photographs were not exactly those of an amateur either.⁷¹

Buchheim spent a considerable amount of time in occupied France, and came back to his wartime photography several times in the post-war era. In 1977, he published a book that reproduced a series of photographs he had taken in France in the 1940s. Buchheim explained in the book’s preface that he had not enlarged these images or shown them to his comrades at the time because ‘[s]uch photos were not suited to the times: I ought to have photographed parades, the shine and glory of the occupiers and “Les Monuments”’.⁷² In framing these photos as ‘hidden’ or ‘unofficial’, Buchheim both covered himself against accusations that he was simply reproducing National Socialist propaganda, and made a claim for the heightened ‘veracity’ of these images, which thus purported to depict the ‘real’ Paris rather than an official occupiers’ version of the city. Equally, Buchheim’s comments underline that propaganda reporters like him had a very clear understanding of the kinds of stories and images they were expected to produce.⁷³

Despite his claims to the contrary, however, Buchheim’s photographs are not nearly as different from those of his contemporaries as he would like to think. Buchheim actually did photograph major Paris monuments; perhaps from a more interesting angle than fellow soldiers with less artistic sense, and interspersed with more shots of everyday street life in Paris, but ‘Les Monuments’ nevertheless.

More tellingly, his 1977 volume constructed an occupied French capital almost without occupiers. His introduction to the photographs suggests that this simply reflected images as he captured them in the 1940s: 'At that time, when the occupier came into the picture, I looked away – also with the camera'.⁷⁴ Buchheim had photographed the 'bombastic' military parades along the Champs-Elysées, he noted, but otherwise this volume of occupier photography contained few occupiers, and only very fleeting signs of war.

Buchheim made attempts to explain, or justify, his wartime photographic activities, some of them in fiction. In addition to *Das Boot*, he published two other novels that revolved around his experiences in occupied France. In the second of these, *Die Festung*, Buchheim described his autobiographical protagonist wandering around the ruined city of Rouen in 1944, haunted by the visible consequences of warfare, taking photograph after photograph. Rather than sinking into passive despair, Buchheim's character pushed onwards with the words, 'So, continue, and take pictures of these streets of rubble! Document what it looks like here! Capture for all time what the vandals have done with a beautiful medieval city'.⁷⁵ Here, Buchheim presents photography as a specifically documentary activity, a conscious recording of war's horrors, even a statement about the nature of the Nazi regime. The author turns occupiers' photography into recording, and that recording into a political act, implying that his protagonist's photographs constituted a very limited form of opposition to war and the Nazi regime.

How are we to interpret this statement, made, after all, after war's end and in a work of fiction? At the very least, it appears that Buchheim used the camera in his novel, and perhaps used it in reality as well, to create a separation between the actions of the 'Vandals' and the photographer's presumably civilized self. Returning to Hüppauf's point, Buchheim employed his camera to imagine himself as a simple observer, or even a conscientious documenter, of a violent scene. The catch was of course that Buchheim was writing well after 1945, and perhaps seeking above all to justify having taken so many photos in a context where, in hindsight, photography itself might appear to have been a callous act.⁷⁶ Like other occupation soldiers, Buchheim fell prey to the notion that he could simply be a tourist, a voyeur. His photographs remained remarkably blind to the war, and he certainly did not go as far as to document German brutality per se.

Buchheim's photos include many of the same tropes found in the images of 'true' amateurs. In fact, like the 'war stories' that Robert Moeller identified among survivors of the Second World War (and notably of the expulsion from Germany's former eastern territories), soldiers' photographs repeat themselves to the point that one is tempted to question their ability to tell us very much about what the occupation was 'really' like. Yet, unlike the post-war oral accounts that Moeller investigated, which were only as reliable as the fading memories they reflected, occupiers' photographs do date from the period, and capture precise moments in time. In one sense, therefore, they may seem to us to be more reliable, but of

course the occupiers saw only certain images as worthy of capture, and a selection had taken place before the shutter was ever released. Some of this selection was mandated from on high, as in the prohibition against photographing anything that would damage the reputation of the Wehrmacht. In other cases, the selection may have been less conscious, yet it too would have been influenced by a more nebulous set of ‘rules’ or conventions about the kinds of photos to take.

Many images, we have noted, could have been drawn directly from peacetime albums – the photographs of men sitting around a festive table, for example, or those showing off youthful pranks. Photographs like these underline how ingrained, already, was the sense of a ‘proper’ moment to photograph, and how persistent such notions were despite an extraordinary context. At the same time, they suggest how quickly war becomes ‘normal’ for those who participate in it; or at least, how insistent the desire to assimilate the extraordinary to the ordinary remains.

Although the ‘official’ memory of the occupation today emphasizes German brutality, and French collaboration and resistance in the face of overwhelming oppression, the images taken by occupying soldiers hardly reflect this story at all. Hidden away in the attic, perhaps shown only decades later to curious grandchildren, they offer a far more benign picture. It would be easy to dismiss these photographs, eagerly captured by young men in uniform lured by a regime that sought to use these images to write its own glorious history. Indeed, such evidence of the past has often been dismissed on the grounds that it is not only unreliable and possibly unauthentic, but more importantly, cannot possibly reflect the past in any objective way. These concerns are largely beside the point. The amateur photographs examined here do not reflect one single, ‘real’ past; rather, they shed light on soldiers’ attempts to capture, document, and make sense of the experience of being occupiers. They also reveal how the National Socialist regime sought to direct occupiers’ seeing, and through photography, encouraged soldiers to see themselves not as oppressors, but rather as sightseers; not as participants and actors, but simply as detached observers of what was going on. Occupiers’ amateur photographs do not reflect the public, let alone the academic or scholarly histories of the occupation. However, they certainly do reflect, and also helped to create, a popular memory, recounted privately, that centres not on violence and war, but on the very real pleasures that German soldiers in France enjoyed. In other contexts, among victors who believe they fought a ‘good war’, photos like these showing the camaraderie and adventure of wartime get more play. But in Germany, the notion of soldier is too inextricably linked to that of perpetrator for such a ‘harmlessly’ positive narrative to survive.

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and France, especially in wartime. Her book *'For Their Own Good': Civilian Evacuations in Germany and France, 1939–1945* (Berghahn Books, 2010) was the first comparative study of civilian evacuations in the two countries. Torrie has written articles on soldier tourism, popular protest in the Third Reich, and wartime food history. She is working on a book that uses diaries, letters and amateur photographs alongside 'official' sources to explore German occupiers' experiences in France, 1940–44.

Notes

1. H. Lorenz, *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich, ein Bilderbuch mit Erzählungen* (Paris: Wegleiter, 1943), preface. See also Krob, 'Paris Through Enemy Eyes: The Wehrmacht in Paris 1940–1944', *Journal of European Studies* 31 (2001), 14ff.
2. Frances Guerin points out that 'banality' in this context does not, as in Hannah Arendt's formulation, describe a bureaucratic, routine approach to genocide. Rather, it refers to a kind of 'bourgeois normality', visible in soldiers' photos, 'that framed the stress of war'. F. Guerin, *Through Amateur Eyes: Film and Photography in Nazi Germany* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 69.
3. For instance, Peter Jahn indicated that the exhibit 'Fotofeldpost' focused on images from the Eastern not Western Front because the former highlighted the 'tension between the extreme war situation and a photographic habitus that was shaped by private life'. Peter Jahn, 'Vorwort', in Peter Jahn and Ulrike Schmiegele (eds), *Foto-Feldpost: geknipste Kriegserlebnisse 1939–1945* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 2000), 7.
4. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 47.
5. A law of 16 September 1940 forbade photography out of doors except by professional photographers and members of the German occupation forces. Françoise Denoyelle, 'Walter Dreizner, un amateur sous influence: des télécommunications à la photographie', *Francia* 33(3) (2006), 89.
6. An important early contribution was Sybil Milton, 'The Camera as Weapon: Documentary Photography and the Holocaust', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1 (January 1984), 45–68. See Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); and for a brief overview of the development of visual history, Gerhard Paul, *Visual History: ein Studienbuch* (Paderborn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 13.
7. Petra Bopp, *Fremde im Visier: Fotoalben aus dem zweiten Weltkrieg* (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2009), 7.
8. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds), *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Institute für Sozialforschung, 1995); Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter and Ulrike Jureit (eds), *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Bilanz einer Debatte*, Beck'sche Reihe 1632 (Munich, 2005); Guerin, *Amateur Eyes*, 41–45, 85–91.
9. Jahn and Schmiegele, *Foto-Feldpost*. Amateur photography in the long twentieth century was the subject of 'Knipser'. Timm Starl, *Knipser: die Bildgeschichte der privaten Fotografie in Deutschland und Österreich von 1880 bis 1980* (Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 1995).
10. *Fremde im Visier* opened in June 2009 in Oldenburg. It was shown in Munich, Frankfurt, Jena, Graz and Vienna, see <http://www.fremde-im-visier.de> (accessed 18 July 2017).

11. Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 10.
12. Ibid., 100–106.
13. Gerhard Paul, following Heike Falkenberger, *Visual History*, 9.
14. Timm Starl, *Knipser: die Bildgeschichte der privaten Fotografie in Deutschland und Österreich von 1880 bis 1980* (München: Koehler & Amelang, 1995), 98 cited in Bernd Boll, ‘Vom Album ins Archiv: zur Überlieferung privater Fotografien aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg’, in Anton Holzer (ed.), *Mit der Kamera bewaffnet: Krieg und Fotografie* (Marburg: Jonas, 2003), 167.
15. William Shirer, ‘This is Berlin’: *Radio Broadcasts from Nazi Germany, 1938–40* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1999), 328 (dispatch from 17 June 1940); Alon Confino, “Traveling as a Culture of Remembrance: Traces of National Socialism in West Germany, 1945–1960,” *History & Memory* 12(2) (2001), 109.
16. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 4.
17. Sontag (*ibid.*, 14) has remarked on the overlapping vocabulary of fighting and photography: ‘shoot’, ‘aim’, ‘capture’.
18. Bernd Boll has commented that, ‘Since place, time, context and photographer have been passed down for only a fraction of photographs, historians quickly reach the limits of their usual methodology and therefore often downplay the usefulness of amateur photography as an historical source’; Bernd Boll, ‘Das Adlerauge des Soldaten: Zur Fotopraxis deutscher Amateure im Zweiten Weltkrieg’, *Fotogeschichte* 22(85/86) (2002), 75. Gerhard Paul’s 2004 volume on war photos, for example, focuses exclusively on the ‘published, the politically favoured images: i.e. the public face of war’; Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges – Krieg der Bilder: Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 20. In *Fremde im Visier*, the roughly 150 amateur albums are all scrupulously documented; Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 10. My investigation, which focuses on broad mentalities and perceptions, uses anonymous as well as well-documented albums. The former are used to confirm, for example, that themes identified in the latter were widespread rather than simply representative of individual tastes.
19. Boll, ‘Vom Album ins Archiv’, 169–70.
20. Maiken Umbach, ‘Selfhood, Place, and Ideology in German Photo Albums, 1933–1945’, *Central European History* 48(3) (September 2015), 336.
21. Helmut Lethen, ‘Der Text der Historiographie und der Wunsch nach einer physikalischen Spur: das Problem der Fotografie in den beiden Wehrmachtsausstellungen’, *Zeitgeschichte* 29(2) (2002), 84. Guerin claims that ‘when [amateur soldiers’ photos] were placed in albums and captioned, it was usually done in retrospect at the war’s end’; *Amateur Eyes*, 38. This may have been true of images from the Eastern front, but the context-specific sarcasm of captions in some albums from France, and other evidence, suggests that soldiers put these together during the war, perhaps during home leaves. See album of Infantry General Siebert, discussed below, and the album of Johann Wetjen, in Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 15. Boll, ‘Vom Album ins Archiv’, 174; Petra Bopp, “...ich habe ja nun aus Russland genug Bilder”: Soldatenalltag im Sucher eines Amateurfotographen im Zweiten Weltkrieg”, in Irene Ziehe and Ulrich Haegle (eds), *Der engagierte Blick: Fotoamateure und Autorenfotografen dokumentieren den Alltag* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), 73–74; Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), 147–48.
22. Soldiers’ letters raise similar questions. See Klaus Latzel, ‘Wehrmachtssoldaten zwischen “Normalität” und NS-Ideologie, oder Was sucht die Forschung in der Feldpost?’, in Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans-Erich Volkmann (eds), *Die Wehrmacht: Zwischen Mythos und Realität* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999).
23. Punishments included destruction of the offending negatives. Ulrike Schmiegelt, ‘Macht Euch um mich keine Sorgen ...’, in Jahn and Schmiegelt, *Foto-Feldpost*, 25.

24. This regulation was likely prompted by the destructive bombing of the Renault plant in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt in early March 1942. Notice from commander of greater Paris to units in the city, 11 March 1942 (Archives Nationales : 40 AJ/451).
25. Schmiegelt, 'Macht Euch', 25.
26. W.H. Auden, letter to Erika Mann Auden, in W.H. Auden and L. MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London, 1937), 137, cited in Lara Feigel, "The Photograph My Scull Might Take": Bombs, Time and Photography in British and German Second World War Literature', in Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp and Richard Overy (eds), *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940–1945* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 122.
27. Jahn, 'Vorwort', 7. This rule too appears to have been widely disregarded. Amateur photographs survive from the latter part of the war, once Red Army soldiers entered German territory and obtained cameras through plunder. See Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann's chapter in this volume.
28. The strongly masculine make-up of the occupying forces, combined with the fact that most amateur and professional photographers of the 1930s and 1940s were already men, meant that most photographers in France were also men. Lorenz's *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich* included two photographs by 'DRK-Wachführerin von Koehl', but women photographers were likely to have been a very small minority.
29. Cf. Umbach, 'Selfhood', 336–37, 364.
30. Peter Jahn, 'Bilder im Kopf – Bilder auf dem Papier', in Jahn and Schmiegelt, *Foto-Feldpost*, 9.
31. On photography and the assertion of ordinariness in the Third Reich, see Umbach, 'Selfhood', 338.
32. The exchange rate in France of 20 francs to one Reichsmark favoured German consumption and exploitation. Cf. Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat: Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2006), 114–32.
33. Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 15–16.
34. General Siebert, 'Bilder zum Westfeldzug 1940' (Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv [BA-MA]: N 586/8).
35. Sontag, *On Photography*, 10.
36. Julia S. Torrie, "Our Rear Area Probably Lived Too Well": Tourism and the German Occupation of France, 1940–1944', *Journal of Tourism History* 3(3) (December 2011), 309–30.
37. Cf. Sontag, *On Photography*, 6.
38. Bernd Hüppauf, 'Der entleerte Blick hinter der Kamera', in Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds), *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995), 515. Cf. Guerin, *Amateur Eyes*, 72.
39. See, e.g., 'Konvolut Walter Gerloff, Einzelfoto, Zwei deutsche Offiziere auf dem Arc de Triomphe, Paris 1940', in Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 26.
40. French citizens who tried to photograph outdoors were viewed with suspicion. In October 1941, a young French brother and sister, apparently on holiday from Paris, were apprehended by the Feldkommandant for taking photographs in the forbidden coastal zone of Calvados. They were held for questioning, fined 50 francs and let go. Letter from Préfet du Calvados to M. de Brinon, Délégué Général du Gouvernement Français dans les Territoires Occupés, 14 October 1941 (Archives Départementales du Calvados: 5 W 8/3).
41. Sybil Milton noted that 'even the private photographs [of Propaganda Company members] had compliant subjects, vulnerable to the whims of the Nazi photographer'; Milton, 'Camera as Weapon', 51. Occasionally, images documented their subjects' reluctance to be photographed, as when they showed art sellers in Montmartre with their berets pulled down to cover their faces. Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 28, 34.
42. Bernd Hüppauf, 'Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder', *New German Critique* 72 (Fall 1997), 32.

43. Böll, *Briefe Vol. 1*, 25 September 1942, 484.
44. On self-censorship, see Bopp, ‘Soldatenalltag im Sucher’, 83, 90.
45. The same could not be said of Southern Europe, where occupiers’ photography contains the same sightseeing themes visible in France.
46. A series of photos taken by PK 649, photographer Wolfgang Vennemann, is available online. See, for instance, Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv: Bild 101I-027-1477-04; Bild 101I-027-1480-02; Bild 101I-027-1480-11; Bild 101I-027-1480-15, at: <https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/> (accessed 14 November 2016). See also Ahlrich Meyer, *Der Blick des Besetzers: Propagandaphotographie der Wehrmacht aus Marseille, 1942–1944* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1999).
47. Milton, ‘Camera as Weapon’, 59. Photos by propaganda photographer Dieck giving a sanitized view of the internment camp at Beaune-la-Rolande are available online at the Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv. See Bild 101I-250-0939-28A; Bild 101I-250-0939-26A, etc. at: <https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/> (accessed 14 November 2016).
48. General Siebert, ‘Bilder zum Westfeldzug 1940’ (BA-MA: N 586/8). Cf. Bopp, ‘Soldatenalltag im Sucher’, 81–83; Petra Bopp, ‘Fremde im Visier: Private Fotografien von Wehrmachtsoldaten’, in Anton Holzer (ed.), *Mit der Kamera bewaffnet: Krieg und Fotografie* (Marburg: Jonas, 2003), 102.
49. General Siebert, ‘La Rochelle 1940–41’ (BA-MA: N 586/9).
50. Rolf Sachsse, *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat* (Dresden: Philo Fine Arts, 2003); David Crew, ‘What Can We Learn from a Visual Turn? Photography, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust’, *H-German Forum: German History after the Visual Turn*, 18 September 2006; <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx>.
51. Umbach has underlined the circularity of this process of ‘appropriations and reappropriations of visual templates’ by public and private photographers; Umbach, ‘Selfhood’, 364.
52. In 1940, National Socialist publications often made reference to the fact that German soldiers had not behaved like ‘barbarians’, the way the French had supposedly expected. The occupation regime was at pains to demonstrate at least superficial civility. See, for instance, Franz Goetz, ‘Deutsche Truppenparade’, *Der Vormarsch 2* (18 June 1940), 3 (BA-MA: RHD 69/50).
53. Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 28. On the ‘myths’ about the occupation during the First World War, see John Horne and Alan Kramer, ‘German “Atrocities” and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers’ Diaries’, *Journal of Modern History* 66 (March 1994), 1–33.
54. Cf. Umbach, ‘Selfhood’, 364.
55. Norbert Windfelder, *An der Kanalküste: Foto-Erinnerungen* (Paris: Imprimerie E. Desfossés-Néogravure, 1942), 1. Given the quality of the photos, Windfelder was either a very skilled amateur, or a propaganda photographer who chose to publish a collection of images under his own name. An ‘Uffz.[Sergeant] Windfelder’ contributed one photograph to the volume *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich*, which in theory contained only amateurs’ snapshots. Lorenz, *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich*, 95.
56. Ibid., 9–10, 12, 36, 46, 49–51.
57. Guerin, *Amateur Eyes*, 75.
58. H. Lorenz, *Frankreich, Ein Erlebnis des deutschen Soldaten* (Paris: Odé Verlag, 1942), preface.
59. Lorenz, *Soldaten fotografieren Frankreich*, preface. See also Krob, ‘Paris Through Enemy Eyes’, 14ff.
60. At the peak in 1941–42, there were some 12,000 PK members active on all war fronts. Milton, ‘Camera as Weapon’, 50.
61. The familiar portrait of Hitler (Figure 5.6) appeared on the title page of the canonical account of the Führer’s visit to France by Heinrich Hoffmann, *Mit Hitler im Westen* (Munich: Zeitgeschichte, 1940).

62. Karen Fiss, *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.
63. Umbach, 'Selfhood', 349.
64. The regime especially favoured monuments like the grand gothic cathedrals that could be linked to a shared medieval past. Cf. Torrie, 'Tourism'.
65. Jane Caplan has explored the way that tour guides (in particular the 1943 Baedeker guide to the Generalgouvernement) functioned to create and support the Third Reich's official story on occupied areas. Jane Caplan, *Jetzt Judenfrei? Writing Tourism in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (London: German Historical Institute, 2013).
66. File note Pr. Nr. 6829/43, Schwendemann for Generalkonsul Gerlach and Gesandten Schleier, German Embassy in Paris, 27 November 1943 (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes: DBP/1141b); Wolfgang Geiger, *L'image de la France dans l'Allemagne nazie 1933–1945* (Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 379–80.
67. Reichsamt deutsches Volksbildungswerk der NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude', ed., *Paris: deutsch gesehen* (Berlin: Hermann Hillger, 1941), 53; Cf. Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 28.
68. The whole text read, 'The German soldier takes in a host of big impressions during his visit to Paris. This little book will help him shape the most important into a lasting memory' (Der deutsche Soldat nimmt bei / seinem Besuch in Paris eine Fülle / grosser Eindrücke in sich auf. / Dieses kleine Buch will ihm behilflich sein, / die wichtigsten zu einer bleibenden / Erinnerung zu gestalten). Reichsamt deutsches Volksbildungswerk der NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude', *Paris: deutsch gesehen*.
69. Konvolut Giesbert Witte, Einzelfoto, Moulin Rouge, Paris 1942, Bopp, *Fremde im Visier*, 33; 'Paris (1940) Montmartre' from album in author's collection; Soldiers in front of the Moulin Rouge, Paris, PK 689, Summer 1940 (Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv: Bild 10II-129-0480-26). Since at least the turn of the century, Germans had considered Montmartre an essential Paris destination, its dubious reputation confirming their notions of French decadence. Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany 1898–1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 56.
70. Three generations of French women; two men and two women at a table, Kfz. Uffz. album, author's collection.
71. PK members were encouraged to use various media to capture a story. During the war, Buchheim produced a collection of images documenting life aboard a U-boat. The same collection, published almost unchanged in 1976, depicted submariners as modern knights of the sea, tragically misled by their commander, Karl Dönitz. Lothar Günther Buchheim, *U-Boot-Krieg*, 1st edn (Munich: Piper, 1976); Anton Holzer, 'Die oben, wir unten: Das Boot, der Krieg, die Fotografie: Der U-Boot-Krieg als deutsche Heldengeschichte?', in Anton Holzer (ed.), *Mit der Kamera bewaffnet: Krieg und Fotografie* (Marburg: Jonas, 2003), 122, 136.
72. Lothar Günther Buchheim, *Mein Paris: Eine Stadt vor dreißig Jahren* (Munich: Piper, 1977), 10.
73. Cf. Guerin, *Amateur Eyes*, 76. Buchheim may also have thought that describing these images as 'unofficial' snapshots retrieved after years of obscurity in his attic would render them more acceptable to a postwar audience.
74. Buchheim, *Mein Paris*, 13. There is a precedent for emptied street views in pre-war photography of the French capital – for example, that of Eugène Atget. Françoise Denoyelle draws attention to the work of another highly skilled occupation-era German photographer, Walter Greizner, who created a contradictory vision of Paris in images that show, on the one hand, Parisians coming to terms with the challenges of daily life under duress, and on the other hand, like Buchheim's, omit the occupiers who were at the root of their oppression. Denoyelle, 'Greizner', 88, 91.

75. Loether-Günther Buchheim, *Die Festung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1995), 354.
76. Sontag writes that because the photographer chose to photograph rather than to intervene, '[p]hotography is essentially an act of non-intervention'. Sontag, *On Photography*, 11–12.

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Chapter 6

GAZING AT RUINS

German Defeat as Visual Experience

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann



In the summer of 1947, the German writer Alfred Döblin returned as an officer of the French occupational forces to the metropolis that had served as the stage for his classic modernist city novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, twenty years earlier, and which he had been forced to leave in 1933.¹ In his diary, Döblin recorded his impressions of the demolished city in brief, almost photographic takes:

The view along the way almost exceeds the limits of reality. It is an inconceivable nightmare in broad daylight. ... We are in Berlin. ... Long rows of streets are in this same deplorable condition, dead and yet not dead. ... We are approaching Chausseestrasse. On the other side of it we see a strange sight. There, in a faintly intact building, is an elegant restaurant with chandeliers and sheer curtains, the signs outside are in Russian. It must be for officers. ... We make our way carefully, the asphalt is ripped up and full of holes. ... It is early afternoon and an eerie silence reigns. Imagine, a huge city like Berlin, a broad street with no traffic, few people, and no noise. ... As we are coming to the Lehrter station a crowd streams towards us. ... Everyone is schlepping something, loaded down with bags and sacks. Many are in rags, a few look like cave dwellers. ... And then we sit down and have something to drink, an amazing experience. We drink tea from dainty cups, and smoke cigarettes as if nothing at all had happened ... And outside is the wasteland, the desert, the silent battlefield that stretches for miles, once a city that bore the name Berlin. ... We walk by Café Vienna, it still exists. People are sitting outside at tables, playing at pre-war life. And why not? The weather is beautiful, the bombs couldn't change that. ... Many customers seem to be from another era, come back to haunt this one. ... Friedrichstrasse is quiet and empty, as is the Linden, through which throngs of people and traffic once passed. It was once necessary for police to direct traffic at Kranzler-Ecke. Now, as we stand here, a young Russian soldier approaches us from Friedrichstrasse, he has a young woman on his arm. She wears a plain blue dress. They walk past us solemnly. A vision, a hallucination: across the

Notes from this chapter begin on page 151.

ruins of this obliterated city, a young Russian soldier walks along, serious and quiet, with his wife. Could anyone have imagined this five years ago, not to mention fifteen years ago when I was still here?²

It is this astonishment, the bewilderment at the improbability of the post-war imagery, that is typical not only for Döblin but also for contemporary ways of seeing the post-catastrophic city more generally. These ways of seeing or ‘visual experiences’ after catastrophe will be the focus of this chapter. The 1940s constituted something like a watershed moment in European history – or, to use a different metaphor, a ‘compressed time’ (Dan Diner) – in which historical events altered the social and political configurations of the continent violently, suddenly and irrevocably. Within five years – between 1943 and 1947 – the descent into war and genocide was followed by the return to a stable and, in comparison to pre-war Europe, fundamentally different international order. The starting point was in 1943: German mass killing policies in the East reached their zenith; Nazi Germany’s defeat became a certainty; and the Allies began to draft plans for a post-war order. The transition ended in 1947, when the post-war settlement turned into a new conflict among the victorious powers, splitting the continent into communist East and capitalist West. The cold war constellation, which lasted in Europe until 1989–90, emerged from this short transition period between war and peace.³

In order to understand this transformative moment, it is essential to keep in mind the extent of violence that was unleashed in the final stage of the war. What had started as a blitzkrieg to subjugate and colonize Europe evolved in the East into a fierce life-or-death struggle – a war without limits between two dictatorships.⁴ ‘At the beginning of 1945,’ as Richard Bessel notes, ‘Germany witnessed the greatest killing frenzy that the world has ever seen, as military casualties reached their peak, the Allied bombing campaign was at its most intense, and millions of Germans fled westwards ahead of the Red Army’.⁵ During the last four months of the war, more German soldiers were killed than in 1942 and 1943 combined, and they were killed for the most part in Germany. Allied casualties were probably even higher. In the Battle of Berlin in April 1945, one of the last gruesome battles of the war and the only one – except for Stalingrad and Warsaw – where a major city became a battlefield, German and Soviet troops suffered 240,000 casualties in the space of only three weeks. More German civilians (over 100,000) died during these last three weeks of the war than during the entire bombing campaign against the city (approximately 20,000).

The shock of violence shaped visual experiences of the transition from war to peace, although the ways in which this occurred still remain largely unexplored. To be sure, a number of works have analysed American and British media coverage of the liberation of concentration camps in Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Buchenwald. For various reasons (for example, wartime censorship), the post-war

imagery was more violent for the American and British, but also the German, public than visual propaganda during the war. Both Western Allied and Nazi wartime propaganda suppressed photographs of their own dead soldiers as well as civilian victims of wartime violence, hence the importance of the harrowing images from the liberated camps for Western perceptions of Germany in April and May 1945. These images later gained iconic status in the visual memory of the Holocaust. In contrast, photographs of Nazi atrocities had been at the centre of Soviet visual propaganda since the first year of the war. In the spring of 1945, at the moment when the Western media 'discovered' Nazi atrocities, these images had all but disappeared from the Soviet press, which focused instead on heroic conquest and victory.⁶

For Germans and for the Allies, however, visual experiences of German defeat in 1945 were much more complex and contradictory. As the Döblin quote indicates, the astonishment and bewilderment evident in contemporaries' ways of seeing post-war Berlin were directed at two events in particular: the wartime destruction of German cities and the presence of Allied troops in everyday life among the ruins. My questions are therefore: how different were German and Allied visual experiences of the post-war metropolis? And what was the significance of these divergent visual experiences – again, not only those of Germans – for the devolution of wartime violence and the emergence of cold war realignments?

Berlin Interzone

The example of Berlin is particularly well suited to exploring these questions. This is not because the destruction there was greater than in other European cities or because the occupation was especially brutal – the lawlessness of Soviet rule in Berlin, for example, pales in comparison to the annihilating power of Nazi rule in Warsaw – but because, for contemporaries, Berlin possessed a symbolic significance for the experience of civic rupture in the 1930s and 1940s. Along with New York, Weimar Berlin was *the* modern metropolis of the 1920s, defined by its vibrant urban culture. In 1930, Berlin had 4.3 million inhabitants, but by May 1945 only 2.6 million remained. Today, the population is 3.4 million, as it was in 1950; in other words, Berlin as a metropolis has never fully recovered from the aftermath of Nazi policies. In the 1930s and early 1940s, Berlin turned into the capital of the Nazi empire in Europe, even if, perhaps, as Eric Hobsbawm claims in his memoirs, Berlin never became a Nazi city at heart.⁷ After 1939, Berlin developed into the centre of the German war industry, surrounded by labour and concentration camps. Paradoxically, Nazi wartime imperial efforts turned Germany into a multinational society in the early 1940s. There were more than half a million foreign and slave labourers in Berlin from all the European countries under Nazi rule (almost 20 per cent of the city's population in June 1944). Only a few

thousand Jews survived Nazi persecution in Berlin – about 35,000 were deported and killed in the camps, and more than 100,000 left their native city.

During the Battle of Berlin, vast parts of the inner city were completely razed. More than 100,000 women were raped by Soviet soldiers in April, May and June 1945, before American and British troops arrived in the city.⁸ After the first violent encounters with the Red Army, the post-catastrophic city was divided in July 1945 into four different zones (and experiences) of occupation. Ironically enough, late Nazi and Allied Berlin was a polyglot metropolis, shattered but packed with people – predominantly women (in the summer of 1945, only half of the pre-war male workforce remained in the city), refugees from the East (Germans as well as displaced persons) and Allied troops.⁹ The demolished Reichshauptstadt was *the* war trophy for the Allies. Subsequently, it became a laboratory for the post-war order, when for several years the city served as a microcosm of international politics, a contact zone between victors and vanquished, and a space of everyday encounters where we can observe in close-up how the hostilities of the total war were transformed initially into increasingly peaceful entanglements of Germans and Allies, but then into a new global enmity, this time between the Allies themselves in the early cold war.

Visual Propaganda vs. Visual Experiences

My contention is, therefore, that in order to historicize visual experiences of German defeat one could begin with the imagery of documentary records – in particular, diaries and photographs – in which contemporaries captured the events as they were unfolding. In the 1940s, diary writing became a popular social practice to an unprecedented degree. These chronicles have yet to be incorporated into a history that integrates incommensurate or asymmetrical experiences of violence and loss into a single narrative. Needless to say, these private records do not represent a more ‘authentic’ everyday history of the entanglements and encounters connected to war and occupation, but like documentary photographs they do reflect fundamentally different experiences and expectations in the transition from war to peace that enable a more nuanced understanding of why the transition happened in this particular way.¹⁰

Photographs are another obvious and yet underexplored source for such an entangled history of the post-war moment. Allied troops were accompanied by war photographers who left a multitude of images that historians have only recently started to explore. The industrial manufacture of small, affordable and easy-to-handle cameras from the mid-1920s onwards changed the social trajectories of photography dramatically in the 1930s and 1940s. Amateur photography emerged, and the taking of photographs (like diary writing) entered the realms of everyday social practice.¹¹ Moreover, the period between the early 1920s and the

mid-1950s, the pre-television age, was the heyday of photographic journalism. In Weimar Berlin, the first major illustrated magazines and newspapers were read by millions each week. During Weimar's final years the photobook was invented by modernist photographers like August Sander (*Das Antlitz der Zeit*, Face of Our Time, published in 1929, with an introduction by Döblin), who conveyed their meanings not through an interplay of text and images, but primarily through photographs.¹² In Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, avant-garde photography was used experimentally as a propaganda tool. Similarly, between 1935 and 1943, American avant-garde photographers like Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans were commissioned by the Farm Security Administration, a Roosevelt New Deal agency, to take everyday photographs of rural poverty in the South.¹³ While Nazi and Stalinist propaganda machines retained a mistrust of modernist photography (preferring film and painting, or state-supervised amateur photography instead) and used images only if they were encapsulated in text, British and American photojournals, which had emerged by the late 1930s, based their commercial success on the power of 'documentary' images. The British photojournalistic magazine *Picture Post* started up in 1938 and was an immediate success, selling 1.6 million copies each week after only six months. War exponentially increased the circulation of *Life Magazine*. Founded in 1936, only six years later its editors could claim that tens of millions of civilians and two out of every three US servicemen read the magazine. Both magazines relied on the work of German émigrés like Stefan Lorant and Kurt Korff (previously editors of the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* and *Berliner Illustrierte*). Since the 1940s, American and British photojournalism has set international standards for the medium.

Photographs are, of course, a tricky source, which is one of the reasons why the few historical works on the subject have focused primarily on visual propaganda. While accounts of American media coverage of the liberation of concentration camps, for example, are extremely important, they primarily analyse American atrocity propaganda at home and in Germany at the end of the Third Reich. Naturally, they omit large parts of the visual traces of genocidal war and military occupation in Eastern Europe. To this day, the visual memory of the Holocaust is shaped by American and British images of the liberated camps on German territory, rather than by images from the actual sites of extermination in the East that were liberated by the Red Army (and which did not feature as prominently in Soviet visual propaganda in 1945).¹⁴ To focus only on published photographs, moreover, is similar to relying only on official (German and Allied) sources and propaganda.¹⁵ Censorship practices are important, but even Goebbel's Ministry of Propaganda failed to control pictorial information completely. As David Shneer has noted, the photographic record of Nazi genocidal policies 'lies primarily in archives, not on the pages of the press'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it remains unclear how to use the vast quantity of unpublished wartime and post-war documentary images (including amateur photography) that we encounter

not only in archives but also in commercial and private collections. Historians are only beginning to explore the implications of these vast visual records for the writing of history.

I will not rehearse at length here the critical theory of photography or visual culture. Instead, I will just note two of its governing distinctions relevant for historical inquiry, the first of which is that photographs are indeed captured experiences, but they also convert experiences into an image. In this respect, photographs are no different from diaries, which also convert experiences into something new – a text. Wartime and post-war diarists were acutely aware of the impossibility of representing their experiences accurately in language – or painting, as is suggested in the impressions of Berlin that British artist Mary Kessel recorded in her diary on 6 September 1945: ‘Berlin smells of death. Incredible like a million-year-old ruin, standing silent so that crickets sing – one can hear them, pale figures creeping around cutting trees, hidden in dark. Pools of water – pale in moonlight, and white ruins like great teeth bared. Oh – unforgettable smell of thousands of dead – The ‘still lives’ of burnt out cars and tanks in the gutters – and mile on mile on mile, where no one lives or can ever live again – just smelling – there the crickets sing. Can you imagine the stillness. And how can one paint it? HOW get it all in?’¹⁷ In other words, photographs are traces of past experiences, of things that actually happened, but they also embody a particular aesthetic perspective on reality that needs to be reconstructed if we think, for example, of the eerie beauty of some photographic records of ruined cityscapes, or the intense emotion conjured up by Holocaust liberation photography.

A second and particularly pertinent observation for the purposes of my argument is that the camera is also a way to appropriate the thing photographed. ‘The camera’, as Susan Sontag famously wrote, ‘makes everyone a tourist in other people’s reality’.¹⁸ Photographic seeing always runs the risk of appropriating the experiences of others, for example suffering, and turning it into a consumable narrative – what I will later discuss as the ‘politics of pity’. The Second World War was a pivotal moment in this emergence of photography as a way to capture and appropriate experiences of political violence – not simply as ‘distorted’ or ‘propagandistic’ representations of events, but as complex and contradictory yet powerful ways of giving meaning to human suffering.

The Spectacle of German Defeat

In the following, I will indicate different visual experiences of German defeat in 1945 and lay out a preliminary argument about their political implications. For this chapter, I have examined images by Soviet, British, American and German photographers (mostly professional), who were in Berlin at the end of the war and during the early Allied occupation.¹⁹ The majority of these photographs were

never published and are now in private and public collections throughout Europe and the United States. It is impossible to assemble a comprehensive sample of these visual records, and the following are mere suggestions of possible ways of understanding those photographs that are available.

For the sake of argument, I will claim that there are three dominant visual experiences of German defeat: a triumphalist mode, an elegiac mode and an ethnographic gaze. These are not identical in every case, but are predominantly connected to Soviet, German and British/American wartime experiences and ways of photographic seeing. As will become more apparent later, by 'Soviet', 'German' and 'British/American' perspectives I do not wish to imply that photographic seeing can be divided neatly into national categories. Some of the most eminent American war photographers like Robert Capa (Endre Ernő Friedmann) and David Seymour (David Robert Szymin) were European immigrants and deeply indebted to German and Soviet avant-garde photography of the 1920s and early 1930s. This was also the case for Kurt Hutton, who at the time worked in Berlin for the famous photo agency Dephot (then still Kurt Hübschmann), before migrating to Britain in 1934 where he was a member of the founding staff of *Picture Post*. Then there was Margaret Bourke-White, who travelled from America to Soviet Russia in the 1930s with the official task of photographing industrial construction sites for Soviet magazines. Her sympathetic photobook *Eyes on Russia* (1931) and her photoreportages for the *New York Times Magazine* hardly differ from Soviet visual propaganda of the time. Notwithstanding, different wartime experiences did shape ways of photographic seeing; photographs of post-war Berlin by German émigrés who returned in American uniform to their native city in 1945 differ from the photographs of those who had remained in Nazi Europe. What all these photographs have in common is that they depict German defeat as a liminal moment in European history.

The Triumphalist Gaze at German Defeat

In Soviet photography, Berlin is inextricably connected to the conquest and defeat of a deadly enemy who had conducted the war in such a way that it could not hope for peace. Not only in well-known Soviet visual icons of the war, such as Evgenii Khaldei's photograph of the taking of the Reichstag, did the gesture of heroic triumph predominate over the German defeat. The most important Soviet war photographers were in Berlin at the end of the war, and they all took photographs of the Reichstag in ruins. If Berlin was in Soviet propaganda parlance 'the cave of the beast', the Reichstag was its heart (although this is not quite logical, since the Reichstag had been the place of German parliamentarism, abandoned by the Nazis after the fire in 1933). Other preferred images of Berlin in 1945 were Hitler's Reichskanzlei, largely destroyed and littered with Nazi paraphernalia, and the thousands of German prisoners of war who had to march

through Berlin before being deported to the gulags (a triumphalist spectacle like the march of German POWs through Moscow on 17 July 1944), and who were photographed not as individuals but in large columns.

Soviet war correspondents like Arkadii Shaikhet, Georgii Zelma, Boris Ignatovich and Georgii Petrusov were well-known photojournalists in the 1930s. They had learned their trade by photographing the gigantic Stalinist construction sites – for example, the factory in Magnitogorsk between 1930 and 1941 – whose images were published in the propaganda photo magazine *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in construction), designed by El Lissitzki. The 1930s witnessed the shift from Soviet avant-garde photography to the academic aestheticism of socialist realism, with its staged and overtly heroizing imagery (emulating bombastic paintings, the preferred art form during Stalinism).²⁰ For the duration of the war, photography regained some of its prestige in Soviet propaganda. While modernist techniques (like close-ups and diagonals) were still considered too formalist by authorities, war itself eliminated the dull and idyllic imagery of Stalinist propaganda before and after the Second World War. Instead, Soviet war photography employed a heroic visual language that used certain modernist elements – in particular, unusual camera angles, dramatic lighting and a focus on expressive movement as well as ‘conscious’ socialist realist elements, such as the retouching or even staging of photographs (as was the case in Khaldei’s photograph of the taking of the Reichstag). This heroic visual language also informed Soviet images of German defeat, as did the fact that they – unlike American photojournalists – were part of the fighting troops. Some, like Timofei Melnik, had been severely wounded in combat or, like Khaldei, had lost family members in the Holocaust. Most of these images did not shy away from the realities of war, and consequently were not published in Soviet newspapers. However, as was the case for Soviet diaries and letters from Berlin in 1945 (with the notable exception of Vasilii Grossman’s diaries), which used key terms of Soviet propaganda to describe the faces of German civilians as *zverskii* (beastly),²¹ Soviet visual propaganda did not differ entirely from these unpublished images. There was a clear sense in both published and unpublished photographs that the tables had been turned, that Soviet troops in Berlin were now, in a dramatic reversal, masters of the master race.

Moreover, in the immediate post-war period, photographs of everyday life in the German territories under Soviet rule rarely appeared in the Soviet media. If magazines like *Ogoniok* (the Soviet equivalent of *Life*) reported from Berlin at all, the pictures of ruins and reconstruction (taken, for example, by Georgii Petrusov) were accompanied by articles that stressed German war crimes and the possibility of a resurrection of Nazism. One article in *Ogoniok* from February 1946 notes: ‘The Germans like to complain now about their bitter fate, about living with cold and hunger. They claim they are forced to sell their last pieces of clothing on the black market. Yet, all this is not correct. Many servants of

the Third Reich, among them many Berliners, have robbed Europeans during the war of so many possessions that these will last for a long time'.²² Instead of images of post-war Germans in despair, every year the Soviet media republished photographic accounts of the heroic conquest of Berlin. In the narrative of the main 1948 Moscow exhibition 'The Great War of the Fatherland and Artistic Photography', as well as in subsequent Soviet photobooks of the Second World War, Berlin remained the trophy of the heroic war against German Fascism.²³ In other words, Soviet Berlin (in contrast, as we shall see, to America's Berlin) was visually frozen into the moment of triumphalist subjugation. In contrast, amateur photographs by Soviet officers or civilians in post-war Berlin that have shown up in private collections in recent years depict not only the extent of destruction and defeat, but also, occasionally, cordial interactions with the civilian population in the everyday life of the city.²⁴

The Elegiac Gaze at Ruins

There are few pictures of the end of the war in Berlin taken by either professional or amateur German photographers.²⁵ If the notion of *Stunde Null* (introduced by the 1947 Roberto Rossellini neo-realist Italian film, *Germany Zero Hour*, which was set in Berlin and incorporated documentary film material of the ruined cityscape) has any meaning, then for German visual memories of the end of war. Many German photographers had been deployed with propaganda companies of the Wehrmacht, but by spring 1945 they had not yet returned to the city. Others had buried their cameras shortly before the end of the war and could only begin taking pictures with them again during the summer, once they had obtained supplies on the black market (supplies that were, however, readily available to Allied photojournalists). Furthermore, the Nazis had forbidden that photographs be taken of the social chaos at the end of the war, or of the devastating results of the air raids. During the initial weeks of Soviet occupation, authorities ordered that all cameras be turned in. For a few weeks, taking photographs continued to be dangerous for German civilians. As a result, most of the existing pictures of German defeat were taken by the Allies – for the same reason that the only images of the final and systematic destruction of Warsaw in November 1944 were taken by Germans.²⁶

Early post-war images by German photographers exhibit a marked allegorical tendency. In the photographs of Friedrich Seidenstücker, Willi Saeger and Willy Römer, to name a few, the defeat and destruction of the city appears as an event from an ancient, faraway world, like the ruins of Pompeii (cf. cover image). An elegiac aesthetic reminiscent of the images of romanticist, post-revolutionary paintings, in particular the work of Caspar David Friedrich, pervades their photographs, even in the rare cases where human figures are included. (A similar allegorical tendency can be discerned in German novels of the immediate post-war

period, such as Hermann Kasack's *Stadt hinter dem Strom* and Ernst Jünger's *Heliopolis: Rückblick auf eine Stadt*).²⁷ This gazing at ruins was so predominant in German photography in 1945–46 that it constitutes a distinctive photographic genre, the so-called *Ruinenfotografie*. These elegiac images of ruins have been interpreted recently by cultural historians as a visual denial of German responsibility for Nazi crimes.²⁸ Although these images are indeed very different from Allied atrocity photography, it is remarkable that the most prominent German *Ruinenfotografen* were not taken by Nazi or even Wehrmacht photographers, but rather by representatives of Weimar culture who had been forced to stop working during the Third Reich. August Sander, for example, whose work was banned by the Nazis and whose son died in prison, spent the post-war years obsessively photographing the ruins of Cologne. Seidenstücker and Römer, who did the same in Berlin, had been socially engaged chroniclers of everyday life in the modern metropolis before 1933. This makes the fact that urban life and human figures are often absent in their post-war photography all the more striking. It is important to note that most of these images were not published at the time. Their images of the ruins were not commercially successful. Only a small fraction of this material has been published posthumously since the 1980s; most of it (like the cover image for this volume, presented here for the first time) remains unexplored in both private and commercial collections.²⁹

In contrast, photographers who were more committed to the visual propaganda of the Third Reich, such as Hilmar Pabel, Hans Hubmann and Gerhard Gronefeld had no difficulties adjusting in 1945, and soon published their work on everyday life in post-war Berlin on both sides during the early cold war, even in *Life*.³⁰ Moreover, visual documentation of the devastating effects of Allied bombing campaigns against German cities was censored by Nazi authorities. Reports in Nazi newspapers and magazines, for example, rarely included photographic images of the ruins (despite the Nazi leadership's fascination with imperial ruins)³¹ but, strikingly, often featured medieval drawings of the intact cityscape. If shown at all, photographs of city ruins displayed the resilience of the civilian population, of civil defence and of moral resourcefulness, in spite of the 'barbaric' terror attacks. The visual narrative of these Nazi reports has more in common with photographic accounts of Berlin as a cold war *Frontstadt* than with the melancholic gazing at ruins in the immediate post-war period.³²

For this reason, the elegiac narrative in German early post-war photography was a specific way of coping with the aftershocks of German defeat and the destruction of German cities. It reflected a particular aesthetic, distant from the Nazi past as well as from Allied atrocity propaganda.³³ This changed during the early years of the cold war, in particular during the Airlift in 1947–48. The resilient city (and not the ruins) became the dominant theme of visual representations of Berlin – in contrast to Cologne and Dresden – by (now West) German and, as we shall see, British and American photographers.³⁴

The Ethnographic Gaze with an Emphasis on Suffering and Survival

In contrast to Soviet war photographers, the Americans and British came to Berlin when the war was over. They did not experience German occupation and the genocidal warfare between the Elbe and Volga rivers first-hand. To be sure, there was also a clear sense of revenge in early American and British imagery of defeated Germany (as in Soviet photography), for instance in the shockingly new aerial photographs of the razed German cities (famously by Bourke-White), portrait pictures of German prisoners of war, and of dead local Nazis who had committed suicide with their families in the last days of the war. As in Soviet photography, the destroyed Reichskanzlei (and to a lesser degree the Reichstag) were initially preferred subjects in British and American photographic accounts of Hitler's Berlin in ruins. While atrocity propaganda still defined the image of Germans among the American and British publics in spring 1945, this changed over the course of that year. The result was a kind of visual de-Nazification: Nazi Germans became Germans again.³⁵ An ethnographic gaze at life among the ruins of Berlin figured prominently in this shift from punitive to compassionate images of post-war Germans. For American photographers, Berlin became a visual shorthand for the pity of war and for the resilience of urban life.

With this shift, the motifs informing the photographs also changed. Images of concentration camps and portraits of unrepentant Nazi leaders and the wealth they had accumulated throughout Europe were replaced by images of German women with children, often interacting on friendly terms with Allied (British, American and Soviet) soldiers. These images of the 'culture of defeat' (Wolfgang Schivelbusch) captured suffering as well as strategies of survival. While they were initially often juxtaposed with captions that emphasized German responsibility for Nazi crimes, these captions were eventually dropped. Instead, an emphasis on the resilience of the civilian population and the surprising return to urban life shaped American and British imagery of post-war Berlin. This holds true for amateur photography by Allied troops and civilians employed in the occupied city,³⁶ but even more so for American and British photojournalists who came to Berlin between 1945 and 1948. Post-war Berlin features prominently in the works of well-known war correspondents such as Margaret Bourke-White, Robert Capa, David Seymour, Leonard McCombe and Lee Miller. Some, like Henry Ries and Walter Sanders, returned to their native cities wearing American uniforms. Sanders' photoreportage 'The Road Back to Berlin' in *Life* (11 November 1946), for example, depicted a German boy vividly recalling the air raids alongside an image of a German *Fräulein* enjoying the afternoon sun at one of the reopened cafés on Berlin's fashionable Kurfürstendamm. There were increasingly also socio-critical photographs of the humanitarian crisis in post-war Germany – images of hunger, deprivation, and wayward adolescents – and,

beginning in 1947–48, images of a return to modest consumption and islands of domesticity and peace in the midst of the destruction.³⁷ In *Life*, these documentary images of post-war poverty in Europe were often visually juxtaposed to American abundance, apparent in advertisements for American consumers. This visual de-Nazification is epitomized in the well-known images of the Airlift in 1947–48 (by Ries, Sanders, and others) which showed German women and children looking to the sky full of hope at their American saviours, the same inhabitants of German cities whose loyalty to the Nazi regime only a few years earlier was supposed to have been broken through aerial warfare.

The Politics of Pity

For Soviet photographers (and diarists), whose country had been devastated by Nazi Germany and who had witnessed genocidal warfare, the destruction of German cities was a justified form of retribution, especially given the fact that the Germans they encountered at the end of the war were always better nourished, better dressed, and possessed more material wealth than their own families had ever had. The gesture of heroic triumph over a deadly enemy continued to inform Soviet visual representations of Berlin in 1945, despite official propaganda about a German–Soviet friendship, which was inaugurated immediately after the war. Images of the increasingly peaceful interactions and entanglements between Soviet troops and German civilians in the everyday life of post-war Berlin (taken mainly by British and American photographers) were at first a provocation for the phobias of Stalinist authorities, and were later conveniently silenced on both sides during the cold war. They did not enter German or Soviet visual memories of the end of war.

Shock about life in a post-catastrophic metropolis is evident in the work of American and British photographers who had not experienced the war of extermination in the East first-hand. Their photographs reflected the emergence of a new ethics of seeing that has become the dominant concern of humanitarian photography in the contemporary period.³⁸ Ironically, for Western photographers (and media) it was the demolished and occupied post-war Germany and not the desolate death zone left by Nazi rule in Eastern Europe – that is, Berlin rather than Warsaw, Leningrad, Kiev or Minsk – that became visual shorthand for the pity of war, a war that had ostensibly destroyed the principles of civilization. The central paradox for the Allies in post-war Germany was that they expected to find a populace of fanatical Nazis and violent insurgents, and what they actually encountered was a people sick of war, contemptuous of the ruling elite that had led them into disaster, and initially complacent about the realities of occupation.³⁹ To the Western Allies, Soviet lawlessness against the defeated soon appeared to be a greater threat than the feminized imagery of the former

enemy. In American and British visual experiences, German women and children in particular became passive victims of the war, an attribution that Germans soon assumed for themselves – politically, but also visually in the photographs of everyday life in post-war Berlin by photographers such as Gronefeld.⁴⁰

The compassionate imagery of Germans as victims of Nazi and Soviet rule was in many ways the product of American and British experiences in post-war and early cold war Germany, and of everyday encounters and entanglements on a local level. In the aftermath of the war, American photojournalism in particular transformed, at first reluctantly, the former *Reichshauptstadt* into ‘America’s Berlin’, a dramatic reversal that has been described by cultural historians, albeit without taking documentary photography into account.⁴¹ However misguided the visual representations of Germans as victims of Nazi and Soviet rule may appear to us today, it was precisely this humanitarian sentiment evident in American photographic accounts of post-war Berlin that contributed to the rapid transition from punitive occupation to political alignment.

This humanitarian sentiment becomes even more apparent in other photographic projects of the post-war period – for example, in David Seymour’s *The Children of Europe* (1949), prepared for the newly founded UNESCO, which depicted the universal suffering of children in post-war Europe without making distinctions of place, time or nationality through explanatory captions.⁴² It is also apparent in the most successful photographic exhibition of the cold war, ‘The Family of Man’, which opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1955 and had its European debut in West Berlin later the same year. A total of forty-four thousand visitors viewed the exhibition during its twenty-five-day run in Berlin, many of whom (including Bertolt Brecht) came from the Eastern part of the ideologically, but not yet physically, divided city. The exhibition not only contained the now well-established image of a German child with satchel, walking home from school among the ruins, but also a picture of Berlin youths facing a Soviet tank, taken by Wolfgang Albrecht at the uprising on 17 June 1953 against communist rule (published by the *New York Times* four days later). This image was placed next to photographs of human and civil rights struggles in South Africa and Indonesia, thereby suggesting that post-war Germans, black South Africans, and Indonesians under colonial rule were all fighting for the same universal rights.

The exhibition subsequently travelled around the globe, and by 1962 it had been seen by more than nine million visitors. It was shown in Moscow’s Sokolniki Park at a time when Stalinist photography was criticized officially for its pompous and staged picture style. During the thaw, documentary photography or eyewitness reportage was privileged instead.⁴³ In this regard, ‘The Family of Man’ exhibition offered an alternative photographic style to official Soviet (and East German) photography,⁴⁴ and the socially engaged and compassionate documentary photographic style of the 1930s and 1940s now reached

its climax. Many of the contributing photographers, including the organizer Edward Steichen, had served as war correspondents in Europe; some, like Capa and Seymour, were now reporting about the wars of decolonization in Africa and Asia. The main trajectory of the exhibition, as Steichen explained in his call for exhibition photographs in 1954, was to search for images that expressed the universal through the individual and the particular: ‘It is essential to keep in mind the universal elements and aspects of human relationships and the experiences common to all mankind rather than situations that represent conditions exclusively related or peculiar to a race, an event, a time or a place’.⁴⁵ ‘Family of Man’ was hence part and parcel of the mid-century search for a new universal morality – and photography seemed to provide its lingua franca. As critics of post-war photography like Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag have stressed, ‘by purporting to show that individuals are born, work, laugh, and die everywhere in the same way, *The Family of Man* denied the determining weight of history – of genuine and historically embedded differences, injustices, and conflicts’.⁴⁶ Documentary photography was especially prone to the rise of this humanitarian morality and its emphasis on distant suffering that began with a compassionate gaze at Europeans, including Germans, as examples of the pity of war. We encounter similar depoliticized photographic imagery of distant human suffering in the wars of decolonization and the postcolonial conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s (such as Don McCullin’s photographs of the starving children of Biafra, or the refugees in Bangladesh), which have ultimately merged into contemporary Western notions of humanitarian emergencies.⁴⁷

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Notes

1. See Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006). This is the revised version of an article that was first

- published in a special issue on ‘Post-catastrophic Cities’ of the *Journal for Modern European History* 9(3) (2011), 3. Donna West Brett, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany after 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2016), which includes a discussion of German post-war ruin photography, appeared after the submission of the revised manuscript.
2. Alfred Döblin, *Destiny's Journey*, trans. Edna McCown (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 299–301, 304.
 3. See Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann et al. (eds), *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War: Europe, 1943–1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).
 4. Amir Weiner, ‘Something to Die For, A Lot to Kill For: The Soviet System and the Barbarisation of Warfare’, in George Kassimeris (ed.), *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London: Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2006), 101–25; Mark Edele and Michael Geyer, ‘States of Exception: The Nazi–Soviet War as a System of Violence, 1939–1945’, in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 345–98.
 5. Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 5.
 6. David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 181.
 7. Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), 46.
 8. Atina Grossmann, ‘A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers’, *October* 72 (1995), 43–63; Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: The History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995), ch. 2.
 9. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *In Cold Crater: Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945–1948* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
 10. Many of these sources, especially Soviet diaries, have only recently become available to historians. See Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ‘Nazis into Germans: Writing a Diary in 1945’, in Hoffmann et al., *Seeking Peace*, 63–90. For a similar approach, taking the Battle of Stalingrad as an example, see Jochen Hellbeck, “‘The Diaries of Fritzes and the Letters of Gretchen’: Personal Writings from the German–Soviet War and their Readers”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10 (2009), 571–606.
 11. See the pioneering study by Timm Starl, *Knipser: Die Bildgeschichte der privaten Fotografie in Deutschland und Österreich von 1880 bis 1980* (Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 1995).
 12. Daniel H. Magilow, *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012).
 13. On the striking similarities between Soviet and American documentary photography of the 1930s, see Leah Bendavid-Val, *Photographie und Propaganda: Die 30er Jahre in den USA und der UdSSR* (Zurich: Edition Stemmler, 1999).
 14. Samuel Moyn, ‘In the Aftermath of Camps’, in Frank Biess and Robert Moeller (eds), *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).
 15. On wartime and post-war American visual propaganda, see, for example, the excellent works of Cora Sol Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye: American Visual Propaganda in Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung: Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998); Dagmar Barnouw, *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), and, with a specific focus on censorship practices: Gerhard H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during World War II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). There are no similar works on Soviet visual propaganda during or after the Second World War

- except for Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes*. For Nazi Germany, see, for example, Rainer Rutz, *Signal: Eine deutsche Auslandsillustrierte als Propagandainstrument im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2007). On the multiple usages of atrocity photographs since 1933, see Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: Tauris & Co., 2004); Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14 (2001), 5–37; Carol Zemel, 'Emblems of Atrocity: Holocaust Liberation Photographs', in Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds), *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 201–19; Habbo Knoch, *Die Tat als Bild: Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001); Ulrike Weckel, *Beschämende Bilder: Deutsche Reaktionen auf alliierte Dokumentarfilme über befreite Konzentrationslager* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012).
16. Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes*, 177.
 17. Mary Kessel, *German Diary, August–October 1945*, Imperial War Museum, London.
 18. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001), 5; idem, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003); for a recent critique see Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
 19. The story of French photographers in Vichy France and occupied Germany merits a separate study, which I cannot sketch out here. An exhibition of André Zucca's photographs of Paris under German occupation at the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris has stirred much debate in France. See Jean Baronnet, *Les Parisiens sous l'Occupation: Photographies en couleurs d'André Zucca* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).
 20. See Konstantin Akinsha, 'Painting versus Photography: A Battle of Mediums in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture', in Diane Neumaier (ed.), *Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-Related Works of Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 31–46; Aleksandr Lavrentiev, 'Photo-Dreams of the Avant-Garde', in David Elliott (ed.), *Photography in Russia 1840–1940* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992); Margarita Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph 1924–1937* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Boris Ignatovich, *Kunst im Auftrag/Ikskusstvo na zakaz 1927–1946*, ed. Margot Blank (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2006).
 21. See, for example, RGALI, Fond 2581, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 118–141; Lazar Bernshtain, *Zapisnye knizki s dnevnikovymi zapisiami, 1933–1960*; Dnevnikovye zapiski o poezdke v Germaniiu, 7 March 1945. Vasily Grossman, *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army 1941–1945*, ed. Anthony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova (London: Harvill Press, 2006); see also the important collection of wartime letters by Red Army soldiers: Elke Scherstjanoi (ed.), *Rotarmisten schreiben aus Deutschland: Briefe von der Front 1945* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2004).
 22. V. Barykin, 'Berlin', *Ogoniok* (February 1946), No. 5.
 23. See, for example, Mikhail Trachman, *1418 dnei* (Moscow: Sovetskii Khudozniik, 1968), which contains the well-known Soviet photo icons of the Battle of Berlin. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, several photobooks emerged by Soviet war photographers, who had returned to (East) Berlin to document the new modern Socialist city. See, for example, Trachman, *Reise nach einem Vierteljahrhundert/Puteshestvie cherez chetvert' veka* (Dresden: Zeit im Bild, 1970); Georgii Petrusov and Roman Karmen, *Begegnungen mit Berlin* (Berlin: Deutscher Militärverlag, 1970).
 24. See, for example, the photographs by Boris Tartakovskii (author's collection), who worked for the Soviet military government in post-war Berlin, and by Vladimir Gelfand (Vitali Gelfand collection; www.gelfand.de), who also wrote an eloquent diary of his experiences in Germany. I wish to thank Alexander Tartakovskii and Vitali Gelfand for making these photographs available for this chapter.

25. See the study by Marline Otte, *Autofocus: Photography and Self-Reflection in East and West Germany, 1949–1989*, forthcoming, which explores the absence of Nazi defeat in German family photo albums of the 1940s.
26. See, for example, Joe J. Heydecker, *Die Stille der Steine: Warschau im November 1944* (Berlin: Dirk Nishen Verlag, 1994).
27. This sparked the criticism of W.G. Sebald, who claimed in *Natural History of Destruction* (2003) that post-war German writers had omitted the experience of urban destruction in their writings. On the ensuing debate, see Andreas Huyssen, ‘Rewritings and New Beginnings: W.G. Sebald and the Literature on the Air War’, in *idem Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 138–57.
28. Jörn Glasenapp, ‘Nach dem Brand: Überlegungen zur deutschen Trümmerfotografie’, *Fotogeschichte* 24 (2004), 48. Glasenapp’s argument is based on the analysis of two post-war photoessays: Hermann Claasen, *Gesang im Feuerofen* (1947), and Richard Peter, *Dresden – eine Kamera klagt an* (1949). For more nuanced accounts of post-war German photography, see Ludger Derenthal, *Bilder der Trümmer- und Aufbaujahre: Fotografie im sich teilenden Deutschland* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1999); and Jens Jäger, ‘Fotografie – Erinnerung – Identität: Die Trümmeraufnahmen aus deutschen Städten 1945’, in Jörg Hillmann and John Zimmermann (eds), *Kriegsende 1945 in Deutschland* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 287–300.
29. August Sander, *Die Zerstörung Kölns: Photographien 1945–1946* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1985); Friedrich Seidenstücker, *Von Weimar bis zum Ende: Fotografien aus bewegter Zeit* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 1980); Diethart Kerbs (ed.), *Der Fotograf Willy Römer 1887–1979: Auf den Strassen von Berlin*, (Berlin: Kettler, 2004). I am grateful to the late Diethart Kerbs and the Agentur für Bilder zur Zeitgeschichte for making Römer’s post-war photographs available to me.
30. Gronefeld, who photographed Nazi rule in Eastern Europe as a member of a Wehrmacht propaganda unit, did his first post-war photoreportage in July 1945 on returning Jewish survivors in Berlin. He published several photoessays for *Life* between 1946 and 1949, starting with ‘The Death Walk – German Acrobats Do Stunts Above the City’, 1 July 1946. Starting in the 1950s, he focused on animal and nature photography like many other German war photographers. See the interview by Diethart Kerbs, “‘Da kommen Menschen zu Tode’: Ein Gespräch mit Gerhard Gronefeld über die Geisel-Exekution 1941 und seine Tätigkeit als Kriegsberichterstatter”, *Fotogeschichte* 4(13) (1984), 51–64, in which Gronefeld reflects on his wartime experiences.
31. Julia Hell, ‘Imperial Ruin Gazers, or Why did Scipio Weep?’, in Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (eds), *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 169–92.
32. See, for example, the photoessays ‘Nach dem Terrorangriff’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 25 February 1943; ‘Britische Bomber greifen an’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 27 May 1943; ‘Ruinen klagen an’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 30 September 1943; ‘Berlin improvisiert’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 10 August 1944; and ‘Front-Stadt Köln’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 16 November 1944.
33. Similarly, Jäger, *Trümmeraufnahmen*. On the failure of Allied atrocity propaganda for German re-education, see Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung*.
34. See, for example, the photobook by Heinz-Ulrich Wieselmann, *Unsterbliches Berlin* (Berlin: Klasing 1948), which depicts Berlin as an anti-Nazi and anti-Stalinist city; or, in the 1950s, the work of Fritz Eschen, for example in *Bollwerk Berlin: Weisst Du wie es bei uns aussieht?....* (Berlin: Pandion 1952). On Eschen, who as a German-Jewish photographer survived Nazi persecution only by hiding underground in the city, see Fritz Eschen, *Photographien Berlin 1945–1950* (Berlin: Nicolai 1989).
35. This is one of the findings of Barnouw’s *Germany 1945*, although it contradicts her main argument that Allied photography (contrary to German photography) did not capture post-war German suffering.

36. See *Berlin 1945: Der private Blick. Fotografien amerikanischer, britischer und französischer Soldaten* (Berlin: Alliierten Museum, 2005).
37. Similarly, for this shift in British visual representations of post-war Germany, see Martin Caiger-Smith, *The Face of the Enemy: British Photographers in Germany 1944–1952* (London: Dirk Nishen Publishing, 1988). A case in point are visual representations of Berlin in the book by British (and *Life*) photographer Leonard McCombe, *Menschen erleiden Geschichte: Das Gesicht Europas von der Themse bis zur Weichsel 1943–1946* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1947), and in the material for a planned Europäisches Fotobuch by the Swiss photographer Werner Bischof, who published some of this material between 1945 and 1950 in *Life* and in the Swiss magazine *Du*. More critical of Hitler's Germans is the photobook by Henry Ries, *German Faces* (New York: Sloane, 1950).
38. Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (eds), *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
39. Similarly for Japan under American occupation: John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).
40. A similar point on the 'feminization' of the former enemy has been made by Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, for American images of post-war Japan. See also Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Re-Imagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Liz Heineman has demonstrated how this feminized notion of German victimhood gained dominance in 1950s West Germany. Elizabeth Heineman, 'The Hour of the Woman: Memories of the Germans' "Crisis Years" and West German National Identity', *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), 354–95.
41. See Andreas W. Daum, 'America's Berlin 1945–2000: Between Myths and Visions', in Frank Trommler (ed.), *Berlin: The New Capital in the East: A Transatlantic Appraisal* (Washington DC, 2000), 49–73.
42. On post-war humanitarianism and its particular focus on the fate of European children, see Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Heide Fehrenbach, 'Children and Other Civilians: Photography and the Politics of Humanitarian Image-Making', in Fehrenbach and Rodogno, *Humanitarian Photography*, 165–99.
43. Susan Emily Reid, 'Photography in the Thaw', *Art Journal* 53 (1994), 33–39, 33.
44. Astrid Ihle, 'Wandering the Streets of Socialism: A Discussion of the Street Photography of Arno Fischer and Ursula Arnold', in David E. Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds), *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002), 95. As an example, see Arno Fischer's photobook (conceived around 1960): *Situation Berlin: Fotografien 1953–1960*, ed. Ulrich Domröse (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2001). As Ihle notes, Fischer's photographs offer an alternative view of everyday life of the ruined city, in contrast to the false optimism and propaganda images of German reconstruction, East and West. Consequently, the book could only be published forty years later. For a similar photographic project by the Cologne photographer Chargesheimer, see his *Berlin: Bilder aus einer großen Stadt* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959). On the subversive implications of the imagery of ruins for the representational cosmos of socialism during the 1950s, see David Crowley, 'Memory in Pieces: The Symbolism of the Ruin in Warsaw after 1944', *Journal for Modern European History* 9 (2011). See also Paul Betts, 'Picturing Privacy: Photography and Domesticity', in idem, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
45. Cited in Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 167. See also Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
46. Sontag, *On Photography*, 33; Roland Barthes, 'Le grande famille des hommes', in idem, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957). See also Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality*,

- Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), who – following Arendt – makes the important distinction between ‘compassion’, which is linked to presence and thereby apparently local, and ‘ pity’, which generalizes and integrates the dimension of distance.
47. Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

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Chapter 7

EDMUND KESTING'S POLYPHONIC PORTRAITS, AND THE ABSTRACT FACE OF THE SOCIALIST SELF IN EAST GERMANY

Sarah E. James



It should be stated firmly that with the appearance of photographs, there can be no question of a single, immutable portrait. Moreover, a man is not just one sum total; he is many, and sometimes they are quite opposed.

—Alexander Rodchenko, *Against the Synthetic Portrait, For the Snapshot*, 1928

In general, facial expressions are more ‘polyphonic’ than language ... But a face can display the most varied emotions simultaneously, like a chord ... These are the chords of feeling whose essence is in fact their simultaneity. Such simultaneity cannot be expressed in words.

—Béla Balázs, *Visible Man*, 1924

In 1958 the artist Edmund Kesting (1882–1970) published the photobook *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv* (The painter sees through the lens) (Figure 7.1).¹ Exploring the possibilities of what Kesting described as ‘chemical painting’, the book contained over seventy experimental photographic portraits. In many of these portraits, multiple faces of the same individual overlap – taken from different angles and overlaid via combination printing. In some cases the multiples provide a staggered echo of the outline of the person, producing fragmented effects and exaggerated gestures. Sometimes he represented multiple subject positions and angles, tracking the subject’s movements as in the chronophotography of Eadweard Muybridge or Étienne-Jules Marey. This opening up of the portrait to the temporal and dynamic effects of movement gives Kesting’s images a cinematic quality. In some instances, silhouettes of bodies merge with close-ups of facial features, or two people are collapsed into one Janus-faced subject. In others, faces melt into backgrounds or are overlaid with distorting patterns and

Notes from this chapter begin on page 178.

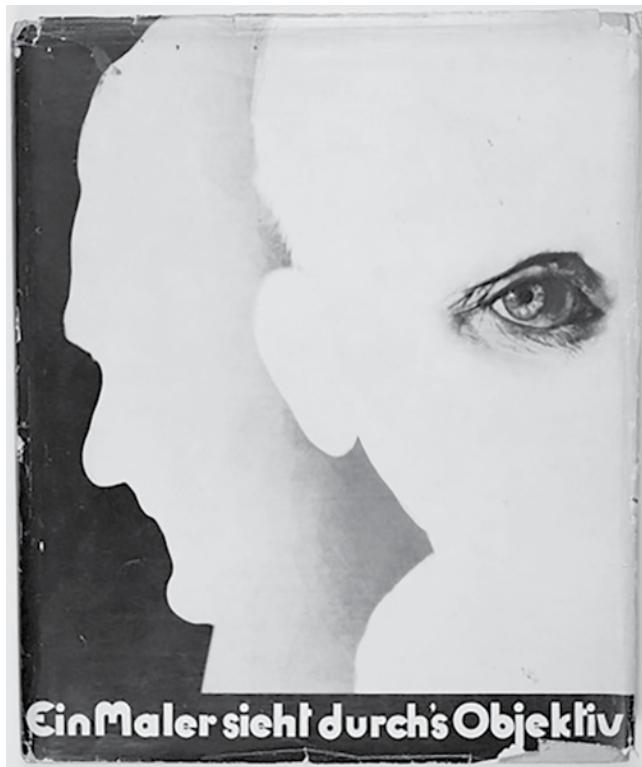


Fig. 7.1: Cover of Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*, Fotokino Verlag, Halle, 1958, DACS © 2017.

abstracting shadows producing a variegated visual field within which people and objects have ambiguous or continuous outlines (Figure 7.2). These polymorphic profiles and multiple angles complicate the conventions of the standard frontal photographic portrait. Produced in the late 1950s, Kesting's book could easily be mistaken for an example of the fashionable 'Subjektive Fotografie' that dominated the West German photographic world of the post-war decades. Popularized by Otto Steinert, the movement became known for utilizing avant-garde formalist techniques to produce an experimental and abstract photography.

Lacking the radical political and social aims of the avant-garde, it soon became reduced to a style synonymous with advertising and commercial photography. As simply another example of 'Subjektive Fotografie', Kesting's book would hardly be exceptional. However, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv* was not published in West Germany, but in communist East Germany, during a decade that arguably witnessed the most comprehensive official rejection of all abstract, experimental, formalist and avant-garde artistic practices. During the same decade photography



Fig. 7.2: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*, Fotokino Verlag, Halle, 1958 (labelled 'Zwischen Trümmern und An Einem Fenster', undated), DACS © 2017.

was brought under strict regulation of the state and made to conform to a highly choreographed and rigid set of criteria – the ultimate aim being that the photographer's vision should be retrained as properly socialist or 'partisan'. This was a period that also witnessed the mobilization of the genre of portraiture and the medium of photography as part of the SED's (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or Socialist Unity Party of Germany's) totalizing fashioning of an anti-fascist socialist personality.² How then do we read Kesting's book and its incongruous mode of photographic representation? And what can this experimental mode of portraiture, and its publication by the German Democratic Republic's most prominent official photography publishing house, tell us about 'the ethics of socialist seeing' and the photographic construction of socialist subjectivity in the East Germany of the late 1950s?

Despite some superficial similarities to Steinert, Kesting's experimental portraiture had nothing to do with latter's post-war subjectivist turn, and was instead deeply rooted in the photographic avant-garde circles of Berlin and Dresden in the 1920s. During this period, although often understood exclusively in terms of the emergence of abstract photograms and the dizzying perspectives and surface patterns that also abstracted the modern world, and have become synonymous with modernist photography, the portrait also emerged as photographically transformed into a kind of social laboratory. Kesting had originally trained in Dresden, and by the 1920s he was at the centre of artistic vanguardism in Berlin, and part of the group that orbited around Herwarth Walden's now legendary

gallery Der Sturm, where Kesting took part in several exhibitions. He played a key role in founding the alternative art school Der Weg: Schule für neue Kunst (The Way: School for New Art). Based in Berlin and Dresden, it maintained close connections with Der Sturm and soon had strong links with the Bauhaus to the East of Berlin in Weimar, and from 1925 in Dessau. Kesting was close to Moholy-Nagy and Lothar Schreyer, and also others associated with Dada such as Kurt Schwitters, as well as Soviet constructivists such as El Lissitzky. Kesting experimented with collage and montage, and in the mid-1920s began focusing on photography. During these years he experimented with multiple exposures, and later developed his 'chemical painting' technique – painting and scratching the light-sensitive surface of the photographic paper. In the photographic work of Dadaist figures such as Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann, the Bauhaus pioneers of Neue Sehen such as Moholy-Nagy and Alice Lex-Nerlinger and the Soviet constructivists Lissitzky and Rodchenko, the portrait had been retooled and repositioned as a complex discursive and performative politicized field. For these practitioners, as well as Kesting, the human face was frequently transformed into landscapes or cities, or made to house multiple people, intersubjective experiences and symbolic acts of solidarity (Figure 7.3). In perhaps one of the best-known manifesto-like portraits of the period – *The Constructor* of 1924 – Lissitzky denatured his self-portrait, transfiguring it into a call to arms for the artist reconfigured as an engineer of the cultural revolution. Combination printing enabled Lissitzky to picture the eye as fusing with the hand, and replace the artist's brush with the draughtsman's compass, and his skin with graph paper. In other portraits, Lissitzky overlaid several prints of one person, thereby producing



Fig. 7.3: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler fotografiert*, VEB Fotokino Verlag, Leipzig, 1987 (labelled 'Familienporträt Müller', 1927–28, and 'Weekend', 1932), DACS © 2017.

ghostly portraits in flux – often with ears and eyes combining, suggesting a desire to reinvent the somatic and experiential field of the portrait as a kind of multisensory experience. Moholy-Nagy regularly produced complex ‘multiple portraits’ as he called them, which showed his subjects in as many as four or five positions, so that the head tilted and shifted animating the face. Often poised with contrasting expressions, this added an abstract and rhythmic quality to the surface of the photograph, but also suggested the possible contingency and shifts in the mood of the subject and in the viewer’s perception of their projected character. Like his avant-garde colleagues, it was during this period that Kesting started to experiment with a new kind of fractured and abstracted portraiture, one that multiplied and displaced the individual portrait via photomontage, composite printing techniques and solarization. He began to perform corruptions and distortions of the human face. This complex kind of perspicacious and performative portraiture typical of the German and Soviet avant-gardes transcended the formal investigations of experimental techniques. Such portraits not only articulated a de-individualized subject but also undid the orthodoxies of singular artistic authorship and agency. Collectivizing and decentring artistic and photographic practice enabled a pointed critique of bourgeois individualist subjectivity.

Refusing the idea of capturing the inner nature of the individuals under his lens or fixing on some essentialist notion of likeness or interiority, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv* continued this avant-garde denaturing of the subject and his performative approach to portraiture into the post-war period. With its stark contrasts and juxtapositions, its abstract and monumentalizing perspectives and dynamic rhythms across its pages, Kesting’s photobook bore a striking resemblance to the manifestos for new vision of the 1920s, such as László Moholy-Nagy’s 1925 *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting, photography, film) or Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold’s *Foto-Auge* (Photo-eye) of 1929. Like them, it appears to be a manual for a new kind of seeing and an exploration of a photographically mediated experience of selfhood. But how the radical decentring of the portrait and the fluid and ambiguous subject positions performed across the book’s pages were deemed compatible with the SED’s attempts to consolidate the socialist personality in the post-war period is less immediately apparent.

During the 1920s this avant-garde approach to photographic portraiture became highly popular. There are countless examples of portraiture with individual’s faces tracked or repeated via multiple printing – creating serial faces or bodies in movement. Faces of friends and family members were often montaged or overlaid during printing, and placed nestling inside other faces, producing collective portraits, and couples were photographed as composite portraits. Such mobile and multiple portraits doubled and blurred the individuals represented, muddied gender divides, and pictured the dynamics of social relations, intersubjective agency and dialogue. Other popular techniques used by figures associated with the Bauhaus – something they shared with the surrealists – was the embrace



Fig. 7.4: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler fotografiert*, VEB Fotokino Verlag, Leipzig, 1987 (labelled 'Spiegelbild', 1930, and 'Ruth Poelzig', 1928), DACS © 2017.

of mirrored or doubled portraits, which duplicated the face via reflections and produced a complex visual field of representation. Florence Henri's series of self-portraits via mirrored surfaces are well-known examples of this, and Kesting also produced several portraits with his sitters reflected in mirrors (Figure 7.4). Such images deliberately doubled the individual so as to decentre the subject, producing a self-image defined as much by the discursive internal and abstract complexity of the photographic field as by its mimetic proximity to reality.

In the 1920s, at the height of his experimentation, Kesting put his mobile portraiture to the task of representing the most extreme and emphatic kinds of bodily expressions, gestures and physical movements, developing collaborative series with the Dresden expressionist dancers and choreographers Mary Wigman, Dore Hoyer and Dean Goodelle (Figure 7.5). Wigman was close to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Emil Nolde, and was a pioneer in the world of modern dance, developing what became known as *Ausdruckstanz*, or 'expressive dance'. As Jiyun Song has argued, what was so unique about Wigman's approach was her desire to solve the dilemma of producing a genre of dance that could be both popular and radically innovative simultaneously.³ She trained at the artistic colony in Hellerau (a small town near Dresden) and also under Rudolf Laban in Switzerland, both of which led her to the utopian belief that dance could enable the rehabilitation of the body and of perception, which had been stultified and rigidified by mechanized, capitalist society.⁴ For Wigman, as Song has stressed, dance 'became the ideal medium of communication for expressing the freedom of the body from oppressive social norms and codified behaviours'.⁵ Using the same combination printing and photomontage that he would pursue in his post-war



Fig. 7.5: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*, Fotokino Verlag, Halle, 1958 (labelled 'Palucca Tanzt', undated), DACS © 2017.

portraiture, Kesting utilized photography to represent Wigman's utopian dance and its rhythmic movements and exaggerated gestures. The increasing significance of expressionist dance and Wigman's approach to reschooling the body via gesture within Kesting's approach to his photographic portraiture is clear, and many of the photographs directly related to his expressionist dance series were also included in *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*.

In examining Kesting's portraiture in relation to 'the ethics of seeing' – both as we might formulate it in relation to the official aesthetics of 'actually existing socialism', and the political programme of the avant-garde – this chapter asks what the art historian might be able to contribute to current methodological and historiographical debates that are seeking to position photography as a medium uniquely capable of not only reflecting or documenting history, but of producing it. Traditionally the historian has approached the photograph as an unstable, unreliable and ideologically promiscuous source. But what if the very hermeneutical precarity and mobility of photography offers a way of rethinking the mutable relations between the formation of political agencies and experiences in East Germany in the 1950s, and their relation to alternative or ambivalent forms of knowledge and modes of seeing? Kesting's portraits are not of interest to the historian because of the ways they might reframe our understanding of specific historical events or popular, everyday and marginalized experiences, but because they do not seem commensurate with the majority of historical accounts and experiences of East German visual culture and the officially condoned representation of the socialist self in the 1950s. These photographic portraits appear

to go against the grain of the officially state-sanctioned aesthetics of ‘socialist realism’ – the dominant model of artistic practice in the GDR – and the majority of historical accounts of both popular and artistic photography in East Germany. As will become clear, Kesting’s photography also problematizes those still dominant readings that have insisted that the photographic culture of the GDR only opened up to artistic experimentalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

Kesting’s *Ein Maler sieht durch’s Objektiv* is particularly enlightening when it comes to unpacking the often contradictory and inconsistent reception of the Weimar photographic avant-garde in the GDR. From such perspectives, Kesting’s portraits provide a productive means of dismantling conventional understandings of socialist aesthetics in East Germany and orthodox accounts of the official photographic construction and representation of the ‘socialist self’. Further, Kesting’s portraits enable us to approach the idea of ‘socialist seeing’ as a more ideologically fraught, aesthetically ambivalent and socially mediated act of subjecthood and representation – and not just an acquired artistic style or official dogma. Kesting’s portraits, and the complex ways of seeing his subjects that they perform and embody, also enable us to muddy the binaries of official versus radical or alternative socialist aesthetics and subject positions. More than this, Kesting’s photography – once freed from the twin burden of either acting as a form of accurate historical documentation or enabling aesthetic reflection – allows us to trace some of the complex aesthetic and political relationships that existed in the GDR of the 1950s, between a plurality of radical and orthodox socialisms and modernisms, and their rootedness in the heterogeneous and shifting leftist cultural world of pre-war Weimar.

On the SED’s Struggle against Abstraction and the Abstraction of that Struggle

In the post-war period, Kesting gravitated to the newly founded (1947) School for Applied Arts in Berlin-Weißensee. There, despite the state’s closure of the official Dessau school, an unofficial Bauhaus culture had been established by pre-war avant-gardists and Bauhauslers, such as Mart Stam, Peter Keler and Gustav Hassenpflug. Kesting was put in charge of the photography class, and continued to work in the same experimental way as he had in the pre-war period. In 1945 he produced the particularly provocative portfolio *Dresdner Totentanz* (Dance of death in Dresden) (Figure 7.6). By means of combination printing, montage and chemical painting he depicted skeletons engaged in an expressionist dance around the ruins of the city after its destruction by the Allied firebombing. The series was doubtless influenced by Wigman’s modernist performances – she had choreographed a performance called *Totentanz* in the 1920s. Kesting mapped the morbid tropes and skeletal iconography of expressionism and its deeply somatic



Fig. 7.6: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*, Fotokino Verlag, Halle, 1958 (labelled 'Der Verstörung von Dresden', undated), DACS © 2017.

reaction to the catastrophic First World War onto the Second. It could not have provided a more problematically decadent or experimental representation of the ruined city for the SED, and it made a provocative counter to both Richard Peter's horrific images of burnt skeletons still wearing Swastika armbands as well as to the propagandistic photographic record of *Aufbau* (construction) that quickly replaced the pictures of post-war rubble. Yet Wigman was an ideologically ambivalent subject for Kesting's expressive portraiture. Despite influencing communist dancing troupes in New York in the 1930s, Wigman's 'pure' dance was in many ways antithetical to East German socialism, as she had always rejected any form of ideology, explicitly avoiding the prospect of communist rule in the aftermath of the war by finally leaving the Russian Zone for West Berlin in 1949. Yet Wigman's avant-garde legacy lived on in the GDR. Her student Gret Palucca (also photographed by Kesting) had founded her own modern dance school in Dresden in 1925, and reopened it after the war. The school was nationalized in 1949, and despite the fact that the experimental and expressionist dance traditions synonymous with it were somewhat straitjacketed by the more dogmatic syllabus containing classical Russian ballet, it remained another significant if ambivalent avant-garde presence within 'actually existing socialism'.

The East German state's opposition to any form of modernist, formalist or avant-garde experimentation was the result of the vigorous pursuit of a Soviet-mandated form of socialist realism – based on Soviet-centred critiques of the

decadence and non-partisan nature of formalism and abstraction. Following the so-called 'Formalism Debates', which dominated East German cultural discussions in the early 1950s, Walter Ulbricht categorized all modernism as backward, and formalism – along with all forms of experimental art – was condemned and forbidden.⁶ Ironically, the official consolidation of socialist realism in the GDR at the third annual *Kunstausstellung* (art exhibition) in Dresden, took place in 1953, the same year as Stalin's death – which in the Soviet context would lead to a more open approach to modern art and design, albeit short-lived and inconsistently maintained under Nikita Khrushchev.⁷ The SED's continued distrust of formalism and abstraction was constantly buoyed by the West German Federal Republic's simultaneous embrace of it – particularly abstract expressionism and art informel. Alongside this, abstract art was increasingly ideologized along cold war lines because of the American government's deployment of it in the aggressive 'cultural diplomacy' and democratization projects developed in the 1950s. Indeed, as is well known, the United States Information Agency (essentially the cultural wing of the CIA) mobilized abstract expressionism as a form of pro-American propaganda – positioning it as the ideal embodiment of democratic liberal individualism, and organizing several touring exhibitions of abstract expressionism in West Germany.⁸ Yet in many ways the SED's socialist realist Kulturpolitik of the 1950s was also a reaction to the modernist tendencies that predominated in this decade in East German film, photography, theatre, design, dance and poetry.

In East Germany throughout the early years of the 1950s, numerous articles were published condemning non-figurative abstraction.⁹ Yet the appropriate form of socialist realist art championed by the SED was still far from coherent. From the very beginning, the general understanding of properly socialist production had been imported from the Soviet Union, and was consequently heavily influenced by Zhdanov's doctrine of realistic form and socialist content.¹⁰ Skewed towards literature, this hardly provided a concise model to follow for painting or photography. It remained, for most of the 1950s, loosely defined in terms of three highly elusive and rather abstract components: 'socialist subject matter', 'socialist form' and the representation of the 'typical'. Yet the reduction of form to political identity was highly problematic – clearly abstraction, as the example of the historical avant-garde proved, did not connote reactionary politics, whilst a naturalistic or realistic style could never be taken as ensuring any ideologically sound commitment, as the National Socialist precedent had made clear.¹¹ Obviously the SED's approach to socialist realism was anchored in an ideological commitment to a specific and entirely historically dependent conception of reality itself. In one very straightforward sense this was in terms of reconceptualizing it as a collective social experience, as opposed to a reality structured principally by individual perceptions. Within socialist realism, portraiture was privileged but also refunctioned – the individual was transformed into

‘new soviet man’, or what Wolfgang Holz described as ‘the socialist body with communist soul’.¹² In other words, individuals were transfigured into allegorical types often representing different modes of socialist production, no longer defined by character traits but material symbols of their class and achievements. The prioritizing of portraiture was fundamentally connected to the social engineering implicit in the attempt to construct a new socialist society, which the SED acknowledged would be impossible without the development of socialist citizens. Indeed, even the post-war remit of state-sanctioned socialist psychology was to produce no less than a new human type, ‘the socialist personality’. As Christine Leuenberger has stressed, this personality was defined as fundamentally anti-fascist – but more than this, it had to be ‘the carrier of ideology, the state, culture, and social morals’.¹³ Psychoanalytic concepts such as the unconscious were officially rejected as irrational and opposed to scientific Marxism, and Western models were criticized for their basis in an ahistorical and individualist understanding of subjectivity.

All cultural production, professional and amateur, bore the burden of the cultural construction of this socialist self and collectivized agency. But art and photography were particularly privileged; not only could they be understood as capable of representing the new socialist personality, but in terms of the kind of spectatorship they demanded from the public, they could be asked to actively train it – to help to produce individuals capable of seeing the world anew from socialist and collectivist perspectives. Given the ubiquity of photography, and its central place in the aesthetic, public and domestic worlds of most East German citizens – from photojournalism to the family album – it, more than painting, was arguably granted an even greater social role in such pedagogical processes. For example, in an essay titled ‘On Photographic Seeing and Socialist Man’, published in the popular official photography magazine *Fotografie* in 1960, the photography theorist Friedrich Herneck declared: ‘[T]o form the socialist image of man has become the main concern of our photography as much as for all the arts. Our photography tries to form the image of the new man with his characteristic traits, on his way from the “I” to the “We”, struggling for a socialist morale and a well-rounded personality’.¹⁴

However, when it came to representing the socialist personality, the line between superficial or flat naturalism versus a mystical, distorting symbolism was often opaque, and Soviet officials in the GDR regularly critiqued both extremes. Like socialist realism, formalism was often defined negatively, and consequently no less ambiguously conceived – mostly in terms of its lack of ideas and contents. The other ambiguous characteristic that circled socialist realism was the attribute of ‘progressiveness’, which had complex and seemingly contradictory temporal repercussions for a genre that increasingly looked to past art styles as suitable models. For example, in 1947 Max Grabowski argued in the official SED journal *Einheit* that ‘[a] work of art that has as its subject matter themes from the life and

events of our time, but which makes use of an artistic form of expression more appropriate to the lifestyle and intellectual attitudes of earlier times and that, for example, falls under the rubrics of romantic, classicist, naturalistic or impressionistic, that work of art cannot claim to be progressive'.¹⁵

Grabowski's statement fundamentally problematized the use of earlier artistic styles within socialist realism, and consequently renders inconsistent what came to be understood as the inherent classicism, and often romanticism, of much socialist realist production. What was soon clear from such fraught and often contrary debates was that East German socialist realism was not something that could simply be imported unchanged from the Soviet Union, but had to actively be constructed and developed in its own terms on East German soil.

Following the party conference held in April 1959 at Bitterfeld, Ulbricht had pronounced a new coming together of art and the masses, and the importance of art and work developing hand in hand, so as to shape the new socialist citizens of the GDR. This came to be known as the Bitterfelder Weg (Bitterfeld way), and in practice it meant that professional, documentary and art photographers were urged to embrace portraiture – in the form of the representation and collaboration of workers. The collectivization of amateur photography into workers' clubs and groups was simultaneously attempting to facilitate the construction of the new socialist and anti-fascist personality. Many amateur and professional photo exhibitions in the 1950s and 1960s were framed around themes such as 'On Becoming a Socialist Person'. This meant that the privatized snapshot depictions of families, workers and leisure activities could be explicitly retooled – at least in the public sphere – to transcend individualistic or private motivations and embrace the collective and the community so as to be socially effective.¹⁶ With these goals in mind, photographic culture was heavily regulated. The Kulturbund (Cultural Association of the GDR) attempted to regulate all cultural activities, and photographic artists such as Kesting were dependent on being members of the artists' union (Der Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR, or VBK), established in 1952, if they were to gain any official commissions. It was standard practice for exhibitions to be banned at the last minute and for work to be inconsistently or erratically censored. The Zentrale Kommission Fotografie (ZKF, the Central Commission for Photography), established in 1958, closely monitored photography's subject matter, whether in the press or the museum. It attempted to coordinate all photographic activities, exhibitions and publications. The latter were in great part brought under state control via the consolidation of Leipzig's Fotokinoverlag. Soon the most influential specialist publishing house in the GDR (and publisher of Kesting's book), it also published the GDR's most popular amateur and professional photo magazine, *Fotografie*.

The SED's cultural policy following the 'Formalism Debates' complicated any engagement with the radical legacy of the Weimar avant-garde. Despite the

often progressive, leftist, anti-fascist and communist tendencies of many of its proponents – some of whom found themselves playing key roles in the construction of a new East German culture – the interwar avant-garde included many aesthetic and cultural positions now incompatible with the party line. For example, the riotous and decadent theatre, cabaret and salons of Dada, the conservative realism of Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) and the experimental and internationalist modernism of the Bauhaus posed problems to the apparatchiks of actually existing socialism. To take the latter of these by way of an example, much has been written about the SED's highly volatile and changeable approach to the Bauhaus's brand of modernism.¹⁷ In the post-war years, concerted efforts were even made to rebrand the Bauhaus by several SED representatives – including Johannes R. Becher, the president of the Kulturbund and future minister for culture – as a socialist and humanist project. Many claimed the newly founded school for applied arts in Berlin-Weißensee – initially under the influence of the modernist architect and designer Mart Stam – to be a direct continuation of the Bauhaus philosophy in the GDR.¹⁸ But as Greg Castillo has argued, the Bauhaus brand of modernism was soon understood as an American pathology, and officially condemned.¹⁹ However, more recently scholars have attempted to complicate this narrative of recuperation and dismissal. For example, Simone Hain has insisted that:

The prevailing view of the horrors of the Formalism Debate can easily mask the lasting influence and truly dialectical effect of the Bauhaus idea in the GDR. Despite penetrating criticism of the Bauhaus – first of its functionalist aesthetic, then of its activist, ‘reformist’ conception of society, and finally of its doctrinaire, ahistorical urbanism – over the long term the Bauhaus enjoyed greater respect and a deeper resonance in East [Germany] than was ever the case in West Germany.²⁰

The knotty and mutable ways in which the legacy and politics of Bauhaus modernism unfolded within East German Kulturpolitik – including the significant role played by specific figures who had formerly been associated with the school in the pre-war years and their subsequent post-war affiliations to the party – provides one representative example of the conflicted and ambiguous reception of the German avant-garde in the GDR. It also reveals either the schizophrenic status – or, in Hain’s more generous words, the ‘dialectical effect’ – of modernism under actually existing socialism. On the one hand the Bauhaus could be mobilized as part of the new anti-fascist, democratic and native socialist order, whilst simultaneously signifying the ideological enemy – Western democratic cultural imperialism. This simultaneity of opposing ideological positions gave any engagement with the legacies of the Weimar avant-garde a productive ambiguity and status that in some ways confounded literal censorship and the SED’s poorly defined aesthetics of partisanship.

Photographic Seeing, and Seeing as a Socialist

By the early 1950s, photography's documentary, objective, functional and historical attributes were increasingly privileged by the East German state, and realist documentary practices were linked to humanism and morality. In terms of suitable models for photographic work in socialist East Germany, the abstract photographs of artists associated with the Bauhaus, the Dadaist photomontages of figures such as Hausmann and Höch, as well as the expressionist photographic experimentations of the Neue Sehen (New Vision) figures such as Aenne Biermann, soon embodied more of a problematic bourgeois form of decadence for the SED apparatchiks than the constructivists had done for Stalin. Indeed, many artists associated with the German photographic avant-garde – for example, Moholy-Nagy – were not vocally committed to the revolutionary communist politics that had guided the experiments of their Soviet constructivist colleagues. In this context, the formalist dynamism of the New Vision and the decadence indulgence of Dada were consistently discredited or more often ignored by the SED. In 1953 Kesting had his contract at Weißensee terminated, and from 1955 to 1960 when he retired, he taught in a more technical capacity at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen (Technical School of Film and TV) in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

Kesting's formally experimental portraiture was increasingly incompatible with the SED's positioning of the medium as political, progressive and anti-romantic as opposed to the more subjective, symbolic and decadent expressive arts. As Herneck stressed in 1960, 'the representational character of photography makes its misuse for formalist experiments more difficult'.²¹ However, at the same time, it was more slippery than painting to define as properly socialist. Photography posed its own very specific challenges to the doctrine of socialist realism. A central issue was the temporal dynamic of socialist realism – both to represent the present whilst at the same time alluding to the 'will be', the projected future of socialist utopia. Photography was fine with the first mandate, and in fact had a profound advantage over painting – a genre with a delayed symbolic register. But it failed spectacularly at the latter – how could photography project into the future, when, as a medium, it was always inherently tied to the past? Another issue that hampered photography's projection of an imagined future was its failure to produce the kind of allegorization that was arguably the basis of all socialist realist representation, and that was much more easily achieved in the medium of painting. As a stylistic device and artistic approach, realism clearly had quite distinct and more obviously achievable characteristics in painting than those it could be said to assume in photography. Realism in photography was less a quality that could be achieved by the artist or photographer, and more a basic prerequisite of the medium. In fact, it actually had to be

deliberately distorted and manipulated in order to be avoided or compromised – for example, in the abstraction of the cameraless photogram or the transformative darkroom manipulations of solarization. How, then, could the quality of realism produced by the camera be judged in terms of its socialist, progressive or partisan attributes? For the photography theorists and critics associated with the ZKF, it soon became clear that the realism of the camera should best be judged by the kind of ‘photographic seeing’ followed by the photographer. For example, Herneck argued that ‘the opposition of hand and eye, which plays a significant role in the classical visual arts, is largely suspended in the photographic arts. The photographer is indeed able to paint directly with his eyes – a fact that is essential in evaluating photography’.²² Consequently, Herneck went on to conclude that ‘[i]n order to support the development of the socialist realist creative method among GDR photographers, what appears most important is *photographic seeing*’.²³ Herneck was not alone in his rather abstract approach to the privileging of seeing. Writing the same year, and even further abstracting the nature of ‘socialist seeing’, Gerhard Henniger, another vocal and influential figure associated with the ZKF, proclaimed that ‘a photographic artist must not only be able to “see” photographically, but also socially’.²⁴ Paradoxically this emphasis on the political and social dimensions of ‘photographic seeing’, and the pedagogical possibilities of both the photographer and spectator of photographs learning to see in a certain way, related directly back to the photographic culture of Weimar, where developing a visual literacy, and the importance of photographic seeing, had been a central concern of photographers, theorists and critics on both the left and right.²⁵ Indeed, one of the most obvious historical models for a progressive and proletarian approach to ‘photographic seeing’ available to the SED was that developed by the Arbeiter Fotografie (Worker Photography) movement in the 1920s. The movement emerged directly in opposition to the hegemony of reactionary press agencies during the late 1920s, and in response to the need for the working classes to represent themselves.²⁶ Like the later East German theorists of photography, for the Marxist theoreticians of the Weimar movement, one of the central aims of ‘worker photography’ had to be the training of a properly proletarian eye. For example, writing in 1930, and pre-empting Henniger’s later proclamations, the Marxist theorist and activist Edwin Hoernle argued that the class-based vision of the proletarian was a psychological and social skill that needed to be learnt and practised, not just behind the camera but at all times. Hoernle declared, ‘[W]e are the eye of the working class, and it is we who must teach our fellow workers how to see’.²⁷ Hoernle, like many others associated with the Arbeiter Fotografie movement, believed that this class consciousness had to be translated very carefully into a socialist way of seeing with the camera’s lens.

Despite its clear resonance with the SED’s ideological positioning of ‘photographic seeing’ in the 1960s – although occasionally proposed as a vague model for amateur photography – this militant model of class-conscious practice was

largely ignored in the post-war decades of the new East German state.²⁸ Instead, more often than not, photographic realism was reduced to optimistically depicting the imaginary proletarian utopia, not the struggles of the working classes, the paradox being that this class struggle was understood as redundant in the newly transformed socialist society. Whilst individualism, sentimentalism and a superficial prettiness were rejected as necessarily bourgeois, under official mandates photography became increasingly saccharine and carefully choreographed. If ‘photographic seeing’ was to be deployed in a socialist fashion it tended to be about heightening theatricality and heroism, and translating socialist ideology in as clear and simplistic a manner as possible. Securing the photographic representation of a more generalized and ‘total’ reality that conformed to realist mandates was also increasingly understood as the main imperative for photographers, and this, it was claimed, could best be achieved via a typologizing perspective. Learning to use the camera to typologize – and there were many examples of typological photographic models from the nineteenth century onwards, some of which were incorporated into official histories of the medium by way of productive examples – meant depicting key socialist ‘types’. In the GDR, as in the Soviet Union, the ur-type was the worker. Outside of work, socialist citizens were officially represented performing their public roles at SED or May Day demonstrations and celebrations in what became another popular type of mass portraiture. This staged and typologizing mode of portraiture was positioned in opposition to West German ‘*Subjektive Fotografie*’, which became the focus of much scorn.²⁹ Of course, West German critics were no less hostile to the official photography of the GDR, dismissing its naivety, homogeneity and ‘the mindless and blissful smile’ that characterized the mass of propagandistic images, deforming any individual expression, and clumsily rendering people one-dimensionally.³⁰

Whilst these debates were raging in the 1950s and 1960s, Kesting continued to produce portraits that appeared far too experimental and abstracted than should have been ideologically permissible, and equally certainly could not be reduced to the mindless propaganda or one-dimensionality associated with official GDR portrait photography. Kesting’s own insistence on an approach that he described as ‘painting with photography’ – clear in both the many camera-less abstract images and ‘chemical paintings’ he produced – took photography far away from its safe indexical and realistic functions, and should have made him even more problematic for the state. Yet, Kesting’s approach to portraiture is even more extraordinary because, unlike some self-consciously countercultural artists or lone and isolated modernists who worked on the fringes of East Germany’s cultural production and outside the world of official commissions and exhibitions, Kesting’s photography was not produced in private or simply ignored and censored by the state. As well as the publication of *Ein Maler sieht durch’s Objektiv* in 1958, Kesting received his first exhibition in the GDR the following year, and his images were published in official photobooks and magazines

throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1987 Kesting's experimental, abstracted portraits, self-portraits, photomontages and solarizations of the pre- and post-war periods were republished in the GDR in the book *Ein Maler Fotografiert* (A painter photographs), and his endorsement as a good partisan and progressive was cemented. The state's curious position in regard to Kesting's abstract photography was not simply one of tolerating a former avant-gardist, as is made clear by the continual appearance throughout the 1950s and 1960s of abstract and experimental photographic techniques on the pages of the ZKF's main voice, *Fotografie*, where they were accompanied by numerous feature essays for amateurs on how to produce photomontages, photograms, solarizations and other experimental techniques.

The SED's mass condemnation of the Weimar avant-garde continued, well into the late 1960s and the 1970s, to be entirely inconsistent and illogical. Figures such as John Heartfield, who had bridged the worlds of Dada excess and communist commitment, had a particularly perplexing position in the GDR. He was celebrated as an anti-fascist militant but not readily endorsed as providing a suitable artistic model, despite being given several early exhibitions. In the first major exhibition dedicated exclusively to photographic art, 'Medium Fotografie', which took place in Halle in 1978, a bizarre mixture of avant-garde work was celebrated.³¹ Alongside Kesting, whose experimental photomontages and combination printing were given significant attention, other formerly taboo practitioners such as Moholy-Nagy – who had previously been considered the epitome of formalist decadence – were included, along with Bauhaus colleagues such as Marianne Brandt. Whilst figures like the indisputably leftist Heartfield and the worker photographer Walter Ballhause were no surprise, the inclusion of far less progressive wings of the German photographic avant-garde, such as Albert Renger-Patzsch – whose work had been condemned by Benjamin for its aestheticization and depoliticization – made less sense. But even more shocking was the rehabilitation of Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, whose very explicit connections with national socialism were dismissed and who was positioned as an important humanist portrait photographer. It seemed that 'properly socialist seeing' could even accommodate, or at least turn a blind eye to, the most reactionary and instrumentalized of photographic visions.

A Different Kind of Dialectic?

Kesting's post-war abstract portraits offer not only an insight into his own contrary place as an avant-gardist in East Germany, but quite literally provide a fractured visual biography of the fate of many politically progressive avant-garde figures in the GDR. Many of the images in *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv* and his later *Ein Maler Fotografiert* were taken from the lengthy ongoing series of

portraits that Kesting was officially commissioned to take of members of the Akademie der Künste during the 1950s and 1960s. During this time he also worked officially as a portrait photographer, producing images of prominent figures in the East German art, cultural and theatrical world, including famous actors, directors and dancers. These portraits returned to the abstract doubling of his avant-garde portraiture of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as his engagement with the worlds of theatre and dance. Yet they now did so to celebrate the figures who officially represented the heights of the SED establishment and its celebrated realism. For example, one characteristically theatrical portrait portrays Helene Weigel – the actress, second wife of Brecht, and after the latter's death in 1956, artistic director of the Berliner Ensemble. Many of these portraits, such as that of the sculptor and dancer Jan Bontjes van Beek, bear an undeniably strong resemblance not only to the Weimar avant-garde but to the constructivism of Rodchenko – particularly his composite portraits of the 1920s (Figure 7.7). Just as in Rodchenko's photograph of the painter Alexander Shevchenko (1924), van Beek's face is represented by Kesting as a dialectical double. Superimposed twice, it looks out of the frame in both frontal and profile positions. Both have the same dramatic and fairly confrontational effect, as well as giving the sense of duration, dialogue and conversation.

Many of the subjects of his portraits had biographies no less deeply embedded in the radical or leftist avant-garde culture of Weimar than Kesting's, yet often these earlier biographies were deliberately repressed or excised from the cultural histories of the GDR. For example, one of Kesting's portraits, produced as part of a series in 1952, depicts the head of the Kulturbund – the novelist, artist and poet Johannes R. Becher. Becher may have been known as the dogmatic voice of Kulturpolitik in the 1950s, but in the 1920s he had been a member of the radical expressive artistic group *die Kugel* in Magdeburg, and was later publisher of the communist newspaper *Die Rote Fahne*. In his Weimar expressionist years he had been involved in the anarchist socialist circles of the psychoanalyst Otto Gross, who was a central figure in the utopian Ascona community that was so instrumental to Wigman and her pedagogical and social approach to dance. Becher was also a well-known morphine addict who took part in the wild *Neue Jugend* nights and events organized by Wieland Herzfelde at Neumann's Gallery in Berlin. In sharp contrast to the stiff official portraits of Becher that had become the norm, he is pictured by Kesting in a stylistic ode to Weimar modernism – represented as a product of that time of collectivist experimentation. Kesting's portrait can be understood as performing a deliberate intervention: deploying an avant-garde mode of seeing to subvert the standardized bureaucratic protocols of official portrait photography.

One way of reading the subject positions performed in Kesting's portraits and their recuperation as avant-garde is melancholic in register. Many of the individuals under Kesting's lens had been members of the Weimar anti-fascist

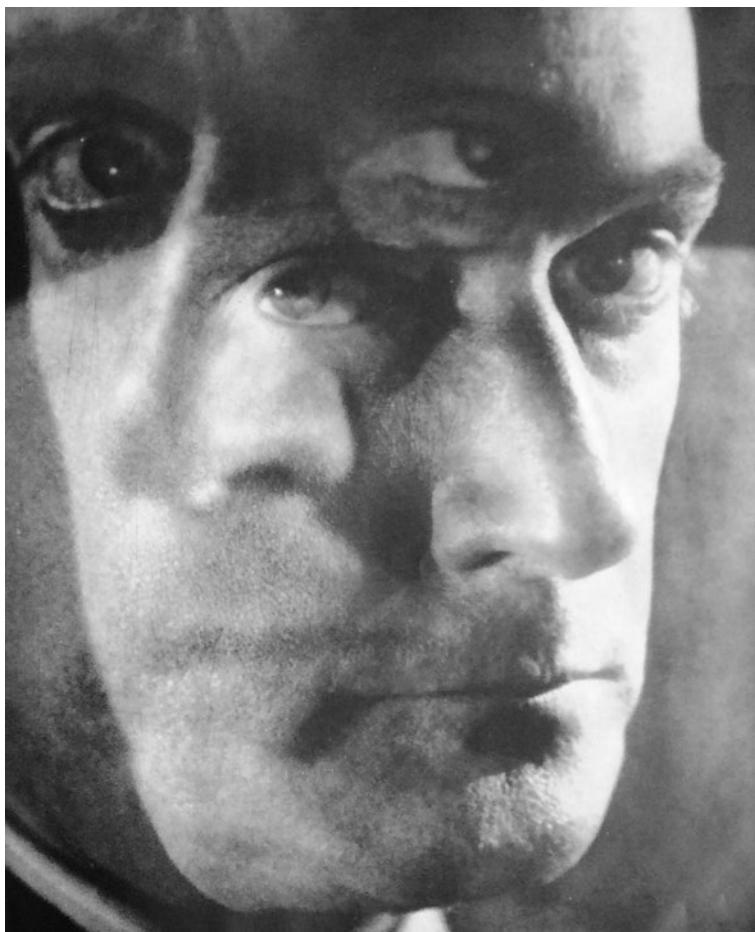


Fig. 7.7: Double-page spread from Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maler sieht durch's Objektiv*, Fotokino Verlag, Halle, 1958 (labelled 'Jan Bontjes van Beek', undated), DACS © 2017.

resistance and the German Communist Party in the 1920s, and were later terrorized and interned by the Nazis, only to be isolated and repressed or rejected by the Socialist State of East Germany in the 1950s. From this perspective, Kesting's *Dresdner Totentanz* can be understood as being as much about the avant-garde ghosts of expressionism as about the firebombed city. Yet, his portraits also document the complex position of a more militant, ambivalent socialist modernism in the GDR – as embodied by figures such as Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler and John Heartfield. Yet, in other ways, his portraits represent genealogies of the German artistic left, both pre- and post-war, as well as the radical legacies

they continued to project into the future. For example, one portrait depicts the painter Alexander Camaro, born Alfons Bernhard Kamarofsk. From 1928 to 1930 he trained with Wigman in Dresden, first performing publicly as her partner in Munich in 1930 in Albert Talhoff's pacifist dance *Das Totenmal*. In 1949 he founded the legendary surrealist-Dadaist artist cabaret 'Die Badewanne' (Bath tub) in West Berlin, condemned by the SED for its American-style boogie-woogie and nihilism in a 1949 issue of *Neues Deutschland*. Camaro played a central role in the training of the younger generation of dissident neo-avant-gardists in the GDR, such as Robert Rehfeldt – the Fluxus-connected mail artist who arguably emerged as one of the most important unofficial artists of this younger generation in East Germany.

As well as providing, in both form and content, a visual portrait of the post-war fate and possible continuation of the German avant-garde, Kesting's work also enables a new perspective on an arguably overlooked feature of the German and Soviet photographic avant-garde's approach to portraiture. Although the utopian politics involved in engineering a new subject via the technology of the camera have frequently been discussed, the majority of art historical accounts tend to focus on the technique of montage, seriality, the depiction of the masses, and the prosthetic and estranging perspectives of the camera. Yet the ways in which Kesting used portraiture to articulate social relationships enables us to recover this often overlooked mode of avant-garde portrait practice that against the estranging, abstracting and denaturalizing trends of most avant-garde photographic production, attempted to represent the collaborative social structures, relationships, friendships and solidarity between the people depicted.³² Such relational aesthetics and collaborative modes of authorship were newly privileged by many of the avant-garde groups and collectives that emerged in Germany and the Soviet Union. For example, it is well known that Rodchenko interrogated and reinvented the conventions of the traditional bourgeois portrait via his montages, close-ups, distortion and prosthetic extension of the human form by technology. But Rodchenko also produced what he described as 'composite portraits', mapping relationships, artistic groups, couples, lovers and friends. For example, in one of his many photographs of Lili and Osip Brik, Rodchenko fused the couple together: the reflected disc of Osip's glasses circling Lili's chin like a speech bubble, and his face becoming shrouded in her scarf, thus mobilizing a kind of visual biography and social performance of partnership. Such composite portraits were equally common in German circles. Höch often pictured herself and her then partner and fellow Dadaist, Hausmann, via combination printing as ghostly echoes of each other – like a modernist version of spirit photography. Kesting's composite and performative portraits alert us to this much overlooked avant-garde use of photography – often manifested in ghostly combination printing or montage – to represent complex biographies, new solidarities and social relations.

Es und Ich: Intermediality and the Face

Kesting's portraits also recuperated another of the avant-garde's modes of seeing for the post-war period. His portraits are completely embedded in an intermedia perspective – which operates across the technologies of photography, theatre and dance – but is, perhaps most palpably, cinematic in its mode of seeing. Because of this, Kesting's portraits also re-engage the complex intermedia dialogues symptomatic of the avant-garde between photography and film. For example, the cinematic theories of Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein proved crucial to the photographic explorations of the Soviet and German avant-gardes. From this perspective, the kind of experiments with the face single-mindedly pursued by Kesting in the post-war period and their mode of seeing might also be elucidated via the explorations of the Hungarian silent film theorist Béla Balázs, and in particular the latter's *Der sichtbare Mensch* (The visible man) which appeared in 1924.³³ Balázs's influential theorization of film examined amongst other things 'shifts in actorly performance engendered in film by the new interrelation of camera and gestural body'.³⁴ For Balázs, the face in film had to be understood as fundamentally double – as the actor represented both himself and another. As Jacques Aumont has suggested, Balázs saw the face as never totally a face in and of itself, but as both individual and type – it contained both 'the Es and the Ich, the innate and the acquired, fate and freewill, destiny and soul'.³⁵ For Balázs, the face was always actually two faces, superimposed one over the other – and multiple in another sense, in that it was capable of expressing several emotions simultaneously. Balázs's reading of the face went on into the realms of physiognomy and, for his critics 'excessive visagification', as he soon gave everything – objects included – a face, seeing physiognomy emerging cinematically in decor and backgrounds.³⁶ Yet his basis of the portrait in different models of perception is helpful when unpacking Kesting's cinematic portraiture. Balázs's 'polyphous face' enables a way of conceptualizing Kesting's mode of seeing, which is not dependent on the model of montage or prosthesis. Instead it allows for a kind of multiple 'mechanism of the senses', whereby individual features of the face might denote different emotions and perform different expressive tasks. It was the mobility of film that enabled this for Balázs – its variation over time, its ability to affect rhythms and speeds. Kesting produces his own rhythmic filmic portraiture, schooled in expressive dance and elaborated across the pages of the book. Further, as Aumont explains, for Balázs the face could not be detached from perception, from seeing: '[T]hat which the face reveals and conceals at the same time is what is under it – the invisible that it makes visible. The face provokes the vision, *is* vision'.³⁷ In the context of the post-war GDR, we might see Kesting's faces as provoking and performing vision: as attempts to offer an alternative collectivizing and retooling of perception and the body under socialism

– one that brought together and recuperated the avant-garde projects of figures such as Wigman and Lissitzky, with which Kesting had been so invested.

The experimental, cinematic portraiture of Kesting, which perversely became an officially condoned model of portraiture from the 1950s onwards, might even be thought of, in Benjaminian terms, as something like the repressed ‘optical unconscious’ of actually existing socialism’s photographic fashioning of the self. Positioned alongside his abstract photomontages, combination prints and solarizations, Kesting’s portraits enable us to reopen debates around the repressed aesthetics of socialist modernism and the often ambivalent simultaneity of radicalism and dogma, militancy and orthodoxy, utopia and bureaucracy that characterized East German cultural praxis and theory in the 1950s and 1960s. From this perspective, Kesting’s portraiture radically rehabilitated the real dialectics of the Weimar avant-garde – the decadent, theatrical and formalist *alongside* the militant and politically committed. But the fact that he was consistently condoned, and even championed, by the East German state suggests that the SED’s supposedly totalizing and stultifying vision of what ‘socialist seeing’ and the socialist personality ought to look like was not nearly as totalizing as is often claimed. In fact it would seem that there was, from the 1950s to the 1980s, more space for contradiction and complexity within the collectivist imagination and the ethics and aesthetics of socialist seeing that emerged under actually existing socialism in East Germany than is generally conceded. It is the productive and dialectical ambiguity of photography – in this instance, the experimental portraiture of Edmund Kesting – as a medium that documents, represents, embodies, performs, and socializes vision, which means it is uniquely placed to reveal this.

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Notes

1. See Edmund Kesting, *Ein Maker sieht durch's Objektiv* (Halle: Fotokinoverlag, 1958).
2. On photographic culture of East Germany, see Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: Photographic Cultures across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013).

3. Jiyun Song, 'Mary Wigman and German Modern Dance: A Modernist Witch?' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43(4), 427–5737.
4. On the Lebensreform movement and its radical blend of art, political anarchism and psychoanalysis, see Song, 'Mary Wigman', 429–30.
5. Song, 'Mary Wigman', 430.
6. On the formalism debate, see Heather E. Mathews, 'Formalism, Naturalism, and the Elusive Socialist Realist Picture at the GDR's *Dritte deutsche Kunstausstellung*, 1953', 90–93.
7. On the complexities of Khrushchev's 'Thaw', see Stephen V. Bittner (ed.), *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); and on the reception of modernism in terms of design, see Victor Buchli, 'Khrushchev, Modernism, and the Fight against Petit-bourgeois Consciousness in the Soviet Home', *Design History* 10(2) (1997), 161–76.
8. On the USIA, abstract expressionism and the cold war, see Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999); and also Michael L. Krenn, *Fall-Out Shelters for the Human Spirit: American Art and the Cold War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
9. See Jørn Guldberg, 'Legacy, Heritage or History: A Study of Artistic Agency in the Art Scene of the GDR, 1949–1989 and Beyond', in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jacob Wamberg (eds), *Totalitarian Art and Modernity* (Århus: Århus University Press, 2010), 201–2.
10. See Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 140–203.
11. This complexity is discussed in Mathews, 'Formalism, Naturalism', 102.
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13. See Christine Leuenberger, 'Socialist Psychotherapy and its Dissidents', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 37(3) (Summer 2001), 263–64.
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Chapter 8

SEEING SUBJECTIVITY

Erotic Photography and the Optics of Desire

Jennifer Evans



I first encountered this photograph of Manfred (Figure 8.1) on the blanched walls of the Berlinische Galerie during its 2008 retrospective on the photography of Herbert Tobias. Manfred was a rent boy, one of Tobias's many pick-ups from the bars, train stations and tearooms of the divided city. This trophy photo, immortalized in the exhibition as high art, began its life as a stylized token of that erotic adventure, a personal archiving of one night's bliss. After some digging, I learned more about him – not from Tobias's extant private papers, but from the pages of a 1970s men's magazine published in Hamburg on the heels of the 1969 decriminalization of Paragraph 175 of the German Criminal Code, which for close to a century had outlawed same-sex acts between consenting adult men. The concomitant relaxation of censorship statutes allowed Hamburg chronicler Hans Eppendorfer to publish *him* magazine (later renamed *him applaus*), the self-congratulatory 'magazine with the man', which was to serve as a signature 'Forum for Culture, Show and Eroticism' during the early years of the sexual revolution. Thanks to his friend's benevolence, Tobias – a former bright light of the fashion world whose lustre had tarnished because of his rampant drug use – became the house photographer and an occasional columnist for the biweekly publication. He was just starting to enjoy modest success with small gallery exhibitions in West Berlin and Amsterdam when he became ill with what would later come to be recognized as AIDS. By the time of his death in 1982, his homoerotic art had secured a wide audience among the readership of *him*, but it would take another twenty-five years for it to garner the interest of the academic community.

Why might this be? Although intimacy, pleasure and desire are fundamental elements of experience and personhood, they remain overlooked in most historical accounts of the twentieth century. This is particularly true when it comes to

Notes from this chapter begin on page 200.



Fig. 8.1: ‘Manfred Schubert’. West Berlin, 1955. Berlinische Galerie.

erotic images. A reading of select images from Tobias’s collection of rent boy photos not only fills the historical void, but it can demonstrate the importance of thinking critically about the work of such images as they shift our focus away from what photographs document and portray to the emotions they stir and the memories they resurrect or conjure up, and possibly even redeem. If we think of images such as these as agents of meaning in their own right, we see that they perform the work of history by literally calling into being distinct emotional responses in these different time-bound relationships of viewing, interpretation and display.¹ Instead of simply noting what they document, this approach emphasizes what they do, including what feelings they enlivened and engendered at different moments in the past. In training ourselves to see the shifting subjectivities of photographic sources – in other words, those they depict and those they actively create – we begin to ask new questions of the image as both an object and a text, one that constructs new social realities as much as it also reflects them.² By recognizing the subjectivity of our sources, not only do we affirm the importance of performative self-fashioning as a vital part of twentieth-century German photographic history, but we also recognize that this too is a way of viewing the past ethically for the range of historical subjects and personages made visible there.

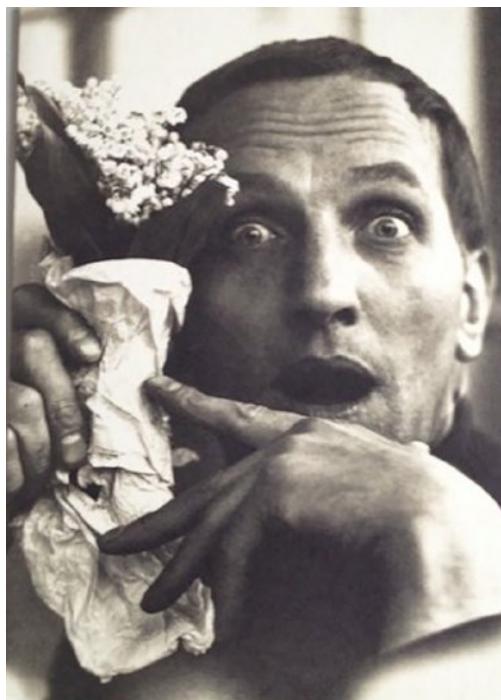


Fig. 8.2: 'Self Portrait'. Undated. Berlinische Galerie.

Who was Herbert Tobias and how, exactly, did he come to play such an important role in shaping the form and content of this evolving queer aesthetic? In many ways, his origins are quite unremarkable. He was born in 1924 in Dessau to a petit bourgeois family, and first started experimenting with photography as a child, before being forced to put aside his interests in art and theatre in favour of more practical work as a landscape surveyor. As Tobias recounted in the few articles he penned for *him* magazine, both of his parents were strong believers in Hitler's social revolution – so committed, in fact, that they frequently took their two young sons along with them to party gatherings and on leafleting campaigns.³ After his father's untimely death in 1936 and his brother's subsequent enlistment, Tobias became the sole breadwinner, before he too was called up in 1942 and deployed, like so many young Germans, to the ravaged eastern front.⁴ Trying to make sense of the destruction he had helped to perpetrate, he took atmospheric editorial shots of villages and troops infused with pathos, suffering and sympathy.⁵ Redeployed westward, he fled his detachment, was arrested by the Americans, and was sentenced to a short stint in a POW camp.

Following his release in 1947, he enrolled in a theatre course and toured with a small company, before breaking away with a few fellow travellers to form their

own act – which they called ‘Intimate Theatre’. For the next three years they lived hand to mouth, barely eking out a living in and around Heidelberg. It was there that Tobias met an American civilian employed by the occupation government, whom he would characterize as his first great love. Their passion did not go unnoticed by their neighbours, who informed on the couple, causing them to flee post-war Germany for Paris, where Tobias practised his photography from the sanctuary of their room in a cheap hotel until he landed a job at a photography studio. His work piqued interest at *Vogue Paris*, and he was invited to hone his talent under the mentorship of celebrated German photographer Willy Maywald. Over a series of months, he explored themes of intimacy, tenderness and longing in private photographs of the friends, lovers and acquaintances he met in the Parisian gay scene. From brazen shots out of doors in the city’s known cruising nodes to quiet images of cohabitation and repose, Tobias experimented with a range of styles while documenting defiant claims to self-realization within the still-repressive climate of the 1950s.⁶ A dust-up at a urinal with an agent provocateur led to his inauspicious return to West Germany, where a fortuitous win in a photo competition by the *Frankfurter Illustrierte* provided him with the means to relocate to the leafy green district of Grunewald, in what was then West Berlin. From his parterre apartment, he captured images of a series of rent boys like Manfred, including some from the other side of the still-permeable Iron Curtain.⁷

While biographical and contextual analysis comes easily to historians, a more systematic analysis of Tobias’s work must read within the frame, and place the relationship between photographer, camera, subject, the image’s own stylistic conventions and its circulation against the backdrop of changing international aesthetic practices that saw photography’s use in communicating a particular vision of male beauty to an intended audience.⁸ Viewed from this vantage, we see that Tobias’s celebration of the abject world of cruising and the sex trade placed him both in conversation with and separate from other artists working within the evolving homoerotic counterpublic sphere, which had started to carve out a space within turn-of-the-century aesthetics for evermore explicit homoerotic themes.⁹ Perhaps the best-known purveyor of early erotic photography in the late nineteenth century, the Prussian photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden took hundreds of Arcadian snaps of the bachelor culture of Taormina, Italy, much to the delight of his closeted *fin de siècle* aristocratic patrons, who paid handsomely for his mail-order trade in images of Sicilian youths. In von Gloeden’s visual imaginary, which almost always included symbols of Homeric antiquity, ephebe boys were adorned with laurel leaves and positioned alone or in groups, *en plein air*, where they revelled in the beauty of their own bodies. Using this symbology to tap into the classical taste and refinement of his patrons and the sensuous potency of the Hellenistic intergenerational idyll, von Gloeden stylized his subjects in a way that was hidden in plain sight while still utterly recognizable, both constructing and trading on this shared vision of gay desire.

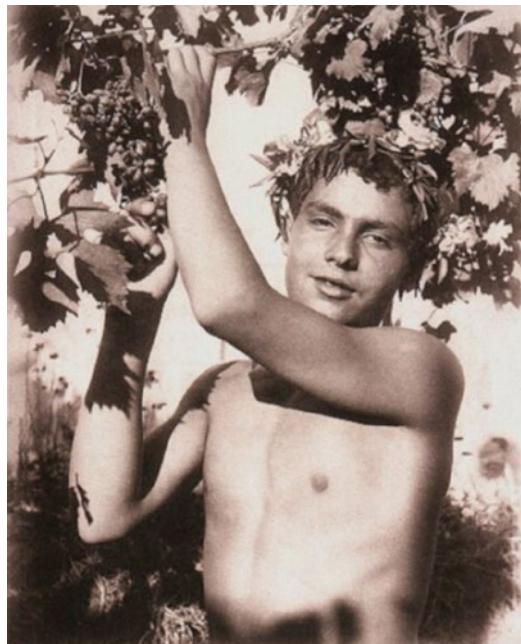


Fig. 8.3: ‘Italian boy posing as Bacchus’. Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931).

Although there is no evidence in Tobias’s personal papers that he owned any of von Gloeden’s images, his own photographs contain distinct visual markers that suggest he was very much cognizant of this earlier aesthetic tradition. In two images in particular, both of boys from the streets of West Berlin, we see similar use of light and shadow alongside the telltale presence of flora and foliage, a nod to the pastoral pre-industrial tradition, equating the unmitigated honesty of ephebe masculinity with the naturalness of love unbound (see figures 8.5 and 8.7). This specific iconography, together with the affinity for lower-class masculinity, can also be read as an effort to wrap the homoerotic urgency of the photograph in a veil of beauty, masking the tawdry as artful if not entirely respectable. These subcultural cues would be suitably opaque to those not in the know. The cognoscenti on the other hand, versed in the imagery of homoeroticism, might handily decode these references as implied inferences of male–male desire.¹⁰

Tobias’s use of these visual cues deepens the queer historicity of the photos. These vestiges of an earlier canon remain patently visible, whether through the use of leaves and lighting (Figure 8.4), the emphasis on dirty, scuffed hands (Figure 8.5), or the continued preoccupation with impish beauty (Figure 8.6). Even the orientalism of von Gloeden’s oeuvre is noticeably present in Tobias’s, not in the guise of agrarian eroticism but through Tobias’s own colonization of Berlin’s city streets in search of working-class trade. The homoerotic gaze of the photographer,

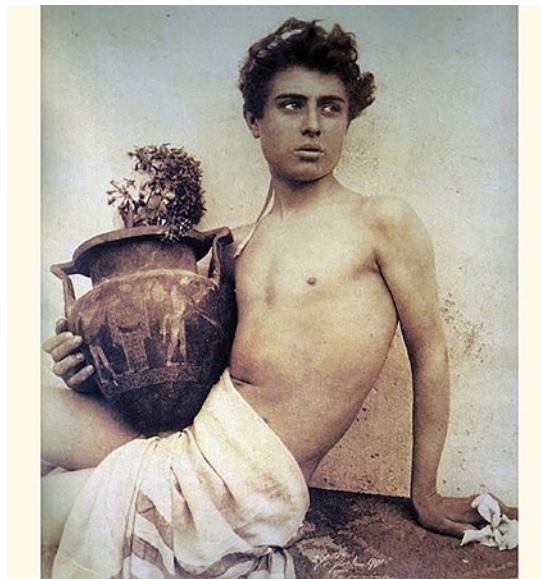


Fig. 8.4: Wilhelm von Gloeden, untitled, ca. 1900. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

anticipating the tastes and desires of the imagined audience, lingers over these youths. Drawing on earlier notions of mutuality and erotic friendship, it basks in the visual pleasure of implied intergenerational love, rendering these boys much more than mere objects of the spectator's desire and longing, as Laura Mulvey famously phrased it in regards to women's depiction in film. In Tobias's realization, these boys may be seen as wielding erotic agency in their own right.¹¹

Unlike von Gloeden, however, Tobias did not hide his subjects' erotic appeal behind the faux Hellenism of amphoras, lyres and pan flutes.¹² These are photos of street boys, and they are captioned as such, leaving little to the imagination about the subjects' origins in the squares and alleyways of the Cold War city. Ever the perfectionist, it is telling that Tobias either deliberately courted imperfection in these photos or at least allowed existing blemishes to remain in the final prints. The purity of lines and symmetry, which parallel the innocent beauty of the sitting subject, is ever so slightly disrupted when our eyes widen to take in the bandaged index finger on the hand of the blonde boy holding the fan (Figure 8.7). Similarly, 'The boy from Reichskanzler Square' (Figure 8.6) is posed under the shadow of a crescent moon cast on an apartment wall, perhaps a nod to this earlier orientalist tradition. His pursed-lipped, curly haired profile is classically rendered. If it were not for his pockmarked skin, protruding Adam's apple and dirt-caked fingernails, we might overlook the obvious transgression of age and class boundaries that made this image possible in the first place.

Although Tobias draws on the visual language of verisimilitude, these ‘semiotic clashes’ between the innocence of youth and the boys’ ostensible desperation are anything but transparent renderings of life on the margins. Instead, they are painstakingly crafted meditations on the everyday eroticism of intergenerational desire. Like von Gloeden’s subjects, these youths are not easily positioned as victims of their own representation. Despite the relative inactivity of the poses and staging, Tobias’s street boys are embodied subjects. They stare back at the lens. They force an interpretive encounter. One need only take notice of the quizzical counter-stare of ‘The boy from East Berlin’, to say nothing of his erect nipples (Figure 8.5). Perhaps the cause is innocent enough, a physiological response to being photographed out of doors in the courtyard of Tobias’s West End apartment. But again, when taken together, these codes and conventions construct for the knowing viewer an optic of anticipation, enjoyment, mutuality – and possibly even release. While von Gloeden played with various erotic looks, Tobias’s aesthetic conversations, both within and beyond the frame, are explicit without being pornographic, extending these earlier semiotic conventions into the street and back home again, eroticizing intergenerational sex and the cruising gaze as elemental features of embodied queer desire.¹³

If we concentrate solely on the level of aesthetics, we can periodize them according to how queer desire is depicted. Tobias’s visualization of desire shared

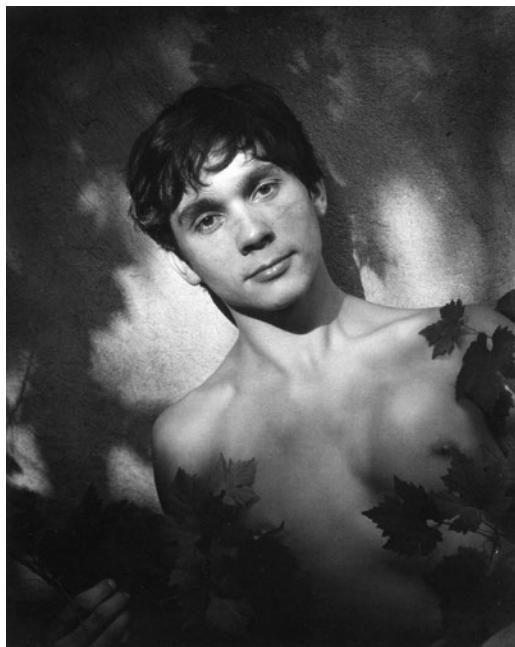


Fig 8.5: ‘The boy from East Berlin’, 1957. Berlinische Galerie.



Fig 8.6: ‘The boy from Reichskanzler Square’, Berlin, 1955. Berlinische Galerie.

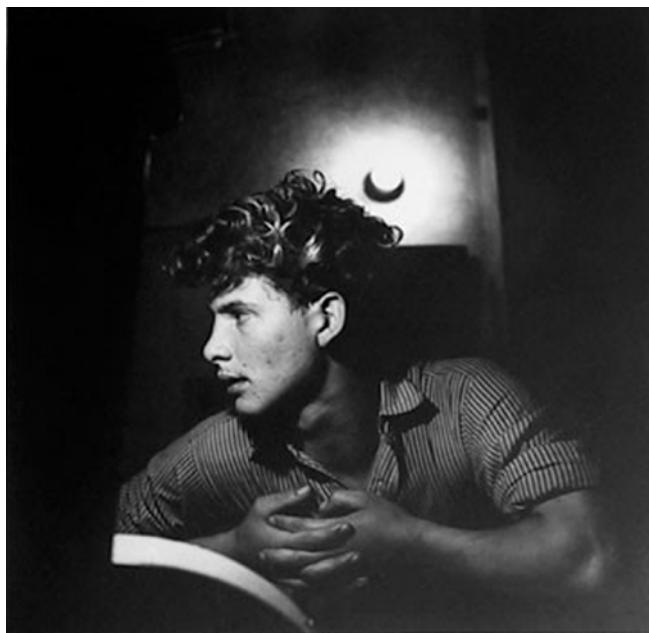


Fig 8.7: ‘Photograph of a young boy’, West Berlin, 1950s. Berlinische Galerie.

certain affinities with turn-of-the-century imagery. It differed significantly from the emplotment of homoerotic desire in the stylized studio images taken by pictorialist photographers of the so-called Glamour Generation, those well-heeled gay mandarins such as Carl Van Vechten, George Platt Lynes and George Hoyningen-Huene who worked within the fashion, film and literary establishment on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1930s, taking pictures of models, dancers and friends after hours, and circulating among the literary and cultural elite.¹⁴ Tobias's images, although likewise drawing on elements of modernist iconography, staging, and especially lighting, extended the reach of homoerotic photography away from the rarefied world of the movie studio and salon into the street, literally and figuratively. Even when compared to the mass-produced images circulating in the beefcake magazines from the Los Angeles based bodybuilding scene, or the photographs and sketches in so-called friendship magazines such as the legendary Swiss publication *Der Kreis* (The Circle), a symbol of the 1950s international homophile movement, Tobias's aesthetic diverged significantly from the smooth-skinned athletes and classical near-nudes that surveys indicated the readers of these men's magazines preferred.¹⁵ Taking inspiration directly from the flesh trade, Tobias mixed styles and visual metaphors along his own personal axis of high and low, queering the homoerotic gaze and the elements that helped to hold it together in a complex visual semiotic code.

Looking outside the frame to consider the photograph's movement and migration as a material object, we see other ways in which we might historicize the role and resonance of the image in constructing queer structures of feeling at mid century.¹⁶ The Manfred photo had come a long way from the gutter and street, circulating briefly – though not insignificantly – among the photographer's closest friends before being taken out of the confines of vernacular subalternity and into the public sphere in *him*. But this does not mean that it was fully hidden from society. Given his previous interactions with the law, it is fair to assume that Tobias was fully cognizant of the fact that its mere possession might be dangerously incriminating.¹⁷ In light of possible persecution – and according to the rules of evidence in operation in 1950s West Germany, such images could still be used as proof of transgression – it is even more astounding that he took no fewer than eight different shots of Manfred, from quirky close-ups to *mise en scène*. Whether a twist of archival fate or a testament to this particular young man's enduring erotic effect on the photographer, of all the images housed among the Tobias papers at the Berlinische Galerie, Manfred is the most photographed of all his liaisons (see figures 8.8 and 8.9). Further proof of the artistic and libidinous appeal of this subject, selections of the Manfred photos would surface in two different photo essays in *him* once the 1969 decriminalization of homosexuality meant that Tobias no longer had cause to fear arrest or censure.

Going beyond the frame once more and folding Tobias's photography into the social history of post-1945 West Germany, we see that his choice of subject



Fig. 8.8: 'Manfred', undated. Berlinische Galerie.



Fig 8.9: 'Manfred', undated. Berlinische Galerie.

was troubling in other ways, especially in contravening the efforts of progressive sexologists intent on reforming the pernicious anti-sodomy legislation through the promotion of gay respectability. The vision of sexual sobriety cultivated by the homophile lobby – and promoted internationally in the pages of *Der Kreis* – turned on the disavowal of cruising and male prostitution.¹⁸ This was not a new position in the struggle to eradicate laws against same-sex sexual expression. The Weimar Republic's most strident voice for the repeal of anti-sodomy legislation, Magnus Hirschfeld, likewise characterized the boy prostitute as a blight on the gay scene, or worse as a 'pseudohomosexual' who challenged sexological discourses of inversion.¹⁹ In West Germany, where a wave of arrests had led to a rash of suicides by young men accused of homosexuality, a progressive jurist warned specifically against the dangers of the trade and the malevolence of the rent boy, since it was feared that these arrests were the work of a blackmailing hustler.²⁰ This view was by no means in the minority, even among well-intentioned progressives; far into the 1970s, activists such as the filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim and the student movement leaders Martin Dannecker and Reimut Reiche, responsible for some of the most important studies of sexual marginalization during the sexual revolution, continued to demonize cruising as a holdover of illegality and crass capitalism that prevented gay men from lending their energy to organizing for change.²¹ In actively cultivating 'the cruising gaze' and aestheticizing street-level sex as a fundamental feature of queer desire, Tobias's photography flew in the face of both the visual and social politics of the homophile lobby and extant progressive networks by articulating a vision of desire that was more reflective of actual practices within the gay scene, however risqué, marginalized, unsavoury or taboo. Against the backdrop of ongoing illegality and the assimilationist aspirations of homophile groups, Tobias's photographs of a casual connection can be read as a strident affront to the official morality of post-war West Germany, to the elite aesthetics of early queer cosmopolitans, and to the unfortunate hypocrisy of the reform movement that drew on a history of sexological thinking, and demonized the passions of street sex as antithetical to the politics of modern homosexual identity.²²

In uncovering the aesthetic and social historical conventions at work in Tobias's photographs of rent boys and pick-ups, we gain unparalleled insight into post-1945 illegality in the form of icons and emblems of a defiant desire in a deeply homophobic age. Simultaneously viewing these images iconographically and as material things with distinct, though changing, genealogies enables us to discern ways in which Tobias's renderings form both an evolution of and a deviation from previous visualizations of queer desire over the course of the twentieth century. A third and final way to consider these images is for their role in the actual constitution of a more lubricious queer subjectivity, one that began to take shape in the decades before AIDS fundamentally coloured same-sex desire in hues of risk, danger, infection and aversion.²³ Embracing 'the cruising gaze' and

embodied desire, Tobias sought to free the queer subject from the normativizing impulses of previous claims to assimilation and respectability.

From the safety of his apartment in tiny Grunewald, against the prying eyes of the state and the disavowal of the scene, Tobias defiantly styled and photographed his pick-up, who, as he describes in the 1974 *him* article where this photo first surfaced publicly, was hanging around outside a known gay pub in the city centre when they met.²⁴ The composition of the photo, its staging, the narrative scenario presented or hinted at, and Manfred's self-confident counter-stare suggest that he was anything but one of the closeted 'sad young men' described by film historian Richard Dyer as having surfaced in films of the same era.²⁵ In this photo of the boy next door, a troubled hood in shorts who had spent more than his fair share of time in foster care and jail, we are confronted with a gaze that mixes innocence with trust and playfulness with seduction. Tobias pulls back any veneer of respectability and privacy in this image, implicating the viewer in the construction of an embodied erotic sensuality that virtually penetrates the lens (see Figure 8.10).

Despite the obfuscated classical silhouette on the wall in the background – one of Tobias's many self-portraits, it just so happens – this image of Manfred in the cluttered bedroom resonates with the frisson of imminent transgression. For one thing, his form is curiously off-centre, nearly inseparable from the hodgepodge

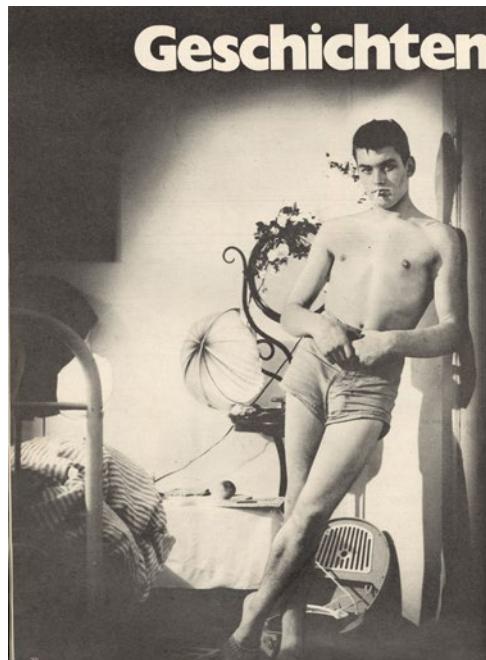


Fig. 8.10: Herbert Tobias, 'Stories with Manfred', *him* (December 1974).

of items adorning the scene. The eye has to work hard to focus in on Manfred, perched against the wall and smoking. The slightly cinematic rendering of his stance – his shoulders, cigarette, arms and hands – points in the direction of his semi-erect member, which pushes provocatively against his shorts. Unlike the catalogue version, which is more artfully rendered, the magazine image is cropped in such a way as to emphasize his midsection, the focus of allure for *him*'s readership. His cigarette, tousled hair, and rumpled bedsheets further tempt the viewer with suggestions of what was about to happen (or perhaps already had?). In contrast to his American contemporary Minor White's photographs, where the camera captured the subject looking askance – or as a pleasingly rendered (yet fragmented) torso – Manfred's gaze is both steady and direct. Reminiscent of E.J. Bellocq's staged though documentary-like photographs of prostitutes in the brothels of Louisiana, he stares directly back at his photographer/lover and viewer as an active participant in his own self-narration.²⁶ While the spectator's eye explores his body, Manfred's stance and counter-stare invite this action. Photographically, he is rendered both the subject and the object of desire.

If Tobias's 1950s photography turned on the right to physical pleasure as an essential element of his aesthetics of subjectivization, how might we understand the role of decriminalization and 1970s gay rights consciousness in this particular visualization of desire? Such an analysis requires that we view the photographic legitimization of 'abject' desire as another feature of the social, aesthetic and visual history of the sexual revolution. Moreover, using pictures such as these as historical sources means not only subjecting their provenance and circulation to analysis but also examining their aesthetic conventions for how, and in what ways, this too has changed and evolved over time. While modernist aesthetics provided some sanctuary for the homoerotic display of male figures as long as they conformed to the image 'of the svelte, hairless, well-proportioned body' of the ephebe, athlete and dancer, in the 1950s Tobias began challenging the gendered implications of this motif in favour of a more complex mix – one might even say jumble – of homoerotic masculinities, including those of the impoverished boy prostitutes working the streets.²⁷ Not only did his photography challenge the classificatory scientific gaze of sexologists, and the punitive use of images by the police, but it also built on and transcended the canonical homoeroticism of preceding generations of queer photographers, acting, to use Shawn Michelle Smith's phrasing, as a 'counterarchive' to the 'counterarchive' by offering a unique visual meditation on erotic friendship, mutuality and unencumbered homoerotic desire.²⁸ After the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 and the lifting of censorship laws, when more genital and pornographic images gradually penetrated the public sphere, Tobias's work continued to flout convention through the use of nostalgia for the forgotten 1950s, when alongside visual essays on industrial chic and the leather scene, *him* still saved a space for photos of the time when 'boys wanted to look like Elvis'²⁹ (see Figure 8.11).

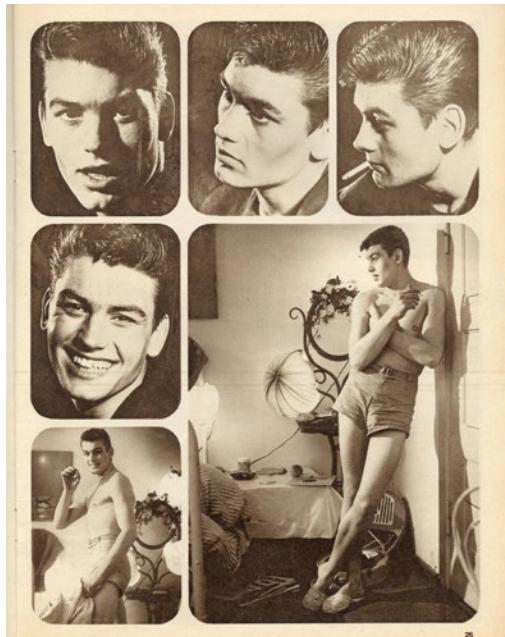


Fig. 8.11–8.12: Herbert Tobias, 'A nostalgic trip into the past. When boys wanted to look like Elvis'. *him applaus*, vol. 12 (December 1977), 24–25.



Fig. 8.13: 'I don't know to whom I belong...', 1972. Berlinische Galerie.

If his 1950s photography challenged normative legal and medical discourse as well as the homoerotic canon by advancing the visualization of abjection as elemental to what he himself called 'the sensual man', interestingly, for Tobias, the decriminalization of homosexuality did not usher in a dramatic shift away from sensuality and towards the explicitly sexual. Indeed, some of his 1970s photographs retained many of the formal conventions of his previous work, as evidenced by Figure 8.12, which transgresses racial boundaries instead of inter-generational ones, while still drawing on lighting and staging techniques honed during this earlier period.

Tobias took the opportunity provided by the relaxation of censorship to reflect upon his earlier canon, whether in revisiting a particular theme from an

earlier series or by returning to the photo of Manfred. The sense of introspection, longing, and existential quandary that animated his earlier images remained very much in evidence in his contributions to the gay magazine, where his pursuit of abjection and the everyday was doubly important in the climate of the 1970s, when legality had failed to transcend what he felt was the stultifying conformity, bitterness and apathy of the slowly commodifying gay scene.³⁰ What he hoped would awaken the senses to the essence of human existence was more important than ever amidst the increasingly youth-obsessed 1970s. Lost in the struggle for greater visibility and acceptance – as he argued in a magazine interview in November 1977 – was that judgment, criticism, and the inability to countenance beauty remained core features of daily life, and were perhaps even more pronounced in gay subcultures, where, as if under a magnifying glass, ‘life was on display in a much more concentrated form than in wider society’.³¹ A month after his tell-all interview, in which he lamented the sexual politics of the scene, Tobias resurrected Manfred’s image one final time for this ‘nostalgic trip into the past’³² (Figure 8.11). In doing so, ironically, he condemned the youth-obsessed gay scene with his own youthful trophies, simultaneously exposing his existential angst at growing old and his lament that his own queer aesthetic no longer held meaning for the gay community. Through this rendition of Manfred in different poses and positions, we see Tobias’s effort to reclaim himself as a desiring subject (and desirable by extension) at a moment when his ability to express his own erotic subjectivity seemed to be slipping through his fingers, only to be resurrected twenty years later under the auspices of high culture.

By the last decades of the twentieth century, images of carnality and eroticism had secured a firm place in the photographic register, creating a widening sphere of activity for gay-identified men in fashion, academe, and the wider art community. Still-slippery obscenity laws and informal practices of self-censorship in artistic circles meant that erotically charged photos were rarely curated or on display in museums and galleries.³³ Despite the fact that major artists had traded on homoerotic imagery for some time, the conjoining of intimacy, mutuality and queer desire was slow to be embraced as high art. Censure in the art world ensured that both explicit and deeply personal depictions of male–male sexuality remained underground until the 1980s. The putatively democratic force of the sexual revolution, together with the greater affordability of cameras and film, slowly chipped away at these strictures, creating new agents and conduits of sexual knowledge formation. In West Germany, sex shops flourished, gay-themed magazines were founded, and university students joined New Left activists to press for better information on queer cohabitation, domesticity, aging and health.³⁴ Pornographic filmmaking fundamentally changed the playing field, creating new modes of self-presentation, and average people began to use the camera in their own erotic play, documenting in the process changing body

practices, aesthetics and subjectivities.³⁵ In contrast to past decades, erotically charged photography now leapt off the pages of men's magazines into mainstream advertising campaigns, a hallmark of the increasing acceptance of homo-erotic imagery and the further commodification of the gay scene. As never before, men's bodies became 'spectacularized' in art and fashion, a consequence of the liberalization of anti-sodomy laws, the growth of visible urban subcultures, and deliberate attempts by advertising executives to harness the potential of this 'new male consumer market' without fear of retribution for contravening previously established gender norms.³⁶

Placed in this context, Tobias's photos can be understood as a visual marker of changing social mores within both the queer and the dominant cultural canon. Going one step further and taking Tobias's erotic archive as a site of self-fashioning as well as a performative practice, we can begin to appreciate more fully the multiple ways in which his mode of visualization served as a living and moving artefact of changing emotional expression. Unfortunately, his pursuit of his art was hampered by his erratic personality and addictions, which threatened for a time to derail his artistic endeavour entirely. By the mid-1970s, he retreated even further from society, turning his back on the fashion industry before being spurned by the nascent gay and lesbian movement that had been galvanized into a potent force for change on both sides of the Atlantic. Relying on the benevolence of friends, he attempted a return to the theatre when it was clear to everyone but him that his calling lay elsewhere.³⁷ Forced to return to taking pictures, he discovered that in the changed moral climate of the post-decriminalization years, he could finally publish his erotic photography publicly. By the time of his death in 1982, he had begun to taste some artistic success, with an exhibition in Amsterdam featuring, among other works, images of youths such as Manfred, whom he had first become fascinated with during his time in Berlin.

There is much to be gained by viewing erotic photography as history, especially when we consider the emotional work of images in creating historical subjectivity in the changing places and spaces of viewing and display. How might attention to the affective relationships between subject, photographer and viewer open up new possibilities for the way we appraise key turning points in history, to say nothing of the need for a more nuanced appreciation of subjective experience as both materially grounded and socially constructed?³⁸ A way forward is in considering photography's iconographic, material and subjective registers. By attending to an image's aesthetic make-up, we pull out multiple, coexisting meanings that aid us in devising new ways of periodizing the histories we seek to write. Recalling that photographs are not only layered aesthetic texts but actual physical entities – things that circulate, are traded, and migrate from their place of creation to new spaces of consumption – we are forced to recognize that they also transcend the boundaries of the local and the national. All images are mobile, but queer erotic

photographs are particularly frenetic, trafficked from place to place, circulating in tourist and fine art networks, on the boundary between high and low, and on both sides of the Atlantic as well as along twilight subcultural pathways. To place photography and the emotions it engenders solely within national frames might prove to be illusionary, given the degree of hybridity, transfer and exchange that seems to accompany its multiple migrations.

Such an emphasis on the social lives of images does not disrupt their meaning. Rather, it allows us to better understand the specificities of human experience in the changing socio-spatial contexts of viewing. In Tobias's photos of rent boys, we see the aesthetic inheritance of an evolving homoerotic imagination, while simultaneously gaining a glimpse into the baleful world of homosexual persecution before the era of decriminalization. Furthermore, analysing images in this way forces us to recognize the place of the sexual and aesthetic avant-garde as sites of politicization and resistance, sometimes against hegemonic culture but often among subcultures as well. Tobias's photos provide insight into the negotiation of modern sexual subjects as mediated through the realm of desire, ensconcing passion (alongside reason and respectability) as elemental to self-realization and personal fulfilment. They do this, in part, by rendering desire visible through the aestheticization (and eroticization) of abject masculinities. Unlike the iconic images of soldiers, sailors, bodybuilders and wrestlers that have been passed down as icons of homoerotic virility, or even Robert Mapplethorpe's self-portraiture, which brought images of leather men into the gay visual arcana, Tobias took select elements of turn-of-the-century gay iconography and pictorialism, and combined them with a fascination with class, friendship and brotherhood to stage a multivalent queer subjectivity as the cornerstone of modern queer identity. His images of street boys reclaimed the gutter, but this in and of itself was not his biggest contribution to the burgeoning gay aesthetic. It is the way these photos helped to create a new vision of shared eroticism, one that was neither shrouded in sepia nor graphic in content, but that turned on the memory, intimation or anticipation of pure passion. In short, it was not the subject matter – street sex and intergenerational coupling – that was transgressive and new, but the deeply personal attempt to render the private public, and to arrest fleeting moments of longing and desire before they moved into history. In the 1950s, these images portrayed a claim to desire that was both dangerous and illegal. But they were no more welcome or accepted in the 1970s when they were finally allowed aboveground, when their trademark eroticism and intimacy struggled to keep pace with more bodily and youth-obsessed depictions of queer desire.

Herbert Tobias's photography bridges the gap between the museum and the street, integrating elements of daily life into the queer visual canon. Although galleries were loath to countenance erotically charged images in the early 1970s, by the late 1980s personal exhibitions of homoerotic images were increasingly published and exhibited, confirming 'a real though not unanimous acceptance of

homosexuality in cultural milieus, right to the top of the most important museums'.³⁹ The sign of greater acceptance was not the toleration of more explicit imagery, but the deliberate targeting of a specific and assumed gay audience, one with its own clearly defined aesthetic tastes.⁴⁰ Regardless, the acceptance of the erotically charged male as both a subject and object of art and desire helps to periodize this important shift away from the disavowed homoerotic sensuality of pictorialist photography towards a more self-assertive embrace of same-sex desire, mirroring the gains made in the era of decriminalization in the quest for pride over marginality. In other words, by developing ways of reading these images of intimacy and eroticism as lending insight into the era of the sexual revolution, we see that Tobias's photographic practice played an indelible part in challenging the legitimacy of existing sexual practices, social mores, and modes of desire. In this sense, his visual depiction of bodies and pleasure can be said to have a history, one inextricably bound up with, and informed by, core social, personal and aesthetic struggles of the late twentieth century on the West German and increasingly globalized stage. In so far as his photographs helped to construct the history of the age by revealing new visual and social formations, they also serve as evidence of changing historical assumptions and values about the sensual body on display in this widening public sphere, a process that had been underway for the better part of the twentieth century.

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Notes

1. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
2. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1999).
3. Herbert Tobias, 'Die Erinnerung ist das einzige Paradies, aus dem uns niemand vertreiben kann ... Sprich zu mir von Liebe – Mariu!', *him applaus* 2 (1979), 6–9.
4. Herbert Tobias, 'Leben zu Protokoll ... fast ein Augenblick von Glück: Ein Gespräch zwischen Herbert Tobias und Hans Peter Reichelt', *him applaus* 11 (1988), 8–13.
5. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann makes the point that photography helped Germans to visualize and make sense of the meaning and experience of defeat. See his chapter in this volume.

6. Anna-Carola Krausse, 'Das Bild Bin Ich: Annäherung an Leben und Werk. Erstes Shooting', in Ulrich Domröse, *Der Fotograf Herbert Tobias*, 11–23, here 12–14. 47.
7. Herbert Tobias, 'Geschichte mit Manfred', *him* 12 (December 1974), 20–23. On cruising across the German–German boundary, see Jennifer V. Evans, 'Bahnhof Boys: Policing Male Prostitution in Post-Nazi Berlin', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12(4) (2003), 605–36.
8. This idea comes from Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), and forms the conceptual framework for the Toronto Photography Seminar's SSHRC-supported project on photography and queer affect. See <http://thephotochemicalsituation.wordpress.com/>.
9. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002). Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 193; Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 28.
10. Allen Ellenzweig, *The Homoerotic Photograph: Male Images from Durieu/Delacroix to Mapplerhorpe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Eric O. Clarke, *Virtuous Vice: Homoeroticism and the Public Sphere* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); James Gardiner, *Who's a Pretty Boy, Then? One Hundred and Fifty Years of Gay Life in Pictures* (London: Serpent's Tale, 1998); Peter Weiermair, *Hidden Image: Photographs of the Male Nude in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, trans. Claus Nielander (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).
11. Joseph A. Boone, 'Vacation Cruises; or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism', *Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition*, Special Issue, *PMLA* 110(1) (January 1995), 89–107. On the objectifying role of the gaze in cinema, see Laura Mulvey's classic article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16(3) (Autumn 1975), 6–18.
12. Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also Jonathan D. Katz and David C. Ward (eds), *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2011).
13. Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 99. See also Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising Queer Streets in New York and London* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
14. Thomas Waugh, 'Posing and Performance: Glamour and Desire in Homoerotic Art Photography, 1920–1945', in Deborah Bright (ed.), *The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 58–77.
15. See Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 406; and Dian Hanson, *Bob's World: The Life and Boys of AMG's Bob Mizer* (Cologne: Taschen Books, 2009). On the differing visions of queer beauty and body aesthetics in twentieth-century photography, see Evans, 'Queer Beauty'.
16. For some time now, so-called 'thing theorists' – scholars of literary, visual and material culture – have devoted attention to the cognitive and emotional workings of inanimate objects. See *Things*, Special Issue, *Critical Inquiry* 28(1) (2001), ed. Bill Brown; as well as Carl Knappett, 'Photographs, Skeuomorphs and Marionettes: Some Thoughts on Mind, Agency and Object', *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1) (2001), 97–117; and Christopher Pinney, 'Things Happen: Or, From Which Moment Does That Object Come?', in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 256–72.
17. Domröse, *Der Fotograf Herbert Tobias*, 265.
18. Andreas Pretzel, *Homosexuellenpolitik in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Hamburg: Männer Schwarm, 2010). On the use of classical body images in *Der Kreis*, see Hubert Kennedy, *The Ideal Gay Man: The Story of 'Der Kreis'* (Binghamton, NY: Routledge, 1999). For the United States generally, see Martin Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10(1) (January 2001), 78–116.

19. Kerwin Kaye, 'Male Prostitution in the Twentieth Century: Pseudohomosexuals, Hoodlum Homosexuals, and Exploited Teens', *Journal of Homosexuality* 46(1/2) (2003), 1–77, here 5.
20. See Herbert Hoven (ed.), *Der unaufhaltsame Selbstmord des Botho Laserstein: Ein deutscher Lebenslauf* (Frankfurt: Dtv, 1991).
21. Kristof Balser, Mario Kramp, Jürgen Müller and Joanna Gotzmann (eds), *Himmel und Hölle: Das Leben der Kölner Homosexuellen, 1945–1969* (Cologne: Emons Verlag, 1995), 136; Botho Laserstein, *Strichjunge Karl: Ein kriminalistischer Tatsachenbericht* (Hamburg: Janssen Verlag, 1954), pg. 54. Of course, the fear of solicitation and blackmail had a long history in the gay scene, and was intense during the Nazi period. In Hamburg, for example, members of the Hitler Youth served as decoys, pretending, as Stefan Micheler argues, 'to offer sexual services in order to entrap men'. Given this recent history, it is not surprising that distrust of street boys continued into the post-war period. See Micheler, 'Homophobic Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex-Desiring Men under National Socialism', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11(1/2) (2002), 105–30, here 125.
22. David S. Churchill, 'Transnationalism and Homophile Political Culture in the Postwar Decades', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15(1) (2009), 31–66; Julian Jackson, 'Arcadie: Sens et enjeux de "l'homophilie" en France, 1954–1982', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 53(4) (2006), 150–74; Domenico Rizzo, 'L'ami idéal: Canon homophile et "marché" des relations dans les années 1950', *ibid.*, 53–73.
23. Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
24. Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
25. I have sometimes had to point this out to predominantly straight audiences, who do not appear to pick up on the inference, harking back to the point that what is visible to us is often what our world and experiences condition us to see.
26. E.J. Bellocq, *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912*, ed. John Szarkowski (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1970).
31 Pierre Borhan, *Men for Men: Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in the History of Photography since 1840* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 73.
27. Pierre Borhan, *Men for Men: Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in the History of Photography since 1840* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 73.
28. On the use of photography as a 'counterarchive', see Shawn Michelle Smith, 'Introduction: Photography on the Color Line', in Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1–24, here 6.
29. Herbert Tobias, 'Ein nostalgischer Ausflug in die Vergangenheit: Als die Jungens alle wie Elvis aussehen wollten ...', *him applaus* 12 (December 1977), 24–25. On the genital aesthetic in early gay pornography, see Jeffrey Escoffier, *Bigger Than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore* (New York: Running Press, 2009).
30. Jennifer V. Evans, 'The Long 1950s as Radical In-Between', in Heike Bauer and Matt Cook (eds), *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13–28.
31. Tobias, 'Leben zu Protokoll', 9.
32. Tobias, 'Ein nostalgischer Ausflug in die Vergangenheit'.
33. Borhan, *Men for Men*.
34. Elizabeth Heineman, *Before Porn Was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
35. Escoffier, *Bigger Than Life*. On everyday practices, see Susanne Regener, 'Medienamateure im digitalen Zeitalter', *Amateur: Laien verändern die visuelle Kultur*, Special Issue, *Photogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Photographie* 111(29) (2009), 5–10.

36. Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996), 179.
37. Domröse, *Der Fotograf Herbert Tobias*, 265.
38. Sara Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', *Social Text* 22(2) (2004), 117–39; David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub (eds), *Gay Shame* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
39. Borhan, *Men for Men*, 256; Mark Liddiard, 'Changing Histories: Museums, Sexuality and the Future of the Past', *Museum and Society* 2(1) (2004), 15–29, here 23.
40. Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996).

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Chapter 9

PHOTOGRAPHING REURBANIZATION IN WEST BERLIN, 1977–84

Anna Ross



For generations the Berlin city laboratory has been called Kreuzberg.
—Hardt-Walther Hämer, *IBA Berlin 1987: Project Report*

In December 1979, the amateur photography group ‘Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter’ met every Saturday at 11 A.M. to document the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg. In the north-west corner of the district, the reconstruction efforts of the 1940s and 1950s had created visibly green surroundings, but ones in which apartment blocks possessed a haphazard relationship to existing streets and the characteristic mixture of residential and commercial properties in the area. Further to the east in Kottbusser Tor, the cityscape looked very different. Here, from 1963 on, the West Berlin Senate had embraced almost total demolition and rebuilding of apartments through the policy of clear-cut or area renovation (*Kahlschlag- oder Flächensanierung*).¹ Construction rates slowed somewhat after May 1976 as the Construction Minister Harry Ristock sought to temper this policy and replace it with a new programme of urban repair (*Stadtreparatur*), creating yet another aesthetic in the streets around the former Görlitzer Bahnhof. It was in this striking bricolage of post-war planning that the Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter met but, as the group wrote, making documentary photographs had ‘become difficult in recent times because, thanks to the “Strategies for Kreuzberg” hype, hundreds of people with cameras are walking through our neighbourhood (*Kiez*)’.² Tourists had begun to arrive in a steady stream, snapping what they could on foot or from the free bus tours on offer in the vicinity.³ Professional photographers were there too. Everybody, it seemed, wanted to photograph Kreuzberg’s transformation by 1979.

For the Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter, Kreuzberg raised important questions vis-à-vis the moral underpinnings of official planning policies. For whom exactly was

Notes from this chapter begin on page 223.

the city being reurbanized? How was the Berlin Senate going to deal with the growing occurrences of speculation, increased rent and forced dislocation that accompanied modernization? And what effects were these multifarious planning policies having on local residents? Historians and social scientists have been particularly interested in the debates generated by such groups in West Berlin and other cities undergoing reurbanization in this period.⁴ We possess important analyses of the complex and shifting claims to the city made in the 1970s and 1980s, and the new forms of protest this entailed, especially squatting.⁵ Indeed, squatting movements flourished across West Germany in these decades, and more broadly throughout Europe from the Netherlands to Italy. But for all its merits, research on reurbanization in the post-war period has largely done away with the photographic mania in which housing debates occurred. In the case of Kreuzberg, it overlooks the surge of photographs made in the district as debates about housing policies reached national attention, suggesting that the contemporary faith in the photograph to capture humanist questions in a way that no other medium could seem to be all but forgotten.

This chapter explores the circulation of photographs taken by residents in the 1970s and 1980s to illuminate an ethics of seeing developed in the vernacular of a local neighbourhood setting. It appears that residents found the photograph particularly suited to their cause for two reasons. Firstly, photographs were a simple means of showing the alienating effects of demolitions and the new housing developments being built over historical Kreuzberg, despite the Senate's commitment to urban repair. Images of rubble, vacant blocks and new housing developments – often abstracted to a series of geometric surfaces – became increasingly common, as did photographs that contrasted this destruction with bustling local communities. Photographs enabled residents to evoke in the viewer an emotional connectedness with the old cityscape, thereby encouraging a reassessment of planning policies on the part of a wider German public.⁶ And it was not just the local community that recognized this potential. The West Berlin Senate, political parties, citizens' initiatives and the press all acknowledged the importance of the visual to planning debates, and circulated images in a conscious effort to shift public opinion.⁷

Secondly, it appears that the residents and the countercultural youth who came to occupy Kreuzberg saw in the photograph the means to transform individual, isolated connections to the built environment into a movement of widespread importance. As Elizabeth Edwards outlined in her contribution to this book, photographs play an important role in processes from non-event to event. They help to create significance in places overlooked by traditional hierarchies. Although the residents and students never voiced their pursuit in these terms, it is evident that the circulation of photographs in Kreuzberg helped to transform the district into a 'scene'. Photography groups like the Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter followed residents into illegally occupied apartments, where locals had

begun to renovate old structures as a form of protest against reurbanization policies.⁸ Likewise, a small amount of film footage gave the public their first or only views inside an occupied apartment where squatters were busy animating the neighbourhood by renovating doors, windows and fixtures. Visual media were especially effective in reproducing this performance of occupation on a broader scale and gathering individuals into social networks of support. Otherwise put, recourse to the photograph in this period seems to suggest a collective impulse towards direct action.⁹

Editors of resident newspapers were supportive of direct action through photography and encouraged participation by asking readers to send in their own photographs of contemporary or bygone Kreuzberg. In creating a rich visual archive of the district, they showed how locals fitted into the historical evolution of Kreuzberg and were involved in the active construction of its social history. This contextualization of photographs by resident organizations in newspapers and exhibitions became crucial to mounting a defence against reurbanization, and they provided a common source of animation for the politics of residents, squatters and sympathetic political parties in the district.

From the historian's perspective then, resident photographers can be seen as part of a larger history of humanist photography focused on urban landscapes and the ethics of seeing it generated. Since its inception, photography has been essential for drawing attention to overlooked parts of cities. For intellectuals like Walter Benjamin, the landscape of the subterranean could undermine the appearance of order and completeness in a city.¹⁰ Eugène Atget had done this at the turn of the twentieth century through his photographs of Paris's medieval courtyards, streets and outlying areas, and the surrealist photographers of the 1920s and 1930s were heading in the same direction. In a similar manner, photo essays in the Weimar illustrated press provided a popular forum for bringing whole quarters of the city's less salubrious regions into focus.¹¹ Here photographers used a powerful social realism to illuminate the plight of the urban poor. In the post-war years, cultural critics strongly influenced by Benjamin once again became interested in the political potential of urban spaces 'failing' to keep pace with development in a city; and in the late 1970s, groups like the Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter joined this long-standing tradition. Yet of all the moments in the twentieth century in which German photographers produced humanist photographs of urban change, the resident photographs of the period 1977 to 1984 are certainly among the most interesting. Unlike the social realism of the Weimar years, the quarter portraits of Kreuzberg referenced the many social connections and continuities they could find in their suburb in a Benjamin-like manner.¹² This was not necessarily aesthetically innovative, but the synthesis of ideas and references opened a new chapter in the way we see the city, as well as initiating a new source of saturation that would come to prevent ethical ways of seeing.

Kreuzberg from the Outside

Photographs of debris by named and unnamed photographers began to appear in Kreuzberg's resident newspapers in the late 1970s. In October 1978, for example, the Citizens' Initiative SO 36 (BI SO 36) – one of a handful of citizens' initiatives founded between 1977 and 1979 to energize the turn towards urban repair – published an image of two apartment blocks mid demolition, on which they superimposed the quotation:

I am a city still, but soon I shan't be –
 Where generations used to live and die
 Before those deadly excavators rolled in to haunt me:
 One thousand years to build. A fortnight to destroy.¹³

The photograph was taken by Bernd Proske of the Rotfilter group, and the words were Bertolt Brecht's, except for the term 'excavator' (*Bagger*), which replaced the original 'deadly birds' (*Todesvögel*). Brecht's stanza first appeared in his *Kriegsfibel* (1955) alongside a photograph of Liverpool's port, but whereas Brecht alluded to the destruction Liverpool had endured from German bombers during the war, the new image was, it seemed, drawing on the weight of Brecht's 'photo-epigram' to make the point that reurbanization was now unleashing the same destructive power in the city as aerial bombing had done in the Second World War. Indeed, resident broadsheets appeared across Kreuzberg to make exactly this point. The Citizens' Initiative SO 36 provided a detailed coverage of destruction and construction in east Kreuzberg in its monthly *Südost Express*. The editors commissioned their own photographs but they also encouraged residents to send in photographs for publication.¹⁴ By December 1978 – a year after the foundation of the newspaper – the Citizens' Initiative SO 36 was selling 2,000 copies a month at a price of 60 Pfennig.¹⁵ By 1980, circulation stood somewhere between 2,500 and 2,700 copies per month.¹⁶ In west Kreuzberg, the *SüdWest-express* provided the largest dissemination of images of Kreuzberg's transformation. It ran throughout the height of the squatting movement in 1981 and 1982. Likewise, the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* also played an important role in circulating such images for a number of West Berlin districts. This weekly newspaper was founded in March 1981 and ran until the end of that year. It originally cost 50 Pfennig and had a circulation of 3,000 copies. Circulation rose to 4,000 in May.¹⁷

Attributions rarely accompanied photographs in resident papers, meaning that it is very difficult to be certain as to the place of these photographers in the political landscape; but what is clearer is the attitude of the newspapers towards the destruction in the district. The ephemeral broadsheets that circulated between 1977 and 1984 consistently denounced demolitions as a problem caused by the policies of the Senate in general and Harry Ristock in particular, and realized by

developers. Prominent personalities such as Peter-Paul Zahl agreed with the concerns raised by resident newspapers. He claimed: '[T]oday speculators are managing to do what Hitler and his world war were incapable of bringing about'.¹⁸ Even *Der Spiegel* described how, in past years, building refuse and debris was known to 'fall like bombs' in Kreuzberg.¹⁹

Alongside the publication of largely unattributed photographs, a small number of professional photographers sympathetic to resident concerns also began photographing the demolitions in Kreuzberg. Michael Kipp and Manfred Kraft were two such photographers who possessed close links to West Berlin communities and their later squatting scenes. These professionals sold their photographs to Berlin's left-leaning newspapers such as *die tageszeitung* and magazines like *Zitty*.²⁰ Michael Kipp also sold his photographs to national press organs producing engaged journalism such as *Stern* and *Der Spiegel*.²¹ Like resident photographers, Manfred Kraft illuminated the scale and effects of demolition in his images. He often utilized a strong triangular composition to frame rubble in the district – just as Bernd Proske had done – but Kraft's photographs were more lively, incorporating the movement of smoke and onlookers in the immediate surroundings (Figure 9.1). This visual technique was effective for drawing attention not only to the scale of destruction in Kreuzberg but also to its impact on life in the district. Kraft gave a human face to his time-series photographs of explosions, portraits of mountainous rubble, and panoramic views of completely levelled plots of land to make the point that demolition in the post-war period had become a regular event and an intrusion into everyday life on a large scale.²²

Both amateur and professional photographers contrasted this developing visual of a populated Kreuzberg with the new complexes built in the area. Photographs of recently built apartments in resident newspapers deployed oblique angles, surprising vantage points and a foregrounding of the inorganic to make them appear abstract and alienated from social life (Figure 9.2). Such buildings – known as 'grey lice' in common parlance – could be found along the S-Bahn between Kottbusser Tor and Schlesisches Tor.²³ Of these, the most prominent example was the New Kreuzberg Centre (Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum, NKZ), completed in 1974. The directors of this project had promised a residential complex fitted with shops, affordable retail space, car parks and a 'friendly green' feel.²⁴ But what resulted was one of the most hideous and dysfunctional buildings in West Berlin. For the residents living in the centre, a sense of anonymity caused serious mistrust, and by 1980 it had become a prison of noise, dirt, concrete and steel.²⁵ Some even went so far as to refer to the centre as the 'new KZ', the German abbreviation for concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager*).²⁶ A range of photographs and articles depicted other alienating complexes and the 'dead' footpaths around them that 'had nothing to do with Kreuzberg', making the point that, as the *Südost Express* claimed, modern architecture was destroying city life by 'turning lively old quarters into sleepy suburbs'.²⁷



Fig. 9.1: Manfred Kraft (1982). 'Eviction and Demolition at Winterfeldtplatz', Umbruch-Bildarchiv, 1562c.

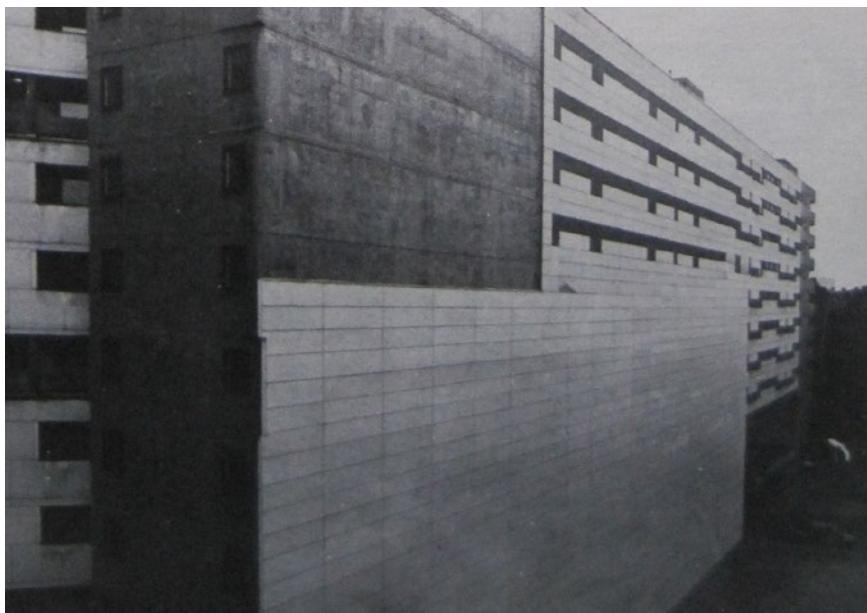


Fig. 9.2: Unknown (1980), Untitled, *Südost Express* 4, 8.

Hence, photographs in resident newspapers over the period 1977 to 1979 drew attention to two new ways of seeing, both of which challenged the Senate's claim that it was being more sensitive to the Kreuzberg cityscape with the shift to urban repair. While photographs of debris emphasized the trauma that reurbanization caused locals, photographs of new constructions alluded to the eventual destruction of local life. Underpinning these images was the assertion that the Kreuzberg cityscape was supporting a valuable but overlooked social entity. It was supporting, as members of the scene put it, a *Kiez*.²⁸ The term '*Kiez*' in German conjures up images of conviviality and belonging, much like the term '*quartier*' in French or 'neighbourhood' in English.²⁹ For instance, the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* defined *Kiez* in their 'Small Scene Dictionary' as a '*Heimat* or one's own quarter, district or city precinct full of life and feeling'.³⁰ Photographs suggested, in other words, that the administrative area in which building projects were taking place was not neutral space but an inhabited place, imbued with people's hopes, fears, histories and futures.

Awareness of the Kreuzberg *Kiez* became increasingly widespread with the help of photographs. For example, the *Südost Express* urged residents to make 'springtime strolls through SO 36' guided by the photographs published in their newspaper.³¹ Brief descriptions of the area and its history, such as narratives of the changing uses of municipal space, accompanied the photographs in these articles. They were also combined with stanzas from Bertolt Brecht's *An die Nachgeborenen* to heighten the significance of walking and looking. The very fact that the paper was encouraging readers to engage in discussions about 'trees' or buildings in the Kreuzberg context, to walk among them, to look at them, was tantamount to a transgression according to the quotations they chose. With the help of Brecht, the *Südost Express* believed they were encouraging a radical activism in the acts of walking and looking. Moreover, the growing recognition of a *Kiez* in Kreuzberg by resident photographers helps to make sense of the frequent associations of the Senate and speculators with Nazism: the Senate was not just demolishing buildings, resident newspapers claimed, but engaging in the morally egregious destruction of community itself. Its failed attempts at reurbanization were destroying a place rather than an administrative space.

Citizens' initiatives continued to energize the turn towards urban repair during this period, which led to increased resistance among residents and, beginning in 1979, a widespread squatting movement. On 3 February 1979, the Citizens' Initiative SO 36 occupied apartment buildings on Lübbener Straße and Görlitzer Straße. Throughout 1979 and 1980, student, alternative and autonomist groups joined residents in taking over and renovating old apartment blocks rather than seeing them demolished. As the minister Klaus Duntze argued, these young Germans also saw an abiding social value in Kreuzberg that the authorities had refused to acknowledge in the debate on reurbanization. 'For them,' he wrote, 'the quarter means ... more than just cheap living space. [It offers them]

the chance to ... try out lifestyles from tomorrow'.³² In the early months of 1981, squats increased rapidly in Kreuzberg and the surrounding districts, so that by the summer, around 165 apartment buildings had been occupied in West Berlin. After this dramatic turn of events the scene splintered, and by the autumn of 1984 it came to a close – but not before a flood of images had come to national attention.³³

Kreuzberg from the Inside

During the height of the squatting movement, the number of images produced by citizens' initiatives increased exponentially. So too did those taken and circulated by the local authorities, police and, most notably, the press. The West Berlin newspapers, in particular those belonging to the Springer empire, were mainly interested in using photography to portray opponents of reurbanization as dangerous extremists, undermining the very foundations of the Federal Republic. They printed, for instance, images of street rioting, violent evictions and revanchist reoccupations to destabilize the legitimacy of the squatting movement. As the Alternative Liste (AL) – the forerunner of the Greens Party – wrote, articles in *Bild*, *BZ* and *Berliner Morgenpost* were whipping up a 'pogrom against squatters and their supporters'.³⁴ However, many resident photographers preferred to turn their cameras back to the question of the Kreuzberg *Kiez* by profiling civic initiatives and events intertwined in the built environment. In particular, photographers focused on the occupation of Kreuzberg's rental barracks rather than the more violent street protests carried out by some members of the scene.

Views into occupied apartments were slow to appear in 1979 and 1980, but by 1981 they were readily available. The *Südost Express* first published this style of picture with the occupations of Lübbener Straße 3 and Görlitzer Straße 74.³⁵ On a double-page spread, one could see squatters working together, climbing ladders, stripping back wallpaper and painting doors. Renovation images likewise became a fixture in the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* in 1981, and they were not uncommon in *Zitty* and other Berlin newspapers. *Zitty* sent the journalist Wolfgang Spielhagen into a squat in Bülowstraße 55, where he recorded his experience of spending hours sitting 'around the table, drinking and talking'.³⁶ In March 1981, *Der Spiegel* sent Hans Halter into an occupation, and in September 1981 Jörg Mettke documented the forcible eviction of squatters from an apartment.³⁷

A good number of the photographs of occupied apartments focused on actions of hard work or motifs that highlighted industriousness. As the editors of the *Südost Express* stated alongside their photographic reportage: '[M]any residents in SO 36 think of long-haired crackheads, punks with buzz cuts, or people fishing for a rent-free apartment when they hear the word maintenance squatting



Fig. 9.3: Unknown (1979), Untitled, *Südost Express* 3, 10.

(*Instandbesetzung*). This, however, has nothing to do with crackheads. Rather, as the following images should make clear, it mostly involves lots of work, effort and expense'.³⁸ Scene photographers chronicled resident and alternative squatters using their hands to saw and join, conjuring up romantic associations of the moral economy of craftwork. At times these images even reproduced stylistic elements characteristic of romantic painters, particularly the *Rückenfigur* or figure shown from the back, to emphasize such an interpretation (Figure 9.3). To be sure, these photographs provoked detractors to criticize squatters as new romantics.³⁹

Such throwbacks to history were important, and provided a crucial link for the performative reconstruction of the *Kiez*. Local broadsheets were aware of the rhetorical power of heritage, and deliberately drew upon memories and myths to bolster the virtue of the squatting scene. The *Südost Express*, for example, encouraged residents to send in photographs of Kreuzberg's late nineteenth-century and interwar topographies to build a picture of Kreuzberg as the home to generations of workers.⁴⁰ The editors created a regular double-page spread in which they reprinted vintage photographs. At times, comparisons to contemporary photographs were made, aligning the same street, square, station or apartment block. But in such cases, the parallels drawn were not crudely political; rather they

were designed to educate residents about the rich history of their district.⁴¹ The *SüdWest-express* mimicked the *Südost Express* in printing a regular double-page spread of vintage cityscapes, and the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* developed histories of this hard-working *Kiez*.⁴² The *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Westberlins* (SEW) also printed historical images near squatting articles, arguing that the quarter had long been a bastion for the working class and had always ‘voted red’.⁴³

Alongside values of hard work, photographers sought to articulate a sense of conviviality in occupations, similar to that seen in working-class associations. Images of squatters sitting around kitchen tables or in group meetings were ideal for expressing such an idea. As Belinda Davis has argued, ‘kitchen tables were one of the most popular meeting places for activists, offering a highly desired intimacy, requiring no one else’s “permission” to use them, and demanding little outlay of cash’.⁴⁴ In other words, kitchen tables made feelings of belonging and emotional connectedness easily accessible. They also appeared to bring together a range of people, breaking down divisions between the young and old, men and women, and the employed, unemployed and student. But there were certainly limits to this trope. Despite claims to the contrary, depictions of the kitchen frequently showed women continuing to serve men, rather than sitting themselves at the table, smoking, talking or strategizing. And in other photographs, one can see that a normative gender dynamic often prevailed in the squatting scene.

Nevertheless, editors actively sought a wider sense of conviviality in the visual archive of the past, particularly in kitchens, to bolster the rhetoric of the present. Alongside images of Kreuzberg’s existing communities, editors printed photographs alluding to the generations of working-class populations that had lived in the rental barracks. In March 1979, the *Südost Express* published a double-page photograph of a dilapidated rental barrack with a particularly deep series of courtyards, over which they asked how one could begin to count: the number of feet that had walked through these courtyards; the amount of work carried out there; the number of nights filled with anxiety; the incidence of rage; the quantity of schnapps drunk; and the number of children born, raised and lost in these apartments.⁴⁵ The *Instand-Besetzer-Post* similarly reprinted this image and the accompanying caption.⁴⁶ Moreover, by 1981, photographs of the nineteenth-century inhabitants of the rental barracks had begun to appear in the *Südost Express* and *SüdWest-express*. Mostly in groups, these portraits created the idea that rental barracks were not simply architectural containers for contemporary social lives; they had acted as the architectural containers for decades.⁴⁷ This observation was important because it bolstered the claim that Kreuzberg’s building stock had a redeeming value in the number of social histories it offered to tell, as opposed to modern apartments, which contained no trace of the past.⁴⁸ Resident newspapers claimed that rental barracks were ‘real houses’, and on this basis, new futures for the district could be imagined.

In some instances, although this was rare, photographers looked to include marginalized groups in the construction of place in Kreuzberg. For example, a small number of photographs illuminated squats that were run entirely by women, for women, to create living arrangements that were rarely tolerated outside the scene. As the *Südost Express* reported in February 1981, women were often prevented from finding accommodation by themselves or as a group on the grounds that they might be lesbians or would attract conspicuous numbers of men to the house. In order to fight such prejudices, thirteen women established a squat in Liegnitzer Straße 5, in front of which they hung banners affirming their occupation. Like other squats, this group of women began renovating their apartment alongside their academic or work commitments, and used the squat to support self-help initiatives.⁴⁹ Images of women participating in renovation activities were important for making their presence visible in squatting communities, and refuting the traditional gender norms that shaped society and much of the movement (Figure 9.4).

Although emphatically less common, resident photographers also included the presence of Turkish communities in the construction of place. In both the *Südost Express* and *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, a small number of photographs exist in which Turkish men and/or women are busy with the work of renovation in Turkish–German joint ventures such as the Regenbogenfabrik. *Der Spiegel*

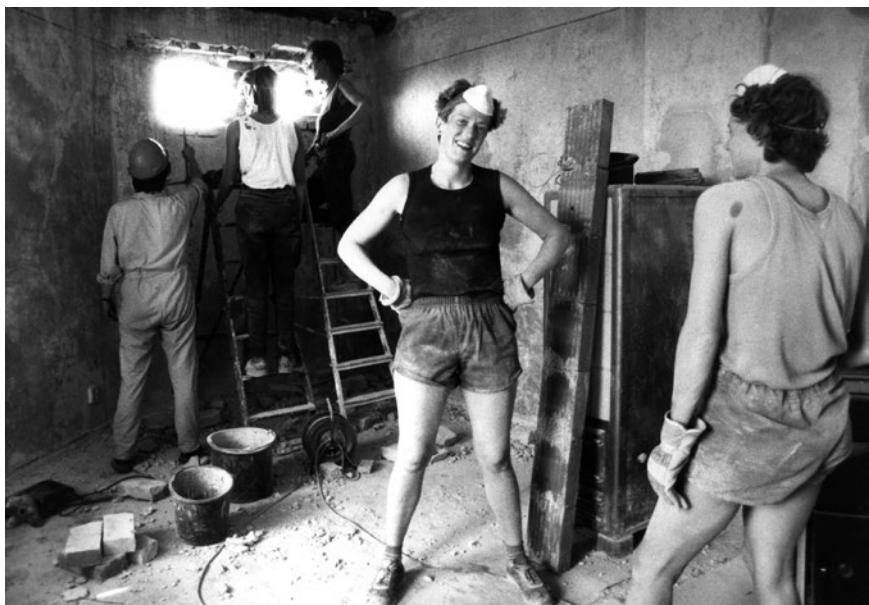


Fig. 9.4: Dragana Cukavac (1983), 'Maintenance squatting in Liegnitzer Straße 5', personal collection of Dragana Cukavac.

likewise produced an article on the Turkish women in Kottbusser Straße 8. Here eight women and five children, most of whom were Turkish, sought to renovate the apartment in collaboration with their German neighbours. Two sociologists from the Freie Universität worked with the women and supported the venture as an ‘example for integration’ between foreign and German families. This was certainly clear to see in the accompanying photographs, the third of which was an archetypical example of a community created through work. Moreover, the virtue of the workers in this article brought into stark relief the immorality of contracted labourers and the police. As the author recorded, the women were not treated ‘as human beings’, and in one instance, builders even greeted them by banging on the door and yelling, ‘Hitler forgot to gas you all to death’.⁵⁰ However, as with images of female activists, these photographs were not widespread, nor did they garner a strong historical underpinning in the visual reconstruction of the *Kiez*.

What was most common across this corpus of images was the attempt to conflate the human element of Kreuzberg and democratic values, especially as tensions between occupants and the police increased. In December 1980, the violent police eviction of squats in the Admiralstraße and Fraenkelufer hit the headlines, and in March 1981, a wave of police evictions began according to the strategy titled the ‘Berlin Line of Reason’ (*Berliner Linie der Vernunft*). It was important for many of the non-violent protesters and documentary photographers to meet this expression of authority with a distinct moral superiority, as they lacked any real legal standing in the face of eviction. As the police drilled through walled-up entrances and windows, squatters sought to show that the world they were entering was one of order, hard work and peaceful equality. Rooms were newly painted and possessed functioning amenities. Furthermore, the photographs taken by Michael Kipp during the evacuation of Hermsdorfer Straße 4 indicated that the order in the built environment was reflected in the inhabitants – and stood in contrast to the disorder of the police. Kipp frequently deployed creative vantage points to make this point (Figure 9.5). Likewise, the reportage of such events in *Der Spiegel* drew attention to the surprising features of the situation, such as the fact that squatters sat on stairwells, waiting for the police and singing ‘under the paving stones lies the beach’.⁵¹ These lyrics reproduced the famous slogan of the Situationist International, graffitied across Paris in 1968, and they exemplified the movement of the 1980s: behind Berlin’s rental barracks lay a beach, an exciting new world of authentic social liberation for the individual, squat community and the *Kiez*.

As images conflating the *Kiez* with democratic values multiplied, so too did the attempts of the citizens’ initiatives to contextualize and foster social networks around them. Photographs of the Kreuzberg *Kiez* past and present increasingly appeared beyond the pages of resident newsletters at community events, popularizing the ways in which resident photographers wanted people to see this place



Fig. 9.5: Michael Kipp (1981), 'The eviction of eight occupied houses', Umbruch-Bildarchiv, 1561z.

and its history. For example, the *SüdWest-express* published photographs of the street festival of 27 June 1981 in Eylauer Straße, showing older residents and renovation squatters in conversion. According to the article, this sense of integration was aided by an exhibition of photographs and archival materials designed to awaken 'a community feeling' (*Kiezgefühl*).⁵² In a similar manner, the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* published photographs of residents walking, browsing exhibits and talking with one another at the Richardplatz spring festival in Neukölln. Such photographs conveyed a distinct sense of interest and involvement in community matters, as well as a general celebration of the uniqueness of inner-city living. The accompanying article in the *Instand-Besetzer-Post* noted that the festival offered information, drinks, photographs from occupied houses, 'home-made' cakes and 'self-composed' music.⁵³ To be sure, an emphasis on the 'home-made' could be seen across numerous photographs, indicating an almost village feel of care and closeness in community projects.

The development of scene networks around photographs and the social heritages they were defending also spread throughout 1981 in the form of photography exhibitions.⁵⁴ In early 1981, squatters held an exhibition on squatting in Amsterdam before Ralph Rieth, Peter Hebler and the März-Foto-Kollektiv hosted an exhibition entitled 'Squatting in Berlin' (*Hausbesetzung in Berlin*).⁵⁵ The März-Foto-Kollektiv displayed photographs, pamphlets, placards and commentaries from over 160 occupied houses, ordered according to their *Kiez*. Alongside these



Fig. 9.6: Unknown (1982), 'View of the exhibition *Das Glück braucht ein Zuhause*' in M. Düspohl, G. Kreikemeier, T. Nötzold and A. Reinhardt (eds). *Das Glück braucht ein Zuhause: Abriss, Wohnungsnot, Mieterselbsthilfe in Berlin-Wedding*. Berlin: Evangelische Versöhnungsgemeinde und Berliner Mietergemeinschaft, 1982, p. 109.

exhibitions, the show 'Maintenance Squatter Pictures' (*Instandbesetzerbilder*) took place until 28 August in the Galerie am Chamissoplatz. It presented photographs of renovation squatting by Wolfgang Krolow, as well as an overview of the work undertaken by the Chamissoplatz Tenants' Council (Mieterrat Chamissoplatz) over the previous five years.⁵⁶ On 11 August 1981, the exhibition 'Happiness Needs a Home: An Exhibition about Housing Shortage, Demolition and Tenant Self-Help in Berlin-Wedding, 1891–1981' (*Das Glück braucht ein Zuhause: eine Ausstellung über Wohnungsnot, Abriss und Mieterselbsthilfe in Berlin-Wedding, 1891–1981*) opened in an occupied house in Blumenthalerstraße, providing a fascinating view inside apartments past and present (Figure 9.6).⁵⁷ Other exhibitions also took place in the second half of 1981, including a series of exhibitions showing photographs of maintenance squatted houses and a retrospective of the previous ten years of squatting in Berlin.⁵⁸

Taken together, photographs of residents and students restoring authentic, historically embedded cityscapes drew attention to the 'moral protest of the squatters'.⁵⁹ Squatters were, their newspapers and exhibitions claimed, simply continuing a series of traditional, respectable activities that had occurred in this district from time immemorial, unlike the actions of the Senate, which were

often depicted as being artificial, immoral and analogous to those of the National Socialists. The work of resident squatters in repairing their quarter was helping to sustain a way of living that was, they claimed, loved by inner-city residents and that supported a valuable urban community. Likewise, the restoration work being carried out by alternative squatters was cultivating, resident papers argued, the democratic values needed for the regeneration of German society. Squatters claimed to support non-hierarchical communities and civic participation, but as we have seen, the reality was that women and marginalized groups had only a limited place in the movement. Nevertheless, photographs of Kreuzberg's built environment sought to evoke a long history associated with the integrity of hard work, as well as providing the impetus for realizing a new future connected to global, democratic movements.

Liminal Kreuzberg

Taking photographs of renovation squatting subsided somewhat during the period 1982 to 1984, but not before they helped to shift reurbanization debates in Kreuzberg. Reports suggest that resident newspapers and exhibitions were reasonably successful in increasing the limited but critical support for the social worth of Kreuzberg. In 1979, the 'Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft Bonn' – a society run by deputy mayors for cultural affairs from a number of large cities, academics, actors, directors and artists – awarded their annual prize to BI SO 36 and the Verein SO 36, including a cash payment of 2,000 DM to the *Südost Express*.⁶⁰ Exhibitions too were having some success in capturing public attention. In January 1982, the *SüdWest-express* wrote that 'only a relative minority of the population' were familiar with the photographs of renovation squatting in the exhibition in the Red Corner, but this was not to be derided.⁶¹ Exhibitions were helping to raise public awareness, so the article went, by virtue of the fact that they illuminated entire themes relevant to contemporary debate – something individual photographs in newspapers could not achieve. Moreover, polls conducted by the Institute for Applied Social Research (Institut für angewandte Sozialforschung) in 1981 showed that 63 per cent of West Berliners approved of the squats they saw in the press, provided they were non-violent.⁶²

Photographs in squatter newspapers and exhibitions also helped to confront local political parties with the language of a vibrant social past and present in Kreuzberg, and to garner important support in these circles. Political discussions were held in association with squatting exhibitions, putting debates about the future of the district in direct relationship to the moral economy of squatting. For example, the podium discussion 'What's next for Kreuzberg?' (*Wie geht es weiter in Kreuzberg?*) took place in association with the exhibition *Instandbesetzbilder*. Participants included Heinrich Lummer (CDU), Ulrich Rastenborski (CDU),

Werner Orlowski (Baustadtrat Kreuzberg), Peter Ulrich (SPD) and Klaus Dunthe (minister in SO 36).⁶³ The importance of observing social relations in reurbanization gained the most traction with the SEW and the AL. The AL created their own division for renovation squatting and actively argued against inhumane reurbanization policies. In doing so, they activated the social-historical arguments created by photographs of renovation squatting. ‘Kreuzberg must be preserved’, one newsletter asserted, ‘– with its front houses, side wings and workshops0. Here the history of a city can be felt and experienced. Here social structures came into being that have survived until today’.⁶⁴ Of course, it helped that the founding members of the AL in Kreuzberg included photographers such as Michael Kipp, who had done so much to promote a sense of place in the district.

The public and political pressure created through maintenance squatting and its visualization was sufficient to force municipal authorities to enter into a process of legalization with squatters. Seventy-seven squatted apartments were legalized in 1979 and 1980, before the new CDU-led Senate and its hard-line stance on squatting came into effect in May 1981.⁶⁵ The CDU significantly curbed processes of legalization but it could not undo the real gains secured by renovation squatters. Public opinion helped to ensure a partial continuation of legal integration after May 1981, so that by 1984, 105 of the 165 squatted apartments in West Berlin were secured by rental or purchase agreements.⁶⁶ This was certainly no sweeping victory for the squatting movement but it did show that the conceptualization of place was not without material consequence. Moreover, political pressure from the AL- and SPD-controlled borough government in Kreuzberg saw the Senate agree in 1983 to a major shift in policy.⁶⁷ At this time the Senate declared their commitment to the ‘Twelve Principles of Careful Urban Renewal’ – a guide designed to promote a more resident-friendly form of development in West Berlin, including a commitment to preserving ‘Kreuzberg’s special character’.⁶⁸ And these were not just words. As Hardt-Walther Hämer reported in 1990, the rate of construction in Kreuzberg reduced dramatically as a result. From an intended 1,600 new residential units planned in 1979, only 360 were actually built after the introduction of the Twelve Principles; 370 courtyards were transformed though planting, and most spectacularly, almost 7,000 apartments were renewed instead of the planned 1,500. The authorities also set up a range of community centres, meeting places for young people and sporting facilities.⁶⁹

At the contemporaneous International Building Exhibition (Internationale Bauausstellung, IBA), the authorities provided access to the renovated apartments in Kreuzberg, as well as a whole barrage of pamphlets and books in support of careful urban renewal. Not only did this paraphernalia incorporate many of the squatting ideals, but in some instances it also reprinted original photographs taken by the photographers of the *Südost Express*.⁷⁰ The IBA experience showed

that the creation of place by resident photographers had been an integrating force, and should be viewed as an important consideration for future planning. Hardt-Walther Hämer even went so far as to suggest that the careless destruction of building stock was now, without question, conflated with ‘destroying culture and evidence of human history. And this means that we are not just losing homes, jobs and inner-city life, we are also losing our identity and with this the most important foundation of our cultural society’.⁷¹ A loud echo of the social worlds past and present created by the squatting movement could not have been clearer.

Conclusion

Facing one of the largest urban-renewal projects in post-war history, resident newspapers used photographs to encourage locals to see Kreuzberg as a web of valuable social relations, as a *Kiez*, rather than an administrative district designated for destruction. These photographs celebrated the village feel of inner-city living and drew attention to the many authentic, community-based experiences available in occupied apartments. The reprinting of vintage photographs in resident newspapers and exhibitions, especially those depicting Kreuzberger of the past, added a rhetorical weight to this idea by suggesting a striking continuity between the *Kiez* of the 1970s and that of the late nineteenth century. The implication was that Kreuzberg’s tenements created a unique district identity inflected with strong working-class associations, and the renovation activities undertaken by resident squatters to save their homes acknowledged Kreuzberg’s uniqueness as one of the last tenement quarters of Europe. It created, in other words, a sense of urgency around saving this community and its valuable social heritage.⁷²

Photographs also served to evoke empathy on the part of local authorities for the residents and disaffected youth in Kreuzberg, encouraging a break with contemporary attitudes towards housing policies. They primarily did so by presenting overlooked realities in the district, from continued demolitions to the sense of community generated around maintenance squatting. The contextualization of such photographs was important in resident newspapers, exhibitions and at public discussions, with citizens’ initiatives providing the most important framework for how this line of seeing should be understood. The representational strategies deployed by residents were not always innovative in the housing debates, but they helped to complement the work of citizens’ initiatives. The abstraction of rubble and new housing developments in the years 1977 to 1979 contrasted with the increasingly humanized images of Kreuzberg produced at the height of the squatting movement. When photographing squats from the inside, residents and professional photographers often relied on montage or

allusion in form to invest their humanized images with links to larger social histories and moral economies of work. Here, too, aesthetics sought the same animation in the viewer as the subject.

The result was that resident photographs of Kreuzberg had an important effect on planning policies over the years 1977 to 1984. They facilitated the consolidation of social networks for squatting, and encouraged action on the part of a range of political actors. In short, they helped to produce a sense that Kreuzberg was facilitating a scene in which future realities were being negotiated. That said, the long-term success of photographs of the *Kiez* in the process of reurbanization is questionable. The subsequent gentrification of the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain after 1989 suggests that the authorities often continued to deprioritize the social importance of local populations for economic considerations. A second wave of squatting took place in these suburbs in 1990, but here too social and cultural concerns were soon overridden. And in Kreuzberg today a growing gentrification threatens the local community once again, suggesting that there are now perhaps too many photographs of this order to evoke protest.

But photographs of place also had long-term implications for validating the new social worlds developed by squatters – and on this level, it seems that values have shifted in a more lasting way. Kreuzberg's old building stock offered many spaces in which social and political experience could be explored away from the march of normalization promoted by the authorities. Here photographs of new forms of communal living helped to challenge the hierarchical forms of interaction that characterized society in the late 1970s. In some instances, as with the case of women and immigrants, the professed radicalism of the squatters was not as progressive as some photographs suggested. Nevertheless, there were a substantial number of areas in which progressive ideals challenged traditional norms, and this local political scene provided a clear platform for wider, global movements that have, in bursts, remained part of the political landscape and endure to this day.

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Notes

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1. For details on the shift from reconstruction to modernization, see J.M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xvii.
2. 'Fotowerkstatt Rotfilter', *Südost Express* 12 (1979), 17.
3. On the free district tours, see 'Wieder Rundfahrten durch Kreuzberg SO 36', *Saierungs-Zeitung* 9 (1978), 3.
4. There were many notable examples of reurbanization outside the Federal Republic of Germany. Across the Wall, for instance, the construction of the Leninplatz exemplified the German Democratic Republic's commitment to providing 'better, cheaper, quicker construction' in the city. Beyond the two Germanies in Paris, the French authorities approved the reurbanization of an estimated 24 per cent of the city's surface area between 1954 and 1974, causing a displacement of around 550,000 people. See: R. Strobel, 'Before the Wall Came Tumbling Down: Urban Planning Paradigm Shifts in a Divided Berlin', *Journal of Architectural Education* 48(1) (1994), 29–30; D. Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 137.
5. See: H. Pruijt, 'The Logic of Urban Squatting', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37(1) (2013), 19–45; R. Karapin, *Protest Politics in Germany: Movements on the Left and Right since the 1960s* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 61–116; R. Koopmans, *Democracy from Below: New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany*. Colorado: Westview, 1995; A. Holm and A. Kuhn, 'Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35(3) (2011), 644–58. For excellent discussions of space in the movement, see: A. Vasudevan, *Metropolitan Preoccupations: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015; A. Vasudevan, 'Dramaturgies of Dissent: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin, 1968–', *Social and Cultural Geography* 12(3) (2011), 283–303; B. Davis, 'The City as Theater of Protest: West Berlin and West Germany, 1962–1983', in G. Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (eds), *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).
6. On the concept of place that shapes this line of thinking, see: M.J. Miller, *The Representation of Place: Urban Planning and Protest in France and Great Britain, 1950–1980* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 9–24; D. Massey, 'Places and their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal* 39(1) (1995), 182–92; D. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
7. As the editors of one resident newspaper wrote: '[E]very day you can see just how important photographs are to the political debate and to the formation of opinion ... if you cast a glance at the Berlin press'. See 'Auf die Tiefenschärfe kommt es an: Fotoausstellung im Roten Eck', *SüdWest-express* 9 (1982), 20.
8. There had been earlier instances of squatting in West Berlin and the Federal Republic but they carried neither the momentum nor the political attention of this wave of activism. See Koopmans, *Democracy from Below*, 170–71.
9. On direct action, see M. Klimke and J. Scharloth, 'Utopia in Practice: The Discovery of Performativity in Sixties' Protest, Arts and Sciences', *Historein* 9 (2009), 46–56.

10. W. Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', in M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1927–34*, trans. R. Livingstone and others, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1999) II, 595–637; W. Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *ibid.*, 507–30; D. Sheridan, 'The Space of Subculture in the City: Getting Specific about Berlin's Indeterminate Territories', *Field Journal* 1(1) (2007), 106.
11. On the Weimar photo essay see: D.H. Magilow, *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).
12. We know that the Fotwerkstatt Rotfilter hosted a reading group every Sunday at 4 p.m. to read Benjamin's works. It was likely that many of the photographers active on the scene took part in this group, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that here Benjamin's ideas on the city were discussed. 'Fotwerkstatt Rotfilter', *Südost Express* 12 (1979), 17.
13. *Südost Express* 9 (1978), 10–11. The English translation is from B. Brecht. *War Primer*, trans. J. Willett (London: Libris, 1998), 19.
14. 'Wir über uns', *Südost Express* 11 (1979), 21; 'Wie der Südost Express entsteht', *Südost Express* 1 (1980), 20.
15. 'Ein Jahr Südost Express', *Südost Express* 11 (1978), 2.
16. 'Wie der Südost Express entsteht', *Südost Express* 1 (1980), 21.
17. 'Was uns betrifft', *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 25 March 1981, 2; *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 15 May 1981, 2.
18. 'Bilder aus Kreuzberg', *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 25 August 1981, 28.
19. 'SOS für SO 36', *Der Spiegel* 13 (1977), 216.
20. *Die tageszeitung* also had a close connection to the squatting movement. See Jörg Mettke, 'Achtung, Achtung, Sie haben 15 Minuten Zeit', *Der Spiegel* 40 (1981), 45.
21. On engaged journalism, see C. von Hodenberg, 'Mass Media and the Generation of Conflict: West Germany's Long Sixties and the Formation of a Critical Public Sphere', *Contemporary European History* 15(3) (2006), 390–93. On Kipp, see P. Nowak, 'Der Chronist der Hausbesetzer', *die tageszeitung*, 10 August 2010; <<http://www.taz.de/!56791/>>.
22. *Der Spiegel* referred to demolition as 'ein alltägliches Schauspiel, das jeden Tag irgendwo in der Bundesrepublik zu besichtigen ist'. 'Sanierung haut den Gesündesten um', *Der Spiegel* 26 (1980), 30.
23. 'SOS für SO 36', *Der Spiegel* 13 (1977), 221.
24. '65 Millionen Steuergelder für NKZ-Pleite', *Südost Express* 4 (1980), 8.
25. 'Mieter im NKZ röhren sich', *Südost Express* 4 (1980), 9.
26. Karapin, *Protest Politics*, 87.
27. *Südost Express* 3 (1978), 7.
28. The extent to which the Senate overlooked the *Kiez* in Kreuzberg was evident in 1977, when *Der Spiegel* quoted Construction Minister Ristock as saying that Kreuzberg was in danger of taking on a ghetto character. See 'SOS für SO 36', *Der Spiegel* 13 (1977), 216–23, here 223.
29. Miller, *The Representation of Place*, 147.
30. 'Nachtrag von A bis I', *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 4 September 1981, 36.
31. 'Frühlings-Spaziergang durch SO 36', *Südost Express* 6 (1979), 8–9.
32. M. Düspohl, *Kleine Kreuzbergsgeschichte* (Berlin: Berlin Story Verlag, 2009), 136–37.
33. Holm and Kuhn, 'Squatting and Urban Renewal', 646–49. For an excellent account of the different branches of the movement, see also F. Anders, 'Wohnraum, Freiraum, Widerstand. Die Formierung der Autonomen in den Konflikten um Hausbesetzungen Anfang der achtziger Jahre,' in S. Reichardt and D. Siegfried (eds), *Das Alternative Milieu: Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa, 1968–1983* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 473–98.
34. 'Springer wirft mit Schlagzeilen', *Extrablatt*, undated, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum (FHXB).
35. 'Ohne Fleiss kein Preis', *Südost Express* 3 (1979), 10–11.

36. W. Spielhagen, ‘Was, wenn sie jetzt Kämen? Impressionen aus einem besetzten Haus’, *Zitty* 13 (1981), 17.
37. H. Halter, ‘Mut zum Träumen, Kraft zum Kämpfen’, *Der Spiegel* 10 (1981), 53–56; Mettke, ‘Achtung, Achtung’, 44–47.
38. ‘Instand-Besetzer tun was für den Kiez’, *Südost Express* 5 (1980), 10.
39. These criticisms were recorded in ‘Wird nicht Instand-Ge-stezt’, a pamphlet of the Alternative Liste Kreuzberg 3(1980), 1, in FHXB.
40. ‘So sah es früher in Kreuzberg aus’, *Südost Express* 4 (1978), 8–9.
41. Ibid., 14.
42. See, for example: *SüdWest-express* 2(1981), 14–15; 3(1981), 14–15; 4(1981), 14–5; 5(1981), 13–14; 7(1981), 12–13; May 1982, 18–19; June 1982, 16–17; July/August 1982, 14–15; February 1983, 16–17; ‘Historische Seite 8. Folge’, *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 25 August 1981, 32–33.
43. ‘Trotz Sozialistengesetz: Berlins Südosten wählte rot!’, *In Kreuzberg: Informationen und Alternativen der SEW Kreuzberg* 3(1984), 16.
44. Davis, ‘The City as Theater of Protest’, 266–67.
45. *Südost Express* 3 (1979), 12–13.
46. *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 31 July 1981, 36.
47. See, for example: *Südost Express* 5 (1981), 12–13; *Südost Express* 9 (1982), 12–13; *SüdWest-express* 3 (1981), 14–15.
48. This is in spite of its original association with speculation. See: ‘Mietskasernen: “Quelle von Verderblichkeit”’, *Der Spiegel* 51 (1980), 154–58; B. Ladd, *Urban Planning and Civic Order in Germany, 1860–1914* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 178; B. Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 103.
49. ‘Das kommt davon: Liegnitzer Str. 5 instandbesetzt’, *Südost Express* 2 (1981), 11.
50. H. Halter, ‘Mut zum Träumen, Kraft zum Kämpfen’, *Der Spiegel* 10 (1981), 53–56.
51. Mettke, ‘Achtung, Achtung’, 47.
52. ‘Altmieter und Instandbesetzer im Gespräch’, *SüdWest-express* 5 (1981), 2.
53. ‘Nettes am Richardplatz’, *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 30 April 1981, 10.
54. This complemented open-door events in squatted apartments. See the advertisements in the *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, particularly during TUWAT. For example: 11 September 1981, 13.
55. *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 11 March 1981, 12; 31 July 1981, 24; 4 September 1981, 16 and 38.
56. *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 4 September 1981, 38.
57. Ibid.; M. Düspohl, G. Kreikemeier, T. Nötzold and A. Reinhardt (eds), *Das Glück braucht ein Zuhause: Abriss, Wohnungsnot, Mieterselbsthilfe in Berlin-Wedding*. Berlin: Evangelische Versöhnungsgemeinde und Berliner Mietergemeinschaft, 1982.
58. *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 2 October 1981, 24.
59. ‘Krieg der Justiz gegen die Jugend’, *Der Spiegel* 37 (1981), 43.
60. ‘Kulturpreis ’79 an Bürgerinitiative SO 36 und Verein SO 36’, *Südost Express* 11 (1979), 3.
61. ‘Auf die Tiefenschärfe kommt es an: Fotoausstellung im Roten Eck’, *SüdWest-express* 9 (1982), 20.
62. P. Mitchell, ‘The Squatting Experience in West Berlin, 1979–1982’, unpublished dissertation, FHXB (2009), 32.
63. *Instand-Besetzer-Post*, 4 September 1981, 38.
64. ‘Wird nicht Instand-Ge-stezt’, *Extrablatt* 3 (1980), 1.
65. Vasudevan, ‘Dramaturgies of Dissent’, 291.
66. Holm and Kuhn, ‘Squatting and Urban Renewal’, 648.
67. Karapin, *Protest Politics*, 66.
68. *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987: Project Report* (Berlin, 1991), 202–3.

69. H.W. Hämer, 'Taking Stock in 1990', in *ibid.*, 204.
70. See, for example, the poster 'Selbsthilfe in Kreuzberg SO 36', FHXB, *Soziale Bewegungen Kreuzberg*, Nr. 18.
71. Hämer, 'Taking Stock in 1990', 204. See also the fascinating essay by J. Posener, 'Stadtrepatur – Weltreparatur', in *Idee, Prozess, Ergebnis: Die Reparatur und Rekonstruktion der Stadt* (Berlin: Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1984), 48–51.
72. P. Davey, 'Altbau', *Architectural Review* 181 (1987), 88.

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Chapter 10

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF EAST GERMANY'S VISUAL CULTURE

Candice M. Hamelin



In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe.
They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing.
—Susan Sontag, *On Photography* ...

In 1972, at the age of eighteen, Gundula Schulze Eldowy left her hometown of Erfurt, a small city in Thuringia, to study at the Technical College of Advertising and Design in East Berlin. Taken with the unfamiliar sights and sounds of the East German capital, a city that she recollects as 'an extinct metropolis' that not only had the 'feel of an archaeological site', but that had 'an unexpected magic' due to its 'unique blend of art, subculture, workers, refugees, and dreamers', Schulze Eldowy frequently spent her days and nights as a young student wandering its streets.¹ The scenes she saw and the individuals she encountered during these meanderings piqued her interest in those around her. Eager to learn more about their lives, she approached the locals whom she came across every day in the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, and listened to their stories. These initial interactions with her broadly defined neighbours – the baker, the cobbler, the newspaper seller, the vegetable man, the bar patron – helped her to acclimatize to her new surroundings, and shaped her artistic interests.

After she completed her studies in East Berlin, where she would reside until German reunification, Schulze Eldowy took to the streets with a Nikon FE and, as many of her early black and white images attest, began to photograph the city and its residents rather indiscriminately. She would continue to do so until 1979, when she started to use her 35mm camera in a more selective manner,

Notes from this chapter begin on page 244.

photographing almost exclusively individuals who lived on the margins of East German society. Describing her motivations and artistic practice in 'Im Herbstlaub des Vergessens' (In the autumn leaves of oblivion), a lyrical essay that at once recounts her experience of living in East Berlin and introduces a series of photographs taken by the photographer between 1977 and 1990, she asserted the following:

What spurred me on was curiosity. It was a sense of beauty, too, which taught me dismay. How could so many people live in the most degrading circumstances? With this question in mind I approached these people and listened to them. I experienced their stories, for I was living side-by-side with them, became one of them. Berlin overpowered me entirely. *I penetrated into the guts of the city and photographed them.*²

Put differently, Schulze Eldowy travelled to the innards of East Berlin and photographed those rarely documented by other East German photographers.³

By photographing what could be characterized as East Berlin's underclass, a social stratum that included the city's poor, elderly, sick and disabled, Schulze Eldowy made a decision about the kinds of people she deemed worthy of looking at. She chose to document and to call attention to individuals who had been disregarded by the East German media and who failed to have a presence in major photography exhibitions and specialized photography journals overseen by the state and its cultural organizations between the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949 and the early 1980s.⁴ In doing so, Schulze Eldowy helped not only to expand the repertoire of suitable subject matter for East German photographers, but also to diversify East Germany's visual culture, which, up until the latter half of the 1970s, had consisted largely of healthy, vibrant East German citizens contributing to and benefiting from their socialist society.

In what follows, I will introduce Schulze Eldowy's early photographic practice by way of her series *Berlin in einer Hundennacht* (Berlin on a dog's night, 1977–1990). I will then examine *Tamerlan* (1979–1987), a cycle of images and photographed letters that Schulze Eldowy began shortly after she enrolled as a photography student at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig (Academy of Fine Arts, or HGB), and demonstrate how it simultaneously exposed and traced the decline of a kind of woman and body that had been essentially omitted from East Germany's visual culture prior to the 1980s. Finally, I will address the support she received from official channels and draw on the experiences of her colleagues to argue that East German officials struggled to reach a consensus on how to treat photography after the medium had finally secured its place in the East German art world in the 1980s.

Berlin in einer Hundennacht (1977–1990)

Schulze Eldowy began her first series *Berlin in einer Hundennacht* in 1977. The cycle, which she worked on at the same time as *Der Wind füllt sich mit Wasser* (The wind fills itself with water, 1979–1980), *Aktporträts* (Nude portraits, 1982–1985), *Arbeit* (Work, 1985–1987), *Straßenbild* (Street picture, 1979–1990), and *Tamerlan*, includes approximately seventy black and white photographs taken in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg over the course of thirteen years.⁵ Arranged neither thematically nor chronologically, the images belong to one of three overarching categories: East Berliners walking on the streets; East Berliners sitting in neighbourhood pubs or in the privacy of their apartments; and the buildings in Berlin's Soviet sector. Whether in the presence or absence of Berliners, the latter group of images, the architecture of East Berlin, is pictured in a state of neglect, bearing marks of decrepitude on its facades or existing in piles of rubble. On several occasions this cluster of photographs shifts its focus from the damage and ruins of Berlin to the city's unexpected, anomalous structures – for instance, to a wooden shed on Dragonerstraße (now Almstadtstraße) that operates as a makeshift mobile hair salon, or an unadorned storefront window showcasing a prosthetic leg and a plastic dog. The peculiarities captured by Schulze Eldowy's camera in this group of images can also be seen in those of East Berliners on the streets. They are visible in photographs of newly-weds Ulla and Horst, who, unable to afford a wedding photographer, asked Schulze Eldowy to photograph them after the fact standing in what appears to be an alleyway in their wedding clothes, and of ominous-looking sisters whose central difference – not masked by their identical outfits, hairstyles and gloomy expressions – is the need for a cane by the girl standing on the left. The similarities between the latter image and the one of twin sisters Cathleen and Colleen Wade taken thirteen years earlier by Diane Arbus, whose photographs of individuals living on the fringes of society certainly influenced Schulze Eldowy's practice, leaves one to question whether Susan Sontag's claim that the American photographer 'chooses oddity, chases it, frames it, develops it, titles it' could also be said of the East German photographer at the beginning of her career.⁶

Schulze Eldowy's early proclivity towards the unusual quickly developed into her penchant to photograph the unrepresented. An exhausted worker covered in soot, a legally blind woman delivering mail, and a severely obese woman lying naked on a couch with her legs splayed for all to see, each make an appearance in *Berlin in einer Hundennacht*. However, Schulze Eldowy did not photograph these individuals until after she had enrolled at the HGB in 1979. Founded as an academy of drawing, painting and architecture in Leipzig in 1764, the HGB added photography to its curriculum in the late nineteenth century and was the only academic institution in the GDR to offer a degree in art photography.⁷ While

attending the school, Schulze Eldowy took classes with Horst Thorau, Arno Fischer and Evelyn Richter, and was frequently exposed to the work of international photographers. She had access to its library and art gallery; the former purchased monographs on Diane Arbus, Larry Clark and Annie Leibovitz, among others, from Thames and Hudson, which had a booth at the annual Leipzig book fair, and collected foreign journals such as *Camera, Art, Proffoto* and *Fotomagazin*, while the latter organized exhibitions on August Sander, El Lissitzky, Hans Hartung, Karl-Heinz Mai, Man Ray and Henri Cartier-Bresson.⁸ She also spent time at Arno Fischer's apartment in East Berlin, where he and his wife, fashion photographer Sibylle Bergemann, held informal artist gatherings and discussed their work. These meetings not only included Fischer and Bergemann's circle of friends, but also foreign photographers, such as Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, Helmut Newton, Karol Kállay, René Burri and Josef Koudelka, who had been invited to the GDR by Dominique Paillarse, the director of East Berlin's Centre Culturel Français (French Cultural Centre, or CCF).⁹ As a result, East German and international artists alike critiqued her work, and her knowledge of modern and contemporary photography and photographers grew considerably between 1979 and 1984. What remained unchanged, however, during these years in which she commuted between East Berlin and Leipzig was her interest in documenting individuals who failed to have a presence in East Germany's visual culture.

Tamerlan (1979–1987)

On one of her usual outings in Prenzlauer Berg in the spring of 1979, Schulze Eldowy came across Elsbeth Kördel sitting in Kollwitzplatz. Compelled by what she claims was 'her femininity, her beauty, her honesty', she began to photograph her from a distance.¹⁰ On that particular afternoon the square was empty and her actions did not go unnoticed. Within minutes Kördel had signalled for the photographer to join her. As Schulze Eldowy approached her with surprise, she continued to record what appeared in her viewfinder, taking several close-ups of Kördel before introducing herself and putting her camera aside. Before she could do the latter, Kördel began to speak to the photographer, informing her about her difficult childhood in Prussia, the loss of her husband after the Second World War, her physically and emotionally abusive son, and other hardships that she had endured over the course of her sixty-six years.¹¹ In addition to learning about Kördel's past, Schulze Eldowy discovered that the older woman needed someone to confide in. Taking down her address before leaving, the photographer arrived at Kördel's apartment three days later with her camera – the mechanical device that had led to their introduction – in hand, and photographed her again.

Schulze Eldowy would carry on the practice of documenting Kördel in her various living quarters until 1987, resulting in the series *Tamerlan*.¹² Composed of twenty-eight black and white photographs, the cycle, which bears the same name as the fourteenth-century dictator Timur the Lame, commences with a grainy three-quarter profile of Kördel taken several decades earlier by an unknown photographer. Given to Schulze Eldowy during one of her visits, the photograph draws attention to the striking features of Kördel's youthful face and neck through its interplay of light and shadows. At the same time as it blends her hair and shoulders into its darkened background, it underscores her arched brows, strong cheekbones, defined jaw line, painted lips, articulated collarbones and neck muscles. Poised as she looks beyond the photographic frame, the woman preserved here is set apart temporally and ontologically from the one presented in the series' following images. Untouched by the hands of time and the unforeseen hardships of the future, she marks the existence of a woman who once was.

Leaving this self-assured woman in the past, the series continues with *Tamerlan, Berlin, 1979*, a close-up of Kördel sitting alone on a park bench in Kollwitzplatz. The photograph captures the elderly woman, whose body fills most of the frame, crouched forward with her elbows resting on her thighs. Firmly clutching a cigarette in one hand and a scarf in the other, she appears both haggard and old. Her face, which is now framed by dishevelled white hair, reveals the passage of time: wrinkles line her forehead and surround her eyes and mouth, and her once supple skin has begun to sag. Distinct from the self-possessed woman in the series' opening image, Kördel stares directly at the camera, undaunted by its presence, and with her mouth open in mid-sentence, seems to invite – one could even argue, given her furrowed brow and distraught expression, challenges – Schulze Eldowy to document her story.

From here the series moves indoors, where it not only exposes Kördel's financial poverty by showing the neglected state of her home and possessions, but also traces her physical and emotional descent as she moves from a hospital to a nursing home. Diagnosed with arteriosclerosis in 1981, Kördel found herself unable to walk, and sought treatment at a state hospital. The first of several photographs documenting her battle with the peripheral artery disease is *Arteriosclerosis, Berlin, 1981*. Taken as Schulze Eldowy stood looking over the foot of Kördel's hospital bed, the image shows the elderly woman sitting partially upright with a blanket covering her midsection. Her attention is drawn to something or someone beyond the photographic frame, and while her face appears calm, her hands clutch at her bedding and communicate a sense of unease, the cause of which becomes apparent when the viewer sees her lower extremities. Distinct from the rest of her seemingly healthy body, her exposed feet, which extend into the foreground of the image, are barely recognizable. Swollen and filled with liquid, they consume her toes and ankles and confine her to the hospital bed, where, as the series' other images make evident, she would spend several months convalescing.

After recovering from her first bout of arteriosclerosis, Kördel moved into a nursing home and stayed there until 1985. During this period Schulze Eldowy photographed her alone and in the company of other residents, who, like Kördel, were rarely documented by East German photographers. She also photographed the intimate handwritten letters she received from Kördel. Coinciding with the growing interest in private life in the GDR, which historian Paul Betts proposes was the ‘logical result of the regime’s own policies of building GDR society around the nuclear family’, this act provides a different lens – a textual one – through which to view the elderly woman.¹³ Moreover, it lends a first person voice to the series. The photographed letters read as follows:

Berlin, 22.7.81

My dear! Do you know that I have landed in a home? At my own request. This will probably be the end. Whether I am happy is another matter. I was not pleased with my first impression, but I must bear my fate. Lunch, oh, do not even ask! I have a wish. If you, my little one, have not forgotten me, could you please come? As always, with warm regards, Tamerlan.

Today is 12.2.82.

Yes, I imagined that my living situation would be different. I wake up, or rather we are woken up, around 5:00 AM to wash and to get dressed. Then it is 6:30 AM. I lie back down again until 7:30 AM. Around 8:00 AM we are called for coffee. There we get two slices of bread with butter and marmalade. The most important thing is my pot of coffee. I sit there together with two others for two hours. We exchange words or one of us tells about the misdeeds he committed as a young brat. By that time it is noon. I have no good friends. The food here is loveless, fatless, mostly without taste. The outcome is that it is returned to the kitchen. Nobody cares here. ... Afterwards we rest until 1:30 PM. At 2:00 PM we get coffee and cake. At 5:30 PM we have supper: two pieces of bread, some butter, sausages and occasionally a bowl of herring salad that is sometimes good and other times it must be returned. Afterwards we sit in the hall; the only saving grace is to look at other people on the television. This takes us to 9:30 PM. Only four or five people sit there. That is the end of the day. Then comes blissful sleep. My wish is that it would last forever. Every day is the same.

These photographs at once communicate Kördel’s state of mind and operate as a marker for the photographer’s absence at the nursing home. Their written content oscillates between factual information and the elderly woman’s feelings of unhappiness, insecurity, loneliness and boredom. From them the viewer learns that Kördel longs for Schulze Eldowy’s company and wonders whether the photographer has forgotten her; finds pleasure neither in her living situation nor in the food she consumes; and desires to escape her monotonous life, evident not only through her choice of words, but through her repetitive writing style. At the same time as her words disclose her distressing psychological condition they also reveal her transition from accepting her providence to wanting to fall into

an everlasting slumber. That is, her photographed letters convey her desire to die, and present the viewer with an alternative to the optimism that tended to underlie photographs in the media and state-sponsored exhibitions and photography journals.¹⁴

Despite being in many ways as revealing as their written counterparts, the vulnerability expressed in the images of Kördel's letters does not surface to the same degree in *Tamerlan*'s proceeding photographs. Taken one year apart between 1985 and 1987, the final three images of the series document Kördel after she had been readmitted to the hospital. Similar to the series' opening image, the first of these photographs, *Tamerlan, Berlin, 1985*, presents Kördel as a strong, confident woman once again. Positioned between the photographer and an indistinct background, she stands naked with her arms by her sides and stares unreservedly at the camera. Her appearance is no longer in disarray: her hair is neatly combed to one side and her eyes are accentuated with dark make-up. Bearing a resemblance to the graceful woman who once was, she encourages the viewer not only to return her gaze through her open stance and affable look, but also to observe her unclothed body.

Unfortunately, the confidence expressed by Kördel in *Tamerlan, Berlin, 1985* is not seen in the series' closing photographs. Standing to the left of her subject in both, Schulze Eldowy photographs Kördel amidst the accoutrements of a sterile hospital room; and rather than focusing on her upper body, she includes her entire body or, at the very least, what remains of it in the frame. Distinct from her appearance in *Arteriosclerosis, Berlin, 1981*, in which she is wearing a nightgown, Kördel is now seen lying and then sitting completely naked on her hospital bed with one exception: a bandage that wraps around and binds the wound caused by the amputation of her right leg in *Tamerlan, Berlin, 1986* and her left leg in *Tamerlan, Berlin, 1987*. Looking directly at Schulze Eldowy's camera, a device with which she has now established a candid rapport, she beckons the viewer in both of these photographs to witness her body, to comprehend its deterioration – an act that she assists by placing one arm behind her head as she lays on her back in the former and outspreading both in the latter, not only to steady her body, but also to grant the viewer an expanded view of her emaciated and dismembered form. Compelled to return her forceful gaze, the viewer encounters a body that, despite making visible the inevitable aging process that we all experience, is quite foreign. That is, the viewer is confronted with a naked woman, both elderly and disabled, that had little to no photographic exposure in the GDR.

Although it was acceptable for East German photographers to document the disadvantaged in the context of eliminating social injustice from the late 1950s onwards, images of aged and damaged bodies did not circulate until the 1980s, when Schulze Eldowy and her colleagues Karin Wieckhorst and Renate Zeun, who photographed people suffering from disabilities and cancer, as I will discuss later in this chapter, were permitted to exhibit their work.¹⁵ The same could be

said of photography in the West, where sickly bodies did not have a presence in visual culture until British photographer Jo Spence began to circulate photographs that traced the changes her body had undergone due to her struggle with breast cancer between 1982 and 1986; and American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe took a self-portrait in 1988, two years after being diagnosed with AIDS, that not only pictured his frailty, but also foreshadowed his imminent death.

By photographing Kördel over a period of eight years, Schulze Eldowy simultaneously unveiled a woman who was financially, emotionally and physically impoverished, and a kind of body that had been largely omitted from East Germany's visual culture. Starting in the early 1950s, semi-clad women appeared in advertisements and were quickly followed by nudes in *Das Magazin*. The typical nude in this illustrated monthly 'was female, young, slim, and physically unblemished, lightly tanned, wore little make-up or jewellery, ... was photographed out of doors', and 'was associated with health and strength' rather than blatant sexuality like its Western counterpart at the time.¹⁶ In spite of its association with vitality and health, the nude became an object of desire for men and women alike, and by the mid-1970s it had found its place in the magazines *Die Fotografie* (Photography), *Neues Leben* (New Life) and *Junge Welt* (Young World), as well as at the *Porträtfotoschau der DDR* (East German Portrait Photo Show), the *Berliner Internationale Fotoausstellung* (Berlin's International Photo Exhibition) and the *Fotoschau der DDR* (East German Photo Show). Like its predecessors in *Das Magazin*, nudes in these state-sponsored periodicals and exhibitions were, for the most part, healthy young women with voluptuous attributes placed in natural settings and, as time progressed, in more provocative spaces such as the bedroom. While nude photography in the GDR began to diversify in other ways besides locales to include children as well as male and black bodies around the same time as Schulze Eldowy began her series *Tamerlan*, there was little room for photographs of marginalized or disabled bodies in the genre. The same could be said of East German photography in general.¹⁷ Nevertheless, as I will argue below, Schulze Eldowy was able to exhibit *Tamerlan* along with her other series because photography had acquired a new status in the GDR in the late 1970s, and officials subsequently failed to reach an agreement on the kinds of photography and photographs that should circulate in the 1980s.

East German Photography as Art

In 1977, the same year that Schulze Eldowy began *Berlin in einer Hundennacht*, the medium of photography began to gain significant attention in both Germanys. For the first time, photography had its own section in *documenta 6*, which took place between 24 June and 20 October 1977 in Kassel, and was the subject of the

state-sponsored exhibition *Medium Fotografie* (Medium Photography), which opened on 4 December 1977 at the Galerie Roter Turm in Halle/Saale, and marked a pivotal moment in the history of East German photography. It featured, for example, the work of August Sander, John Heartfield and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy next to that of Arno Fischer, Evelyn Richter and Christian Borchert, and suggested a lineage between the avant-garde of the 1920s and East German photographers.¹⁸ Moreover, the survey of twentieth-century photographers, which was described in its exhibition catalogue by Hermann Raum, vice-president of the Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR (Association of Visual Artists of the GDR, or VBK), as ending 'the old argument about whether photography is a visual art form', drew serious attention to East German art photographers for the first time.¹⁹

Following *Medium Fotografie*, photographers saw the establishment of the Arbeitsgruppe Fotografie (Photography working group) within the VBK in June 1981, and the inclusion of photography in the *IX. Kunstausstellung der DDR* (Ninth National Art Exhibition) in 1982. Established in 1950, and held approximately every four years in Dresden, the exhibition had initially showcased the work of painters, architects, sculptors, and graphic and ceramic artists. In 1982 the exhibition broadened its scope to include the work of the aforementioned East German photographers, together with that of Helga Paris, Ute and Werner Mahler, Barbara Berthold, Roger Melis, Uwe Steinberg and Ulrich Lindner.²⁰ In addition to this exhibition, hundreds of Kulturbund (East German Cultural Association) *kleinen Galerien* (small galleries), underground and private galleries, such as the Kreiskulturhaus Treptow, Gosenschänke, Sophienstraße 8, Galerie P, Galerie Mitte and Galerie Weißer Elefant, either opened or began to exhibit photography for the first time.²¹ Alongside these new exhibition opportunities for East German photographers, international photographers were also increasingly acknowledged and permitted to show their work in the GDR. The CCF, for instance, organized exhibitions on international photographers and often invited them to East Berlin to speak about their photographic practices in the 1980s.²² While visiting the capital, many of these photographers attended gatherings at Fischer and Bergemann's apartment, as mentioned above, and participated in studio critiques at the HGB.²³

Coinciding with photography's new status, the Ministry for Culture asked the Zentrale Kommission Fotografie der DDR (East German Central Commission for Photography, or ZKF) to promote photographic activity by offering amateur and professional photographers stipends ranging from 1,500 to 6,000 DM – those who had been awarded a degree from the HGB were generally given upwards of 4,000 DM.²⁴ Provided by the Culture Fund of the GDR and totalling 100,000 DM per year between 1982 and 1985 and thereafter 80,000 DM per year, state grants allotted by the ZKF, which renamed itself the Gesellschaft für Fotografie (Society for Photography, or GfF) in 1982, benefited numerous

East German photographers.²⁵ One such photographer was Christian Borchert; between 1983 and 1984, he received financial support to advance his series *Familienporträts* (Family Portraits, 1978–1994), and photographed over fifty East German families in the comfort of their homes.²⁶

The importance bestowed upon the medium of photography is not only evident in the state's endorsement of photographers, but also in its concern for collecting photography. In 1983, the VPK requested that Ulrich Domröse, the current curator of photography at the Berlinische Galerie, research photographers and build a 'collection on the photographic history of the GDR'.²⁷ Funded by the Culture Fund of the GDR, this endeavour resulted in the acquisition of nine hundred photographs by Fischer, Richter, Steinberg, Bergemann, Schulze Eldowy, Ursula Arnold, Thomas Florschuetz, Klaus Elle and Michael Scheffer between 1987 and 1989.²⁸ While this body of work was transferred from the Kulturbund to the Berlinische Galerie in 1990, the latter was not the first German institution to house an impressive collection of East German photography: under the direction of curators of photography Ulrich Wallenburg and T.O. Immisch, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Cottbus and the Stiftung Moritzburg in Halle/Saale respectively began to acquire photographs from 1979 and 1987 onwards.²⁹

Had Schulze Eldowy belonged to an earlier generation of East German photographers she would have had very little opportunity to exhibit her work in the GDR. Her negatives would have been, as Domröse describes the countless photographs by East German artists unable to exhibit or publish their work, 'proverbial pictures for the bottom drawer'.³⁰ However, owing to the change in photography's status and to the varied and increasing support offered to photographers following the exhibition *Medium Fotografie*, her work had a high degree of visibility. Five photographs from her series *Berlin in einer Hundennacht* were included in the Ninth National Art Exhibition in 1982.³¹ The following year she was given solo exhibitions at Galerie Sophienstraße 8 and the Akademie der Künste in East Berlin, where photographs of Kördel were presented alongside portraits of her neighbours in Mitte.³² She subsequently showed *Aktporträts*, a controversial cycle that focuses on obese, tattooed, transgender, pregnant and prepubescent bodies, at the Kreiskulturhaus Treptow in 1985.³³ She exhibited *Tamerlan* in the entrance hall of the Eduard-von-Winterstein theatre in Annaberg-Buchholz in 1986 and followed this show with three solo exhibitions: the first was held at the Galerie Junge Kunst in Gera in 1987 and featured *Strassenbild*, *Arbeit*, and *Aktporträts*; the second took place at the Hans Georg Otto clubhouse in Görlitz in 1987 and included *Tamerlan*, *Berlin in einer Hundennacht*, and *Aktporträts*; and the third, which attracted thousands of visitors from all over the GDR, presented the majority of her work to date in East Berlin's Galerie Weißer Elefant in 1988.³⁴ Finally, nine of her photographs from her series *Aktporträts* were included in the Tenth National Art Exhibition, which opened in 1987.³⁵

In addition to gaining exposure through group and solo exhibitions in the GDR, many of which were sponsored by the Kulturbund, her work was featured and discussed in *Die Fotografie*, a specialized photography journal that had served as the mouthpiece of the ZKF/Gff since the organization's founding in 1959. While independent curator John P. Jacob claims that '[East German] artists who produced images too distant from the socialist definition of photography were prohibited from its pages, and thus forced to find refuge for their work in underground galleries and foreign journals', this was not the case for Schulze Eldowy.³⁶ Rather than excluding the photographer from the magazine, which claimed to be 'the voice of the Kulturbund and the Gff', the organization promoted her photographic endeavours on numerous occasions. For instance, after organizing one of her last solo exhibitions in the GDR, it printed the following announcement:

The local representative of the Kulturbund and district executive of the Gff in Görlitz invited [Gundula Schulze Eldowy] to the 'Day of Photography', which took place on 24 November 1987 at the Hans Georg Otto clubhouse.

The Berlin-based photographer Gundula Schulze presented her slide-sound-show 'Tamerlan' – 'Scheunenviertel' – 'Aktfotografie'.

After the show, a lively exchange of ideas took place, questions were asked and participants discussed the pros and cons of her series.

Gundula Schulze confronted this discussion candidly and left no questions unanswered. All in all, a very successful event!³⁷

Appearing in *Die Fotografie* in February 1988, the review alerted readers to three of her series, including *Tamerlan*, and to the unconventional mode in which she presented her work. Like American photographer Nan Goldin, who began to show *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* as a choreographed slideshow accompanied by music in various Manhattan bars and clubs in the late 1970s, Schulze Eldowy used music to set the tone of her exhibition and projected her images onto the walls of the clubhouse. The notice also boasted of the show's overall success: not only were viewers described as being receptive to her work, prompting them to engage in a spirited discussion with the photographer, but Schulze Eldowy was also portrayed as effectively fielding all their questions. The latter was reinforced by a photograph placed beneath the announcement depicting Schulze Eldowy leaning forward while talking to a man who, sitting across from her and mimicking her pose, is seen intently listening to the photographer.

The Variable Treatment of East German Photographers and Photography

Despite promotions in *Die Fotografie* and the numerous exhibition opportunities afforded to Schulze Eldowy, the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry

for State Security, or Stasi) attempted to impede her photographic practice. According to the photographer's Stasi files, which have been carefully examined by curator Matthew Shaul, agents were tasked with disseminating the opinion that her work, considered both 'theatrical and narcissistic', was only concerned with 'negative, superficial impressions of socialist society', and 'presented the contradictions of socialism without providing any proper socioeconomic context'.³⁸ To do so, they would often pose as hecklers and criticize her work during openings and gallery talks. In addition to its effort to tarnish the photographer's image, the Stasi, allegedly convinced that she was working for the CIA, planned to search Schulze Eldowy's apartment and to question her about her relationships, the guests she entertained, and the empty flats in her building.³⁹ According to an operational report dated 9 January 1989, this investigation was to result in 'severe sanctions such as arrest and imprisonment as a result of "the negative attitudes towards the political circumstances in East Germany that she brings to expression in her work"'.⁴⁰ However, due to the political climate in the GDR and the events leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the organization was deterred from carrying out its plans, and Schulze Eldowy avoided incarceration.

The Stasi's desire to imprison Schulze Eldowy at the same time as the state's cultural organizations supported her photographic practice points not only to the inconsistencies in the actions of officials, but also to their inability to determine what kinds of photographs should circulate in the media and state-sponsored publications and exhibitions in the 1980s. On the one hand, the GfF – as photographs included, for example, in the 2. and 3. *Porträtfotoschau der DDR* attest – expected photographers to document men and women working in factories, white-collared workers lecturing, researching, and performing surgeries, athletes competing, students sitting in classrooms, children playing, young lovers and families sharing intimate moments, and politicians attending public events, as had been the case since the late 1950s.⁴¹ On the other hand, the organization also encouraged photographers to explore new subject matter. While the latter is best exemplified by the official support received by Schulze Eldowy, it is also made evident by the photographs printed in *Die Fotografie* in the late 1980s, and shown in the Tenth National Art Exhibition.

In the same issue that included the review of Schulze Eldowy's show in Görlitz, *Die Fotografie* published six photographs from Maria Sewcz's thesis project *inter esse* (1985–1987).⁴² Including over thirty black and white photographs taken during her final years at the HGB, where she trained under Arno Fischer, this series marks a shift from documenting everyday life in the GDR to using photography as a medium of subjective expression. It presents details of street signs, sculptures, famous monuments and unknown interiors, as well as individuals who are frequently blurred by the proximity or movement of the camera, turned away from the photographer, cropped by the photographic frame, and obstructed by objects and animals. One of the photographs published in *Die*



Fig. 10.1: Maria Sewcz, Untitled, from the series *inter esse*, 1985–1987, Courtesy of Maria Sewcz.

Fotografie, for instance, pictures a man standing in the foreground while holding a German Sheppard that has just leapt into his arms and perched itself on his left shoulder, an act made visible by the metal chain trailing in the air behind the animal (Figure 10.1). Taken at night with the use of a flash, the photograph shows the folds and details of the man's trench coat as well as the wrinkles and subtle gradations of the dog's fur. Beyond these particulars, however, little else is familiar in the photograph. With the exception of two triangular shapes in the image's upper left-hand corner that appear to reflect the camera's flash, the background is effaced by darkness, and the identities of the dog and its owner are unknown: the dog's face is cropped at its snout and the man's profile is obscured by the animal and his own long hair that falls loosely around his neck and face. In another photograph, this time taken from a recognizable location, the observation deck of the Berliner Fernsehturm (Berlin TV Tower), Sewcz captures the large shadow cast by the tower's sphere over the buildings and crowds gathered below in Alexanderplatz (Figure 10.2). As in the previous image, elements in the photograph are rendered incomplete: the photographic frame crops both the buildings flanking the shadow and the shadow itself, which is missing its antenna and base. Like all images in the series, this photograph communicates the impossibility of seeing Berlin in its entirety – of seeing its other half, West Berlin – and subtly critiques the state's control over the population's access to information and mobility.



Fig. 10.2: Maria Sewcz, Untitled, from the series *inter esse*, 1985–1987, Courtesy of Maria Sewcz.

Several months after the GFF published photographs from Sewcz's *inter esse* in *Die Fotografie*, the Tenth National Art Exhibition drew attention to individuals previously omitted from the media and state-sponsored exhibitions and publications. In addition to showing nine photographs from Schulze Eldowy's series *Aktporräts*, the exhibition included six photographs from Karin Wieckhorst's series *Regina Reichert* (1981–1985) and eighteen photographs from Renate Zeun's cycle *Betroffen* (*Afflicted*, 1983–1984).⁴³ The former series explores the everyday life of Regina Reichert, a paraplegic living on her own in East Berlin. It shows her getting dressed and bathing herself in the mornings, cleaning her apartment, and enjoying the company of others in various locations throughout the city.⁴⁴ The later series, *Betroffen*, traces the artist's battle with breast cancer. In some ways similar to the work of Jo Spence, it chronicles the passage of time, the notices she received from the hospital, and the changes her body underwent after undergoing a mastectomy in 1984.

While the East German state and its cultural organizations began to actively promote the work of Schulze Eldowy and her colleagues at the HGB in the 1980s, they also, at times and quite capriciously, prohibited the work of rising photographers in the GDR. One well-known example is Helga Paris's series *Häuser und Gesichter* (Houses and Faces), Halle, 1983–1985. In 1983, when Paris's daughter enrolled at the Burg Giebichenstein Hochschule für angewandte Kunst (School of Applied Art) in Halle/Saale, the photographer began to document the

medieval city and its residents. Part of Germany's former Chemical Triangle, the city was home to two large factories, Leuna-Werke and Chemische Werke Buna, and provided jobs and new apartments for thousands of workers and their families between the 1960s and late 1980s. While these factories caused the city to thrive, Paris neither captured Halle/Saale's modern concrete housing towers, many of which were located in Halle-Neustadt, a satellite city located seven kilometres from the old city centre, nor its bustling streets. Instead, she spent her time photographing pedestrians on quiet streets and the city's neglected pre-war architecture, which was heavily stained by soot and often surrounded in a haze of contaminants (Figures 10.3 and 10.4).

Despite calling attention to Halle/Saale's severe pollution problem, Paris's photographs were met with enthusiasm by the VBK. In 1986, the organization decided to sponsor an exhibition of her work at the Galerie Marktschlösschen Halle.⁴⁵ A few weeks before the show's opening, however, on 24 June 1986, after its poster, invitation card and catalogue, which included fifty-six full-page illustrations, had already been printed, local SED officials asked the VBK to postpone the exhibition until the following spring. Their reasoning was that the exhibition gave a 'false impression' of Halle/Saale, and should not coincide with the 1,025th anniversary of the city.⁴⁶

In the months leading up the new exhibition date, several unfavourable events took place. In February 1987, Günter Kuhback, a member of the local



Fig. 10.3: Helga Paris, *Hackebornstrasse* from the series *Häuser und Gesichter*, Halle, 1983–1985, © Helga Paris, Courtesy of Kicken Berlin.



Fig. 10.4: Helga Paris, *Graseweg und Grosse Klausstrasse* from the series *Häuser und Gesichter*, Halle, 1983–1985, © Helga Paris, Courtesy of Kicken Berlin.

cultural committee, argued that Paris's catalogue was still too negative and the VPK was forced to ask contributors to revise their texts – to change descriptions such as 'grey' into 'occasional grey' and 'dark river' into 'rather dark river' – and the photographer to replace sixteen photographs and to rewrite the foreword.⁴⁷ While Paris and her collaborators agreed, the show was postponed again, this time to June 1987, and the cultural committee refused to print the second exhibition catalogue after it was approved by the VPK on 20 May 1987. The SED also decided to stop the second installation of the exhibition and to confiscate all catalogues and posters advertising the show.⁴⁸ Tired from these delays and officials' indecision, Paris demanded the return of her photographs and did not exhibit *Häuser und Gesichter* at the Galerie Marktschlösschen Halle until 1990.⁴⁹

When asked by Matthew Shaul whether she 'thought she had been allowed to photograph the way she did because photography was overlooked as a visual art form', Paris replied:

I experienced the underestimation in Leipzig when a West Berlin publisher put out a book of my work entitled *Women in the GDR*. Helga Schubert from the GDR wrote the text, which had to be submitted to the censor. The photographs, however, were completely ignored. This was very strange, and I completely agree that in this sense photography was often underestimated. But I am not even sure if I consider myself a critical photographer. Had I really approached everything with a cutting critical lens, then I would have taken different photographs. My interest at heart was always to document the simple way in which people lived in their everyday environment.

I also experienced overestimation of photography: when *Halle: Häuser und Gesichter* was published, there was a hysterical reaction and it was withdrawn. I think this was the first time the city's administrators realized how dangerous photography was to them. The exhibition was also withdrawn, but it wasn't forbidden everywhere. I was able to show it elsewhere in the GDR, but in Halle those who were responsible for the decay of the city felt threatened. They were rather simple characters, but highly sensitive to being criticized. The photographs showed the neglect in black and white. If it had been exhibited, some might have complained about the state of the city, but it wouldn't have had the incredible amount of attention it achieved because of the ban. It even reached the magazine *ZK*.⁵⁰

Paris's response highlights – as do the actions of those involved in sponsoring, postponing and cancelling her exhibition in Halle/Saale – the variable treatment of East German photographers and photography in the 1980s. Moreover, it underscores officials' inability to determine what kinds of images were worth looking at after photography had secured its place alongside the traditional visual arts in the GDR.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, officials' indecision on what East Germans had, to borrow from Sontag, 'the right to observe', created an opening for many photographers in the 1980s. Artists who would have been sanctioned by the state,

or whose work would have been relegated to either the ‘bottom drawer’ or underground and pop-up galleries in the 1970s, were now able to circulate their images in major art exhibitions, specialized photography publications, *kleinen Galerien* and private galleries. In the case of Schulze Eldowy, an artist who became increasingly aware of the discrepancy between mainstream imagery and the everyday lives of East Berliners and who was determined to bring attention to this rift, the state and its cultural organizations’ lack of consensus allowed her to widely disseminate her series and to diversify East Germany’s visual culture. Drawn to individuals who had been underrepresented in the media and state-sponsored endeavours for over thirty years, Schulze Eldowy used her camera to demonstrate that the GDR was not simply composed of happy, healthy and successful citizens contributing to and benefiting from their socialist society (as the state, in many ways, still desired), but also of individuals living on the margins of society.

Candice M. Hamelin received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Her dissertation, ‘Behind Immaterial and Material Divides: East German Photography, 1949–1989’, challenges the labels ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ East German photography, arguing that these qualifiers have little value in identifying the different kinds of photography and photographic practices that developed in the GDR. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin where she is researching East German photography in the 1980s. She has been the recipient of various grants and fellowships, including the University of Michigan’s Institute for the Humanities Fellowship and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship.

Notes

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1. Gundula Schulze Eldowy, ‘Im Herbstlaub des Vergessens’, in *Berlin in einer Hundenacht: Fotografien 1977–1990* (Leipzig: Lehmstedt, 2011), 17.
2. Ibid. Emphasis added.
3. On East German photographers and photographic practices, see Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Jana Duda et al., *Geschlossene Gesellschaft: künstlerische Fotografie in der DDR 1949–1989* (Bielefeld and Berlin: Kerber, 2012); Nicola Freeman and Matthew Shaul, *Do Not Refreeze: Photography behind the Berlin Wall* (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2007); Norbert Moos (ed.), *Utopie und Wirklichkeit: ostdeutsche Fotografie, 1956–1989* (Bönen: Druck Verlag Kettler,

- 2005); Matthias Flügge et al., *Foto-Anschlag: vier Generationen ostdeutscher Fotografen* (Leipzig: Seemann, 2001); Karl Gernot Kuehn, *Caught: The Art of Photography in the German Democratic Republic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Ulrich Dörmrose, *Nichts ist so wie es scheint: Ostdeutsche Fotografie, 1945–1989* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur, 1992).
4. Some of these exhibitions and publications included the *Berliner Internationale Fotoausstellung* (Berlin's International Photography Exhibition), the *Fotoschau der DDR* (Photo Show of the GDR), the *Porträtfotoschau der DDR* (Portrait Photo Show of the GDR), and *Die Fotografie* (Photography), the only state-authorized photography journal to feature the work of both professional and amateur photographers in the Eastern Bloc and abroad.
 5. I have been unable to secure the rights to Gundula Schulze Eldowy's photographs, and must guide the reader to her website, <http://www.berlin-ineinerhundenacht.de>, to view the series discussed in the next two sections of this chapter.
 6. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador USA; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 34. On Arbus's influence on Schulze Eldowy's practice, see Schulze Eldowy, 'The Times are Fleeing from the Memories', in *The Big and the Little Step: Photographs 1982–1990* (Leipzig: Lehmstedt, 2011), 13; and Josie McLellan, 'Visual Dangers and Delights: Nude Photography in East Germany', *Past and Present* 205 (November 2009), 168.
 7. On the history of the HGB and its photography department, see Peter Pachnicke, 'Aufgaben, Struktur und Traditionslinien der Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst', in *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig, 1945–1989* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1989), 16–25; and Kai Uwe Schierz, 'Die andere Leipziger Schule', in Susanne Knorr and Kai Uwe Schierz (eds), *Die andere Leipziger Schule: Fotografie in der DDR* (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2009), 6–16.
 8. Photography students at the HGB were also made aware of the work of countless other photographers through books obtained from contacts in the West and the Deutsche Bücherei, a copyright library in Leipzig that obtained all German publications. For more, see Jana Duda, 'From the Family of Man to Waffenruhe: International Influences on Photography in the GDR', in Duda et al., *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, 316–17. On the gallery at the HGB, which was founded in 1979 with the support of the minister of culture, Dr Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, and its exhibitions, see Christine Rink, 'Galerie der Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst', in *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig*, 50–51.
 9. Arno Fischer, in interview with Candice Hamelin on 12 July 2011 in Gransee, Germany; Jutta Voight, 'Der Mann, der auf den Bus wartet', in Klaus E Göltz, T.O. Immisch, Andreas Krase and Jutta Voigt (eds), *Arno Fischer: Photographien* (Leipzig: Connnewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1997), 10; Matthew Shaul, 'The Impossibility of Socialist Realism: Photographer Gundula Schulze Eldowy and the East German Stasi', in Outi Remes and Pam Skelton (eds), *Conspiracy Dwelling: Surveillance in Contemporary Art* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 20; and Duda, 'From the Family of Man to Waffenruhe', 318 fn. 24.
 10. Schulze Eldowy, *Berlin in einer Hundenacht*, 24.
 11. For a full account of their conversation, see *ibid.*, 195–97.
 12. Schulze Eldowy was not alone when she shifted her practice, in part, from the streets to interiors. West and East German photographers alike, including Christian Borcherdt, Herlinde Koelbl, Margit Emmrich, Ute Mahler and Bernd Lasdin, began to photograph everyday Germans in their homes around the same time. On this trend, see Paul Betts, 'Picturing Privacy: Photography and Domesticity', in *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 193–226; and Kuehn, *Caught*, 108–12.
 13. Betts, 'Picturing Privacy', 208.
 14. On this optimism, see Stefan Wolle, 'The Smiling Face of Dictatorship: On the Political Iconography of the GDR', in Klaus Honneth, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (eds), *German Photography 1870–1970* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 127–38.

15. Karin Wieckhorst photographed the debilitated in her series *Regina Reichert* (1981–1985) and *Disabled* (1985); while Renate Zeun captured cancer patients, herself included, in *Afflicted* (1984), *Station Five* (1986), and *Mrs Anneliese St. – Clinic for Oncology* (1987). On their work, see Gabriele Muschter, *DDR Frauen fotografieren: Lexikon und Anthologie* (Berlin: Ex-pose-Verlag, 1991), 166–67 and 170–73.
16. Josie McLellan, ‘Even Under Socialism, We Don’t Want to Do Without Love’: East German Erotica’, in David Crowley and Susan Reid (eds), *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 225. Nude photographs were not simply related to sex and gender; they also highlighted concerns about race, health, nature, work and poverty. By the latter half of the 1970s there was little distinction between Eastern and Western nudes, as many publications in the GDR had access to and borrowed from *Playboy*. On this, see McLellan, ‘Visual Dangers and Delights’, 145 and 153.
17. Nude photography also began to diversify in the United States around the same time owing to the work of Robert Mapplethorpe. Having first received notoriety for his collages that incorporated images from pornographic magazines in the early 1970s, the American photographer spent the latter part of the 1970s and much of the 1980s taking photographs of nude black male models, exploring homosexual culture and iconography and, in general, pushing the boundaries of photography. On Mapplethorpe’s photographic practice, see Janet Kardon, *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1990); Richard Marshall, *Robert Mapplethorpe* (New York: Secker & Warburg, 1988); and Arthur C. Danto, *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).
18. For a full list of photographers and works featured in the exhibition, see Andreas Hünemeier et al., *Medium Fotografie* (Leipzig: Fotokinoverlag, 1979), 110.
19. Hermann Raum, ‘Medium Fotografie und Kunstwissenschaft: von einer Ausstellung angeregte Gedanken eines Kunsthistorikers’, in Hünemeier et al., *Medium Fotografie*, 12.
20. For a list of photographers and works featured in the exhibition, see Erhard Frommhold et al., *IX. Kunstausstellung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Ministerium für Kultur; Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR, 1982), 440–48.
21. The number of *kleinen Galerien* rose from 121 to around 500 between the mid-1970s and late 1980s. On these galleries and how they operated in the GDR, see Flügge et al., *Foto-Anschlag*, 145; and Yvonne Fiedler, *Kunst im Korridor: private Galerien in der DDR zwischen Autonomie und Illegalität* (Berlin: Links, 2013).
22. For a full list of artists who exhibited their work at the CCF in the 1980s, see Duda, ‘From the Family of Man to Waffenruhe’, 318 and fn. 24.
23. Arno Fischer, in interview with Candice Hamelin on 12 July 2011 in Gransee, Germany.
24. Inka Schube, ‘Im Auftrag des Staates: Die Gesellschaft für Fotografie im Kulturbund der DDR: Ein potent-impotentes Allmachtsystem der 1980er Jahre’, in *Fotogeschichte* 102 (Winter 2006), 25 and 27.
25. Funds were allocated by a working committee within the GfF, which consisted of Gerhard Mertink, federal secretary of the GfF, Peter Pachnicke, head of the Department of Photography at the HGB, and Roger Melis, photographer and head of the VBK’s Arbeitsgruppe Fotografie.
26. T.O. Immisch, ‘Familien – ein sozialdokumentarisches Projekt’, in *Fotografie* 12 (1988), 442. On the kinds of projects funded by the GfF, see Schube, ‘Im Auftrag des Staates’, 26 and fn. 18.
27. Domröse, *Nichts ist so wie es scheint*, 9.
28. Ibid., 7; Thomas Köhler, ‘Preface’, in *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, 342.
29. Brigitte Franzen, ‘Eros and Stasi: East German Photography’, in *Eros und Stasi: ostdeutsche Fotografie* (Heidelberg and Berlin: Kehrer, 2011), 16.

30. Domröse, 'Reality, Engagement, Critique', in *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, 300.
31. For a full list of jury members, see Frommhold et al., *IX. Kunstaustellung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 9.
32. Friedegund Weidemann and Gundula Schulze Eldowy, *Gundula Schulze: Waldo's Schatten; Photographien aus dem Jahre 1990* (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1991), 20.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. See Peter Pachnicke et al., *X. Kunstaustellung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Ministerium für Kultur; Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR, 1987), 536; Schulze Eldowy also participated in exhibitions in France, Switzerland and the United States in the 1980s. On this, see Weidemann and Schulze Eldowy, *Gundula Schulze*, 20; and Irina Liebmann et al., *Gundula Schulze el Dowy: das weiche Fleisch kennt die Zeit noch nicht* (Berlin: Galerie Pankow, 1993), 60.
36. John P. Jacob, *Recollecting a Culture: Photography and the Evolution of a Socialist Aesthetic in East Germany* (Boston, MA: Photographic Resource Center at Boston University, 1998), 8.
37. ZKF, 'Mitteilungsplatt 2/1988', in *Fotografie* 2 (1988), unpaginated.
38. Shaul, 'The Impossibility of Socialist Realism', 29.
39. Ibid., 31.
40. Stasi, operational report (Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der Ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik), Berlin, 9 January 1989, quoted in ibid., 31–32.
41. On these exhibitions, see Zentrale Kommission Fotografie der DDR, 2. *Porträtfotoschau der DDR* (Berlin, 1981); and Gesellschaft für Fotografie, 3. *Porträtfotoschau der DDR* (Berlin, 1986).
42. In addition to gaining exposure through *Die Fotografie*, Sewcz's series was included in: 'Fotografinnen' at Fotogalerie Berlin in 1985; 'Junge Fotografen der 80er Jahre' at Galerie Mitte in Dresden, Galerie Oben in Karl-Marx Stadt, and the Kulturhistorisches Museum in Stralsund in 1985 and 1986; and 'Junge Berliner Fotografen' at the Haus der jungen Talente in Berlin in 1987.
43. On the photographers included in this exhibition, see Pachnicke, *X. Kunstaustellung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 402–24 and 534–37.
44. Wieckhorst's series *Regina Reichert* was first shown in the 3. *Porträtfotoschau der DDR*, which took place 11–27 April 1986 at Fucikplatz in Dresden, and 11 July – 2 August 1986 at the Fernsehturm in Berlin.
45. Helmut Brade, 'Vorwort, 15 Jahre Später', in *Diva in Grau: Häuser und Gesichter in Halle* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2006), 5.
46. Bernd Lindner, 'Ein Land – zwei Bildwelten: Fotografie und Öffentlichkeit in der DDR', in Karin Hartewig and Alf Lüdtke (eds), *Die DDR im Bild: zum Gebrauch der Fotografie im anderen deutschen Staat* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 198; and Helmut Brade, 'Häuser und Gesichter: Halle 1983–85', in Inka Schube (ed), *Helga Paris: Fotografien: Photographs* (Berlin: Holzwarth, 2004), 286.
47. Brade, 'Häuser und Gesichter: Halle 1983–85', 286.
48. For a detailed account of these events and the letters exchanged between Helga Paris and Wille Sitte (the President of the VDK), Günter Kuhback (member of the SED), Günter Gnauck (member of the VDK district board in Halle), and Hans-Joachim Böhme (member of the SED), see Lindner, 'Ein Land – zwei Bildwelten', 198–202.
49. The exhibition finally took place between 16 January and 2 February 1990.
50. Paris quoted in Shaul, *Do Not Refreeze*, 59.

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Chapter 11

THE INTIMACY OF REVOLUTION

1989 in Pictures

Paul Betts



For all of the commentary on the events in Germany in the autumn of 1989, there is surprisingly little literature on the photographic history of that revolutionary season. In recent years there has been a wave of pioneering studies on East German photography, showing how this cultural practice occupied a unique role within East German culture more generally.¹ Comparatively scant photographic attention, however, has been paid to the upheavals of 1989. At first this may strike the reader as odd and counter-intuitive, not least because dramatic pictures of East Germans pouring through the breached Berlin Wall on 9 November, dismantling the hated ‘anti-fascist bulwark’ with pickaxes and sledge hammers, or celebrating atop the Wall itself in a feverish fête of German–German solidarity are some of the most emblematic images of that *annus mirabilis*. Yet the global diffusion of televised images of the symbolic end of the Cold War order was really an effect of the unscripted tumult of 9 November, not before. In recent years a number of scholars have argued for the decisive importance of television – in particular West German television – in influencing the developments of 1989.² But its importance is often exaggerated, as televised media images did not drive events in the run-up to 9 November, especially for those who elected to stay in the country. The prelude to that transformative November moment in the capital was captured much less frequently outside of Berlin, even in Leipzig, the epicentre of the opposition movement. While there is growing academic interest in a ‘global 1989’,³ the local representation of the struggle is no less significant.

This chapter returns attention to the photographic account of the protests in Leipzig, the GDR’s second largest city, in the autumn of 1989 by reconsidering one of the classic chronicles of the famed Monday demonstrations, *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage*, a book assembled, edited

Notes from this chapter begin on page 270.

and published in 1990 by the Leipzig historian Wolfgang Schneider. It was timed to come out on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Leipzig uprising in 1990, and for this reason was conceived as a historical intervention into the fast-changing political situation in the country. Schneider's scrapbook was the first time that dispersed photographs of the Leipzig protests appeared together, documenting the unlikely triumph of People Power from which the spectre of reunification fitfully arose, and it made clear that Leipzig 1989 was not necessarily linked to Berlin 1990. His book was thus at once the first photographic account of Leipzig's 'October Revolution' and a revisionist history of the ongoing drama of reunification. What follows is an analysis of several images of 1989 from Schneider's photobook, with a view towards how these Leipzig photographers willy-nilly helped to create a new 'ethics of seeing' for themselves and the reform movement.

On the face of it the legendary 'Leipzig Autumn' was made up of a series of weekly protest marches originating in the Nikolaikirche in East Leipzig, but it was much more besides. The book's subtitle cleverly encompassed the multiple meanings inherent in the word *Demontagebuch* itself – *Demo*, *Montag*, *Tagebuch* and *Demontage*, or Demonstration, Monday, Diary and Dismantling. The play on words underlined how the book was both a photographic chronicle of the Monday marches and a civic *Bildungsroman* of sorts, as well as a testament to the implosion of a once formidable state. It reproduced photos from a number of Leipzig photographers, both amateur and professional; included too was a log of events compiled by Schneider along with reflections by West German sociologist Bernd Lindner and public opinion experts Günter Roski and Peter Förster. Schneider himself died in 2003, and there is no material available to investigate how or why these images were selected or organized. Nonetheless, no source better captured the chaotic and monumental spirit of what is often described as the only peaceful revolution in German history; and the photobook – including its post-1989 rendering – serves as a unique case study of how clandestine private photographs were converted into public memory-making.

The photobook fits uneasily into either the tradition of protest iconography, or the GDR's own visual culture, as civic mobilization is more commonly associated with France, Poland, Hungary and even West Germany. After the explosive two-day uprising in June 1953, marches in the GDR were all but restricted to 1 May, and the annual military parade in East Berlin every 7 October. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Leipzig played host to an embryonic oppositional movement in the late 1980s, and between September 1987 and September 1989 there were no less than thirty-five demonstrations held in the provincial university town, all of which originated from the 'peace prayers' held at the St Nicholas Church on Mondays.⁴ In fact, Deacon Günter Johannsen had been regularly organizing the Monday prayer meetings at the Nikolaikirche since 1982. During the Leipzig Trade Fair in March 1989 several hundred demonstrators carried

posters for travel rights, after which it was broken up by police.⁵ Protesters clashed with police again on 4 June, and numerous arrests were made.⁶ That year Leipzig had already become a city of protest unique in the GDR, but the situation that autumn was something altogether different. Over the course of the summer things had cooled down to the point that the GDR contributed little to the outbreak of reform activities and protests that swept across other countries in the Eastern bloc during that fateful summer. But things were changing by early September. West German television teams on hand at the Leipzig Trade Fair filmed the gathering of several hundred demonstrators, and broadcast the footage on West German television; more unsettling for the regime was the flood of East German refugees making their way to Hungary. Even if the barbed wire along the Austria–Hungary border had been symbolically cut on 27 June amid Western media fanfare, the tide of East German citizens making their way to the Hungarian border (or to the West German embassies in Budapest and Prague for asylum) was growing by the day – an exodus estimated at around twenty-three thousand by the end of September. The full removal of the Iron Curtain by the Hungarian government on 10 September changed everything. Now the refugee crisis was gaining more and more media attention, and not just in the West, as the GDR's leading news television programme, *Aktuelle Kamera*, began to cover the events, albeit with Stasi spin about Western espionage and media provocation.⁷ The legitimacy of the regime was under attack as never before. This first protest wave was thus not street demonstrations but rather a mass exodus, whereby East Germans increasingly chose 'exit' over 'voice' in the first instance.

Schneider's book chronicled the protests and the activities of those who wished to reform the GDR state and society. By late September the swelling number of émigrés exerted a galvanizing effect on the *Dableiber*, especially in Leipzig, and they began to agitate for fundamental reforms. Demonstrators were vilified in the local and national press as unruly troublemakers and 'provocative' disturbers of public order and propriety. Protesters were tarred as '*jugendliche Rowdys*', '*Randalierer*', '*Unruhestifter*' as well as '*gewissenlose Elemente*', and the demonstrations themselves were condemned as nothing more than '*die neuerliche Zusammenrottung mit eindeutig antisozialistischer Tendenz*'.⁸ It is worth noting that protesters were typically denounced in the press for upsetting 'public order' (*öffentliche Ordnung*), reflecting the regime's guiding assumption that what GDR citizens wanted above all was orderly peace and quiet, not change.⁹ In the book, Schneider provided a number of snippets from local and national press about the protests; however, they were inserted less to challenge the state's monopoly of information (something unthinkable at that point in 1989), but rather to show that the state's media coverage was not uniformly condemnatory, for some articles (especially in the Leipzig press) took the protesters' calls for reform seriously. Even so, the press material in the book is there to provide a factual public record of events for those who had lived in a regime that routinely suppressed

information and sanitized public memory to serve state ends, with the 1953 Uprising as the supreme example. In this sense, the book betrayed a discernible belief in the power of verisimilitude (both in word and image) to defy state authority, especially one that was capable of making $1+1=3$, both politically and visually.

The uniqueness of Schneider's book is underscored by the fact that the early Leipzig protests were afforded little visual record in the GDR mass media, particularly in the national party newspapers. The September and October 'peace prayer' protests – which grew from 15,000 to 200,000 people weekly – enjoyed barely any photographic representation. Much of this had to do with the fact that those attempting to take photos were usually arrested, or had their cameras taken from them.¹⁰ This is precisely why Schneider's *Demontage* book was so important and subversive, in that those involved wanted to leave a visual archive of what had happened, and to record how politics and the people changed with every weekly protest rally. At this stage in the events, word of mouth – and not media imagery – was still the main mode of communication and community-building. And given the long-standing taboo zones of East German photography in the GDR (e.g. the Wall, checkpoints, military installations, the police, visiting relatives at train stations, or any negative images of the regime)¹¹ and the fact that the SED-run newspapers carried no visual imagery of the Leipzig demonstrations, these photos become manifestations of civic risk and political *communitas*, depicting a new sensibility of people unafraid to be counted (or photographed) as disgruntled citizens.

What is also striking about these photos is the way that they presented the concerns and self-perception of the actors themselves. For example, the opening section of the *Demontagebuch* is dominated by the preoccupation with the police. The first photograph of the book shows riot police blocking a street during the modest 18 September rally on Karl-Marx Platz, and others depict the police setting up additional surveillance cameras atop the university bookstore (p. 20) during the 2 October rally; another image from the 23 October rally features protesters anxiously looking up at surveillance cameras (p. 62), capturing their fears about the stepped-up security measures being taken by the state. Demonstrators on hand at the 4 October protest described the feeling of being overwhelmed by police presence; rubber bullets were reported to have been fired, and police were recorded as screaming '*Schämt Euch was!*' (Shame on you!) and '*Geht nach Hause!*' (Go Home!) in the face of street demonstrators.¹² Often the police are pictured aggressively arrayed in formation to defend the regime against the 'rowdys' and 'disturbers of the peace', or chasing and even manhandling peaceful demonstrators. There are few close-ups of the protesters, as the crowds and faces often appear out of focus and haphazard. This representational style captures the clandestine nature of the photographs as well as the disinclination of photographers to fix too much attention on specific people, lest individual

protesters could be easily identified by the police if the camera were confiscated. What close-up portraits existed tended to be of the agitated riot police. But these too are often blurry and amateurish, attesting to the dangerous nature of documenting the police on camera, especially during moments of political unrest. Such subject matter for protests may not seem all that unique, given that photographing hostile state power in the face of civil rights rallies has long been standard in visual histories of protest movements internationally, ranging from CND anti-nuclear demonstrations in Great Britain to the socialist uprisings in East Berlin in 1953, Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968; and from the civil rights movement in the American South to the global agitation of 1968 through to the more recent uprisings of the Arab Spring.¹³ What is distinctive here is that photographs of social unrest were strictly taboo in the GDR at this time, subject to criminal prosecution. The SED not only controlled all media across the GDR, but also enforced a strict visual regime in the name of security, public order and blanket surveillance.¹⁴ The sheer act of photographing the police in these dangerous circumstances itself represented a breach of the old order.

Schneider's book conveys just how small and chaotic these early September rallies were. On hand were a few hundred people, no placards, and participants sang 'We Shall Overcome' and the *Internationale*, combining elements of both resistance traditions – the church and the proletariat. At the 4 September rally the opposition was split between those advocating 'We Want Out!' and those proclaiming 'We're Staying!' Exiting the country was no doubt an act of anti-SED resistance, but so too the declaration to stay had become a rallying cry for fundamental reform. Amid the chaos the opposition held together, and oppositional leaders announced the foundation of Neues Forum on 9 September. Those who wanted to go often did so after the news of the border opening on 10 September, thus concentrating the minds of those who remained to push forward with reforms.¹⁵ On 25 September, participants brought megaphones, chanting '*Freiheit*' (Freedom) and '*Neues Forum zulassen*' (Support the New Forum). The 2 October rally swelled to over twenty thousand people, and was the biggest oppositional demonstration since 17 June 1953.¹⁶ Accompanying the growing movement was the new chant of '*Jetzt oder Nie – Demokratie!*' (Now or never, democracy!) and 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!', drawing an explicit parallel to the French Revolution, whose bicentennial was being celebrated across Europe early that summer. While reference to the spirit of 1789 was often made, so too was the October Revolution in Russia, as history was invoked as ballast and meaning in the struggle. Later placards (specifically at the 6 November rally) proclaimed '*Es lebe der Prager Frühling!*' (Long live the Prague Spring!). By contrast, 1848 – a key European moment that fused the relationship between crowds and power across Europe – provided no historical resonance for the Leipziger. But what was crucial for many in framing the meaning of the rallies was Christianity, and this dimension was accentuated throughout Schneider's book. The Nikolaikirche's

pastor, Friedrich Magirius, was Superintendent des Kirchenbezirkes Leipzig-Ost, and he played a critical role both in helping to organize the marches and insisting on their peaceful tone – the slogan ‘*Keine Gewalt!*’ (No violence!) was the movement’s initial rallying cry in the face of state power. Magirius made no bones of his belief that the reform impulse was driven by young people who wished to break free from the false comforts of the ‘niche society’ and its coercive outward conformity by ‘putting an end to this alienation’ once and for all.¹⁷ Observers widely admitted that the church’s ‘*Keine Gewalt!*’ slogan served as the ‘*Solidarisierung der Gemeinschaft gegen Spitzel*’, the pivot point of ‘*das Gespräch in der Gemeinschaft, der Dialog*'.¹⁸ The processional style of the protests also came out of the church tradition, as solemnly marching citizens brandishing ‘peace candles’ remained the visual signature of the Leipzig Autumn.

A crucial day for the movement was 7 October, as the GDR was celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the socialist republic to characteristic staged fanfare, with Gorbachev on hand to mark the occasion. A great deal of state pomp and circumstance had been carefully choreographed to showcase the historical achievements of the GDR, as well as to steady the nerves of the regime in the face of growing citizen discontent (and exodus) after the borders between Austria and Hungary had been lifted by Hungarian authorities a month before. It was on this occasion that a visibly vexed Gorbachev supposedly uttered his fateful words to Honecker that ‘life will punish those who arrive too late’. But even if Berlin put on a good appearance for the capital’s national anniversary celebration, the facade was crumbling. Over one thousand demonstrators were arrested in Berlin, and another two hundred in Leipzig, with protests erupting in six other East German cities as well. The violence and chaos in Berlin was filmed and broadcast by Western media.¹⁹ This was not the case in Leipzig, where although the atmosphere was equally tense, photographing the events was highly risky. Extra video cameras had been mounted by the state atop local buildings, adding to the feeling of surveillance and danger, and citizens knew that this footage would be used to intimidate, incriminate and blackmail participants. East German photographer Martin Naumann recalled his own anxiety about being seen taking photos – the police might take him for a Western agent, while fellow demonstrators might see him as a Stasi informant. People were suspicious of Naumann’s camera and he was warned by several people to be very careful, because some with cameras had been arrested and taken away by the police.²⁰ Nevertheless, he and others ventured to photograph the events anyway.

The *Demontagebuch* pictures of the 7 October rally again focused predominantly on police power, in the form of armed riot police equipped with water cannons, shields and dogs; some even showed police carrying off several protesters. What the images also convey is the chaos of the demonstration, with visible tension in the faces of police and protesters alike. Figure 11.1, taken by Tobias Rossa, encapsulates this fraught atmosphere, as it depicts frightened and panicky



Fig. 11.1: 'Leipzig street demonstration, 7 October 1989', in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 25. Photograph: Tobias Rossa.

citizens running in different directions, with ominous police vans looming behind them. Significantly no placards are visible at this stage in the movement, as carrying signs or posters would draw easy attention to 'criminal elements' observed by security forces or filmed by Stasi surveillance cameras. Instead, messages of discontent were expressed in the non-visual forms of song and chant, as protesters shouted 'No Violence!' and 'Gorbi, Gorbi!' For the photographers the objective was to record the abuse of state power on camera as an act of irrefutable documentation, even if these pictures could not be published anywhere. Such an 'ethic of seeing' was a corollary to what Havel had called 'living in truth'. The demonstration itself was only given a few short sentences in the local and national newspapers, with no pictures or mention of New Forum at all.

The 9 October 'Monday march' was the decisive turning point. Once the anniversary's formalities and nervous truce between government and governed had finished after Gorbachev's departure from Berlin, the regime geared up for a massive confrontation with citizens two days later in Leipzig. This time the SED took no chances, and deployed no less than twenty-eight riot police battalions and numerous auxiliary army units to intimidate the protesters. The Stasi was deployed along the parade route armed with water cannon, tear gas and live ammunition, and instructions were supposedly given to local hospitals to keep

extra doctors and fresh supplies of blood plasma on hand for what they anticipated would be a serious clash with citizens. There was widespread apprehension that Honecker would opt for a ‘Chinese solution’ in reference to Beijing’s brutal suppression of Chinese demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.²¹ After all, the SED’s party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, stated on the day after the Tiananmen Square massacre that such a crackdown was a necessary response to the ‘counter-revolutionary uprising of an extreme minority’.²² Just before the planned 9 October protest, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* ominously warned that ‘law and order would be restored once and for all’, by use of force if necessary.²³ Yet this in no way deterred the opposition, as they turned out in droves, estimated at seventy thousand people. ‘Gorbimania’ was still very popular at this stage, and pleading to Gorbachev reflected the common view that the best chance of reform was to appeal directly to the Soviet premier. The church’s uncompromising insistence on non-violence in the face of the state’s visible threat of violence steeled resolve and gave the protesters the moral high ground. As noted in Schneider’s photobook, this time the procession was much more orderly and confident, though there were few posters on display. But those that did appear were not shy in directing criticism at the country’s leaders – mainly Honecker, Krenz, and Leipzig mayor Bernd Seidel.

No less conspicuous was that fear in the faces of the protesters was much less apparent. The old chants of ‘No Violence’ and ‘Gorbi, Gorbi’ were accompanied by new ones. The first was ‘*Wir bleiben hier!*’ (We are staying here!), which was in stark contrast to the ‘*Wir wollen raus!*’ (We want out!) calls that characterized the September rallies.²⁴ After the slashing of the Iron Curtain on 10 September, East Germans were leaving the country in large numbers. Much has been written about the role of these émigrés in effecting a symbolic break from the old order, voting with their feet in a kind of demographic plebiscite that dramatically undermined the legitimacy of the state.²⁵ However, one could argue that those who insisted on staying put and changing things at home were more dangerous to the regime. The second new chant that made its debut at the 9 October rally was ‘*Wir sind das Volk*’, or ‘We are the people’. Such a simple sounding parole was actually quite a subversive critique of the SED, reflecting the desperate desire on the part of the people to be included in the political process. As such they were calling attention to the SED’s home-grown democratic deficit. More devastating was the implication that the opposition had now wrested the concept of ‘the people’ from the SED, and claimed it as their own.²⁶ This was the GDR’s ‘What is the Third Estate?’ moment, as moral and political legitimacy now shifted to their side. The swelling number of supporters added to this new feeling of fearlessness and even entitlement. Jens Reich, one of the founders of Neues Forum, later remarked that it was the new sense of having lost their fear that prompted more and more citizens to take to the streets in protest.²⁷ But it was the peaceful outcome that was the real surprise for many people, including the participants.



Fig. 11.2: 'Leipzig street demonstration, 9 October 1989', in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 45. Photograph: Martin Naumann.

That Honecker did not order a 'Chinese solution' to the protest rally was a huge relief and even a source of bewilderment, as his draconian inclination was supposedly rebuffed by Central Committee members and local police. Not for nothing was the day christened the 'miracle of Leipzig'.

The secret photographs reprinted in Schneider's book from the 9 October rally mark this change of fortunes. Figure 11.2 (photo taken by Martin Naumann) shows the magnitude of people walking in a peaceful, orderly procession down Grimmaische Strasse, bespeaking a new belief and confidence among the marchers. However, we should remember that images of this key demonstration are actually quite rare. In large measure this was because the SED anticipated that there would be problems. This meant not only the deployment of additional security forces on the ground, but also extra Stasi agents and cameras to identify troublemakers. SED control of the event extended to the media, as all foreign journalists were barred from covering the protest. The SED had learned its lessons from the past: the March 1989 Leipzig demonstration for travel rights was crushed by the police, and was filmed by Western cameras on hand, to the great chagrin of the SED authorities.²⁸ The small 4 September protest was marred by the secret police ripping up one banner that demanded 'We want to leave!' The episode was captured on camera by Western journalists visiting the Leipzig Trade

Fair at the time.²⁹ Western photographers also chronicled the flood of GDR refugees amassing outside the West German embassies in Prague, Budapest and Vienna. Inside the GDR things were different, as the media blackout of the protests was enforced as strictly as possible.

But where other rallies were only photographed surreptitiously – and more for private documentation than public distribution, let alone international consumption – this all changed with the 9 October protest. The imposed media blackout of the rally was broken by the efforts of two clandestine East German photographers, Aram Radomski and Siegbert Schefke, who managed to scale a church tower to take aerial film footage of the rally. They then passed the film rolls on to the West German television station, ARD, for broadcast the next day. The effect was electric, and was immediately hailed as a huge victory for the opposition in showing the world the scale of events happening in Leipzig.³⁰ However, the SED's media control within the GDR remained unchanged, and were controlled even more so: images of the rally were forbidden from being published, as the Stasi exerted redoubled pressure on newspaper editors to toe the line.³¹ The demonstration itself was consigned to a few lines on the back pages of the SED-controlled newspapers, along with a radically reduced estimate of participants.

By the 16 October protest, the changed atmosphere was discernible in the photographic representations. The size of the crowd was still a favourite theme of documentation, but now emphasis shifted to relative close-ups of the participants themselves, in clear contrast to the photographic coverage of the September rallies. Figure 11.3 (by Harald Hirsch) shows a 'New Forum' human chain being formed in front of the Stasi 'Runde Ecke' Building at the 23 October protest march, framed by the ever-present peace candles in the background. Figure 11.4 (by Armin Kühne) shows a group of jubilant protesters marching with their church-given peace candles, in both cases wholly unafraid to be photographed. Notably, the photos do not seek to identify leaders or heroes, but rather were more interested in celebrating the civic courage of ordinary people moved to resist SED arrogance and misrule. The early demos were small and scattered, whose solidarity was born in collective voice, mostly in the form of chants of '*'Wir wollen raus!*' (We want out!) and '*'Stasi raus!*' (Stasi out!). By the 9 October rally the citizens were proud to have stayed and were fighting for a better GDR, and the photos of subsequent rallies show this change of sensibility. The protesters themselves were generally under forty-five years old, many of them students, and usually residents of the city. The majority of them were male, at least at the first rallies, and most had participated in other Monday marches already. But the demographic dimension of the protesters changed with time, as more women joined the marches over the course of October, which is evident in the photographs. On display in the photos after the 9 October breakthrough was a pronounced sense of camaraderie and collective resolve – what one historian has



Fig. 11.3: ‘Leipzig street demonstration, 23 October 1989’, in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 69. Photograph: Harald Hirsch.

called a palpable feeling of ‘Selbstbefreiung und den Wiedergewinn der eigenen Würde’.³²

With time, the historical references dropped away from the placards and chants. Even so, many of the photos of skittish crowds agitated in the face of overwhelming state power, or those celebrating civic assertion to overcome deeply felt injustice, can be traced back to the long lineage of protest movements, ranging from the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 through to the Polish Solidarity movement. A number of the images in the *Demontagebuch* harked back to the chaotic street scenes of the Russian Revolution or the short-lived German Revolution of 1918–19. Certainly the frenetic quality of the September 1989 protests recalled the menacing stand-off between various groups in Berlin in 1919, though of course without the guns or militancy that accompanied the collapse of the imperial state in 1918.³³ Arguably more germane were the photos of the two-day uprising of 1953, displaying mass crowds marching through the streets of East Berlin arm in arm, sometimes with flags, and often in violent confrontation with Soviet tanks.³⁴ But in the 1953 case, these images were usually taken by foreign journalists and distributed in the Western press, and never circulated within the GDR as part of its own visual national history. Interestingly enough, the 1953 uprising went completely unmentioned in Schneider’s book, whether in the print media sections or among the protesters as a key historical precedent to which to draw

a historical connection. Of more direct historical relevance for the uprising of 1989 were the demonstrations of the early to mid 1980s in the name of peace and environmentalism, with its accent on non-violence. Earlier revolutionary episodes were rarely invoked by photographers, as the tradition most commonly recalled was the GDR peace demonstrations several years before, in particular the September 1987 Olof Palme Peace Marches from Stralsund to Torgau. These Europe-wide peace marches took place in order to honour Swedish prime minister Olof Palme, who was assassinated in Stockholm in February 1986. The broader European theme of the march was to protest against atomic energy, but the East German opposition seized on the event (Honecker was in the Federal Republic on a state visit, though the SED had uniquely authorized it as a legal demonstration) to protest compulsive military service, the militarization of primary school education and the production of war toys. The Palme Marches in the GDR were significant not only because they had been allowed by the state as



Fig. 11.4: ‘Leipzig street demonstration, 16 October 1989’, in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 50. Photograph: Armin Kühne.

part of a broader European peace politics, but also because they were not broken up by the police.³⁵ Even more surprising is that the official photos of the ‘Palme Marches’ (complete with Free German Youth) were reprinted in GDR newspapers, giving hope to the opposition that the regime was changing for the better and that demonstrations would no longer be viewed as illegal ‘anti-socialist’ criminal activity. However, the SED’s relatively open attitude towards positive photographic representation of the demonstration proved a singular exception.³⁶ Even so, the visual parallels between the 1987 protest and the Leipzig marches of 1989 were strong.³⁷ But again, images of these protests were rarely distributed, and thus did not form part of a GDR visual history canon upon which these protesters could refer. All the same, these protesters – especially in terms of having had a series of non-violent protests in the early 1980s as a kind of successful protest heritage – could at least build on them at the experiential level.

The subsequent October marches continued to balloon in size and put more pressure on the teetering regime. Honecker himself stepped down on 18 October, and was replaced by Egon Krenz, though the new leader had no answer to the mobilized *Volk* either. The growth of these rallies was remarkable, going from several thousand in late September to over half a million by 30 October. Photos featured huge crowds, but also more individualized portraits of citizens lighting candles for peace vigils, walking together arm in arm, with an increasing visual emphasis on the women, young people and small children involved. As noted in Figure 11.5 by Uwe Pulwitt, the atmosphere increasingly looked like a veritable Volksfest, as the movement grew larger and less dangerous, more inclusive and confident. By this time, the representation of the marchers had gone from a scraggly band of nervous freedom fighters to a new intimate community of the engaged. Often the book feels designed like a family album depicting a city discovering itself, drawing on the tradition of the amateur private photo album as a favourite East German mode of documenting milestones in the lives of ordinary citizens.³⁸

Schneider was keen to emphasize the carnivalesque atmosphere that only increased with each passing week. By the time of the November marches, there were not only more placards, but also more cartoons and coarse jokes on posters, such as ‘Sozialismus krenzenlos’ and ‘Wollt Ihr uns denn noch malbeklauen? Bald wieder Euren alten Marsch? Schluss, SED – leck uns am Arsch!’ They captured the wit and humour of the people, rightly described by Schneider as a kind of ‘Volkspoesie’.³⁹ By early December, the old stand-by chants had died away, and so too had the pleas to Gorbachev and references to early revolutions. The spike in the 4 and 11 December demonstrations is often attributed to serialized revelations of SED corruption, and the urgent need to reform the country completely.⁴⁰ It is no accident that the book ends with citizens storming the Leipzig Stasi building as the final reckoning with the unwanted regime.⁴¹ In the first few months of 1990, the dismantling of the Stasi’s imperium attracted more general



Fig. 11.5: 'Leipzig street demonstration, 30 October 1989', in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 81. Photograph: Uwe Pulwitt.

attention, as its once-daunting 'panoptism' had been shattered once and for all. Evidence of this could be seen in widely reported accounts of citizens destroying detested Stasi surveillance cameras in their cities and towns; but it was also manifest in the visual archive left by the Stasi itself, as their last photos were oddly of Stasi employees dutifully destroying files, salvaging lookout cameras from buildings, and decommissioning sundry spy equipment.⁴² Even so, after 9 November the issue of reunification was squarely at the heart of discussions, and the rallies. Noticeable in the photos of the November rallies (as opposed to the October protests) were not only placards calling for a unified Germany, but also the presence of other posters that rejected the prospect of German unity. The December pictures from the *Demontagebuch* feature protesters drowned in a sea of placards, as noted in Figure 11.6 by Sieghard Liebe, which stressed a growing sense of using



Fig. 11.6: ‘Leipzig street demonstration, 11 December 1989’, in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 157. Photograph: Sieghard Liebe.

the protests to draw attention to contentious political declarations, now with a clear eye trained towards the photographers and film teams covering the events.⁴³

The book’s shift in tone is palpable. Whereas the initial images were taken to document police brutality and small-scale civic protest, the November photos were used to showcase a swelling popular movement of common purpose and possibility, community and empowerment. The initial chants of ‘We are staying here!’ and ‘We are the People’ were the hallmark paroles of the first phase of the struggle before it turned into a referendum on reunification. What the *Demontagebuch* sought to celebrate was civic courage and the defiance of a city in crisis, predicated on asserting what state socialism originally promised but eventually undermined – the fraternal ‘We’. Those who emigrated often insisted in interviews after arriving in West Germany that there was nothing in the way of any ‘GDR identity’.⁴⁴ By contrast, many of those who decided to stay and protest (especially young people) often remarked that they remained behind precisely because of the sense of ‘collective identity’ that was being forged that autumn in the streets of their city.⁴⁵ No wonder that the events were described at the time as a kind of collective “Coming-Out” of the protective niches’, whereby the demonstrators shattered the quiescent conformity of the GDR’s ‘real existing socialism’, so prevalent from the early 1970s onwards.⁴⁶ The protests were thus a

kind of rite of passage for Leipzigers from a life languishing in the ‘authoritarian kindergarten’ of SED rule into a brave new political world in which first civil society and then democracy were radically reinvented by the explosive assertion of ‘people power’.

The protesters initially campaigned for socialism with a human face, just as these photographers sought to give these civil marches a more personalized expression. In this regard it is worth recalling that pictures of people speaking with one another and at roundtable discussions were also favourite photographic subjects in Schneider’s book. These ranged from Kurt Masur speaking at a Sunday meeting (‘Dialog am Karl-Marx-Platz’) on 22 October 1989, to Pastor Heinz Weithaas addressing the Nikolaikirche in late October, to a Neues Forum meeting on 18 November. Included were close-ups of the key players as exponents of the original demands of the movement – dialogue and democracy. The surging crowd shots have become a standard icon of revolutionary moments, ranging from the French Revolution to the Arab Spring, as social media has multiplied the visual coverage of protests worldwide in the early twenty-first century. Given the disappointments of the Arab Spring, arguably born of overblown hopes, perhaps the most important photographic legacy of Leipzig ’89 are indeed the images of courageous civic leaders, who – in their defiant words and deeds – effectively helped to enact and prefigure a post-SED East Germany even before the SED has relinquished power, suggesting what democracy might mean after the collapse of the state. This was a key dimension of the ethics of seeing, in so far as these photographs were keen to front moments of democratic dialogue for a culture long inured to the wooden monologue of state socialist tyranny. The point was never to heroize these figures as charismatic exceptions; rather, the vast majority of the photos in Schneider’s book depict ordinary citizens reclaiming their city in the name of renewal and reform. Significant in this respect was that Schneider insisted on including a picture of a small exhibition of photos (p. 87), mounted at Leipzig’s Königshaus-Passage at the end of October, that documented the growing strength of people power on the ground; the demonstrators were beginning to represent themselves to the city and the world as a tribune of civic activism and democracy. By this time the weekly demonstrations were already turning into history, as a growing historical consciousness of the rallies found expression in these makeshift retrospectives, press coverage and amateur documentary photography. As a result, the pictures reprinted in Schneider’s book were no longer clandestine or contentious. So even before the opening of the Berlin Wall a week later, the courageous acts of civic responsibility had already become the stuff of new self-archived municipal celebrations in the city where it all began. By the end of November there were photos of people casually reading placards on the street, communicating the sense of *Volkfest* leisure and political self-discovery.

As the weeks passed the photographs in Schneider’s book shifted in tone and content. Not only had the rush to German unity begun to frame public debate



Fig. 11.7: ‘Leipzig street demonstration, 18 December 1989’, in: Wolfgang Schneider (ed.), *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kieperhauer, 1990), p. 163. Photograph: Bernhard Eckstein.

more and more by mid-December, but there was also a discernible effort to depict the protesters in a more romantic style, with particular focus on children. Figure 11.7, taken by Bernhard Eckstein at the 18 December rally, shows a young girl poised on her father’s shoulders, peace candle in hand, while her father is busy reading one of the protest flyers. The presence of the peace candle harked back to the beginning of the movement, as well as emphasizing the role of the church in making sure these rallies remained lawful, violence-free popular resistance.⁴⁷ Its styling was a kind of Delacroix ‘Liberty Leading the People’, as the girl symbolically looks back over her shoulder as a new Marianne leading the way with torch in hand into the future. That the subject was a child was no coincidence, to the extent that it – and many other photos depicting young people and children – guaranteed that the revolution would have a future. The irony of course is that this intimate, atmospheric depiction of youthful revolutionary fervour was

nothing itself new, and had been a staple of socialist realism (including the resolute facial expressions of children) since the early 1950s.⁴⁸

But now socialism's old cultural forms had been turned inside out, as the harbingers of democracy's bright future had shifted from the party to its new enemies – disgruntled citizens in the streets. What is more, there seemed to be a whiff of nostalgia in these photos of December 1989, noted in the self-reflexive moments of the *Passagen* exhibition discussed above. After all, Delacroix's famous painting of the French Revolution was executed in 1830 ostensibly to lionize the revolutionary events of that year, though its clear reference was to the original blush of revolutionary possibility some fifty years before. Figure 11.7 seems to present a certain staged radicalism, as the feverish sense of accelerated history during September and October had cooled off by mid-December. This was even more so for Leipzig, as the city's civic mobilization to claim an alternative public sphere was now passing on to the bigger stage of Berlin, and the even bigger business of reunification. To be sure, in 1990, unlike in 1871, German unity 'did not come at the cost of liberalism'.⁴⁹ Yet the original civic courage of these Leipzigers had been transformed into something very different after November, and it is no coincidence that Schneider's album elegiacally ends in 1989, after which Leipzig was no longer the epicentre of events.

The significance of Schneider's was even broader. In the intervening year before his book's publication, the meaning of the Leipzig marches inspired a great deal of commentary. Characterizations of Leipzig ranged from a 'city of heroes' to the crass longings of the 'banana republic's' 'Monday strollers'. As reviewers observed, Schneider's book was an effort to return attention back to the initial blush of Leipzig's street agitation, to commemorate where and why it all began.⁵⁰ Schneider's book was thus a clear rejection of the strong retrospective tendency to hitch 1989 to 1990, to see the Leipzig protests as simply the unruly antechamber to German reunification. Such a telos was common, and has dominated history writing, popular chronicles and official government accounts ever since.⁵¹ *Demontagebuch* primarily endeavoured to unlink 1989 and 1990, Leipzig and Berlin, municipal and national history.

That said, there are discernible tensions within Schneider's book. On one hand, it is a scattered private collection of risky amateur photographs designed in the first instance to document police brutality and state tyranny, images that were not initially conceived of to be published, at least not in the GDR. It is an attempt to make sure that the events of these small demonstrations did not become 'non-events' that 'never happened' once the state disbanded the crowd, imprisoned the participants and denied its political significance. On the other, the book is a loving testimony to the city's brave assertion of 'people power' against a teetering state, and in the end a tale of triumph against all odds and expectations. As the subtitle suggests, the book is a diary both of chaotic weekly demonstrations and the shocking collapse of a formidable and well-armed regime. The

photos from the September and November demonstrations thus seem on closer inspection to be jarringly discordant, and hard to connect visually or politically, precisely because the massive late autumn political mobilizations that grew from the small acts of defiance several months before were impossible to imagine. This seems to be Schneider's larger point – that history is unexpected and fragmented, without clear direction or meaning, and cannot easily be accommodated into larger narratives, in this case nationalist ones. Nonetheless, his photobook was an explicit effort to impose his own narrative on the events one year on, for specific political purposes. Schneider the historian could not help but bestow these events a grandiose world-historical dimension – at one point in the catalogue he relishes with great civic pride that it was in Leipzig where both Napoleon and Honecker met their defeats. This historical connection may be defensibly asserted, yet such broad framing was beyond any possible imagining in 1989, and thus cannot be detected in the photographs themselves. If anything, this will to monumentalize indirectly draws attention to the narrative artifice of the album itself, to the point where one cannot but wonder what these September photographs have in common with their November counterparts apart from a shared binding. Schneider's attempt to lift this fundamentally local history into a more general history is not unique. Another interesting example is the more recent exhibition catalogue, *Himmelweit gleich?*, which compares the upheavals of 'Europe's 1989' across various East European cities, as seen from the perspective of a younger generation of European-minded non-participants twenty years later.⁵² It combines text and photographs from the period within different national settings, and devotes a good deal of space to how 1989 arose from developments in the 1980s within different milieux; however, the exhibition is also informed by the desire to stress the broader European dimension of 'the peaceful revolutions of 1989'. Accentuating the similarities of events across borders was a very common commemorative tendency among historians, publicists and museum curators in the first two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Still, we need to remember that the sense of a common experience across national borders was not something very well understood at the time. Despite the clear feeling at the time that things were falling apart almost everywhere, the revolutions that year played out according to very different national tempos and templates. Schneider's book is thus quite unique within this industry of 1989 commemorations – it is a defiantly local history of 1989 with historical connections to an older European revolutionary tradition, but in his case one that is not framed by any triumphalist narrative of national rebirth. His intervention expressly aimed to challenge the logic and pace of German reunification by reminding readers – and not just those in Leipzig – about the movement's beginnings and democratic daring.

With time this great Leipzig drama was buried by the stampede to German unity, as the clandestine photography of the civic marches was replaced by the internationally televised footage celebrating the East German opposition's uneasy

transition from civil society to political nation. In that way, television was less a revolutionary catalyst, as is sometimes claimed,⁵³ than an audio-visual confirmation of what was already being experienced and asserted. Calls from GDR intellectuals to their compatriots to resist the siren songs of the West in order to build a genuine socialism fell mostly on deaf ears. New Forum leaders pleaded in vain for people to stay in the GDR, beseeching them: ‘You are the heroes of a political revolution, don’t be silenced by ... travel and consuming’⁵⁴ – but to little avail. The great moment of civic courage was ‘blighted not by a cold wind from the East, but by the warm, perfumed wind from the West’.⁵⁵ Not long thereafter, the Leipzig Autumn became the subject of historical interest and even nostalgia, as the political street theatre of Leipzig shifted to Berlin for a global audience.⁵⁶ Schneider’s book addressed this widespread feeling of loss and disappointment for many East Germans. It is a dispatch from the first dawn of this ‘immediate, objective community of witnesses’ among protesters, as well as a testament to the city’s proud place in the topography of the peaceful East European revolutions of 1989.⁵⁷ And just as the marches were seen as critical in loosening tongues, so too did they loosen camera shutters. For some critics, German photography has never been the same since.⁵⁸ But it is a tricky book for historians, both as a record and a reconstruction of events of that year, as it combined real-time documentation, shifting historical memory and raw self-narration amid fast-changing circumstances. After all, it was only the collapse of the East German state that made the publication of his book possible, though by the time the book appeared much of the energy that had prompted this civic unrest was disappearing; so there may not have been a danger of the events turning into ‘non-events’ in this context, as the events reconstructed in his photobook had already become instant history. Schneider’s book therefore marks a special moment in the people’s uprising of 1989 and its changing understanding, after which the surreptitious photographs of Leipzig were overwhelmed by the telegenic global images of the breaching of the Berlin Wall.⁵⁹ For Schneider the ‘ethics of seeing’ rested in the act of visually capturing a collective yet intimate spirit of civic resistance during that revolutionary season, with no clear end in sight. His visual diary is a tribute to the short-lived yet epoch-defining political pageantry of citizen defiance and urban fraternity on the streets of the Saxon city that year, as well as a reminder that all roads did not lead to Berlin.⁶⁰

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Global', which addresses the historical relationship between Eastern Europe and Africa, Asia and Latin America from the 1950s through to the 1990s. He has also co-organized a photography exhibition with Radina Vucetic on 'Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity' in Belgrade (June 2017), Oxford and Los Angeles.

Notes

1. Key titles include Nicola Freeman and Matthew Shaul (eds), *Do Not Refreeze: Photography behind the Berlin Wall* (London: Cornerhouse Publications, 2008); Norbert Moos (ed.), *Utopie und Wirklichkeit: Ostdeutsche Fotografie, 1956–1989* (Bönen: DruckVerlag, 2005); Karin Hartewig and Alf Luedtke (eds), *Die DDR im Bild: Zur Gebrauch der Fotografie im anderen deutschen Staat* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004); Karl Gernot Kuehn, *Caught: The Art of Photography in the German Democratic Republic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Ulrich Dömöse (ed.), *Nichts ist so einfach wie es scheint: Ostdeutsche Fotografie, 1945–1989* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1992).
2. Thomas Großmann, *Fernsehen, Revolution und das Ende der DDR* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015); and Hans-Hermann Hertle, 'Der Mauerfall', in Hans-Hermann Hertle, Konrad H. Jarausch and Christoph Kleßmann (eds), *Mauerbau und Mauerfall* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2002), 269–84. For earlier accounts, see Kurt R. Hesse, 'Fernsehen und Revolution: Zum Einfluss der Westmedien auf die politische Wende in der DDR', *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 38 (1990), 328–42.
3. George Lawson, Chris Armbruster and Michael Cox (eds), *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
4. Ilko-Sascha Kowalcuk, *Endspiel: Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), 307–11; and Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 274–77.
5. Charles Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 135, 139.
6. Robert Darnton, *Berlin, 1989–1990* (New York: WW Norton, 1992), 100; and Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1998), 690–94.
7. Großmann, *Fernsehen*, 120–61.
8. *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 26 September 1989, 8, quoted in Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder Nie – Demokratie Leipziger Herbst '89* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1990), 39, 63, 103.
9. Wolfgang Schneider, 'Oktoberrevolution 1989', 'Wochenchronik, 9–15 Oktober 1989', and 'Wochenchronik, 23–29 Oktober 1989', in his edited *Leipziger Demontagebuch: Demo, Montag, Tagebuch, Demontage* (Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1990), 6, 48 and 72. Many of the same photos were used in *Jetzt oder Nie* for similar purposes.
10. *Jetzt oder Nie*, 50–51.
11. Elena Demke, 'Mauerfotos in der DDR: Inszenierung, Tabus und Kontexte', in Hartewig and Lüdtke, *Die DDR im Bild*, 90–106.
12. Lutz Löscher and Jürgen Vogel, 'Leipziger Herbst: Ein subjective Dokumentation', Radio DDR, Sender Leipzig, 30 December 1989, quoted in *Demontagebuch*, 17.
13. Eszter Balázs and Phil Casoar, 'An Emblematic Picture of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution: Photojournalism during the Hungarian Revolution', *Europe-Asia Studies* 58(8) (December

- 2006), 1241–60; and Maurice Berger, *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011). More generally, *Protest! 65 Years of Rebellion in Photographs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 2011); and Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook*, 3 vols (London: Phaidon, 2006), esp. vol. 2, 42–73.
14. Karin Hartewig, *Das Auge der Partei: Fotografie und Staatsicherheit* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004).
 15. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, 278.
 16. Kowalczuk, *Endspiel*, 381.
 17. Friedrich Magirius, ‘Wiege der Wende’, in *Demontagebuch*, 10.
 18. Hartmut Zwahr, *Ende der Selbstzerstörung: Leipzig und die Revolution in der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 23–45, quotation 45.
 19. Kowalczuk, *Endspiel*, 392.
 20. Martin Naumann, *Wende-Tage-Buch* (Leipzig: Militzke, 1998), 15.
 21. Schneider, *Demontagebuch*, 7.
 22. *Neues Deutschland*, 5 June 1989, 1.
 23. Cited in Maier, *Dissolution*, 142.
 24. Lothar Kettenacker, *Germany 1989: In the Aftermath of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2009), 105–6.
 25. Norman Naimark, ‘“Ich will hier raus”: Emigration and the Collapse of the German Democratic Republic’, in Ivo Banac (ed.), *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 72–95.
 26. Steven Pfaff, ‘Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization: East Germany in 1989’, *Social Forces* 75(1) (September 1996), 91–118.
 27. Cited in Kettenacker, *Germany 1989*, 107.
 28. Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, eds, *Ich liebe euch doch alle! Befehle und Lageberichte des MfS Jan.–Nov. 1989* (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1990), 28.
 29. Konrad Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 33.
 30. Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post–Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 20–21.
 31. Naumann, *Wende-Tage-Buch*, 34.
 32. Zwahr, *Ende der Selbstzerstörung*, 102.
 33. NGBK (ed.), *Revolution und Fotografie: Berlin 1918/1919* (Berlin: Dirk Nishen, 1989), esp. 135–73.
 34. Rainer Hildebrandt, *Der 17. Juni* (West Berlin: Haus am Checkpoint Charlie, 1983), 160–89.
 35. Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition*, 690–94.
 36. Kowalczuk, *Endspiel*, 245–47.
 37. Naumann, *Wende-Tage-Buch*, 6–9.
 38. Cristina Cuevas-Wolf, ‘Making the Past Present: GDR Photo Albums and Amateur Photographs’, *Visual Resources* 30(1) (March 2014), 33–56. For further discussion on the relationship between public and private in photography, Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193–226.
 39. Schneider, *Demontagebuch*, 9.
 40. Günter Roski and Peter Förster, ‘Leipziger DEMOskopie’, in Schneider, *Demontagebuch*, 172.
 41. It is long forgotten that the seizure of administrative buildings across the GDR, including the Partezentrale building in Jena (with files burned and thrown out the window), the prison in Magdeburg and the Kreiskommando of the Volkspolizei, were also a key part of the uprising of 1953, and were photographed at the time as well. Hildebrandt, *Der 17. Juni*, 196–97.
 42. Hartewig, *Das Auge der Partei*, 241–50.
 43. Bernd Lindner, ‘Soziologie der Lösungen’, in Schneider, *Demontagebuch*, 172.
 44. Volker Ronge, ‘Die soziale Integration von DDR-Übersiedlern in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 1–2 (5 January 1990), 43.

45. *Der Morgen*, 28–29 October 1989, p.7, quoted in Naimark, ‘Ich will hier raus’, 88.
46. Bernd Lindner and Ralph Grüneberger (eds), *Demonteur: Biographien des Leipziger Herbst* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1992), 310.
47. Lindner, ‘Soziologie der Losungen’, 173.
48. Stefan Wolle, ‘The Smiling Face of Dictatorship: On the Political Iconography of the GDR’, in Klaus Honneth, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (eds), *German Photography, 1870–1970* (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), 127–38; and more recently, Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
49. Maier, *Dissolution*, 165.
50. ‘Leipziger Demontagebuch’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 October 1990, L2.
51. See, for example, the online brochure, *Der Weg zur Deutschen Einheit: Dossier*, published by the Deutscher Bundestag (www.btg-bestellservice.de), which uses some of the photos in Schneider’s book.
52. Peter Skyba, Sebastian Richter and Stefan Schönfelder (eds), *Himmelweit gleich? Europas '89: 4 Ausstellungen in Dresden, Prag, Wrocław und Bratislava/Zilina* (Schwerin: Baerens & Fuss, 2010).
53. Hagen Schulze, ‘Revolution in der Glotze: Wie das Fernsehen die Geschichte erstickt’, *Die Zeit*, 16 March 1990, 55.
54. *TAZ*, 12 November 1989, in *TAZ, DDR Journal*, 132, cited in Naimark, ‘Ich will hier raus’, 94.
55. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Vintage, [1990] 1993), 74.
56. Thomas Ahde, Michael Hofmann and Volker Stiehler, *Wir bleiben hier! Erinnerungen an den Leipziger Herbst '89* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1999).
57. Schneider, *Demontagebuch*, 9.
58. Miriam Paeslack, ‘Before and After the Wall: German Photography in Discourse and Practice’, *Visual Resources* 22(2) (June 2006), 103–9. For a more positive view, see Lyn Marven, ‘“Souvenirs des Berlin-Est”: History, Photos, and Form in Texts by Daniela Dahn, Irina Liebmann, and Sophie Calle’, *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 43(2) (May 2007), 220–33.
59. Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Chronik des Mauerfalls: Die dramatische Ereignisse um den 9. November 1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999); and more recently, Sarotte, *The Collapse*, esp. 127–54.
60. Pfaff, ‘Collective Identity’, 105–8.

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Epilogue

HOPE FLIES; DEATH DANCES

Moving towards an Ethics of Seeing

Julia Adeney Thomas



... our moral seriousness is measured by our attention span.

—R.B. Kitaj, Wall Label, Retrospective Exhibition, Los Angeles County Museum, 1995

Hope soars, but photographs are stills. Kindness transforms, while photographs are fixed. Time heals, yet the camera stops time. As these examples show, the language of ethics often highlights temporality and action, while photography's vocabulary often underscores the medium's static nature. This tension between the kinetic energy of 'doing good' and the stop-time immobility of photographs has been a source of frustration for many who want photography to promote justice, peace, and compassion. Photographs should stir empathy and action, yet they can seem inert. Some blame the medium itself, calling it ineffective, prurient, and cruel. Others point to particular images of cruelty as anathema. Although at times I too have felt this impatience with photography's ethical capacity, in the main this frustration seems unwarranted. Here I will explore the variety of ways we mobilize photographs, overcoming the disjunction between still images and ethical actions. As I will argue, there are many ways of seeing well. Neither the medium nor particular images are to blame when we falter in the practice of ethical seeing. Instead, we should look to ourselves.

My brief exploration focuses on the difference between a 'mere' atrocity image and an ethical, humanitarian one. Let me begin by explaining what I mean by an atrocity image. We have all glanced at a photograph that does nothing for us. It leaves us cold, unmoved, 'unpricked' as Roland Barthes might say by curiosity or desire. It produces no energy that might be directed towards doing good – but it may, nonetheless, give us information. In my own case, I find many of the

Notes from this chapter begin on page 283.

aerial photographs of the aftermath of urban bombings in the Second World War impenetrably static. These images display vast acres of rubble. If presented without a caption, it is hard to distinguish whether they were taken over Tokyo or Hiroshima, Dresden or Hamburg. I note the destruction, and yet these images suggest no ethical entrée. To me, they are inert – informative rather than compelling. The puzzle, then, is when an image documents atrocity and when it does something far more difficult: when it provides an avenue towards goodness, rendering the act of seeing ‘ethical’ rather than merely ‘informed’. Here I explore three fundamentally different ways of mobilizing still images to animate ethical energy. For shorthand, I call these three ways the presentational, the contextual, and the aesthetic. As I will argue, any photograph may be approached in any of these ways; in some cases we may pursue all three at once.

As my formulation indicates, I am interested here in the ethical responsibility of the viewer. How should we as observers embedded in our own cultures, times, and places engage with the variety of media that we call ‘photos’ from glassy daguerreotypes and chemically coated paper to tiny illuminated screens? While some of what I say could be applied to photographers, the ‘seeing’ central to this chapter is what we do when we view images that we find rather than what some of us do through viewfinders while making an image; this is a distinction between the viewer’s ‘second-order seeing’ and the photographer’s ‘first-order seeing’. In second-order seeing, we are always at a distance in time and space from the moment at which the photograph was taken. That distance can be minute or immense, but either way, ethical responsiveness is neither positively guaranteed nor absolutely impossible. No image, no distance, no span of time, no culture, and no subjectivity can be relied on always to produce the right response, not least because our ideas of ‘rightness’ change. Although it may be frightening to wrestle with the fluidity of the ethics of seeing, there is absolutely no guarantee that a particular image will – or will not – always provoke goodness. Only a turn to history, to the particular cultural circumstances explored in this volume, can stabilize time and place enough so that the responses to an image might coagulate into some sociologically coherent form on which general ethical judgements may be made. Phrases such as ‘German officers in occupied France’, ‘anti-Semitic writers in interwar Germany’, or ‘post-war Soviet propaganda’ delimit an arena of seeing: *those* people at *that* time responded to photographs in *this* way as interpreted by ‘me’ the author, a scholar writing now in the twenty-first century from a particular cultural and individual point of view. For instance, historian Susan Crane, who argues that today we should choose not to look at certain Holocaust photographs, also insists that ‘for the generations immediately following the genocide, atrocity photos and images of Nazi crimes served as vital testimony’.¹ Against theorists such as Ariella Azoulay who make ontological arguments claiming the medium itself *always* provides a moral and political space of egalitarian engagement, and against those who suggest that particular images will *always*

provoke and engage us, I suggest that the ethics of seeing photographs is an ethics *always* in motion.² The photographs are merely stills; their ethical energy depends on ours. Let me lay out my case for three distinctive means of making photographs have wings.

First, by ‘presentational’ I mean the approach to photographs that sees them as providing a transparent window on the world. As Stanley Cavell tells us, ‘in the taking of a photograph, the object has played a causal role altogether different from its role in the making of a painting’.³ According to this view, photography gives access to reality more directly than other mediums; it ‘presents’ rather than ‘represents’ the real. With the camera as a ‘machine’ for seeing according to Kendall Walton, the photograph becomes, as Susan Sontag says, a ‘trace, something stencilled off the real, like a footprint or death mask’.⁴ Here, ‘second-order’ and ‘first-order seeing’ are hardly distinguishable. The eyes of the viewer meld with those of the photographer, both of them observing the same reality. Elevating photography’s guileless transparency in this way ascribes to it an unimpeachable purity of intent. The photographer’s purposes and desires, the choice of equipment, angle, lighting, and printing techniques are neatly bracketed as extraneous to our response to the image and the reality it presents. Understood in this way, a photograph can be used as forensic evidence, as proof of wrongdoing, because it supposedly masks no ulterior motives. Understood in this way, as objectively conveying reality, a photograph of a fire-bombed landscape can be viewed simultaneously as an atrocity photograph and a humanitarian one. To see cruelty is to be shocked; to be shocked compels compassionate action. A photograph is ethical *because* it presents realities that require action. My failure to respond to aerial renderings of the sites of death on an industrial scale is an ethical failure to respond to reality itself. By this accounting, however, we are not talking about the ethics of seeing photographs but about the ethics of seeing the world at large. For those interested in images as distinctive modes of representation, this elision is unwarranted.

Indeed, the presentational approach’s equation among seeing distress, recognizing it as wrong, and wanting to work towards amelioration has not met with universal favour among theorists of photography. Instead, it has met with distinct scepticism and sometimes outright anger by almost every theorist concerned with the ways photography defines and directs sight. Joel Synder makes a compelling case that the mechanics of cameras, far from being neutral extensions of the eye as proposed by Walton, use perspectival rules drawn from Renaissance painting.⁵ Others, in pointing to the biological substrate of vision, suggest that the brain and eye both enable and restrict sight in complicated ways.⁶ Most especially, critics point to the cultural and institutional structures and discourses that constrain ‘free’ access to reality. Combined, these three critiques insist that whatever we see is shaped by the mechanical instruments we use, the physical, electrical, and chemical interactions of eye and brain, and the social, political, and visual

context. For atrocity to become visible in a photograph in such a way that the viewer can see it ethically is, by these lights, a complicated, multistep process requiring active contextualization. If I have not taken aerial images of bombing to heart, it is because I have not seen them through the appropriate lens and placed them in the proper context.

These critics propose a second approach that I will call ‘contextual’, for want of a better word. In this second, contextual approach, photographs become ethical as distinct from atrocity images or, for that matter, from advertisements, art, surveillance, or some other photographic genre only due to their position within complex material, discursive and social structures. The critics committed to this approach tend to argue that photography’s chances of successfully opening our eyes to a problem, let alone contributing to its solution, are tenuous and contingent rather than mathematical. Susie Linfield insists, ‘the real issue is how we *use* images of cruelty.⁷ ‘The forces of violence and the images of violence … create a radically unequal dialectic’ that can bring hope only through action, creativity and collaboration.⁸ Far from being a transparent window on the world, photography approached in this way makes a plea for the wounded, destitute and desperate *only if* allied with individuals and institutions intent on creating the conceptual framework for understanding them as such.⁹ Captions, for instance, are crucial. For example, Rebecca Solnit persuasively demonstrates that the words associated with an image perform a slight of hand, transforming its meaning as when the *Los Angeles Times* labelled as ‘looter’ a survivor of Haiti’s 2010 earthquake, who was in fact collecting bolts of cloth to shelter stricken people from the fierce tropical sun. Had the *Los Angeles Times* labelled him ‘inventive saviour’ in that life-threatening emergency, as Solnit argues he should be, the image would have revealed a humanitarian action on his part and, furthermore, suggested the sort of aid that would be most useful – for example, shelter, shovels, food and water. But calling the man a ‘looter’ transformed the image into a call for greater ‘security’, for policemen with guns, rather than for aid.¹⁰ While not sanguine about photography as a constant and universal force for good, Linfield and Solnit keep the door open to regarding it as a hopeful practice. If a photograph is situated institutionally in the appropriate ways, it can challenge regimes of power and cruelty, spur generosity to those in need, and instigate humanitarian solutions and proposals for the future.¹¹

Does ‘contextualization’ always provide a potential pathway towards the Good? No. While many writers dismiss the claim of photographic transparency and insist that we examine the discursive and structural embeddedness of images in order to make them ‘do good’, it can be argued that photography is so thoroughly embedded in the most powerful of institutions, the state, that it can never come clean. Almost all it can ever show is the reality of the powerful. From this perspective, photography can do nothing other than support reigning regimes. Famously, theorist John Tagg argues that photography, even the FSA depictions

of impoverished dust bowl farmers so beloved by liberals as icons of New Deal goodness, is complicit with capitalist governing strategies, completely imbricated in domination.¹² We always see ‘like a state’. This is because the reality provided by photographs is not a reality lying outside institutions and discourses of power and therefore able to challenge them; reality is itself an effect of power. Tagg argues that a supposedly documentary photograph, ‘because it is already implicated in the historically developed techniques of observation-domination and because it remains imprisoned within an historical form of the regime of truth and sense’, is bound ‘fundamentally to the very order which it seeks to subvert’.¹³ An image is therefore always an image of power, always on the side of those with the means to commit atrocities and hardly ever a means of defending humanitarian values. By this reading, almost all images might be seen as ‘atrocities’ images in that they support – and mask – the workings of oppression. Unless the political formation is ethical, its photographic images will not be ethical either. From Tagg’s point of view, when I or anyone else looks at photographs of flattened buildings in which sheltering families burnt to death, we necessarily adopt the position of the reconnaissance photographer surveying a mission triumphantly accomplished. To look at these ruins is to see unethically. I will return to Tagg’s important point below.

The third approach to mobilizing still photographs in the service of ethical action is aesthetic. Here the viewer attends to the image with patient connoisseurship, noting the way the photographer has framed the objects of interest to construct relationships within the image and beyond. With this aesthetic approach, neither a shocked response to the information presented nor an analysis of the image’s larger discursive context pertains. Aesthetic appreciation is not merely a matter of personal taste. It is no more idiosyncratic than ‘presentational’ claims that images of cruelty must necessarily shock viewers, or ‘contextual’ analyses of how an image counters or reinforces power structures. While any response to a photograph is conditioned by the individual viewer’s political commitments, empathetic imagination and intellectual capacities, all ways of mobilizing a photograph for ethical action rest on particular protocols that go beyond the personal. In other words, our ways of seeing are socially and historically specific as well as individual. With aesthetics, these protocols involve the formal principles of composition that may be mapped onto the categories of ‘atrocities images’ and ‘ethical images’.

Aesthetically, the difference between an atrocities photograph and an ethical one is, I would argue, analogous to Barthes’s famous divide between the pornographic and the erotic. Barthes distinguishes pornography from eroticism by suggesting that the erotic breaks the frame, gesturing towards a ‘subtle beyond’, towards ‘the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together’. Although the quotation is long, Barthes’s voice (ventriloquized in the lovely translation of Richard Howard) resonates with such delicate music that I venture to quote in full:

Pornography ordinarily represents the sexual organs, making them into a motionless object (a fetish), flattered like an idol that does not leave its niche; for me there is no *punctum* in the pornographic image; at most it amuses me (and even then, boredom follows quickly). The erotic photograph, on the contrary (and this is its very condition), does not make the sexual organs into a central object; it may very well not show them at all; it takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph, and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see: not only toward ‘the rest’ of the nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis*, but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together.¹⁴

For Barthes, an image of a penis is just a penis, and ultimately a fetish that bores. A photograph suggestive of a lover, on the other hand, promises sublimity that enlivens. In Barthes’s approach, formal composition is crucial. A pornographic image immobilizes the object of interest within the centre of the frame, pinning the viewer down as well, while an erotic photograph’s frame-breaking, gestural composition moves the viewer, opening him to a prospect of ‘absolute excellence’ and towards the promising space of utopia behind all ethical hopes.

It is important here to underscore the distinction between this aesthetic approach and the presentational one discussed above. The presentational approach responds to the subject matter alone. What is shocking, atrocious, and demanding of our ethical action is what occurred: the reality that has been revealed. With the aesthetic approach, the attention is less on the subject matter than on the photograph’s formal qualities, on the *representational strategies* which either bore us or animate us in Barthes terms. Take, for instance, the 101 photographs used by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Manhattan District in their report on ‘the effects of the atomic bombs’ in Japan.¹⁵ The images are primarily of structural damage in Hiroshima, with close-ups of burnt tiles as well as panoramas of the flattened city, all printed on coarse paper with dutiful captions typed beneath. While ethical questions are raised more naturally with images of creatures, dead or alive, looking at photographs of inanimate structures may focus our attention on composition alone. Following Barthes’s aesthetic principles, we might distinguish between the US Army Corps images that are dull and uninspiring, despite accurately depicting a landscape of atrocious pain (e.g. ‘Figure 59’), and those few that might animate us through their composition, as with the image of brick-and-concrete rubble (‘Figure 23’), where a portion of the shattered wall pierces the photograph’s frame and gestures defiantly skyward; or the steel structure (‘Figure 43’) that collapsed ballistically, its twisted grace seeming to reveal a sinuous, piteous resistance to the tremendous blast from above (figures 12.1–12.3).

While I will not strain your credulity by claiming that the latter two images generate high-wattage animation, I think the contrast between them and ‘Figure 59’ helps to make my distinction clear. Their composition conveys (slightly)

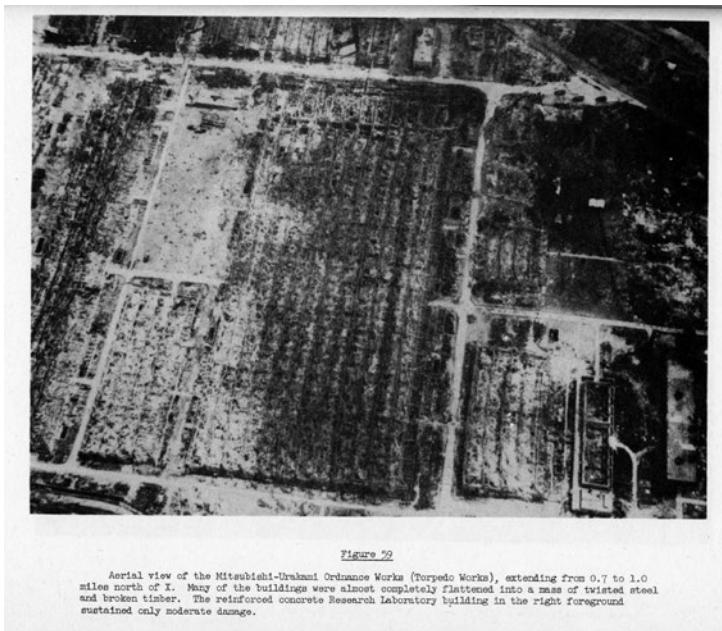


Fig. 12.1: Figure 59: 'Aerial view of the Mitsubishi-Urakami Ordinance Works (Torpedo Works)'.



Fig. 12.2: Figure 23: 'The shattered walls of a brick building near X in Hiroshima'.

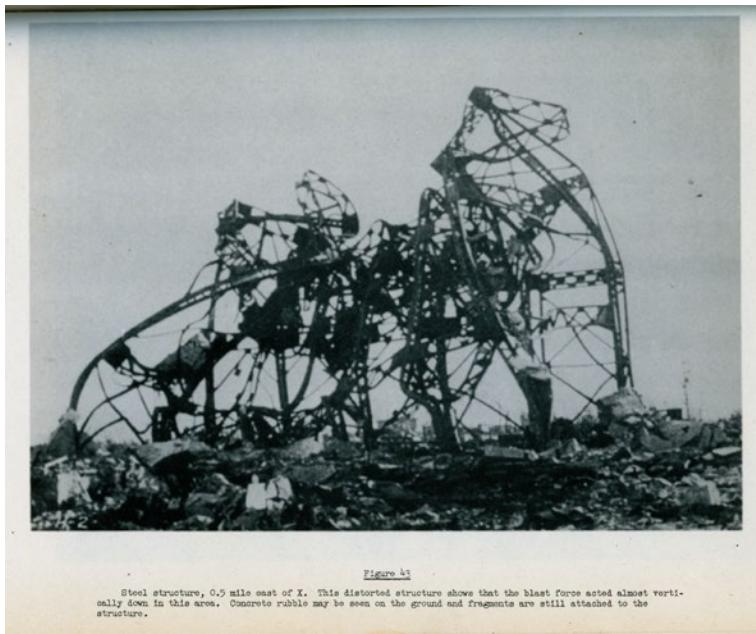


Fig. 12.3: Figure 43: 'Steel structure, 0.5 miles east of X'.

more of the energy necessary to humanitarian hopefulness than is to be found in the Corps' aerial view of destruction, even though it probably depicts the gravesite of hundreds.¹⁶ While it would be stretching the point to insist that the jutting concrete and sagging steel gesture towards utopian possibilities, towards not only a 'fantasy of a *praxis*', but toward the absolute excellence of a being', these more animated compositions have lines of force taking us out beyond the frame and into the world. They suggest a way in which death's stillness can be disrupted so that a more peaceful way of living might be imagined. It is not impossible to imagine an aerial photograph attaining a similar aesthetic animation, though the strictly aerial work of the US Army Corps, in my estimation, never does.

What matters in all three approaches described here is the animation of the viewer, the kindling of vital engagement, whether that engagement is understood as an immediate reaction to the revelation of cruelty, or an empathetic understanding achieved contextually, or an aesthetically spurred yearning for excellence. All three approaches can make still photographs move, transforming an atrocity image into a humanitarian one. In cataloguing them, I have tried to show that the line between atrocity photographs and humanitarian ones, between documenting disaster and trying to salvage or prevent bad situations, can be drawn on a variety of distinct grounds. The same image may be both a record of atrocity

and an inspiration for good, depending on how it is approached. Sometimes it can be at odds with itself, its subject matter dictating one response, while its aesthetics indicates another; its institutional settings sometimes garnishing it with moral authority but sometimes casting doubt as to its ethical value. The morality of the photograph, in other words, is never stable. In my view, we obscure photography's maverick powers if we suggest that it is. In short, there are many ways of seeing well. None of

these approaches is always *ipso facto* wrong. We must attend carefully to how we approach images, knowing that seeing ethically is a highly contingent exercise, one that requires time and the slow unspooling of the eye over the image.

A final caution: animation in itself is not necessarily ethical. Cruelty, too, is energetic, and can be energized through images. As John Tagg's critique implies, still images may be mobilized to assert the impossibility of revolution; they may be used as instruments of oppression as well as instigators of hope; they may do evil as well as good. In short, hope may fly, but death can dance. There is nothing intrinsically moral about motion or emotion. Nevertheless, without the motion of the body, the intellect, or the heart – or all three combined – there can be no change of any kind, for better or for worse, and if photographs are to do good, they must cease in some way to be still. Unanimated images, images that do not move us, will do nothing at all. These images will die, and so will any hope that might have arisen from them. In my opening paragraph, I asked how we can mobilize photographs to overcome the disjunction between still images and ethical actions. The phrasing of this question was deliberate. It is 'we' who are the agents in making images ethical. The quality of our attention in its multiple forms is at the heart of the matter. Such that photographs allow us to see a better way forward, they may be called ethical. But what they show is that the ethical is found in us, and not in the image.

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Julia Adeney Thomas writes about concepts of nature in political ideology, the challenge posed by climate change to the discipline of history, and photography as a political practice in Japan and globally. She is the recipient of the AHA's John K. Fairbank Prize for *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*, and of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians' Best

Article of the Year Award for ‘Photography, National Identity, and the “Cataract of Times”: Wartime Images and the Case of Japan’ from the *American Historical Review*. In 2013, she published two collaborative books: *Japan at Nature’s Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (with Ian J. Miller and Brett L. Walker), and *Rethinking Historical Distance* (with Mark Salber Phillips and Barbara Caine). Currently, she is completing *The Historian’s Task in the Anthropocene* as well as co-editing a collection on *Visualizing Fascism: The Rise of the Global Right*. Educated at Princeton, Oxford and Chicago, she taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago and at the University of Wisconsin–Madison before joining Notre Dame’s history department.

Notes

1. Susan A. Crane, ‘Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and Holocaust Atrocity Photography’, *History and Theory* 47 (October 2008), 309. Note the use of the word ‘atrocity’ here as opposed to ‘humanitarian’.
2. Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).
3. Stanley Cavell, ‘What Photography Calls Thinking’, *Raritan* (Spring 1985), 4.
4. Kendall L. Walton, ‘Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism’, *Critical Inquiry* (December 1984), 270. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1973), 154.
5. Joel Snyder, ‘Picturing Vision’, *Critical Inquiry* 6(3) (Spring 1980), 499–526. See also, Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh, ‘Photography, Vision, and Representation’, *Critical Inquiry* 2(1) (Autumn 1975), 143–69.
6. Barbara Maria Stafford, *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Stafford (ed.), *A Field Guide to a New Meta-Field: Bridging the Humanities–Neurosciences Divide* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011). I have discussed this issue in ‘The Evidence of Sight’, *History and Theory*, Theme Issue: Photography and Historical Interpretation, 48 (December 2009).
7. Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 60. Emphasis in original.
8. Ibid., 62.
9. James Nachtwey sees his own powerful images of twentieth-century ‘loss, grief, injustice, suffering, violence and death’ in these terms, as ‘one element among many in the ongoing dialogue between information and response that helps create the atmosphere in which change is possible’. Nachtwey, *Inferno* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 469.
10. Rebecca Solnit, ‘Words Can Kill: Haiti and the Vocabulary of Disaster’, in Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser (eds), *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), see discussion pp. 17–21.
11. Contributors to this volume here and in their other publications have in the main fallen into this camp, carefully excavating the historical conditions in which images function socially, politically and historically. See, for instance, Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*, esp. Chapter 7, ‘Picturing Privacy’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jennifer V. Evans, ‘Seeing Subjectivity: Erotic Photography and the Optics of Desire’, *American Historical*

- Review* (April 2013); and Josie McLellan, 'Visual Dangers and Delights: Nude Photography in East Germany', *Past and Present* 205 (November 2009). Perceptively, Michael Barnett proposes two types of humanitarianism, emergency and alchemical, the first dedicated to keeping people alive in moments of extremis and the second concerned with the maximalist effort of structuring situations so that emergencies will not arise. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), esp., 37–46.
12. John Tagg argues that photography, especially documentary photography, is 'a specific practice of representation that has to be located in the cultural strategy of a particular mode of governance: a hybrid of discipline and spectacle, of documentation and publicity; a strategy of management of meaning and identity; a strategy of *social democracy* at a moment of deep structural crisis'. Emphasis in the original. John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xxxii.
 13. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 102.
 14. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 59.
 15. United States Army, Corps of Engineers, Manhattan District, *Photographs of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, June 29, 1946* (n.p., 194–).
 16. In this report, the total casualties in Hiroshima are estimated as 66,000 dead and 69,000 injured, and in Nagasaki as 39,000 dead and 25,000 injured. These numbers are low. Although there is no date connected with this report, it seems to have appeared very soon after hostilities ended. *Ibid.*, 18.

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