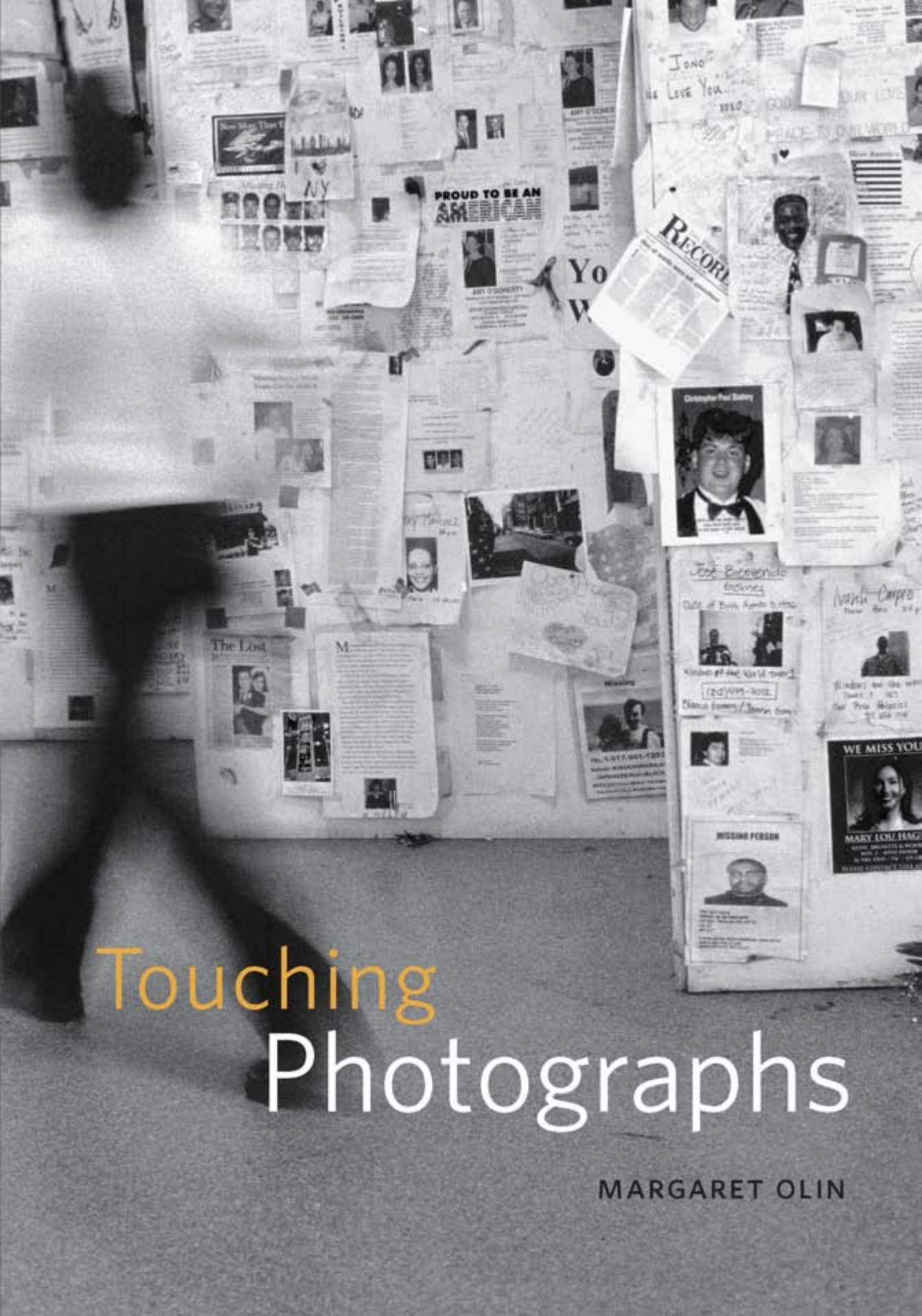


Touching Photographs

MARGARET OLIN

Touching Photographs

{ MARGARET OLIN }

Touching **PHOTOGRAPHS**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO AND LONDON

MARGARET OLIN is a senior research scholar in the Divinity School, with joint appointments in the Departments of History of Art and Religious Studies and in the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University.

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2012 by The University of Chicago
All rights reserved. Published 2012.
Printed in China

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-62646-8 (paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-62646-6 (paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Olin, Margaret Rose, 1948–
Touching photographs / Margaret Olin.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-62646-8 (pbk : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-62646-6 (pbk : alk. paper) 1. Photographs—Psychological aspects. 2. Photography—Social aspects. 3. Photography in literature. 4. Barthes, Roland. Chambre claire. 5. Evans, Walker, 1903–1975. 6. Van Der Zee, James, 1886–1983. 7. September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001. I. Title.
TR183.045 2012
770.01'9—dc22

2011016695

This book has been printed on acid-free paper.

For Bob and George,

our colleagues and students, and their legacy

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Photography, as this book will show, makes connections with people. In my early years in photography, I approached people I barely knew and asked permission to take portraits of them in their homes or workplaces. There they would tell me their stories or sing me their songs. On a busy sidewalk, people stopped to chat as I waited by my view camera to capture "the sunlight and how it fell." Photography may have been an art form, but it was also a way to loiter and meet people. It also seemed to take ages to make a picture, and it cost a fortune.

Scholarship is not a good way to loiter, but, like photography, it is a good a way to meet people. It is also, like photography, lengthy and costly. Aaron Siskind gave me my first invaluable lessons in this art form at the Institute of Design in Chicago. Later, participation in studio critiques at the School of the Art Institute enriched my education in photographic practices. I am grateful to the staff, students, and faculty there, where nearly two decades ago I first developed the ideas that led to this book. During these years, students in my seminars read and reread with me texts by James Agee, Roland Barthes, and many other authors, and helped me refine my ideas.

Thanks also to the curators at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library; the Studio Museum of Harlem; the Hatch-Billops Collection and its curators, James Hatch and Camille Billops;

and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Susan Meiselas graciously opened her studio and archives to me; Carlota Duarte, of the Archivo Photográphico Indigena, San Cristobál de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, answered my questions, as did Lynn Warschafsky and other members of the Institute for Photographic Empowerment at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. At the Francis W. Parker School in Chicago, Christine Beh and the late Ann Hills facilitated my visit. I am grateful to Charles Traub and Michael Shulan, organizers of *Here Is New York*; to Mark Lubell, who answered many of my questions about the exhibit; and to Mickey Kerr and Timothy Soter, photographers who allowed me to use their submissions to *Here Is New York* and discussed them with me; Arne Mutert, of the Bundesamt für politische Erziehung; James N. Saunders and Terry Miles, of Bellevue Hospital Center, New York; and Sarah Henry, of the Museum of the City of New York. At the now-defunct St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center in Manhattan, I owe a debt of gratitude, for their time, their memories, and their expertise, to Sister Miriam Kevin Phillips, Chief Mission Officer; Michael Fagan, Director of Media and Government Relations; James Leach, archivist; and Lisa Feldman, medical photographer. At the Northeast Document Conservation Center, Andover, Massachusetts, my thanks to Ann Russell, former director; Walter Newman, head conservator; and Carolyn Frisa, former conservator.

Audiences for conferences at Trent University, Ontario; Boston University; the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee; Columbia; Yale; Rice University; the Getty Research Institute; Hunter College of The City University of New York; the Speed Art Museum, Louisville; the Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam; the University of New York at Stony Brook; the University of Cork, Ireland; the University of Toronto; and the University of Copenhagen all challenged me with perceptive questions at my presentations. So did readers for the journals where some of these essays first appeared (Katherine Bergeron read my essay on Roland Barthes for *Representations*; others remained anonymous). The many artists and scholars, students, teachers, and others who joined me in thinking and rethinking the issues in this book include Michele Bogart, Jonathan Bordo, Ann Boyd, Alan Cohen, Bridget Cooks, Paula Duffy, Dan Eisenberg, James Elkins, Jane Gallop, Lydia Goehr, Camara Holloway, Maud Lavin, Elliot G. Mishler, Mary Patton, Kym Pinder, Ellen Rothenberg, Mette Sandbye, Deb Olin Unferth, Susan Ward, and Heidi C. R. N. Winterburn. Alex Marx shepherded me around post-9/11 lower Manhattan and shared his experiences with me. Christopher Pinney's patient readings of draft after draft for the University of Chicago Press substantially affected

the manuscript. Dario Gamboni lent his support to the project after reading an early draft of part of it. I am grateful also to several anonymous readers of the manuscript for their useful suggestions, all of which had an impact on this book.

A series of research and technical assistants soldiered their way through the manuscript. I owe thanks to Amir Berbic, who helped me with my initial attempts to create a photographic text; to Brad Farwell, Lindsay Page, and Daniel Everett, who scanned negatives for me; and to Jen Morris, who taught me how to do it myself. All of them provided me with much useful technical information and taught me new skills. Joey Orr helped with research and compiled my first working bibliography. My research assistants, the tenacious Abby Glogower and Heather Vermeulen, helped me in the grueling task of gathering illustrations.

"Tenacious" also applies to Susan Bielstein, my editor at the University of Chicago Press. Like photography, writing books can take a long time. Susan acquired the manuscript several years ago and continued to support and guide it—and me—through multiple rounds of readings and revisions. Anthony W. Burton patiently answered question after question about numerous issues, technical and otherwise. I am grateful for Sandra Hazel's careful copyediting, Laura J. Avey's help with marketing and other matters, and Ryan Li's artful design of the book.

Finally, I have found writing and publishing a book even more costly than making photographs. Luckily, organizations stepped in to help. The National Endowment for the Humanities once awarded me a grant for a planned anthology on theories of perception. Plans changed and the intended anthology never appeared, but the research I did strengthened the present book instead. The School of the Art Institute supported my research with multiple Faculty Enrichment Grants, and I benefited from the support of the office of Carol Becker, former Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs, as well. The Department of the History of Art at Yale University contributed a substantial and generous sum toward the cost of printing the color illustrations.

This book was written in two institutional homes. At the School of the Art Institute, besides the people already mentioned, I owe much of my comfort to Shay DeGrandis, Senior Administrative Director of the Department of Modern Art History, Theory and Criticism; and Teena McClelland, Administrative Director of the Department of Visual and Critical Studies. For offering me a comfortable and welcoming new institutional home, I am grateful to Harold W. Attridge, Dean of the Yale Divinity School, and for housing me in style, Maria Rosa Menocal, Director of the Whitney Humanities Center at

Yale University. For many services, I want to thank Renee Reed, Senior Administrative Assistant of the Program in Judaic Studies, and also Christina Andriotis, administrative assistant of the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale, who in addition had a hand in one of the photographs in the book.

I have occasion to thank some of these people and many others in the context of individual chapters. To those whose omission I will only realize after publication, I apologize in advance. I also owe thanks and apologies to my patient husband and my wonderful children, Ben and Sheba, many of whose formative years I spent engaged in working on this book.

INTRODUCTION

Tactile Looking

METAPHORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND TOUCH

> In examining photographic pictures of a certain degree of perfection, the use of a large lens is recommended, such as elderly persons frequently employ in reading. This magnifies the objects two or three times, and often discloses a multitude of minute details, which were previously unobserved and unsuspected.
>
> WILLIAM HENRY FOX TALBOT, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844)

Photographs are visible, but photography is not only a "visual" practice. Let us begin by imagining Mr. Talbot, inventor of the Calotype and an early pioneer of photography, at his writing table.[1] He holds a magnifying glass to a photograph, leans forward, raises the glass to his eye, and adjusts his position to focus on the portion of the photograph he has chosen. This gesture, ostensibly about photographic detail (a magnifying glass is an aid for seeing), is also about the way in which a photograph is handled, how intimately one can engage with it. The gesture suggests a discourse of photography and raises questions about what a photograph is. Is a photograph a specimen like a rock or a fossil that yields its secrets to a close viewer with a glass? Is it like a fine etching in the cabinet of a connoisseur, who uses his glass to appreciate its value or test its authenticity? Or is it like a book with small print, meant to be read? Newer devices, too, created especially to look at photographs, from stereo viewers to digital picture frames, share in a photographic discourse that testifies to photography's involvement in not only vision but also touch.[2]

Touch puts people in contact with photographs; but as photographs pass from hand to hand they establish and maintain relationships between people—or try to. The "metaphors we photograph by" are interconnected with those we live by, and testify to the photographic attempts, successful and

unsuccessful, to implement the values these metaphors serve.[3] You know the expression "Let's stay in touch." Usually it means that someone is leaving for good. If you are lucky, you have a photograph to remember her by. Since the invention of photography, families have used them to stay in touch, mailing pictures of the children to distant relatives to help them stay close. Various authors have emphasized the gender specificity ascribed to such photographic tasks in accordance with the "familial gaze," in Marianne Hirsch's apt term.[4] Raymond Williams has argued that photography helped keep families in touch once economic necessities had scattered them across the globe.[5] Photographs also keep those who have died within our grasp, a view echoed in comparisons between photography and phenomena such as death masks, in musings about deceased relatives, and in portraits of the dead themselves.[6] Some find photographs of kittens and little girls "touching." Most of us have heard someone say, as of a celebrity, or some famous object, "I was so close I could touch him/her/it," and a friend has shown us a photographic token of that closeness—maybe a photograph taken of "him," maybe a photograph of the boasting friend in front of "it." Frequently we reach for terms related to touch. We might not be able to "handle" "seeing" a photograph that depicts torture. Newspapers speculate about which photographic subjects we should have to handle, whether people falling from towers, our own countrymen beheaded in foreign countries, or victims of tsunamis or earthquakes.[7] Sometimes teachers and parents shield children from photographs they don't think young minds can "handle." A barrier in front of the most gruesome photographs and other images in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum keeps children from seeing them.[8] Sometimes photographs can help people to "handle" things; but sometimes the photograph itself must be handled, in the sense of "managed." Sometimes the photographer must be managed, as with "embedded" journalists, or photographers suspected of terrorist motives.[9]

This kind of "handling" slips easily between touch and vision, as often happens when relationships are at stake and usually with unintended consequences. Your friend says she has started seeing some guy: the sense of sight is not the sense that comes immediately to mind. You may respond, knowing your friend, that she is blind to the guy she is "seeing." Touching is blind. There is a tension between looking and touching; the two activities seem to alternate like a blinking eye, as though we cannot do both at the same time. Many of us are most blind to what touches us most nearly. Scholars are often blind when their pet theories are in danger. A serious scholar, after all, studies topics with personal significance. Historians seek to bring the past alive in order to form a relationship with it. Michael Ann Holly suggests that the art

historian Bernard Berenson, who identified "tactile values" in painting, in fact wished allegorically "for his yearning to reach across time and touch the hand of the master painter."[10] His stated purpose was to use tactile values to identify these hands. When one reaches out hoping to take someone's hand, however, mis-takes, as we shall see, are unavoidable.

Mistakes are unavoidable because we often view the important things distractedly. Walter Benjamin knew that as a mode of perception, distraction involves touch. It pertains especially to architecture, appropriated through vision and touch, "noticing the object in an incidental fashion."[11] But photographs are the architecture of a mostly paper environment made up of newspapers, flyers, posters, and screens, and distraction pertains to them, too, even when we fall in love with them. Like architecture, the medium of photography to a large extent, and in a variety of ways, engages the tactile sense. The word *photograph*, meaning "light-writing," evokes both vision and touch, and in exploiting the slippage between the two parts of its name, photography gains power as a relational art, its meaning determined not only by what it looks like but also by the relationship we are invited to have with it.

Distraction does not make for a perception of something as less real. In fact, while the details may diminish, the representation viewed distractedly may impart an enhanced sense of presence. The presence of photographs can be so powerful that we cannot see them by looking closely. As Jean-Paul Sartre understood, when we look directly at a person's eye, the gaze vanishes.[12] In a famous essay, Jacques Lacan ponders the fact that we don't see the skull in Holbein's famous double portrait *The Ambassadors* until we leave the room and happen to glance back.[13] Perhaps photographs hide their secrets this way, too. And, along with distracted viewing, the sense of presence can lead to mistakes, like the mistakes we make when confused by the presence of our lover. There inattention and the attendant careless errors are not at stake, but rather the heightened attention that produces heightened mistakes.

Such mistakes will play an important part in this book's exploration of what I will call tactile looking. But mistakes are only one symptom of the way in which the "touching" aspect of photography helps construct relationships and communities. The significance of tactile looking, mistaken or not, is that it is more act than reading; it produces more than it understands. In contrast, readings aimed at understanding rely on a visual conception of looking. A passage from an important recent book on photographic theory alludes to this distinction. From postures and glances in a group of photographs taken in 1972, Marianne Hirsch reads signs of race relations in 1970s America, arguing that the photographs reveal the inability of a well-meaning family playing

0.1 From the Goldstein family album, courtesy of Robert A. Goldstein.

0.2 From the Goldstein family album, courtesy of Robert A. Goldstein.

host to a young boy through the auspices of the Fresh Air Fund to incorporate him comfortably into their household. Two photographs illustrate the uneasy relation between the guest and his same-age host. The photographs were published in a newspaper's account of a visit paid to the family twenty years later by the boy, Riddick Bowe, now grown up and turned heavyweight boxing champion. "I study these pictures probably more attentively than any of the participants themselves would," Hirsch says.[14] There is no doubt that she studied these photographs attentively. Like all good readings, hers provides material for discussion, perhaps disagreement. Neither, however, will happen here, where I would like simply to note the word *more*.

The former Fresh Air Fund child did not ask the researcher's questions about the attempts of a liberal family to integrate an underprivileged urban child on a two-week visit. He asked none of the questions that might come up in a seminar: whether—or why—the white boy seems reluctant to share his family's things with a black visitor from the inner city, or whether the parents might have had more success in asking their son to share with someone else. The heavyweight champion came to the photograph with a different concern. "He looked at one photo and he said, 'Gee, it looks just like my daughter.'"[15] One can perhaps study a photograph in a wider context than this, but how can one study a photograph more "attentively," or obtain more powerful results? Walter Benjamin quoted Alfred Lichtwark, in 1907: "There is no work of art in our age so attentively viewed as the portrait photography of oneself, one's closest friends and relatives, one's beloved."[16] The act of looking identifies the man with his daughter. To find our daughter, mother, father, or brother in a picture of ourself cements, compellingly, a family relation.

Such interchanges as the athlete's reading of the photograph of himself with his host family's bicycle, which reinforce family ties, are frequent during family viewings of photo albums; Bowe's actions are perfectly in line with Hirsch's theory of the role of family photographs, according to which they allow a family to cohere through the "familial gaze." But if the family uses the photograph in the album to delineate family boundaries, marking the summer guest as an outsider, in the hands of the guest the same photograph becomes intertextual, allowing Bowe to commune with his daughter outside this album (but perhaps in another one) through looking at a picture within it.

Bowe's remark seems to depend on a three-way *resemblance*: between the picture and the daughter, between the man and the daughter, and between the man and his picture. The way in which the photograph may actually resemble his daughter is less significant than the way in which his "reading" acts out a

0.3 *Family Visit*, Fort Worth, Texas, 2004. Photo: Margaret Olin.

specular relation between children and parents. As we shall see in chapter 2, when we explore Roland Barthes's focus on a hand gesture that he shared with his mother, the search for ties between family members causes us to look for and find resemblances in photographs, whether the photographs are present, absent, invented, or apocryphal. The athlete's reading, like Barthes's, is what I will call a "performative index"; it performs a relation that may not depend on resemblance.[17] Its ability to behave in this relational sense gives a photograph its power to stand in for a person.[18]

The term *attentive*, with its relational associations, applies equally to Bowe and Hirsch.[19] Both of their readings of images resemble interactions with people. Hirsch reads the photograph through a two-way mirror, knowing that the people in the photographs cannot see her, while Bowe interacts directly with the image. He may not, as Hirsch notes, following the family's observation on their "middle class values," have seen many photographs of himself as a child, but he has learned the habitual actions associated with them—what I will later call the habitus of photography—that is, how to use them to reinforce family ties through resemblance and identification.

THEORIES OF TOUCH AND VISION

The polarity of touch and vision occupies a time-honored place in perceptual theory. The eighteenth-century theorist George Berkeley thought that much of what we think we see is really something we touch. He regarded the objects of touch as entirely distinct from the objects of sight. Tactile objects impart ideas of weight and solidity. They arise from direct contact with reality, and because of their greater capacity to "benefit, or injure our own Bodies than the illusory objects of the visual sense, which transmit immaterial colors and lights," we learn to identify the objects of sight with the objects of touch, and think that we are "seeing" things that could touch us.[20] This idea inspired John Locke and others to reflect on how one could "learn" this response. "Molyneux's question" asked whether a blind person who could distinguish a cube and a sphere through her sense of touch would be able, given sight, to make the same distinction immediately using her new sense.[21] In the eighteenth century, the development of an operation to remove congenital cataracts seemed to make possible an experimental answer to the question.[22] This, and similar questions, are still alive in the twentieth-century narratives of Oliver Sacks and others.[23] Touch was the acid test, not sight; unlike its partners on the sensory team that collaborates to supply us with perception, touch could work on its own, the only sense "which of itself can judge of externality."[24]

Some Enlightenment figures preferred not to dirty their hands with "touch." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe thought touch base and earthly, vision ethereal and intellectual. Friedrich Schiller rendered the philosophical idea in historical terms: touch thrived in earlier, more primitive times, vision in later, sophisticated ages. Hermann von Helmholtz turned the distinction into a theory of developmental psychology. His theory that small children learn vision through touch seems to consign anyone who continues to learn from touch to eternal childhood.[25]

The notion of touch as a conduit to reality survives in metaphoric expressions of ordinary language that invoke touch to convey a sense of validation, evidence, and proof. A "touch" is a metonymic part: a little bit of something, just a trace, is a touch of it. It identifies a person: her cooking has her special touch; I would know it anywhere. It connotes rivalry: there is no one who can touch him. There is something risky about it: it was touch and go. But a tangible benefit is a real one. If you want to test the genuineness of anything, use a touchstone. The term has been used to criticize "eye-minded" scientific worldviews that pose difficulties for the use of scientific data in cultural studies of the senses: "Science cannot provide a touchstone of truth."[26]

In the fine arts, too, some theorists seemed to hold out little promise for such an earthbound sense. High arts, in their view, emphasized the spirituality and imagination of the optical sense; visual arts properly confined themselves to depicting colors and lights and avoiding the representation of elements such as outlines that suggested the tactile sense. The seemingly spiritual nature of the visual attracted impressionists and most symbolists.[27] Vestiges of it survived in the work of critics of the mid-twentieth century, who used formal criteria of opticality to interpret such artistic movements as abstract expressionism.

For all its baseness and simplicity, however, there is something appealing about a direct, even primitive, connection to reality. Already in the late eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried von Herder found vision philosophical, but cold, compared to touch. Beauty of form is "not a visual, but a palpable concept."[28] In the late nineteenth century, Bernard Berenson extolled the sense of touch for its "higher coefficient of reality." A painting's "tactile values" convey the reality of its subject.[29] The art historian Wilhelm Worringer conceived of an elaborate interplay between the two modes of perception, for which he drew on the ideas of the art historian and theorist of touch, Alois Riegl.[30] His dissertation, *Abstraction and Empathy*, published in German in 1908, was influential on artists, literary theorists, and aestheticians far beyond Germany.[31]

A rich and intriguing jumble of meanings, evidence, and experience clung to the interplay between the terms *touch* and *vision*.[32] Touch could refer to the appeal to the sense of touch in the viewer, to the touch of the brush or chisel that made the work of art, to the hand of the artist that held the brush or chisel, or to the feelings that motivated the artist to pick up the tool. The touches valued by impressionists in the form of visible brushstrokes on a canvas signified in both directions, suggesting vision and the ephemeral qualities of light and color, as well as the brush (touch) of the artist.[33] An appeal to the viewer's sense of touch could refer to the texture of the paint or the solidity of the represented object. Sometimes, touch could signify three-dimensional space, as opposed to optical "flatness."[34] Reference to the object in space enlisted touch in the discourse of proof, validating representational strategies that sought to represent the solid, real, and authentic.

Nothing need be three-dimensional to refer to touch: the terms *touch* and *sight* were largely symbolic. The moon is too far away to touch, but an eighteenth-century theory traced the source of the "moon illusion," according to which the moon appears larger near the horizon than at its zenith, to a tactile judgment based, like more mundane ones, on the indecipherable lights and colors that we see.[35] If these hard-to-decipher optical signs be-

come signs for the more reliable tactile sensations, so the theory goes, then, armed with knowledge of them, we could begin to judge visually, through past experience, the size and shape of objects we could never hope to touch. The consequences for art are that subjects might be real or imagined, meaning that Berenson could expect his readers to test oil paintings for tactile values without running their fingers along them, and that touch could refer to non-representational art. By the mid-twentieth century, touches of paint became the site of a conflict between two theories of abstract expressionism. While Harold Rosenberg saw a painting as an arena where paint remained as a sign of an action that had taken place, Clement Greenberg saw the same paint as a manifestation of the optical.[36] The confusion illuminates an equation already implicit in Benjamin's concept of distraction: touching is seeing.[37]

It follows from this that notions of touch and sight were sometimes hard to disentangle. Jean Piaget developed the ideas of reciprocity of touch and sight that we have been tracing to take into account the active and coordinated use of touch and vision to discover the world. While he denied that touch works on its own, as Berkeley and Locke had assumed, he still ascribed to a hierarchy whereby intelligence ascends on a perceptual basis toward a higher stage of rational generalization that he called "operational."[38] Other thinkers, Merleau-Ponty perhaps the most well known, dismissed Piaget's privileging of "operational thinking," but expanded his insight into the role of active exploration in perception to formulate a conception of perception as signaling an embodied relation to the world. To perceive the world is simultaneously to perceive oneself; perception is therefore always relational.[39] Even in mundane judgments, such as our estimate of distance and size, the reality of an object, hence its independent existence, emerges from the relationship that we can have with that object: we judge something as far away because it is beginning to slip away "from the grip of our gaze and is less closely allied to it."[40] For Merleau-Ponty, vision and touch are interchangeable in lived experience: "It is only as a result of a science of the human body that we finally learn to distinguish between our senses. The lived object is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather it presents itself to us from the start as the center from which these contributions radiate."[41]

Merleau-Ponty had approached a phenomenological explanation that could be used to understand the entailment of relation in perception, but the discourse of vision and touch eventually diminished, to be replaced by the discourse of the "gaze."[42] The gaze represented a shift in perceptual theory from questions about how we know what we know, to questions about what happens when someone looks at us or we look at someone. The term *touch* had

little to contribute to this discourse, and was seldom heard until recently.[43] Yet aspects of it lived on in new forms. Interactivity, for example, appeals to a viewer's sense of touch, seeming, in the choices it presents, to offer the viewer, or user, a sense of power.[44] When we click on images on websites, they grow larger or give way to other images. Online or computer-aided installations allow viewers to click on an image to give a plant light, move an object in a gallery, or help design a small organism.[45] Interactivity seems to turn a viewer into an actor and a user, a performer rather than a passive consumer. Whether it does so or not is disputed: the "authority" granted to the viewer thereby may be real or illusory; the viewer may be in command or simply conducted by an author turned commander, through patterned actions that narrow the viewer's choices. What this authority does not do, however, is guarantee the truth of a represented object. The author resembles a chief executive who exercises authority over his underlings more than he does a gatekeeper who authorizes access to authenticity. "Interactivity" is most often introduced to heighten art's appeal, rarely or never its representational authority.

The diversion of the sense of touch did not, however, cause the epistemological questions neglected by the discourse of the gaze and by interactivity to disappear from the art-world vernacular. And consequently touch itself remained there hidden inside the term *index*, which, borrowed loosely from C. S. Peirce, usurped touch's function of authorizing authenticity several decades ago.[46] In the most common simplification of Peirce, the *index* is distinguished from the *icon*, because the latter represents its object through resemblance, while the former represents its object through contact: it points at, or it is itself a trace of, or mark made by, its object. A painted likeness is an icon. So, under certain conditions, is a diagram. A thumbprint or a weathervane is an index. Because the item had to be there for an indexical representation of it to exist, it is often thought that an index is inherently more persuasive than an icon.

The technical discourse of indexicality, coming from philosophy and rhetoric to replace an ordinary word, loses the immediate physicality of touch. Thus, as the term *index* usurps the authority of *touch*, it also disembodies the concept: to refer to an "index" of the artist, rather than her "touch," does not bring to mind the artist's hand, or the act of painting. Merleau-Ponty's visceral theory has no place in it. Yet theories of the index at least covertly seem to depend on the reality of touch, implying that if one believes what one sees, it is only because it looks like it can also be touched. Roland Barthes thought that if we think something we see is or once was real enough to be touched, we will be more likely to believe ideas connected to the vision, even though ideas, like the moon, cannot be touched.

The index contributed to the discourse of touch by questioning its basis, making it apparent that touch remains in the realm of language. In visual representation, touch, as Berenson's theory of "tactile" values assumes but fails to make explicit, is not a sense but a signifier of one. By evoking language directly, however, indexical theory turns touching into a kind of reading.

Thus, writing that places the index in question and discusses its problematic shows the limitations of the sense of touch as well.[47] The discourse of touch disguised as index convincingly reveals the extent to which a sign can or cannot tell us whether something is real. When the index usurps the authority of touch, it questions all authority.

PHOTOGRAPHY: A GESTURAL PRACTICE

Metaphors of touch do not encompass everything that makes photography a gestural practice. The gesture with a magnifying glass that brings William Henry Fox Talbot close to his Calotype is only one of many everyday gestures that surround photographs wherever they are, executed at all levels of photographic practices, from making to viewing.

Just as a painter gestures with brushes at a canvas to describe space, objects, people, and ideas, and lecturers gesture at audiences to describe ideas or to connect to their listeners, so photography's gestures function to describe ideas and things and to connect people. People mock tourists for mediating

0.4 *Istanbul*, 2004. Photo: Margaret Olin.

their encounters with a camera, but many of them, gesturing with cameras, actually seek encounters through their lenses. The taking of a picture acts out a relationship. The gesture may be fleeting, but that does not mean that it cannot vary. The engaged gesture of the traditional 35-millimeter photographer, whether a tourist, or perhaps a scholar, differs from the detached gesture of a digital photographer seemingly meditating on the virtues of her camera as if there were no external world to photograph, or the stiffly commanding ges-

0.5 *Vienna*, 2004.
Photo: Margaret Olin.

0.6 *Istanbul*, 2004.
Photo: Margaret Olin.

ture of a cell phone camerawoman. Occasionally an absentminded friend is so focused on his companion that he forgets to load the camera properly. A photograph of such a scene of picture-taking inspired a fascinating series of reflections on Roland Barthes by the hapless cameraman in this case, Hubert Damisch.[48]

Photographic gestures, however, are not the subject of the photograph. Unlike the painter's brushstroke, or Jackson Pollock's "drip," the photographic gesture is not usually meant to be seen, even though the viewer may wonder, while looking at a photograph of a panoramic mountain view or a close-up of a grisly wartime scene, whether the photographer risked any danger while taking the picture. Perhaps in response to such musings, heroic depictions of photographers sometimes show the cloth-covered photographer balanced behind a view camera at the edge of a cliff or wearing combat gear and juggling a Leica in smoke-filled air. Only some photographic gestures even register on the print, generally indicating a point of view, a massaging gesture performed in a darkroom, or the Ouija-board creep of the mouse. Reactions to the photographer can also register, like the fellow tourist's spontaneous smile for a stranger's camera, the mouthing of "cheese" for mother's camera at the birthday party, or the hat or hand that wards off the photographer.[49] Such reactions cannot be read too rigidly. Lucia Moholy and Sophie Calle, among others, played with such conventions for comic effect.[50]

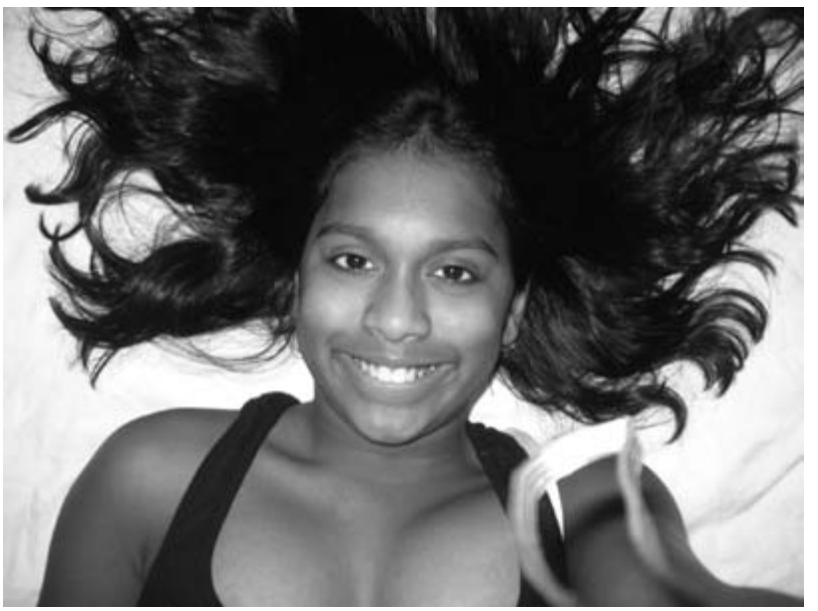
0.7 *Vienna,* 2004. Photo: Margaret Olin.

Yet photographic gestures indicate that photographic practices do more than merely represent the world. Gestures turn photographs into presences that populate the world like people and act within it to connect people. Professional photographers, on whom most studies of photography focus, often operate in teams, like directors of films. Yet even personal photographers, who seem to work on their own, like painters, depend on communities. Often communities themselves are represented in photographs. Art photographers from Danny Seymour to Larry Clark or Nan Goldin regard photographic practices as communal acts that they thematize in photographic diaries or narratives of their friends' lives.[51]

0.8 Lucia Moholy-Nagy, *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy*, 1926. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

This book is not, however, about the work of such photographers or about how photographs represent communities.[52] Instead, it investigates how photographs participate in and create relationships and communities, and it explores ways in which communities gather around photographs. Even snapshot photographers, who do to some extent work on their own, at least while taking pictures, engage in photographic practices that are produced by the societies in which they are embedded.[53] Photographic activity may take different socially sanctioned forms, from the "photo op" of the "tourist" or "family" outing, to the careful preparations made by the serious hobbyist or professional, to the snapshots taken by insurance agents and detectives, to the displays made by curators on the walls of museums, or the arrangements made by collectors in archival boxes. I may take photographs, pose for them, or merely look at them in magazines, on walls, or on websites like Flickr.com. All these activities are photographic practices that inform the expectations people have of photographs, how they act in taking them or posing for them, and how photographs acquire their meanings or do their jobs.[54]

These actions surrounding photography are what Pierre Bourdieu calls their "habitus." As described in his *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, the concept allows the sociologist to examine the significance of habits without regimenting them: certain actors can perform habitual actions of particular kinds with aplomb, becoming virtuosos within their cultures. Photographers may



0.9 Sheba Nelson, *Self Portrait*, 2006. © 2010 by Sheba Nelson.

be virtuosos, but the habitus of photography concerns the actions that surround ordinary photographs as well, and center on their social function.[55]

When the teenager holds a cell phone at arm's length to capture herself on its screen and message the image to her boyfriend, she is not first and foremost making a representation, but rather enacting an accepted genre of courtship behavior, teleporting herself as a gift to her boyfriend. The image itself acts as little more than a manifestation of her attachment to him; holding her image in his hand, he may be reluctant—or eager—to erase it. Made possible by context, photographs are more than context: they touch one another and the viewer. They substitute for people. They can be, and even demand to be, handled. When a much-handled photograph has faded, it can be difficult to bring oneself to throw it away. Photographs are part of our community.

It is possible to describe the teenager's cell phone photograph as a witness to her devotion as well as a surrogate companion to her boyfriend; photography merges the language of witnessing with the language of the index. Georges Didi-Huberman has argued for the impact of the photograph on the discourse of witnessing. Writing of four photographs of gas chambers made by inmates of a concentration camp as an act of resistance, he argues that it is difficult for historians to do justice by them. In the ontology of witnessing, as in any relationship in which photography has a part, one tends to demand either too much from a photograph, disparaging its lack of detail, or too little, rejecting its testimony altogether. While it is tempting to assume, given photography's indexicality, that photography actually proves the existence of what it depicts, it is also tempting to regard the photograph as overly subjective.[56] The act of photographing, in Didi-Huberman's account, mediates between these two extremes, giving photography a degree of authenticity.

It is possible to regard the role that photographic practices play in witnessing as equivalent to an action, arguing, for example, that the photograph is like the heap of rocks that Jacob, in the book of Genesis, uses to mark his pact with Laban, father of Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel.[57] The rocks, which caused Jacob to name the place Galeed, or "heap of witness," did not describe that biblical covenant. After the act of placing them, they no longer needed to be seen, but only to mark the place. Like a snapshot, it was only necessary, most of the time, to know that they were there. This rock heap is similar to churingas, stone or wood ancestor figures that sometimes consist only of "pieces of wood or unworked pebbles," which Claude Lévi-Strauss compared to "documentary archives which we secrete in strongboxes or entrust to the safe-keeping of solicitors and which we inspect from time to time with the

care due to sacred things."[58] The photograph, in its capacity as a witness, is such a heap or pebble that, like objects in an archive, "give(s) a physical existence to history" but can be taken for a likeness of the pact.[59] As I shall show, we do not have to look at photographs to count on their ability to represent, to resemble, to describe, as well as to indicate indexically.

Thus, how photographs look may be less central to their habitus than how people look at them. Or how people refuse to, fail to, or simply do not look at them. The fact that a photograph, once taken, can become a visual presence in our world does not only mean that we look at photographs. We also are *with* photographs; and we spend time in their presence. They are not only visual presences, hallucinations, but also physical objects, with a physical visuality that we can touch.[60] This "touching" characteristic of photographic practices is individual, interpersonal, and communitywide.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Photographic practices involve photographers, their subjects, organizations and people who collect photographs, and photographic institutions. Because the book moves among these "agents," some chapters read differently from others. No ontology of photographs or systematic understanding of photographic or photo-historical methodology is attempted here, but rather a series of inroads into different ways in which photographs, beyond their representational roles, actively participate in building communities and relationships. Sometimes the social actor, or agent, on whom the text focuses seems to be the photographer, be it Walker Evans or W. G. Sebald's fictional photographer, Jacques Austerlitz. Sometimes the agent is a viewer, like Roland Barthes. Sometimes agency drifts from photographer to client to institution or academic viewers, as in chapter 4, on James VanDerZee's Harlems. While agency always entails independence and control, the struggle for agency in this sense engages some chapters more directly than others. The agency of the photographer Walker Evans lessens the control of the subjects, whereas the agency of various institutions, authors, and viewers limits the extent to which the photographer James VanDerZee could control the reception of his photographs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, chapter 5, on varieties of photographic empowerment, addresses the notion of power relations most directly, as the expression "photographic empowerment" itself suggests. All the studies, however, converge on the question of how, in the area of interpersonal relationships, photographs act rather than represent.

Topics move roughly from the use of photographs to establish individual relationships to the idea that a photograph can establish a larger communi-

ty, and that groups of photographs themselves comprise such communities. I write "roughly" because social, communal, and larger historical forces impinge on every individual, while the anonymous social forces discussed here are those on which individuals have or seek to have an impact. As we focus our magnifying lens on photographic practices involving gesture, touch, and their metaphors, we move now closer, now further away. Chapter 1, about the photo-text *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by Walker Evans and James Agee, investigates the notion of the gaze as it was used in text and image to merge social activism and aesthetic modernism through a one-to-one relationship between viewer and photograph. It examines the work as an important example of the struggle between two modernist discourses, of aesthetic autonomy and of the union of art and life. Chapter 2 approaches closer, as it examines the fraught relationship between identifying and identifying with a photograph. Introducing the concept of a "performative index," it seeks to explain why the attempt to create a relationship with photographs depends on the belief in their indexicality but not on what one can see in them. Chapter 3 examines how W. G. Sebald, scholar of Austrian literature, adapted to photography ideas about the power of the image from Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the early twentieth-century Austrian poet. These ideas inform the ways in which his own novels play with the slippage between epistemological and companionable notions of photographs.

With chapter 4, the focus shifts to interactions within or around larger communities. It demonstrates how VanDerZee's availability for appropriation helped make his work the source of and support for visualizations of imagined Harlems for a diverse series of visitors. Chapter 5 centers on efforts to "empower" the disenfranchised by placing in their hands cameras and the expertise to use them, providing them with access to shared Internet sites, and offering them the opportunity to talk back to photographs.

The subject of chapter 6, photographic practices after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City, draws from ideas in the previous five chapters to analyze one of the more complex recent examples of how rituals and conceptions of photography infused a cataclysmic event and affected the way in which people used photographs to try to handle it. The new situation put pressure on available photographic practices and called for the introduction of new ones. After three brief discussions of the images in circulation, and photographic activities by observers both amateur and professional, the two main "stories" of these events turn to innovative photographic exhibits in the immediate aftermath of the events. One of them combines the idea of blockbuster exhibitions such as *Harlem on My Mind* with notions of

photographic empowerment. To explain its cumulative function, I introduce a new conception of "basking" in photographs. The other "story," a discussion of the spontaneous exhibitions of flyers of the "missing," delves into dilemmas encountered by the people who had to cope with displaying and preserving these flyers. These dilemmas go to the heart of what a photograph is and how to treat it.

I realize that many photographic practices discussed in the book aim at bonding communities and cementing positive and productive relationships. The epilogue tries to rein in the apparent euphoria. It asks how we relate to the unwanted attentions of unlovable photographs that create distaste or enmity. How does identification with photographs work when the person gazing out of a photograph is not a loved one, a downtrodden tenant farmer, or a third-world orphan but rather the perpetrator of torture?

When William Henry Fox Talbot took a magnifying glass to a photograph, he looked for evidence of the reality of the moment, the "multitude of minute details" that could tell him, for example, "the hour of the day at which the view was taken."[61] As photography, over the course of its history, increasingly changed from an epistemological tool to a companion and a witness, its users and makers demanded more from it, a different, more relational reality. That kind of reality is the subject of this book. To it, we seldom take a magnifying glass, real or metaphorical.

ONE

"It Is Not Going to Be Easy to Look into Their Eyes"

Privilege of Perception in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

THE GAZE AND THE VISION

Through their "indexical" quality, photographs seem to authenticate any text attached to them. The American documentary movement of the 1930s took advantage of this quality, in abundant collaborations between writers and photographers. One of the most interesting and puzzling of these collaborations, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, harnessed photography's indexical character to its potential as a relational object, with results that illuminate the expectations that modernism laid at photography's door, and begin to suggest the disappointment of those expectations.

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men began as journalism in 1936, but has never been easy to classify since. Rather than collaborating and interacting, its words and photographs, segregated from each other in the book, seem to talk at the same time, leaving the reader paging back and forth, from one to the other, in an attempt to pull together its social network, which ensnares its authors, the photographer Walker Evans and the writer James Agee; their subjects, southern sharecroppers whose gazes look out from Evans's photographs; and finally the reader, whose eyes meet those gazes and read Agee's text. Today, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is known as a classic of an indefinable genre, the collision, in fact, of two modernist genres, the "documentary" and the artistic photographic text. As a documentary, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* exhorts the reader to participate in, so as to ameliorate, the conditions it describes, while as a work of art it steps back to allow itself to be contemplated. The competition enhances the difference between these two discursive modes, like a discordant marriage whose dynamics is bound to puzzle, and even disturb, the outsider. If I gaze at the book as art, its impertinent documentary nature fixes its eyes on me and demands my attention to the tenant farmers and their plight; but if I examine the book to find out about the farmers, I get

lost in Agee's prose and Evans's pictures, and I forget the everyday world outside the book. The tension between these two modes is a central problem in modernist discourse. As I will show in this chapter, the use of photographs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is fundamental to the way in which this complex experiment in intersubjectivity speaks to that tension.

The transformation from journalism to daunting mixture of documentary and art took twenty-four years. In 1936 *Fortune* magazine commissioned a story aimed at increasing public awareness of the plight of southern sharecroppers, at the time a fashionable topic.[1] It was part of a series that utilized a widespread documentary genre about the life of the poor, featuring complementary relationships between photographs and text.[2] For two months, the authors traveled in Alabama, living for the most part in Hale County with one of three families whose lives they recorded. Five years later, they finally published their work, not in *Fortune*, but as an ungainly, almost unsalable book with a text of some 470 pages, accompanied by thirty-one photographs. The "classic" we know today is a second edition that appeared nineteen years after the first, and four years after Agee's death. It included the unaltered text of the first edition, but twice as many photographs and a memoir by Evans. Although the conditions that initiated the project had faded from the public eye, it inspired a new generation of social activists, whose very distance from the 1930s that they idealized helped the book complete its transition from a social document, with faintly exploitative overtones, to a work of documentary art.[3]

The play between the documentary and the artistic aims seems initially to be inscribed in the juxtaposition of images and words. The unadorned photographs of Evans that we encounter, silent and without caption, before the title page of the text, promise unmediated access to gritty reality; the baroque richness of Agee's voluble prose that follows offers fine art. Early on, Agee acknowledges the superiority of photographs over the written word for the documentary purpose: "If I could do it, I'd do no writing at all here. It would be photographs."[4] Evans's images, however, were celebrated for more than their documentary value; an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art before the book appeared deemed them "poetry."[5] Agee's ornate text resists easy classification as well. "Isn't every human being both a scientist and an artist," he asks, "and in writing of human experience, isn't there a good deal to be said for recognizing the fact and for using both methods?" (242). Accordingly, verses alternate with passages in sociological prose, statistics with impressions. Furthermore, the text presents indices of its own: both actually,

in the form of reproductions of handwritten notes from the sharecroppers' family Bible (422–24), and figuratively, in its wish to replace the text accompanying the photographs with "fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and of excrement" (13). The text that provides this feast of words rebels against even the obvious classification as a book. According to its preface, it is "a *book* only by necessity. More seriously, it is an effort in human actuality, in which the reader is no less centrally involved than the authors and those of whom they tell" (xvi, original emphasis).[6]

The text's aspiration to the status of non-art, however, combined with its claim of "actuality," only places it within an identifiably modernist tradition that availed itself of well-worn devices of non-art, in a ceaseless, fruitless attempt to evade recognition as art.[7] The complaint that "no matter how strong and vivid it may be, its strength and vividness are not of that order which, in the open air of our actual, personal living, we draw in every time we breathe" (240) resounds throughout the annals of modernism.[8] This attitude was often accompanied by the notion that art continually suffers what Agee calls, in his gendered idiom (also characteristic of modernist discourse), the "emasculation of acceptance" (13). Indeed, Agee's very denial of art ensures that art is on every reader's mind, so that it is almost impossible to view his collaboration with Evans as anything else. Rather than reject art for its impotence, however, he imagines how art might avoid "acceptance" so as to be reenergized. If played on a street corner, the headline is "Beethoven Sonata Held No Disturbance" (449). If one listens to the Seventh Symphony with the volume turned up so high that it hurts, however, Beethoven is subversive (15).

Beethoven's audience can be disturbed only if it voluntarily enters the space of the symphony, not merging with it, but creating a relationship so close it hurts. In order to create an ear-splitting disturbance with his own music, therefore, Agee turned to relationships. If art fails, it is for want of giving us not the taste of the family's food but the relationship that only reality makes possible, a relation demanding the copresence, in time and space, of real people: a self and an Other that relates to the self. Both must be "actual" in a way that authors and those of whom they tell are not: the reader must do art "the simple but total honor of accepting and believing it in the terms in which he accepts and honors breathing, lovemaking, the look of a newspaper, the street he walks through" (240). These things are "actual" not only insofar as they are in our space but insofar as they are in our time, and we attend to them. Even reality does not always elicit such acceptance and "honor." The people about

whom Agee writes are made real because they are photographed. If they are made "actual" in the sense of "current," however, it is only because they look at us, and we are here now. They entreat us to participate with them in life. We are, then, justified in regarding the gazes of the tenants in Walker Evans's photographs as part of an artful construction of selves to which a viewing subject can attend and thereby make real. As we shall see, the device of the gaze, by which people seek to relate in everyday life, also knits the strands of Agee's disparate text into a narrative.

If we try to meet the tenants on their own terms, however, we face the same challenge that Agee understood Beethoven to face: to reconcile "actuality" of presence with the (modernist) conditions under which the project became art—an aesthetics that presupposes distance and autonomy. The work hesitates in a state of uneasy aporia, dramatized in a text that repeatedly protests, down to its last sentence, that it is only about to begin.[9] This aporia, which the text vividly attacks and to which it is at the same time blind, is the aporia of would-be activist art throughout modernity. The attempt to uphold the distinction between an engaged life and an art demanding disinterested contemplation, and the attempt to break down that distinction coexisted within modernism from its beginnings.[10] The documentary movement of the 1930s was only one of a long line of such attempts to unite art and life, ranging from pseudomonastic societies of artists seeking to translate hermetic art into hermetic lives, to more-public ministries that tried to combine the refined aesthetics of hermetic art and the social needs of housing projects and city planning, and to theorists who tried to find a social function for an art submerged in the critical investigation of its own medium. The attempt to establish a direct relationship between art and its beholder (and to avoid it) was an important theme throughout much of this history. And, as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* strikingly demonstrates, hermetic art is not recruited for social activism without a struggle.

Its major recruiting device is the figure of the returned gaze. The gaze largely replaced the discourse of touch versus vision in order to grapple with the work of art outside the hermetic isolation to which it had been consigned in most discourses of opticality. More recent literature has tended to construe the notion of the gaze negatively: To look at someone is an act of aggression.[11] To "stare down" a challenger is to subjugate that person to oneself. For feminists, that element of subordination in the gaze has usually been sexual, as suggested in Barbara Kruger's famous poster-like images, inscribed so as to bear witness to the violence of looking, with statements such as "Your gaze hits

1.1 Henri-Alexandre-Georges Regnault, *Salome*, 1870. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of George F. Baker, 1916. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY. Used with permission.

the side of my face."[12] Returned "subordination" by the gaze can also be depicted as a decidedly nonfeminist sexual challenge, as in Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, or earlier, in Regnault's *Salome*.[13] Michael Fried has famously drawn attention to the issue through his interpretation of "absorption," the refusal to acknowledge the presence of a beholder, as a source of independence and agency.[14]

Yet the concept of the gaze had positive ramifications as well. By placing the work of art in the same psychological space with the beholder, the gaze

1.2 Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Edward Kosmach*, 1910, Inv. 4702. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna. Used with permission of Belvedere, Vienna.

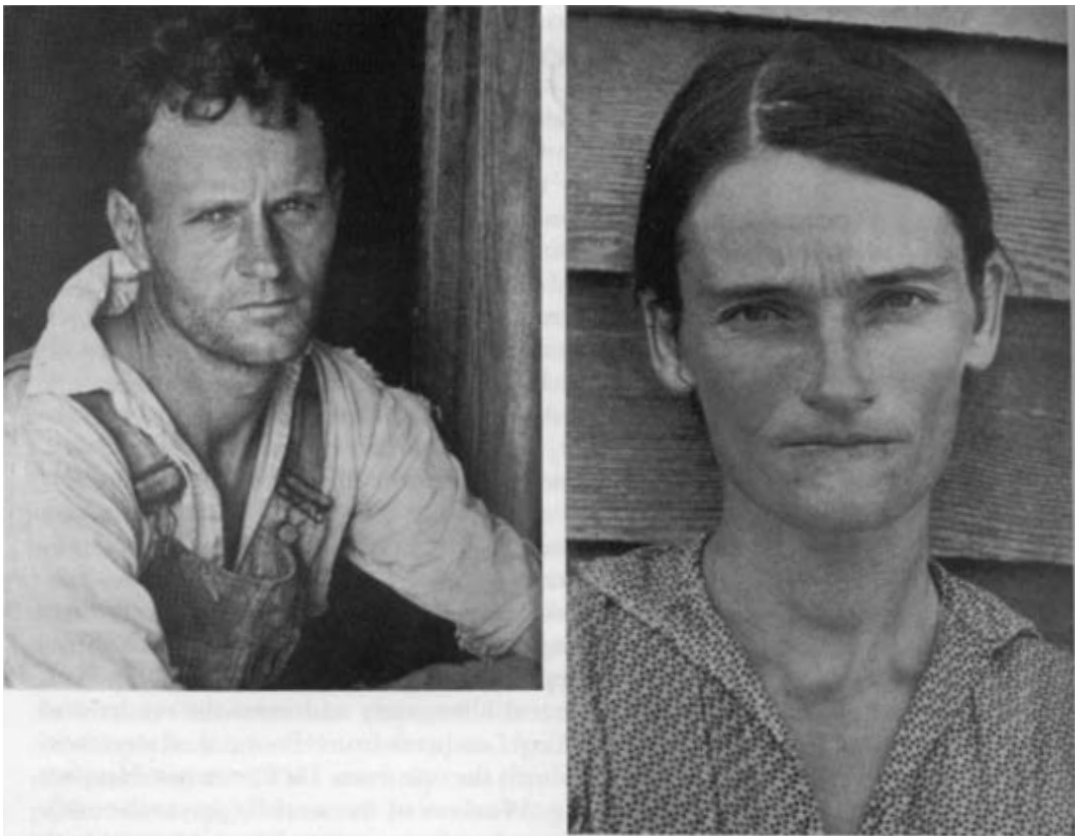
could be used as a way of sidestepping epistemological problems in order to establish the reality of a work of art. At the turn of the century, the transfixing gazes of expressionist work added validity to a style that could not depend on verisimilitude. Put another way, the work of art that grants attention to its beholder insists, in the exercise of its own freedom, that it exists and therefore that its artistic representation is also valid. It urges the viewer to believe that portrayed people have real existence, and are not figments of the viewer's imagination. This possibility troubled thinkers in the early twentieth century, when subjective theories of perception seemed to pose the threat of perceptual and ethical relativism. The association of attention with freedom and the conviction of one's own existence helped make the strategy theoretically compelling.

Finally, the gaze could operate as a figure for the direct participation or implication of the beholder. By acknowledging the existence of others, we participate with them in a relationship. If the "realism" of the work persuades the reader-beholders of the reality of the people, the gaze guarantees that the intention of the work is to inaugurate a relationship between the reader and the subjects, much as it would happen in real life. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* seeks to engage this type of gaze, representative of a communal social ideal.

Yet both text and photographs are inscribed in an irresolvable conflict between the shared gaze and the isolated vision demanded by the aesthetics of autonomy. The artistic vision of Evans and Agee stands to the gaze of their documented subjects in an equivocal relation that threatens to undermine the relationship in which we as readers are asked to participate. As Agee carefully constructs his concept of the shared respectful gaze, he repeatedly engages other, more ethically ambiguous permutations of the concept. In what follows, I shall treat the "gaze" and the "vision" separately, before exploring the obstacles to their reconciliation. This attempted reconciliation turns on, and is emblematic of, the outcome of the struggle between the pivotal function of photography as a means for establishing relationships and the effort to subsume photography into a "modernist" aesthetic.

THE GAZE

> There is no way of taking the heart and the intelligence by the hair and of wresting it to its feet, and of making it look this terrific thing in the eyes: which are such gentle eyes: you may meet them, with all the summoning of heart you have, in the photograph in this volume of the young woman with black hair. (321)



1.3 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941. *Left*, George Gudger; *right*, Annie Mae Gudger.

The passage gathers together three people. The writer, in lieu of taking the reader's heart "by the hair," exhorts "you" to direct your gaze toward a photographed person. Although ambiguous, the reference is most likely to the third photograph in the book, of "Annie Mae Gudger," already facing "you" for the introduction.[15] Similar strategies, used throughout the text, serve to implicate the direct, second-person address in the act of beholding.

Often, as here, the triple direct address is accompanied by a warning: you are not going to be able to look "this terrific thing in the eyes" unless you do so "with all the summoning of heart you have." In "Colon," Agee's exhortation to the reader to participate cooperatively, he speaks of the difficulties facing "one who sets himself to look at all earnestly, at all in purpose toward truth, into the living eyes of a human life" (99). Knowledge can only come through

direct address and the ability to look the truth in the eyes—but it is almost impossible to look the truth in the eyes. The means of overcoming the obstacles to communication, direct address in words or looks, are themselves fraught with obstacles.

Evans behind his camera and Agee behind his notebook face the tenants directly. They point us toward their images and words so that we may face the tenants, too. Twin epigraphs to the book prepare for this three-way relationship, and for the very different tones in which the text alternately addresses the reader and the sharecroppers. A quotation from *King Lear* turns from "poor naked wretches" to address the readers dismissively as "pomp"; one from *The Communist Manifesto* addresses the subjects of the book as the "workers of the world" (xviii–xix). References to theater, a cast of characters, and an "intermission" signal the constant changes in address everywhere in the text, as Agee shifts his focus from one character to another: from the reader, who becomes almost an embattled character in the drama, and whom Agee usually conceives sarcastically or bitterly (in one passage he laments his "inability to blow out the brains with [his text] of you who take what it is talking of lightly, or not seriously enough" [307]), to the tenants, whom he addresses respectfully one by one.

Such passages point to a complex set of expectations associated with the direct, returned gaze. To share a gaze with Annie Mae is to establish a relationship with her. The relationship established through the gaze has an epistemological meaning: to look Annie Mae in the eyes is to look truth in the eyes. There is, however, a threatening element in such a gaze as well. It is threatening to face the truth. It may also be threatening to establish a relationship.

What is hard about gazing into someone's eyes is that the gazer is seen as well. As any spy knows, spying is safe so long as one's seeing is not seen, a point honored shortly after the publication of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in Jean-Paul Sartre's essay *Being and Nothingness*.[16] Using the example of a spy at a keyhole who feels that someone is watching him, Sartre argues that by looking at me, the Other fixes me in space and time, depriving me of my freedom and stealing a world I thought belonged to me alone. We might respond that there is nothing threatening in the attempt of Agee's prose and Evans's photographs to acknowledge the existence of the tenant farmers and their families. If only the acknowledgment of existence mattered, however, photography could have accomplished it without the gaze. If photographed, then somewhere or sometime the tenants must have existed.

But the bare existence that a lone photograph guarantees on its own is not the kind that Agee and Evans wish to provide for the characters in their

story. In their existence, these characters gaze out of their photographs at us, and their gaze grants existence to the viewer just as irrevocably as does the gaze of Sartre's Other. Not only do these people exist themselves, but we exist to them. The hard, fixed look they give us means that they and we exist in the same space. People existing in the same space are of consequence to one another. Our actions, therefore, can have consequence to them. Looking into their eyes, we take responsibility for what we do to them, or more to the point, what we leave undone. Sartre thought that to experience being watched was to experience shame, the shame of being a set, determined object rather than a free subject. Because, however, only the eye of the Other makes us conscious of ourselves, we construct ourselves constantly as an object for an Other. In Evans and Agee's book, to return the look of the photographs is also to come to terms with our own shame. But because it is these specific people whose gaze we return, the shame we feel is that of being privileged, separate. The gaze that they fix upon us reminds us of our own finite natures. We construct ourselves for Others, but not for such Others as these. To face up to our being for *them* is what "is not going to be easy."

In this ethical point lies an important difference between the notions of the gaze in Agee-Evans and in Sartre. For Sartre, the beheld person who returns the gaze objectifies the original observer; he or she becomes the master of the situation, and defuses the power of the gaze.[17] Two cannot be subjects at once for themselves and for the Other. Sartre does not address the experience of two subjects each looking at the other yet remaining subjects. His gaze is a felt or imagined gaze, represented for the spying subject at the keyhole not in the visual but, as Jacques Lacan observed, in the aural sense.[18] The aural sense precludes mutual looking.

It is also possible, however, to conceive of the gaze as engendering not shame but responsibility. If so, then to share a gaze suggests responsibility toward the person looking back at me. The face imparts a command: Thou shalt not kill, according to French philosopher Emanuel Levinas in his book *Totality and Infinity*, where he elaborates his concept of the responsibility adhering to a person who looks into the face of another.[19] A shared gaze with the tenants asks me to refuse to participate, by neglect or indifference, or by subscription to oppressive political or economic systems, in their deaths. Evans and Agee held out great hopes for such mutual looking. Their text and photographs can be read as evocations of the communicative power of the human eye. The returned gaze promises shared subjecthood; it ends exploitation. In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the shame of being gazed upon is transfigured by an ethical term: "I looked them in the eyes with full and open respect"

(29). The term *respect*, etymologically stemming from the Latin verb *respicere*, meaning "to look back," implies that looking has an ethical dimension.[20] Agee uses it consistently to characterize his relationship to the tenant farmers, and the returned gaze he shares more and more frequently with them.[21] With respect, the text and photographs seem to say, mutual looking can overcome the exercise of power bound up in the gaze.

That the returned gaze should prevent murder is a lot to ask of it. Levinas expressly did not wish his thoughts to be applied to faces in portraits or photographs.[22] Such faces cannot look back, even if they seem to, because they cannot speak. Yet the tendency to look at photographs as though the people and things that they represent are actually present gives the figure of the gazing portrait its rhetorical power. The tension between the rhetoric of the gaze and the inability of the pictured gaze to speak indeed unmasks the figure of the gaze as mere rhetoric and opens it to more troubling possibilities that Agee's text also acknowledges. He places in question its assumed connection with immediacy and directness, concedes the privilege of the one who is allowed to gaze, and broaches the possibility of the direct address that fails to see. Hence he records false modes of address in the text along with false gazes. Agee carries on an irritated dialogue with one of Louise Gudger's textbooks: "Dear Boys and Girls indeed!" he exclaims, and "you will read (Oh I will, will I?)" (299–300). Even the preface, which begins straightforwardly enough with first-person address ("During July and August 1936 Walker Evans and I were traveling"), slips within a page into the third person: "The authors found it possible to make this concession" (xiii–xiv). This third-person plural, and perhaps the concession it signals, begins a discourse of confrontation and deception in which direct address and its repeal evokes and revokes the possibility of communication.

The photographer, however, seems to bear more direct responsibility for the gaze than the writer of books. The most pernicious failure of the gaze to which Agee refers is that of a photographer, Margaret Bourke-White, whose facile gaze determines the look of the most popular photo-text of the period, *You Have Seen Their Faces*.[23] In an appendix to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Agee inserts a fatuous article reprinted from the *New York Post* (450–54).[24] Bourke-White's subjects, as explained in this article, either did not look back or were bribed to do so. Far from being collaborative, they tolerated the photographer only because their lack of experience left them helpless to avoid her interference in their lives and rituals: "Her rare photographs of the 'coming through' ritual, if it could be called a ritual, in a white Holiness church were possible only because the minister had never before had a photographer to

deal with and he didn't know what to do about it" (451–52). As helpless as a photographic subject is, however, a photograph is even more so. It can do nothing to confront the feelings of superiority of its beholder. In the last decades, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* has come in for its share of condemnation for its easy acceptance of its own privilege.[25]

Agee's essay seeks to deflect from Evans the criticism he levels at Bourke-White by enmeshing Evans's photographs in a narrative that embeds the photographs in life. He charts the path toward the direct, honest gaze, a painstakingly slow journey accomplished not immediately and easily but, if at all, only after an apprenticeship. Early in the text, Agee records several groping steps toward communication through the gaze, making his way through an obstacle course of false gazes and Peeping Toms. One episode portrays Agee's attempt to commune with the leader of a group of African-American singers that a landowner has coerced into performing for him and Evans. The landowner, indulging the scopophilic element of beholding (listening also comes into play here), teased the young boys as he "rearranged his genitals," and encouraged the singers to perform a "sassy, pelvic tune" (28, 30). "Sick in the knowledge" that the musicians associated him and Evans with the prurient landlord, the narrator "gave their leader fifty cents, trying at the same time, through my eyes, to communicate much more." But his eyes failed. The leader "thanked me for them in a dead voice, not looking me in the eye" (31).

Agee's further attempts to address locals with his eyes are confounded because of the fear and wariness tenants justly feel toward strangers. The "spies" find themselves continually watched, and become weary of "the pressure upon us, the following, the swerving, of the slow blue dangerous and secret small-town eyes," and the "narrow, mean white faces that turned slowly after me watching me" (373, 377). But they are unable to effect the mutuality of a returned gaze with anyone. A tenant family at a crossroads stares at Agee with distrust, transfixing him "at the intersection of those three tones of force" that suggest the subordinating power of the gaze, "as between spearheads" (34). Agee's attempt to make amends to a pair of black men he unintentionally startled is similarly confounded, even though "I stood and looked into their eyes and loved them" (42). While Agee's eyes and smile were "wretched and out of key with all I was able to say," the men only "retreated still more profoundly behind their faces, their eyes watching mine as if awaiting any sudden move they must ward." They walked down the road "without looking back" (43). The repeated identification of himself and Evans as "spy" and "counterspy" further problematizes the propriety of his own gaze and that of Evans (xxii, 5, passim).

The full perniciousness of Agee's spying makes itself felt in the central section of the book, an inventory of the Gudgers' house placed in a framework of gazing as though the house displays itself to Agee for his exhaustive examination. His inspection of the house begins with a confrontation: "We stand first facing it, squarely in front of it. . . . And it stands before us, facing us, squarely in front of us, silent and undefended in the sun" (137). Later he describes himself as "now raising the eyes, slowly, in face of this strength of sun, to look the house in its blind face" (140). The thin line between Agee's sympathetic staring and the lascivious prying of a Peeping Tom begins to blur when he enters the house and compares his experience of being alone there to an afternoon alone in his grandfather's home, during "hot early puberty." There, he "permitted nothing to escape the fingering of my senses. . . . It is not entirely otherwise now" (136–37). Indeed it is not. He seems to permit nothing to escape the fingering of his vision and the inscription of his text. This orgy of prying, which does not fail to record even the dust in the bottom of a seashell, almost takes on the character of a seduction, witnessed and abetted by the reader. Agee concludes the section with the prediction that "it is not going to be easy to look into their eyes" (189). Coming in the middle of the book, this admission of the difficulty of gazing into the tenants' eyes is like a belated admission of the many false starts that have already punctuated the narrative and will continue to do so.

Only a few scenes of looking succeed in evoking the mutual respect after which Agee strives. One, near the beginning of the book, marks the end of a relationship, and the others, near the end of the book, mark the beginning of one. During her leave-taking, Emma, the sister-in-law of one of the tenants, delivers a speech to Agee, "looking me steadily and sweetly in the eyes," after which "she stood looking straight into my eyes, and I straight into hers, longer than you'd think it would be possible to stand it" (64). The sexual element is present in this scene, since it is laced with Agee's fantasies of intercourse between Emma and himself, as well as with the other adult males in the household. It is also fraught with all the pathos of a tenuous connection about to be broken. Instead of taking her into his arms, all that can be done is to "stand facing her, and to keep looking into her eyes" (65).

This ending presages the beginning that is to come at the end of the book. As Agee comes to know the tenants, he tries to use his eyes to communicate with them. With one of them, Mrs. Ricketts, it works no better than it does with the African Americans or the tenants at the crossroads. He found himself trying with his eyes to reassure her of his friendship, but the best he achieved was "just once, a change . . . your eyes softened, lost all their immediate dread

. . . in a heart-broken and infinite yet timid reproachfulness" (365). The attempt at communication ends tragically, because Agee "let my face loose of any control and it showed you just what and all I felt for you and of myself." The look is misunderstood: "it must have been an ugly and puzzling grimace" (366). She withdraws her eyes, and a few pages later the good feeling dissolves, along with the direct address, so that "it is now hard for me to meet her eyes at all" (368).

The look that substituted for an act with Emma becomes an act in itself when Agee shares a look with Louise, the ten-year-old daughter of the tenant farmer. In the book's reverse narrative, the order of the two scenes is inverted so that the farewell to Emma, related early in the book, can presage the events with Louise that have already taken place, but are narrated only at the book's close. As Agee drives Emma to meet her ride out of town, Louise's "terrible gray eyes met mine whenever I glanced for them in the car mirror" (66). Eventually Louise begins to take on a central role. Even as the narrator fails in his attempt to gaze at Mrs. Ricketts, he transfers his direct address from her to Louise, recounting the picture-taking session in which he first sees her. As in a love story, he describes the qualities of her clothes and her person, including the "glowing gold color" of her skin, and then adds, "But as a matter of fact I am noticing all this less than your eyes" (367). Then, "though as yet I scarcely realize it, we have begun this looking-at-each-other of which I am later to become so conscious I am liable to trembling when I am in the same room with you" (368). Finally, while watching her facing the camera, and "looking so soberly and so straight into the plexus of the lens through those paralyzing eyes of yours," he is able to "realize a little more clearly that I am probably going to be in love with you" (369). The picture-taking scene ends with a challenge and a promise. Reprising the eyes of Mrs. Ricketts, Agee resolves not to give up, and foretells that he will have to return, until "that mutual wounding shall have been won and healed, until she shall fear us no further, yet not in forgetfulness but through ultimate trust, through love" (370). After this scene, more than three-quarters of the way through the book, we realize that the unclassifiable mixture of sociology, art, and anthropology that we have been engaged in reading is a narrative as well, and that the narrative has all the marks of a conventional love story.

The sequence of loving gazes shared by Agee and Louise reaches its consummation, like many love stories, during a storm. There, with the family huddled in their dark home for shelter together with Agee, the two partake of a gaze of the sort Agee has been seeking, filled with silent but mutual respect. This event, recounted over two pages toward the end of the book (400–401),

predates the inspection of the house. But the end of the book is the beginning, for the reader, of the established relationship. It is not going to be easy, it implies, but it is going to be.[26] The love story we have been reading is also the story of our own love affair with the tenants, one that can only be consummated after the book has been closed.

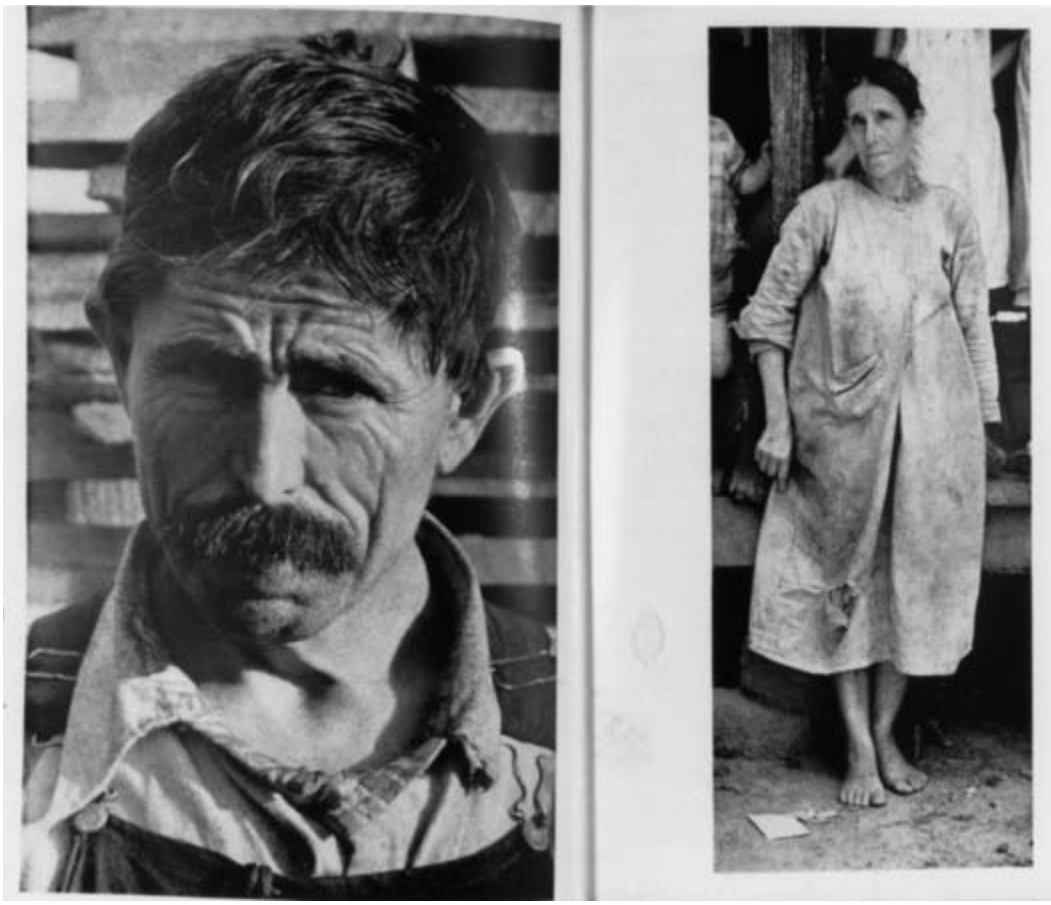
Evans's photographs bask in the achieved relationship expressed by the returned gaze. The image of Louise is particularly striking in the face of Agee's description of her open gaze. Although in connection with the project he made impressive images showing people who do not look directly at the

1.4 Walker Evans, Louise Gudger. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941, 1960.

1.5 Walker Evans, *Portrait of Floyd Burroughs* (George Gudger), Hale County, Alabama, 1936. Courtesy Photography Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

1.6 Walker Evans, Chester Boles, landlord of George Gudger. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941, 1960.

camera, Evans used few of them in the final selection. In the book's second edition, he even omitted some of these.[27] The order of the images is structured by these gazes. First, we see the landlord. Indeed, he is looking at the camera, but the focus is on his well-fed belly, not his face, and his eyes are not allowed to light up or exhibit themselves for the viewer. On the following page spread, the viewer is confronted by two striking tenant portraits, those of George and Annie Mae Gudger, both dominated by the direct gaze (fig. 1.3). Thereafter the work is divided into four sections (with only one separating blank page in the first edition), the next two fronted by images of the direct, piercing gaze of the head(s) of the other two families.[28] In the first edition, the figures are weighted unevenly, encouraging the reader not to look at them individu-



1.7 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941. *Left*, Fred Ricketts; *right*, Sadie Ricketts.

ally, as isolated portraits, but to take the spreads as sequences or extensions of space, groupings of two in foreground and middle distance that cause the tenants to address the viewer individually and communally, and make the tenants spatially present by giving the viewer the sense of looking back and forth through space from one to the other. Two Gudger children seem to share the same space, united by a continuous background, and repetitive pictures of the Woods family allow the parents to advance from their brood cinematically as from a medium shot to a close-up, to accost the viewer as a couple. The significance of the gaze in these images was intuited by Lionel Trilling in an early review. Beginning with the portrait of Mrs. Gudger, he wrote that the reader's immediate

1.8 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941. *Left*, Burt Gudger; *right*, Valley Few Gudger.

> outgoing impulse . . . is at once hemmed in, at once made careful and respectful, by what the camera does. . . . The gaze of the woman returning our gaze checks our pity; . . . Mrs. Gudger . . . simply refuses to be an object of your "social consciousness"; she refuses to be an object at all—everything in the picture proclaims her to be all subject. And this is true of all of Evans' pictures of the Gudger, Woods and Ricketts families.[29]

The absence of captions enhances the feeling of encountering these people in a space. The segregation of word from image encourages the viewer to

1.9 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941. The Woods family.

confront the photographs as people, and not as representatives of a group. We return repeatedly to the pictures as we read the text, combing through the list of characters in order to come to a conclusion about their identity, forced to look and look again, to meet the people on their own terms, only gradually filling in details, and identifying them with their stories, much like we do in real life. Or even better. In real life people often come with captions. Agee's impossible dream is that we could know photographed people more intimately than we know real people to whom we have been introduced, whom we have labeled and dismissed.

The searching mutual gazes passing between Evans's camera and the tenants are as rhetorical as the written direct address. The tenants, after all, were never given copies of the book dedicated to them "in gratefulness and love"; and Evans never even printed the family portrait that George Gudger carefully posed, and would have been delighted to have.[30] Even the assumption of the genre itself belies the equality of address. As part of an effort on the part of privileged, socially conscious members of society to represent to other members of that society the plight of the underprivileged, social documentary operated under the assumption that the voice of the oppressed could not effect necessary changes in society, and must be supplemented by more articulate voices. Agee and Evans preempt the voices of the tenants. Their presumption to speak for the tenants sabotages the vision of freedom and equality.[31]

THE VISION

Yet the strength of the text is that it realizes its own privilege. Agee admits that what he and Evans and, by extension, the reader, are "privileged by stealth to behold," they are also privileged to enjoy. His text perceives his viewing position as morally ambiguous. Having won the confidence of the tenants, the text worries about whether it is betraying their trust. Its musings on its own moral rights often focus on the issue of beauty, as though its ability to enjoy the beauty of its subjects' poverty signals the misuse of its vision. After all, the tenants, who are not beholding but rather living their poverty, can enjoy none of it. The text writes of its "shameful and thief's right" to enjoyment and admonishes those who have the "economic advantages of training" to "recognize the ugliness and disgrace implicit in their privilege of perception." Having apologized for enjoying itself, it then adds a footnote apologizing for apologizing: "The 'sin,' in my present opinion, is in feeling in the least apologetic for perceiving the beauty of the houses" (203). There seems to be no way out of the dilemma of enjoying beauty appropriated from suffering.

What is wrong with the perception of beauty in poverty? While the text recognizes that its appreciation of beauty distances it from the tenants to whom it wishes to come close, it does not realize that its dilemma is endemic to the kind of modernism to which it belongs—even that, as we shall see, its prose and photographs themselves create the beauty it appreciates. It does not see this primarily because of the assumptions it makes about art and beauty. The text thinks that it rejects "art" because "Art, as all of you would understand if you had had my advantages, has nothing to do with Life" (366). Yet in the use of the term *classicism* it assumes (and most contemporary commentaries assumed as well) that the standards of art and beauty on which it bases its judgments are universal (203). Art and beauty may require education to comprehend ("I have a strong feeling that the 'sense of beauty,' like nearly everything else, is a class privilege" [314]), but not to establish.[32] The standards, however, are historical. They pertain to a specific strain of twentieth-century modernism, much of it dealing with architectural theory. The text perhaps unintentionally implies that these modernist tenets, when carried to an extreme, yield conditions of striking beauty when beheld and unlivable poverty when inhabited. On this point rests the moral predicament of the book and of modernist political aspirations.

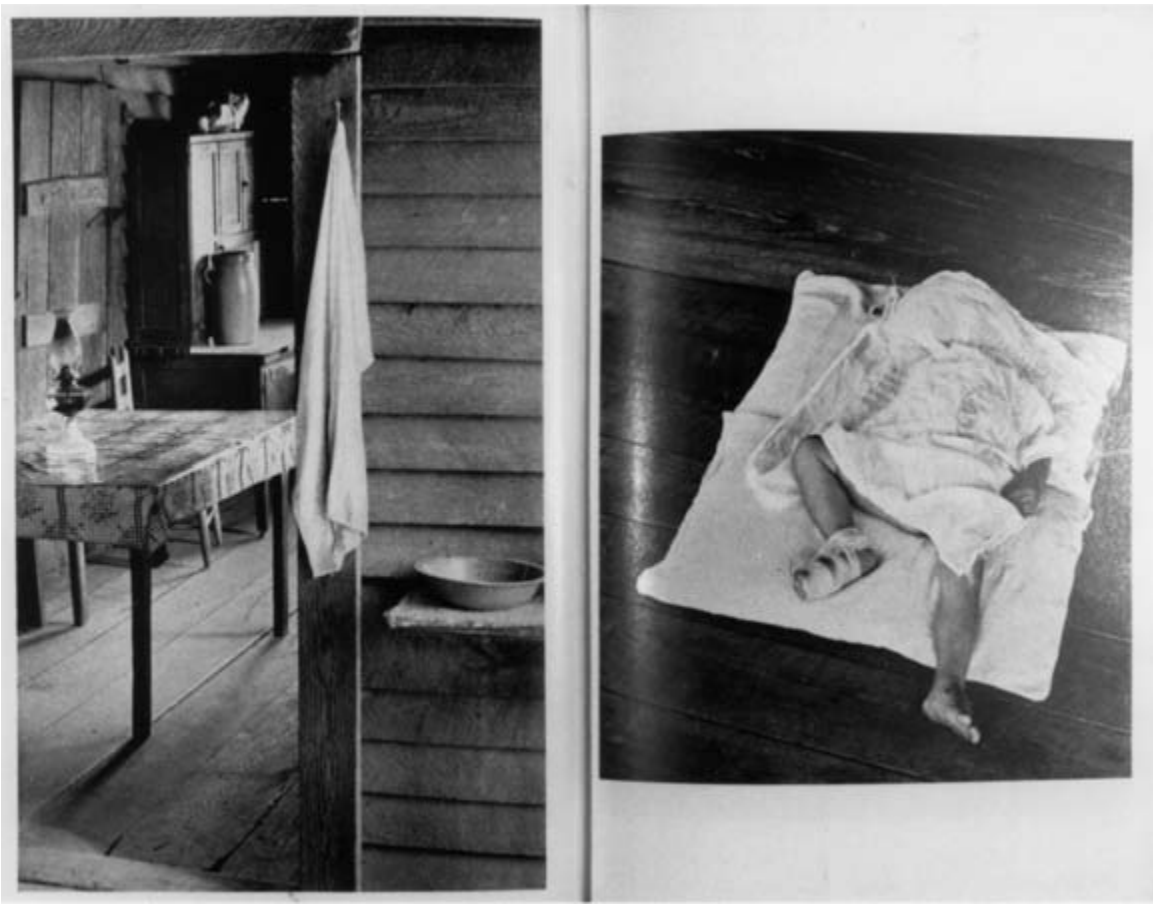
Even though Agee contrasts the "esthetic success" of the houses with their "functional failure," the beauty of the tenants' houses in both Agee's prose and Evans's pictures is the spare beauty of functionalism (202).[33] Their functionalism is not literally that of Mart Stam and Hannes Meyer, who tried to grapple with the social, political, and biological underpinnings of architectural form, but rather the aesthetic functionalism championed two years previous to Agee and Evans's visit with the sharecroppers by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in *The International Style*. Their "First Principle: Architecture as Volume" maintains that "contemporary methods of construction provide a cage or skeleton of supports."[34] This skeletal construction should lead to the "effect of a single volume with continuous surfaces." The surfaces "shall be unbroken in effect, like a skin tightly stretched over the supporting skeleton."[35] Alternative descriptive terms emphasize the spare quality of construction. The skeleton, for example, is occasionally a "tenuous cage" covered by "screen walls," whose tensions "are felt to exist in all directions, as in a stretched textile."[36] In the 1920s, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe described one kind of contemporary architecture, reinforced-concrete buildings, as "buildings consisting of skin and bones."[37]

Although the tenants' homes are not made of reinforced concrete, similar metaphors pervade Agee's prose. According to him, only enough pine lumber

is used "which shall stretch a skin of one thickness alone," and the "hard thin hide of wood has been stretched to its utmost to cover . . . the skeletal beams" (142–43). Elsewhere he writes, "One wall is lapboard . . . the others, the skeleton and the inward surface of the outward skin of the house" (420). Certainly the figure of skin and bones also helps construct an image of the house as a living, if deprived, organism, equivalent to its oppressed inhabitants, an emaciated domicile that can return the gaze of the author. But the same equation of building and organism pervades modernist architectural writing as well: "Only a living inside has a living outside."[38] When Agee observes the "bonelike plainness" of the place, he does not mean to call it unattractive, for he finds it "thin-walled, skeletal and beautiful." That his metaphor of flesh is a sensual one is clear when he extends the compliment to the "naked floor" and figuratively caresses the flesh he has conjured up in his comment that "I should find it hard to tire of . . . running my fingers upon [the wood] as if it were skin" (421).

The "third principle" of Hitchcock and Johnson is "The Avoidance of Applied Decoration."[39] The supposed economy of Nature in creating her organisms is also implicit in the economy of modernist functionalist thinking, which ignores Nature's own ornamental flourishes to admire her as a virtuoso engineer. Agee evokes Nature's economy in his assessment of "not any one inch of lumber being wasted on embellishment, or on trim." The exclamation "Nowhere one ounce or inch spent with ornament, not one trace of relief or of disguise" (143) reveals, by invoking "disguise," the modernist equation of functionalism with honesty, despite the fact that nothing is wasted on comfort or utility either. Even Agee's discussion of the symmetry of the tenants' homes is modernistic. These are subtly rendered asymmetrical ("like Oriental art") in response to needs and terrain, and finally reachieve symmetry that is "born of a subtle, more numerous, less obvious orchestration of causes" (230–31). The discussion is reminiscent of Hitchcock and Johnson's admonitions against obvious asymmetry for the sake of style alone in *The International Style*.[40]

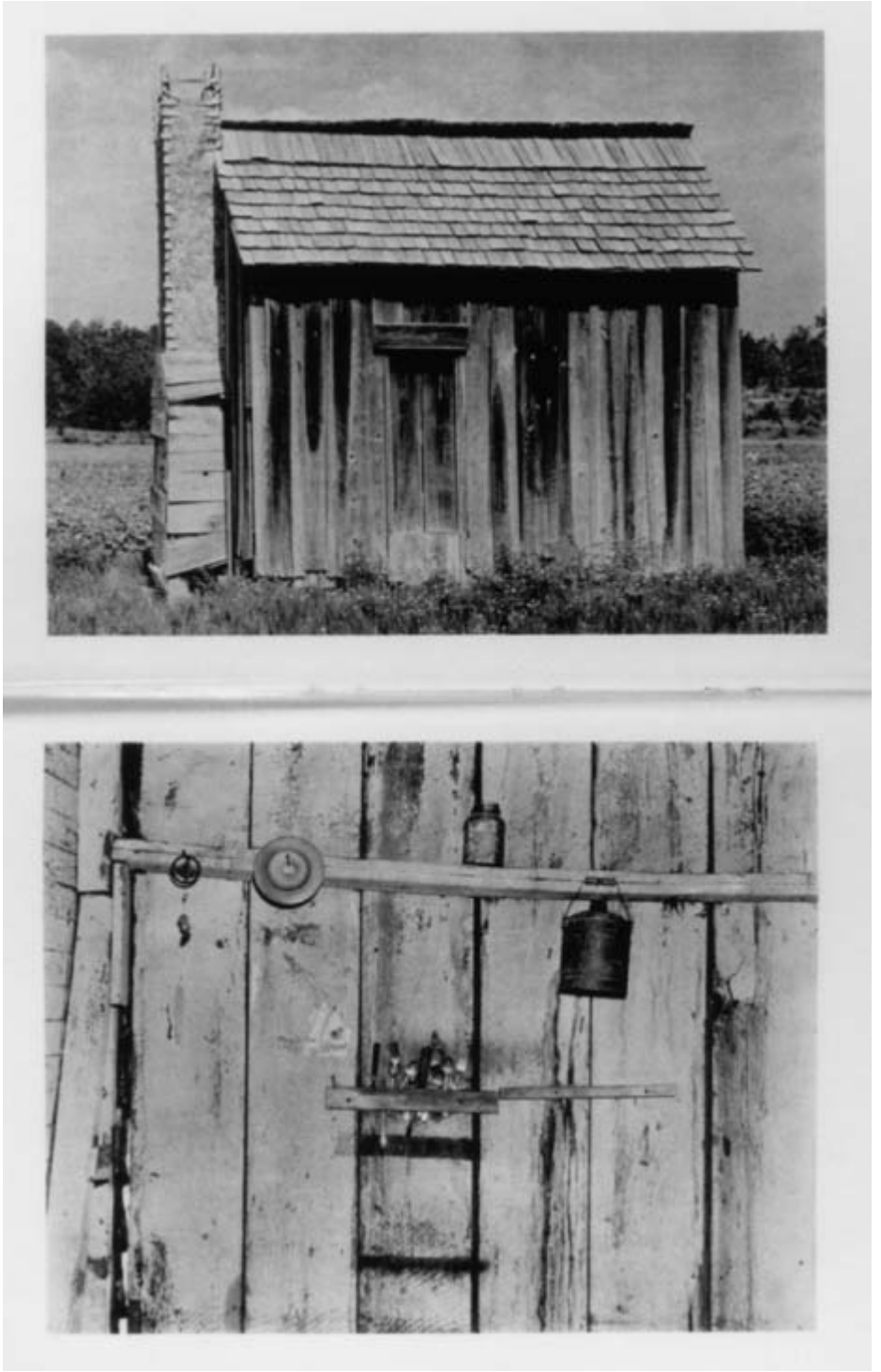
Evans's photographs share Agee's sense of beauty, even though they do not describe it in terms matching Agee's ornate prose. Rather, the spareness of their style accentuates the spareness of the sharecroppers' rooms. But they use additional means to render this spareness. One series, confined to a page spread in the first edition but extended to a third page in the second, is a disquisition on the use of a piece of cloth, showing how the same kind of cloth, revealed in one photograph as a flour sack, is used for washing and drying, and as a cover for a small child.[41] The image is particularly striking to turn back to



1.10 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1960. *Left*, view into the kitchen in George Gudger's home; *right*, Squinchy Gudger asleep under a floor sack.

after reading Agee's description of a flour sack used as a towel in the Gudger household (150–51). Another photograph, showing cutlery stored behind a slab of wood on a kitchen wall, states eloquently the beauty of frugality.

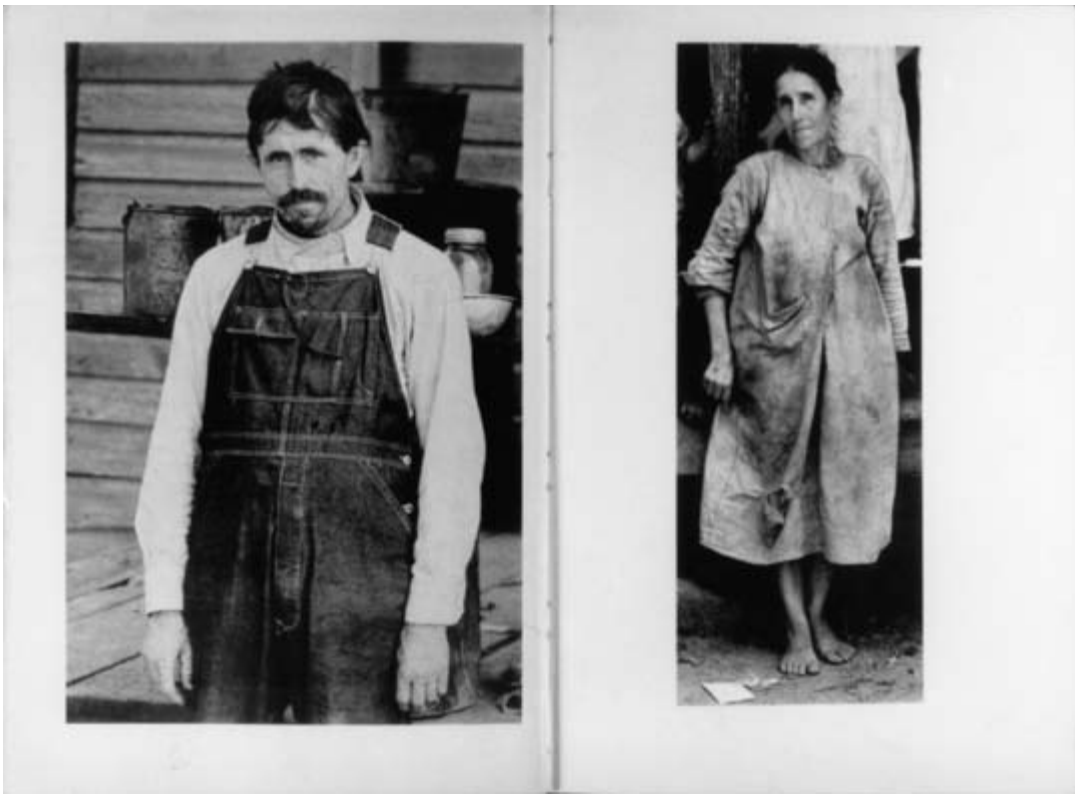
A further tenet of modernism is the isolation of the object. Agee's inventory, which treats each object separately, suggests isolation. In the photographs, objects are not only few but far between. The shining vases on the Gudgers' mantel, and other knickknacks, which the camera of another photographer could easily depict as cluttered, take on the look of precious objects in a modern gallery. The pitcher and lamp in the Gudgers' kitchen, and the bowl and cloth outside it, seem, and perhaps were, arranged with painstaking care. The beauty of bare wood and plain white sheets in the photograph of their bedroom might have pleased Adolf Loos, the pioneering modernist, for



1.11 Walker Evans, page spread.
From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1960.

whom the texture of wood and metal surpassed the beauty of all applied ornament, although he usually had luxury, not impoverished, materials in mind.[42] Indeed, Evans probably cleaned off the table in the Gudgers' kitchen, and rearranged the furniture in other rooms to prevent the appearance of clutter.[43] The studied symmetry of the photograph of the Gudger home's façade in the second edition seems almost to echo Agee's discussion of the asymmetrical subtleties of their living areas.

Most significantly, however, the notion of beauty to which the photographs subscribe is that of distance, disinterestedness, lack of engagement. The decision to leave them uncaptioned may ultimately have served a different purpose in the second edition than it had in the first, enhancing their isolation from life.[44] John Szarkowski, the formalist critic of photography, later produced an exhibition of journalistic photographs without captions, *From*



1.12 Walker Evans, page spread. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1960. *Left*, Fred Ricketts; *right*, Sadie Ricketts.

the Picture Press, in order to stress formal values in the photographs.[45] And indeed, in the second edition of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the isolation of individual, uncaptioned photographs is enhanced by formal means. The sense of a believable space including the viewer, for example, is eliminated by the equalization of scale across a spread. The Gudgers are equal in weight and the Ricketts close to equality, with the result that we are encouraged to look at them separately. Repetitions are eliminated: Bud Woods and his wife do not emerge from their group to face us individually; and no longer do repetitive photographs of mantels appear to invite us to compare them. Added photographs include some that emphasize formal values: the portrait of George Gudger's work boots after Vincent van Gogh's painting of 1886, seen in splendid isolation, and the mysterious gourd tree that concludes the

1.13 Walker Evans, George Gudger's work boots. From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1960.

series. In the spreads, thematic relations between pictures in the first edition are often exchanged for stronger formal relations in the second. The bars of the bed dominate a spread of Bud Woods and his child, while previously one saw only two different views of Bud. The photograph of cutlery, previously viewed in connection with the Rickettses' family kitchen, is now viewed next to an outbuilding whose only connection to the kitchen is a similar relation between vertical and horizontal elements (fig. 1.11). In the late 1960s, Evans often denied, before audiences of politically engaged young people (including, on one occasion, the present author), any element of political involvement in his intentions. He is reported to have said, "I do have a weakness for the disadvantaged, but I'm suspicious of it. I have to be, because that should not be the motive for artistic or aesthetic action. If it is, your work is either sentimental or motivated toward 'improving society' let us say."[46] Partly, this denial must have been in response to young idealists ready to fantasize concerns of the 1960s into these photographs of the 1930s. But it is also congruent with the subtle changes in the layout and selection of pictures between the two editions of the book, which help turn an encounter into a display.

The notion of autonomous beauty contradicts engagement with the tenants, just as the inevitability of art, and its comforting overtones, clashes with political engagement. Photography was often caught up in this discourse. While social activists such as Dorothea Lange pushed photography in the direction of engagement, the "art" of an Edward Weston made photographs of green peppers stand in isolation. Often the seeming activists, like Evans, wished to be viewed as artists and thus caught the medium of photography, with their own art, in the modernist disjunction between art and life. Indeed, while Evans's photographs show extreme poverty, they do not tempt the viewer to donate a chest for the silverware and extra spoons to put in it. Similarly, detachment and involvement battle their way through the pages of the text. The urgency of the tone makes surprising its reliance on prayer as the only remedy, a Christian resignation that reinforces the inactivity of the powerful.[47] Most obviously, however, autonomous beauty contradicts the effect of the direct gaze. As mentioned above, Sartre wrote, "If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes."[48] The Other cannot be beautiful without being an object, and one cannot confront an object directly as a person. There is no responsibility to beauty except to maintain it. Roger Fry sought to define the aesthetic through just such an attitude of detachment. Art allowed one to look at ghastly events without having to be engaged.[49] The same notion of the aesthetic led Leo Tolstoy, late in life, to reject much of the art of his time.[50]

Most attempts to involve the beholder through the gaze in modern art have to deal directly with the gulf between life and art. Some attempts to deploy the gaze in high art have resulted in defusing the power of the gaze by isolating the object in the confines of a strictly defined artistic situation, usually a gallery. The confrontations enacted with minimalist sculpture were limited to galleries and sculpture gardens, and pertained to eyeless objects without any potential to move the beholder to action. Modernist interactive art rarely motivated beholders to actions that had consequences.[51] Such works illustrate the way in which antimodernist art continues to act within institutions such as galleries or museums, all constructed from modernist premises; they make understandable why activist artists often prefer to exhibit work in public spaces not associated with art so as to provoke discussion of social issues raised in it.[52]

Some works that evoked the gaze in reaction to modernist art rejected the aesthetic. Diane Arbus's photographs, for example, often solicited the conventions of the aesthetic in order to overturn them in favor of engagement with the gaze in all its difficulties. The viewer of Arbus's morally ambiguous representations of the image-beholder, subject-photographer relationship may feel driven to reassess Evans's portrait of Annie Mae Gudger with the knowledge that even a gaze is a form.[53] Such photographs confirm that in itself the structure of beholding can neither initiate nor evade a relationship with its beholder, but rather can only allude to the possibility or denial of relationships within time-bound formal conventions. They call the bluff of Evans's photographs of the tenant farmers.

Use of the gaze is not the only way in which artists tried to pressure art into activism. It has been noted that in effect, those modernists and postmodernists who would build a closer relation between art and life sought to found an alternative tradition within modernism on the work of Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaists and constructivists, and the theories of Walter Benjamin and others.[54] Many of the ideals Agee evoked have been realized. In the 1960s, the inclusion of copies of written documents or samples of the handwriting of participants in the social narrative became a stock device in photographic books.[55] Today, documentary installations that often explore politically charged subjects, invite interaction, and blur the lines between art, scholarship, and activism continue to speak to Agee's notion of what the "rest" of the book might have been like.[56]

But even if the combination of the gaze with the marks of a formalist aesthetic is not the most forceful way in which artists have tried to break out of social isolation, it is a powerful figure for the predicament of a modernism

that wished to reconcile itself with social engagement. The contradictions within modernism that prevented such reconciliation thwarted modernism's social conscience from the beginning. They showed up whenever the poor could not afford the designs, when they had to be forced to live in the pristine quarters intended to afford them equal opportunity, or when only the college-educated could understand the universal language based on "primitive" art. These disparities are evident only after the fact and on reflection, or in the context of a rejection of modernism. In contrast, confrontation with the fearsome directness of the sharecropper's gaze in a photograph, uncomfortably pacified by distancing aesthetic, makes the conflict visible and unsettling. Photography's potential for interactivity would continue to characterize, and unsettle, its relations with twentieth-century thought.

TWO

Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification

When a camera is in my hands, I can take a picture of someone, who has gone away, died, or been lost. And have something I'll be able to look at for the rest of my life.

AVIJIT, in the documentary *Born into Brothels*

IDENTIFICATION OF/ IDENTIFICATION WITH

In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the reader is encouraged to confront the tenant farmers who gaze into Walker Evans's lens, to take responsibility for them, to take an active interest in their fate. As we page back and forth from pictures to text and back, we identify the farmers, name by name, from Gudger to Woods to Ricketts, and form an acquaintance with them. Any reader of the critic Susan Sontag's last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, would recognize the importance of this moment of identification, which rivals even that key moment in photography when the camera's shutter opens to allow light into the dark chamber within.[1] Someone must identify photographic images, group them according to various criteria, and place them in newspapers, photographic albums, or art books. Looking at them, someone must know where to turn for help or revenge or, more mundanely, to buy the advertised goods. The moment of identification, unlike that of illumination, does not distinguish photography from other visual images, or even from encounters in the world at large. At work in any personal exchange, identification plays an integral role in the formation of groups.

Even after we identify the Gudgers, Rickettses, and Woodses, they remain irredeemably other. We are never urged to identify *with* them. Identification *with*, however, is often as important as identification *of*. The personal and social position through which the beholder is looking can bring what

she or he sees into focus, or distort it beyond recognition.[2] The encounter with an image might seem more one-sided than a meeting with a person, but it, too, is susceptible to the slippage between one kind of identification and the other. Whether scholars seek to avoid such slippages in their work, or to confront or exploit them, they disturb the simple relation between representations and subjects, between images and people, between photographs and their referents. Something had to be in front of the camera. Does it matter what?

The theorist Roland Barthes had already made an enormous impact on photographic theory before the publication of his last completed book, *Camera Lucida*, in 1979, the enormous influence of which eclipsed that of his other reflections on photography.[3] This rather enigmatic book is ostensibly grounded in a statement of faith in photographic relationality. Unlike the concern of Evans and Agee for mutual looking and confrontation, however, Barthes concentrates on his own subjectivity. This, rather than an effort to confront the Other, drives what appears to be a theory of indexicality: the inseparability of referent and image that the book seems to assume. Its starting point in subjectivity, however, explains the extraordinary series of slippages between people and images and between modes of identification that punctuate its exposition, and leads me to refer to the first-person narrator as the Roland Barthes character in this book.

The narrator lays out in two parts a theory of photographic reception on the basis of the adherence of the photograph to its referent.[4] Barthes (the author, as opposed to the narrator of *Camera Lucida*) had developed a theory of photography based on its indexical nature in his 1964 essay "Rhetoric of the Image." That theory built on earlier writings about the nature of the modern "myth," in which Barthes examined everyday myths that support communal identity: the Tour de France, the Eiffel Tower, the French menu.[5] "Rhetoric of the Image" examined photography's remarkable suitability for mythmaking through an ad for packaged pastas and sauces.[6] Italianicity, he wrote, was evoked by the name of the company, Panzani, and the color—green pepper, red tomatoes—of the Italian flag. A string bag with these vegetables tumbling out of it, along with packages of pasta and cans of sauce, evoked the idea of shopping in an open-air market and the cultural associations of still lifes and cornucopias. But the fact that the ad was photographed, rather than drawn or painted, meant that these cultural and national associations seemed to come directly, naturally.

The naturalness of the associations came from the way photography represents its object: "although the Panzani poster is full of 'symbols,' there

nonetheless remains in the photograph a kind of natural *being-there* of objects, insofar as the literal message is sufficient: nature seems to produce the represented scene quite spontaneously."[7] In this "natural *being-there*," the reader of this book will recognize Barthes's replacement for the term *index* or *indexical*. Elsewhere, Barthes calls photography's indexical power a "certificate of presence."[8] Because the pasta had to be there to be photographed, we feel as though we are looking at it directly, not through a representational medium. The connotation of Italianicity gets a free ride on indexicality; it seems to be in the photograph along with the green peppers. All this seems natural, giving the myth—that one can get Italianicity and freshness out of a can—its persuasive force.

Camera Lucida uses a different strategy to move in a more agonized direction, but it, too, starts with the idea of the photographic index. The person—and here it is most often people, and never pasta, who are the subject (although I shall return to pasta later)—must have been there for a photograph to have been taken: "I call the 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph."[9] The photograph, then, is a trace, a remnant, of the person who was there. The trace is tactile, like a footprint, or perhaps more accurately like a navel, given that in one passage Barthes describes photography as an umbilical cord.[10] In a description that draws on the imagery of a medieval theory, rays move from the subject of the photograph to the sensitive plate, to the finished photograph, and finally to the viewer of the photograph, who is literally touched (nourished?) by the photograph.[11] While the first part of *Camera Lucida* develops the theory through "random" looking at mostly famous photographs, the second part raises the personal stakes: it engages Barthes's grief for his recently deceased mother on the basis of a photograph of her when she was five years old. Because of this communication between the past and the present, a photograph has for Barthes a memorial element lacking, for example, in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Barthes does not look "into the living eyes of a human life" as Agee does. Instead, he marvels over the fact that "I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor [Napoleon]."[12] The "actuality" that Agee found so difficult to achieve faces another obstacle for Barthes. The temporal disjunction that he finds commemorated in any photograph attaches photography directly to death, even if the subject of the photograph is alive still. He cannot see into, but only at, dead eyes. Instead of the index that seemed to guarantee the myth, *Camera Lucida* dwells on the "that-has-been" of the photograph.[13]

2.1 James VanDerZee, *Susan VanDerZee*, ca. 1930. From James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 1978. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Used with permission.

The book's division into two parts may suggest a separation between mind and emotion, the scholarly versus the personal. But both parts are personal. In part 1, Barthes bases his theory of photography on his search for photographs that "exist" for him. To explain the ways that photographs can "exist," he uses two Latin terms: *studium* and *punctum*. The studium denotes the field of its cultural or educational possibilities: emotion requires the "rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture."[14] This unitary "field" is pierced by the second element, the punctum, which breaks out of the cultural field and into the personal. It "shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[15] The studium is the "field" and the punctum is that which pierces the field.

2.2 James VanDerZee, *Funeral Portrait, Susan VanDerZee*, 1931. From James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 1978. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Used with permission.

The punctum is always personal to the viewer, and is often a detail, "Barthes" tells us. As an example, he illustrates a photographic portrait by the Harlem photographer James VanDerZee. Thematically, VanDerZee is close to the heart of *Camera Lucida*. He is known for *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, containing funerary photographs taken in the 1920s, published in 1978.[16] Roland Barthes may have seen it in New York on his visit there in November of that year.[17] If he did, the recently bereaved Barthes may have been struck, and perhaps horrified, especially by VanDerZee's photographs of his own mother, both alive and after her death.

Barthes did not, however, use a photograph from the book of the dead to illustrate his notion of the punctum, but rather a portrait of a family that was alive when VanDerZee photographed them in his studio in 1926. Barthes describes the portrait's studium in the following language: its enunciation of "respectability, family life, conformism, Sunday best, an effort of social advancement in order to assume the White Man's attributes (an

2.3 James VanDerZee, *Family Portrait*, ca. 1925. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Used with permission.

effort touching by reason of its naïveté)."[18] Given that the subject was the studium, its cultural field could have been literature of or about the exponents of the *New Negro*, or he could have acquired his ideas about the context of the photograph in the course of reading the work of W. E. B. Du Bois and others, who exhorted black people to emulate whites in order to be accepted by them.[19] VanDerZee himself was engaged as an official photographer of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.[20] "Sunday best" might actually have been "borrowed best," if VanDerZee, as one biographer affirmed, kept fashionable clothes on hand for clients with aspirations or imaginations

beyond their means, an assertion disputed, however, by VanDerZee's widow.[21] Such observations and conjectures indicate directions for further investigations of this studium.[22]

But actually, Barthes's studium was not very studious; he adapted his remarks from the commentary on the photograph in a special issue on photography produced by *Le nouvel observateur*, the source for many of the photographs in *Camera Lucida*.[23] The commentary tries to do justice to the family's identity: "visibly American, and clearly something else."[24] The family is "desirous of giving itself an image conforming to the marks of prosperity of the American Way of Life."[25] At that time, according to the writer in *Le nouvel observateur*, "'black is beautiful' was not a cry of defiance and despair."[26]

"Barthes's" judgment of the family's "naïveté" is no less problematic for the fact that both he and the editor of the French literary journal were viewing VanDerZee's subjects from the Harlem of the 1920s through the lens of the American 1960s as seen from Paris in the 1970s. Why are the sitters naïve? In thinking that the acquisition of "Sunday best" and jewelry (or to have themselves photographed in such costumes) will make them like whites? Or are they naïve to think that whites will treat them better if they see them in such garb? Which attributes does Barthes mean? Why does Barthes take the "American Way of Life" to mean "attributs du Blanc" rather than attributes of the middle class, surely an aspiration of many of VanDerZee's sitters, and entry into which a portrait by VanDerZee may already have certified? Are there attributes that are more properly theirs, that they could display if they were less touchingly naïve? What "imaginaire" (image-system or repertoire, to use Barthes's expression) would they have created for themselves, had they chosen to construct their visual identities without the resources of VanDerZee's studio?[27] To what image of blacks in Harlem should VanDerZee's sitters have conformed? Perhaps Barthes had in mind, like the editor of *Le nouvel observateur*, the men and women of the Black Power movement and its aftermath in the 1970s, some of whom Barthes would have seen in New York wrapped in Kente cloth or wearing dashikis. Surely, even if VanDerZee's clients borrowed their bourgeois finery, the clothes were not, to the dweller in 1920s Harlem, identifiably "white." Why does Barthes call their identity into question? Do they misidentify themselves?

I dwell on these questions because among Roland Barthes's early "mythologies of the month" were those in which he pointed out and deconstructed the myths that white people held of black people.[28] There he did not indulge in commonplaces about the "White Man's attributes" or "touch-

ing naïveté." To the Barthes of *Mythologies*, whites are just as naïve when they brandish their own attributes, whatever these may be. The clue to "Barthes's" use of the term *naïveté* may be his use of the modifier *touching*. That he finds the identification with whites not only interesting but "touching" suggests that the studium inhabits the same realm of feeling as does the punctum, so that the difference between studium and punctum may be mainly a difference of degree. Yet the studium, while it may touch Barthes, does not prick him. The punctum that punctures the field of the studium is "the belt worn low by the sister (or daughter)—the 'solacing Mammy'—whose arms are crossed behind her back like a schoolgirl, and above all her *strapped pumps* (Mary Janes—why does this dated fashion touch me? I mean: to what date does it refer me?). This particular *punctum* arouses great sympathy in me, almost a kind of tenderness."[29]

The detail that stabs him is actually two details—that is, one detail, around the waist, strikes Barthes first, but another detail becomes more convincing as his eye moves down toward the feet. But later, without the photograph to distract him, a third detail, above the others, comes to him, making this work by VanDerZee the prime example of another quality of the punctum: it illustrates the way in which (like the experience of a Romantic poet, although Barthes does not make this connection) the true significance can often only be specified later, when the image, no longer there, has "*worked* within me."[30] Having moved from the sash around her waist to the straps around her feet, he noticed in his mind's eye what might have been around her neck, and realized that the punctum in VanDerZee's portrait was not a pair of shoes, not a belt, but a necklace. "I realized that the real *punctum* was the necklace she was wearing; for (no doubt) it was this same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family, and which, once she died, remained shut up in a family box of old jewelry. . . . I had just realized that however immediate and incisive it was, the *punctum* could accommodate a certain latency (but never any scrutiny)."[31]

"Never any scrutiny" indeed. The reason that Barthes could only have recognized this punctum when he wasn't looking at it is that the detail he picks out, the "slender ribbon of braided gold," is not there. The lady wears a string of pearls, as does her seated relative. Most readers probably do not notice "Barthes's" mistake, since the VanDerZee photograph is several pages into the past by the time Barthes recognizes the punctum. Possibly for this reason, few writers have commented on it, and those that do merely puzzle over it, remarking that it is, after all, personal, or chalking it up to the reproduction, where "it looks white and rather thick."[32]

2.4 Unknown photographer, Berthe and Léon Barthes and their daughter Alice, from *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, 1975.

In fact, the punctum does exist, but it is in a different photograph, which Barthes reproduced, along with several other photographs of his family, in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. This mistaken detail, then, not the necklace actually pictured, led Barthes to the center of pain in the photograph, and to the time of the "strapped pumps." The wearer of the necklace, Barthes's Aunt Alice, occupies the same place as VanDerZee's "solacing Mammy" in the family picture, or at least in the picture of the family; and the composition of a photograph, not photographed pumps or a necklace, enabled him to make the identification. Presumably, Barthes recognized the family constellation, even though to do it he had to move the detail, the punctum, from one photograph to another.

Barthes's mistake may seem like a simple case of missing the forest for the trees. But the detail he thought he needed to search for was indeed important, if absent. His effort, then, illustrates other highly significant aspects of the punctum: the punctum may be the composition; the punctum may be forgotten; the punctum may be in a different photograph. The example illuminates an important aspect of memory: the deception at its heart, its ability to embroider and change, to be displaced, when it is "working on" one, like the details in a Freudian dream interpretation.[33] Not just the memory of whatever incident or person the punctum reminds one of, but memory of the photograph, the spur to memory, can itself enact this displacement. But the mistaken memory opens up the possibility of comprehension. When Barthes's memory replaced the pearls with the necklace that should have been there, the aunt who occupied the "solacing Mammy's" place magically appeared. This braided gold necklace was, perhaps, the punctum of Barthes's family photograph. He recognized, poignantly, the necklace he had seen his aunt wear and that lay, after her death, shut up inside a "family box," inside a dark chamber, rather than the light chamber, or camera lucida, of Barthes's title, a contrast to the better-known camera obscura.[34] But perhaps VanDerZee's portrait only reminded him of having seen the photograph of his aunt's family, and even the jewelry shut up in the family box had itself lived, for Barthes, only in a photograph. As Art Spiegelman wrote, concerning his attempts to use family photographs in his own work: "Snapshots illuminate my past like flares in the darkness . . . although often they only help me remember having seen the photos before!"[35]

Could Barthes's mistaken identification of the punctum illuminate his "mistake" (surely it was one) about the naïveté of the sitters in the studium? The naïveté he sees in the portrait can only be "touching" if the respectable family picture covers up a grimmer reality. It turns out that the touching

naïveté he sees in the portrait, the respectable family life, indeed covers up the dreary life of a woman who, in her utter respectability, is utterly pitiable. But it is not the black family in Harlem whose naïveté is exposed. It is that of a white family in France, Barthes's family. "This sister of my father never married, lived as an old maid near her mother and it always distressed me to think of the sadness of her provincial life."[36] And whether or not the black family identified with white attributes, certainly Barthes identified his own family with the black family's attributes. He identified with their touchingly naïve and mistaken self-identification. But what is touching in someone else's family is wounding in one's own. Did Barthes understand these reversals; did he know that the necklace was not there? Surely Barthes the author understood. Otherwise, "Barthes" the narrator would never have remarked parenthetically that the punctum will not bear any scrutiny, thus warning readers—perhaps slyly—not to turn back several pages to look at the picture.[37]

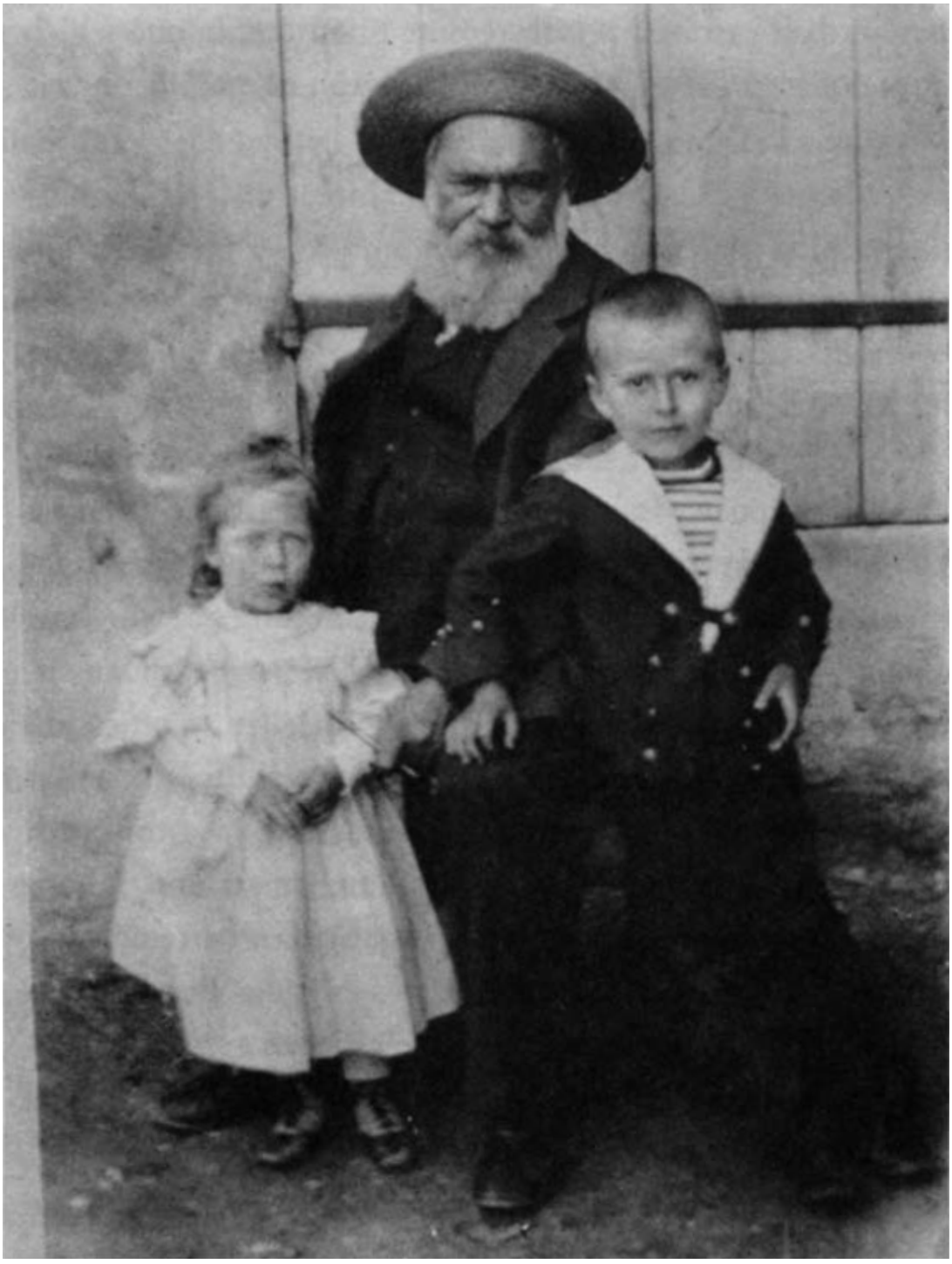
MISIDENTIFICATION WITH

The concept of the punctum is further complicated with the introduction of a second source of punctum, described as "the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* (*'that-has-been'*)," the pure representation of the passage of time that connotes death.[38] Any photograph has this about-to-die/already dead quality, even if the subject is not dead—yet—and even though not all photographs will have this effect in the immediate sense that Barthes describes upon seeing a portrait by Alexander Gardner of a soon-to-be-executed would-be assassin.[39] The extreme example that causes the narrator the most pain is not that of a convict, however, but a photograph of his mother taken when she was a small child. He found it shortly after her death, while sorting photographs in search of one in which he could do more than recognize her, in which he would find "the truth of the face I had loved."[40] He found several pictures, some more characteristic than others, but one finally gave him what he was looking for. He christened it the "Winter Garden Photograph," because it was taken in a greenhouse.

> My mother was five at the time (1898), her brother seven. He was leaning against the bridge railing, along which he had extended one arm; she, shorter than he, was standing a little back, facing the camera; you could tell that the photographer had said, 'Step forward a little so we can see you'; she was holding one finger in the other hand, as children often do, in an awkward gesture.[41]

It is a pale, yellowed photograph; his mother's face, unclear, is in danger of disappearing altogether. Yet it was revealing. It showed "a figure of a sovereign *innocence*. . . . In this little girl's image I saw the kindness which had formed her being immediately and forever." Unlike the other photographs "Barthes" discusses, he chooses not to reproduce this picture in his book, ostensibly because it would mean nothing to his readers.

But most likely there was no Winter Garden Photograph to reproduce, or perhaps only the one of Franz Kafka at the age of six, described, with its palm trees and Kafka's soulful eyes, as well as an oversized hat, by Walter Benjamin in his essay "A Short History of Photography."[42] Benjamin placed the setting tentatively in a "kind of winter garden landscape," but the French translation that appeared in *Le nouvel observateur*'s special issue on photography places Kafka definitively in a winter garden.[43] Like that of Barthes, Kafka's Winter Garden Photograph also remained unreproduced in this translation, but the editor illustrated the essay with several other photographs, among them VanDerZee's portrait of a family.[44] If there was indeed no Winter Garden Photograph of Barthes's mother and uncle, then Benjamin's description inspired Barthes to reposition the photograph of the two children away from the frosty old grandfather of *La souche*, a family photograph Barthes provides later in *Camera Lucida*, and into a nurturing Winter Garden, where he could preserve his mother. The grandfather's large hat, like the one Benjamin describes in Kafka's photograph, may have helped Barthes bridge the gap between the picture of Kafka and that of Barthes's mother. The resemblance between Barthes's described, but not reproduced, Winter Garden Photograph and *La souche* has until recently barely been remarked. Like the pearls that were exchanged for a slender ribbon, the distance between the page containing the description and the one reproducing the photograph may have disguised the resemblance for some, although here it is the photograph, rather than the description, that is delayed. The reader who reaches *La souche* with the faded Winter Garden Photograph firmly in mind may have been meant to smile knowingly, like a reader of a meandering novel who comes upon a sudden turn of events that forces a reconsideration of all that has gone before. If so, the author would have been disappointed, had he lived, to realize how few readers had done so. Not that the resemblance has completely escaped notice, even from the beginning. It has puzzled some readers, one of whom wonders why the Winter Garden Photograph was so much more powerful than this one, while another mistakes *La souche* for a portrait of Barthes's father.[45] Yet when Diana Knight finally raised in print the likelihood that *La souche* is the Winter Garden Photograph, few readers were willing to follow this twist of the plot.[46]



2.5 Unknown photographer, *La souche*, from Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1979.

Perhaps justifiably. Certainly there could have been a Winter Garden photograph. Maybe whenever his mother and her brother posed, they automatically took the same positions, she nestling one finger in her other hand, standing back a bit, he coming forward, leaning on and extending his hand on whatever was handy, railing or knee. They posed the same way wherever they were: at the end of a wooden bridge or at the end of a life; among the branches and palms of a flourishing winter garden, or around and between their grandfather, on the bare dirt of a garden in winter, with no trees except themselves, two offshoots of the *souche* (stock of tree, founder of a family), as Barthes calls the old man. But even if the Winter Garden Photograph was always in that chamber of light, where an unclouded vision could have seen it at any moment, what needed to be hidden, unlike Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter, was not the photograph but its meaning.[47] The reader must be discouraged from wondering how this banal photograph could have inflicted such a wound, and the children must be placed by themselves, not in the distracting company of this old man. "What relation can there be between my mother and her grandfather," Barthes writes, concerning this photograph, "so formidable, so monumental, so Hugolian, so much the incarnation of the inhuman distance of the Stock [*souche*]?"[48] Indeed, if *La souche* is the Winter Garden Photograph, then not only did the fabrication of the winter garden translate his mother's photograph to suit Barthes's metaphor of a bright room, it removed the inconvenient grandfather at the same time. The braided gold necklace should have been there; the old man should not. Man and necklace are present but absent. The punctum is the detail that is not there, or that one wishes were not there. Absence, in this book about loss, is presence. Like Jean-Paul Sartre's mental image in *L'imaginaire*, to which *Camera Lucida* is dedicated, the punctum is "a certain way an object has of being absent within its very presence," or perhaps present within its absence.[49] The punctum's Lacanian counterpoint is the gaze that traps the eye.[50]

But the displacement of the detail is just as Freudian as it is Lacanian. And the detail is displaced here, just as in the photograph by James VanDerZee. Barthes emphasizes his mother's look of sovereign innocence as the picture's distinguishing mark. He mentions, however, other details in the picture as well, for example that "awkward gesture" of his mother's, "holding one finger in the other hand, as children often do." How often do children make that gesture after all? Perhaps they do every day, although a search through several generations of my own family photographs failed to turn up any examples of it. Assuming there really was a Winter Garden Photograph, Barthes's mother presumably made that gesture more than once. That would make a minimum

2.6 Unknown photographer, Roland Barthes, from *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 1975.

of three such gestures in Roland Barthes's family album, two by Barthes's mother and one by Barthes himself as a small child, published by Barthes in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. Perhaps here, as supposedly in the portrait by James VanDerZee, the punctum is a detail. In the Winter Garden Photograph, Roland Barthes discovered not his mother, or not only his mother, but also

himself, himself as a child, specifically as a child known from photographs. A chain of photographs leads Barthes, searching from image to image, to the unexpected discovery of himself as his own mother, just as he had been his mother's mother while he cared for her during her last illness.[51]

But he was Aunt Alice as well. How different was this woman, who never married but lived alone near her mother all her life, from Barthes himself, who, as he does not fail to tell us later in the book, lived alone with his mother until her death, two years before his own? In *Camera Lucida* he writes that in certain photographs, he had his "father's sister's look."[52] They have been compared by Diana Knight, the perceptive observer of several of the anomalies of Barthes's favorite photographs, because "between them [they] incarnate the termination of the paternal line."[53] Indeed, although they were both unfertile limbs of the family tree, what struck Barthes about his aunt was her loneliness, not her lack of progeny. "The father's sister: she was alone all her life," reads the caption of a portrait of Alice in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*.[54] Did the graceful portrait of Alice with her parents on the preceding page (fig. 2.4) cover up the sadness exposed in her childhood portrait? The portrait of Barthes as a young man also sparks an insight into "l'irréductible" in himself: "in the child, I read quite openly the dark underside of myself"—an original darkness that inhabits the man as well.[55]

The displacement of the punctum leads to another, less personal, meaning of the Winter Garden Photograph that its absence disguises. If the punctum is displaced, like an alibi, then the detail that is not there, the "that-has-been," never was. And neither was the indexical power of the photograph. The fact that something was before the camera when the photograph was taken is no longer unproblematically the source of the photograph's power. I do not imply that *Camera Lucida* would suffer if the Winter Garden Photograph turned out to be an invention. To the reader of *Camera Lucida* it should matter little whether it existed or not.[56] The fictional truth of the unseen Winter Garden Photograph is powerful enough to survive its possible nonexistence, just as the missing necklace of VanDerZee's sitter only gains in power through its misplacement in a similarly novelistic turn. But the fact that it does not matter has consequences for any theory of photographic indexicality. To raise the possibility that these images do not exist and to realize how little their existence matters is to cast this founding concept into question. The fact that something is in front of the camera matters; what that something is does not. What matters is displaced.

Barthes's identification of the irreducible does matter. Barthes's sadness and that of his Aunt Alice, like his mother's transparent simplicity, shone

2.7 Unknown photographer, Alice Barthes, from *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 1975.

through their childhood photographs. Just as the Italianicity and euphoria of Panzani appear to be directly represented in the ad through the indexicality of the photograph, so Barthes's irreducible darkness, his aunt's loneliness, and the kindness that had formed his mother's being were visible in their youthful photographs. The photograph is traced to an originary being in front of the camera, and the person is traced to an originary childhood. One sees right through the pasta to its Italian ethnicity. A child, no more able than a vegetable to disguise its essence, reveals the "irreducible" just as indexically as the Panzani vegetables reveal their Italianicity. With one difference: the telling details, whose presence before the camera guarantees the authenticity of the ad, are absent. Essence is not guaranteed.

Yet the pain is there, even when the necklace is not. If the immense power of the photograph does not come from that which was in front of the camera, it lies elsewhere. To find it, we can look in the network of identifications that these photographs establish. They begin with Barthes's family, but they go beyond it as well. If Barthes identifies with Aunt Alice, then in a cross-gender, cross-Atlantic, interracial identification, through his tender care of his mother-become-daughter, he is also the "solacing Mammy" in VanDerZee's photograph, the woman who "on account of her necklace" had, for Barthes, "a whole life external to her portrait."[57] Barthes's aunt gave him piano lessons on his boyhood visits to the provinces, and he went to stay with her after the death of her own mother, his grandmother.[58] But when Barthes's mother died, his aunt was not there to solace him, her necklace already encased in a "family box."

Barthes's "identification" of these people links multiple photographs in a chain of identificatory relationships. His community of photographs that "exist" for him links his family to a series of strangers. But as an encounter with either a portrait or a family, Barthes's encounter with VanDerZee's sitters, like most encounters in this tragic narrative, is at best missed. In order to make the sitters part of his family, he emptied their identity of everything but their status as representatives of a marginalized class open to assimilation by the narrator. Indeed, marginalized figures take up a large share of the illustrations in *Camera Lucida*, which includes among its twenty-five photographs a "blind gypsy violinist," "idiot children," a condemned man, slum children from Little Italy in New York City, five African Americans, including VanDerZee's sitters, and Africans pictured with a French explorer.[59] These subjects were perhaps important objects of identification for Barthes, who enumerated most of his own claims to marginal status in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*.[60] There may have been a wishful element as well. Barthes could have interpreted the black woman's stance in VanDerZee's portrait, and her fashionable clothes of the

1920s, as displaying a self-possession that he could well have wished for his aunt.[61] His relation to the lady in her Sunday best is one-sided, misleading, and unknowable, but poignant and meaningful all the same. The rhetorical analyst Barthes, of an earlier moment, would have unmasked his comments about this picture as an example of mythological thinking; the earlier Barthes, however, wrote essays. *Camera Lucida*, as I have tried to show, is not an essay. Rather than expose the naïveté that makes pasta ads effective, Barthes places himself "in the situation of a naïve man, outside culture, someone untutored who would be constantly astonished at photography."[62]

This naïve viewer is perhaps everyone when photography enters the delicate sphere of human relations. Relations to people can be as one-sided as relations to photographs. Even people do not determine our response to them through preexisting essences. We endow them with attributes we need them to have, hang gold ribbons around their necks when they would prefer pearls. One might say that not only do we misidentify them, we misidentify *with* them. A reading of *Camera Lucida* suggests that the most significant indexical power of the photograph may consequently lie not in the relation between the photograph and its subject but in the relation between the photograph and its beholder, or user, in what I would like to call a "performative index" or an "index of identification." *Camera Lucida* allows us to see its narrator use photography to satisfy his desire to possess or commune with his mother, to absorb her into himself and preserve her there through his identification with her. Photography is a winter garden, like a *chambre claire* that lets in light in the winter and keeps alive artificially that which should otherwise have died.

The narrator of *Camera Lucida* performs, rather than argues, the meeting in the winter garden because he, like many an art historian or critic, is caught up in the rhetoric of proof and existence, the truth of his mother's face. He looks for what a photograph is "in itself."[63] But an "in itself," a "truth," could only have been an external guarantee of the relation that was his goal, a relation established, like most relations, with no guarantees at all.

THREE

"From One Dark Shore to the Other"

The Epiphany of the Image in Hugo von Hofmannsthal and W. G. Sebald

UNDER THE NUT TREE

By the faint light that fell from the living-room window into the well I saw, with a shudder that went to the roots of my hair, a water beetle rowing across the mirrored surface of the water, from one dark shore to the other.

W. G. SEBALD, *The Rings of Saturn*[1]

Roland Barthes's photographic companions were all irredeemably dead, even if their subjects continued to live. He could not share Agee's hope that the encounter with a photograph could foster a relationship so powerful as to wrest the work of art from its isolation and effect change in the conditions of living people. While no direct connection links the hope of Agee to the despair of Barthes, the discourse they share, about the power of photography, grows out of a more general discourse about the power of words and images. This discourse, in its connection to photography, is strikingly visible in the dialogue between two writers who lived a century apart: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, writing in Vienna at the beginning of the twentieth century, sought refuge in the image, literary and visual; W. G. Sebald, a German literary scholar and novelist writing in England and incorporating photographs in the text of his fictional and nonfictional works, shared and critiqued this earlier faith in images using a late twentieth-century discourse of photography. To study the dialogue between these two offers new insights into the hopes for the power of photography to produce access to reality and the destruction of these hopes over the course and in face of the events of the twentieth century.

This discourse, however, and this chapter as well, begin not with photography but with literature. Sebald studied and wrote about Austrian literature and especially Hofmannsthal, whose prose and poetry inspired his own fiction; but the water beetle in the well appears to the narrator Sebald at the

end of a visit to a different poet. During a semifictional walking trip through Suffolk, recounted in his 1992 novel, *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald stops to see the nonfictional poet Michael Hamburger. To call the trip, and the novel that describes it, semifictional leaves the status of this passage, like others, in doubt. The narrator's life shares a great deal with that of its author, W. G. Sebald, who was friendly with Hamburger, but it would take some sleuthing to discover the truth of other details in the book. Does a well lie outside Michael Hamburger's living room, and did Sebald once see a water beetle there? Such insects are not unusual in wells, and Sebald may really have seen one. But it did not make its way into the narrative to lend verisimilitude, because Sebald's shudder, the water beetle that caused it, and the two dark shores were all, like many of Sebald's experiences and observations, borrowed. He took them from a famous and puzzling essay of 1903 by Austrian writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos" ("Der Brief"). Hofmannsthal writes, "For what had [this] to do with pity, or with any comprehensible concatenation of human thought: beneath a nut-tree a half-filled pitcher which a gardener boy had left there, and the pitcher and the water in it, darkened by the shadow of the tree, and a water beetle rowing on the mirrored surface of the water from one dark shore to the other."[2] The sentence goes on, at length (Hofmannsthal and Sebald both relished long sentences), and in the middle of it, the shudder arrives: "this combination of trifles sent through me such a shudder at the presence of the Infinite, a shudder running from the roots of my hair to the marrow of my heels?"[3]

The image of the beetle in the watering can once sent a shudder to (or from) the roots of my own hair, a shudder of embarrassment. I had referred to it to make a point about the role played by visual images in a crisis of representation at the turn of the twentieth century: "The writer of the 'Letter' eventually resolves his crisis with visual images that . . . bring their viewer into direct contact with reality through their irreducible individuality. Other Hofmannsthal heroes do the same. . . . The writer of the letter finds redemption in the sight of a fly swimming across a pail of milk."[4] How could I have made such an egregious error, changing, with a careless image, a bug that lives in water into a fly that drowns in it, the shadow-darkened surface of water into bright milk, the depths of a half-filled watering can into an open pail? I had found the error in my otherwise reasonably meticulous book, full of close readings, too late to correct it.

Unlike mine, Sebald's minor misquotation was surely no mistake; he appropriated Hofmannsthal's passage in a work of literature, and presumably had literary reasons for making changes in it. At least one of the complex rea-

sons why Sebald might have appropriated Hofmannsthal's bug is not difficult to surmise: it made sense to quote from the "Letter of Lord Chandos" because both Sebald and Hamburger, as Germanists, had written literary analyses of Hofmannsthal. But a troubling element in the passage itself may also have resonated with their shared experiences. The appropriation, with its troubling aspect, places Sebald's thoughts within a discourse about—and with—visual images in German thought, to which the Chandos letter is key.

Chandos's fictional shudder, like Sebald's, takes place in England. Lord Chandos addresses the letter, on August 22, 1603, to Francis Bacon. It is written in response to an anxious inquiry from Bacon after a two-year silence on the part of the usually prolific essayist and correspondent, Chandos. Lord Chandos begins simply: he has ceased to write. With great eloquence, he elaborates: words have come to seem empty and abstract. He finds himself unable even to hold a sensible conversation, let alone to complete the several grand writing projects he had planned, such as the ambitious set of "descriptions of the greatest and most characteristic architectural monuments in the Netherlands, in France and Italy. . . . The whole work was to have been entitled *Nosce te ipsum*."[5] In despair over the possibility of expressing himself in words, he retired to his country estate and immersed himself in practical life. There he occasionally found a moment's worth of salvation in a visual image of something homely and mundane, such as "a dog, a rat, a beetle, a crippled apple tree," or the water beetle paddling from one dark shore to another.[6] These images, real and imagined, brought him transcendence as words could not. Indeed, the creatures "rise toward me with such an abundance, such a presence of love, that my enchanted eye can find nothing in sight void of life. . . . I experience in and around me a blissful, never-ending interplay, and among the objects playing against one another there is not one into which I cannot flow . . . as if we could enter into a new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence."[7] The mysticism in such sentiments was immediately recognized, and although Hofmannsthal later qualified his intentions by referring to the Chandos letter as recounting the experience of a "mystic without mysticism," by 1906 he was corresponding on mystical topics with similarly inclined intellectuals, such as the future Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, then engaged in following his dissertation on Christian mysticism with his first works on Jewish mysticism.[8]

The Chandos letter has occupied a place of honor among Germanists for over a century. Some of them, as a recent anthology testifies, were moved to write back.[9] Many scholars relate the letter to a "crisis of language," or "Sprachskepsis" (language-skepticism), sometimes within Hofmannsthal's

own work, sometimes within German literature or European culture in general; some do so only in order to reconsider or deny the existence of any such crisis in one or more of these arenas.[10] As far as Hofmannsthal's own career is concerned, their doubt is justified. The Chandos letter, after all, is written, and Hofmannsthal's output did not even pause. At most, it marked Hofmannsthal's abandonment of lyric poetry for prose and drama. It was one among many prose works using historical styles in the genre Hofmannsthal called "invented dialogues and letters."[11]

The water beetle has not shared in Chandos's fame. Little of the writing about the "Letter" does more than mention it in passing, if that.[12] Only Sebald's encounter with it in a well outside Hamburger's home in Middleton, where it causes in him the same shudder that Chandos had felt, begins to disturb the surface of the water on which it paddles from one dark shore to the other. Sebald's shudder affects Chandos's shudder because, just as the work of Borges's French symbolist poet, "Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote," transcends the meaning of the Quixote by Cervantes, which it quotes word for word, Sebald's rephrased description of the bug's effect on him does not mean the same thing as Hofmannsthal's description of Lord Chandos's shudder.[13] The meaning changes, not only because Sebald's shudder is informed by Hofmannsthal, or Chandos, but also because, as Sebald's tribute itself seems to acknowledge, it is impossible to read Hofmannsthal's "Letter of Lord Chandos" as quite the same venture into mysticism at the end of the twentieth century as in the beginning.

The image of the swimming bug comes late in Hofmannsthal's essay, in response to a possible objection to a previous image. "For what had [his reaction to the bug] to do with pity?" begins Chandos, introducing the image of the water beetle to show that he could be moved by a trivial event that did not engage the human response of pity or pathos.[14] In fact, if Chandos needs redemption from the charge that he anticipates his correspondent may level at him, it is because he has just employed a strikingly pathetic example. It is the image of poisoned rats, whose extermination in the milk cellar of his dairy he had just ordered. The cellar is full of the noxious odor of the poison, the rats unable to escape because the holes have all been stopped. As he imagines the "death struggle of a mob of rats," arresting mental images fill his mind: "the vain convulsions of those convoluted bodies as they tear about in confusion and despair; their frenzied search for escape," images which Chandos compares to the account of the destruction of Alba Longa by Livius, the burning of Carthage, and the myth of Niobe, queen of Thebes, with her dying children.[15] The vision is horrific enough to blot out the mundane impetus for

it: Chandos was drawn to think of the rats he has killed when he sees a startled brood of quail, with the setting sun in the distance.

These were the histrionics from which the homely water beetle came to rescue Lord Chandos. While few later writers discussed the bug in detail, they did occasionally stumble over the rats. Hamburger was among those bothered by the fact that Chandos's only problem with the description of rats dying is that someone might think he felt pity for them. Chandos is a farmer, of course, and it simply won't do to have rats in the milk cellar, but there is something disturbing, nonetheless, about Chandos's description. Hamburger introduces the rats to support an ethical interpretation of Hofmannsthal's conception of poetry. For all of Chandos's rhapsodizing over the image of the dying rats, the rats, writes Hamburger, "were poisoned all the same."[16] Chandos's empathy for the rats does not translate into sympathetic action. By the failure to act, according to Hamburger, Hofmannsthal meant to suggest the weak point in poetic ethics. Although the Chandos letter does not initiate a change in Hofmannsthal's ethics, it takes part in his ongoing struggle, begun much earlier in his career, to reconcile poetry and action.

Hamburger's interpretation of "The Letter of Lord Chandos" contributes to his analysis of Hofmannsthal's concern for the suppression of meaning through the social conventions of speech. "Form is mask, but without form neither giving nor taking from soul to soul," Hofmannsthal had written, by which, according to Hamburger, he "meant not only form in works of art, but the conventions that govern speech, manners and appearances in life: the phenomenalizing principle."[17] For Hamburger, Hofmannsthal's statements on word-skepticism and word-mysticism, on meaning in surface and depth, reference social convention. Hamburger reads Hofmannsthal's observation, "For usually it is not words that are in the power of men, but men who are in the power of words. . . . Whenever we open our mouths, ten thousand of the dead speak through us," as evidence for Hofmannsthal's intention to associate words with social reality, while Hofmannsthal's practice of "concealing the depth in the surface" indicates his intention "to introduce profundity into the mundane."[18]

Although the image of the bug swimming on the dark water makes reference to all these sentiments, Hamburger never mentioned it in his literary analyses of Hofmannsthal. He did, however, conjure similar bugs in his own memoir. In connection with a former girlfriend, he writes, "But Monica, I noted [in a journal], was 'three-quarters unconscious, often inarticulate and immersed in some aquatic depth which words could only skim like those long-legged flies on ponds."[19] His long-legged flies were not *Schwimmkäfer* (water

beetles), of course, like those of Hofmannsthal, but slender, more beautifully limbed water-striders. Yet the aquatic depth that Monica's words could only skim suggests the concealed depth in Hofmannsthal's mystical watering can. Like Sebald, he appropriated, rather than analyzed, the bug.

Yet Hamburger's attention to the way in which social conventions escape the true depth of meaning does not confirm his interpretation of "The Letter." In spite of the expressions of desire to end the isolation of the artist, and of love for simple beings into whose existence one can flow, all suggesting the sentiments of an Agee gazing into the eyes of a tenant farmer's child, it is not obvious that Hofmannsthal in "The Letter" was more interested in activism against rat killers than Chandos, or than we would be were rats in our cellar. It is Chandos's comparison of people with rats that makes us uneasy, since, at our end of the century, we have before us inescapable images of rat poison having been used, in just this way, against people whose oppressors characterized them as vermin. The unavoidable association of the scene of the rats being poisoned in an English cellar with extermination camps in Poland was unavailable to the author of "The Letter of Lord Chandos." It hovers, however, over Sebald's passage about Michael Hamburger. After all, it is this fate that Hamburger and his immediate family avoided by crossing from one dark shore to the other in 1933. It is this fate to which Sebald alludes when he describes Hamburger's passage between those shores, appropriating Hamburger's memoir for the purpose.

The dark shores between which the water beetle navigated bounded the waters separating Europe and England. English poet Michael Hamburger was born of Jewish ancestry in Germany in 1924 and as a boy in 1933 migrated to England with his family to escape National Socialism. Sebald moved the image of Hofmannsthal's bug, swimming from shore to shore, to Hamburger's country home in England from Hofmannsthal's native Austria, neighbor to Hamburger's, and Sebald's, Germany. But, of course, the bug was swimming in an English country estate all along, for Hofmannsthal imagined it there on Lord Chandos's estate in Gloucestershire, to which the lord retreated when he lost his faith in words.

To equate Hofmannsthal's rats with the people that the Nazis called rats and sought to exterminate is an impermissible act of "backshadowing," and the literary critic Sebald wouldn't dream of it.[20] The fiction writer Sebald, however, could celebrate it as a strange coincidence to embellish and redeem through a new context. A few reversals may serve the purpose of redemption. For example, Chandos's bug is darkened in the shadow of a nut tree, while Sebald's is illuminated by light from the living room window. Chandos's

shudder starts at the roots of his hair; Sebald's ends there, as though retreating to meet that of Chandos or completing a circuit. While the bug under the nut tree in "The Letter of Lord Chandos" comes to redeem Chandos from the charge of pathos stemming from the literarily-inspired vision of the rats that preceded it, Sebald's bug follows an account by Anne Beresford, Hamburger's wife, of a beautiful dream about riding in a limousine through a forest. Ms. Beresford was reminded of the dream not by the startled quail who reminded Chandos of the rats but by the act of calling a taxi for Sebald. If Hamburger's dark bug dispelled pathos and literary conceit, Sebald's illuminated bug is itself a literary conceit that evokes a work of literature and casts a shadow.

Both authors, however, use one image of sublime vermin as a cover for another; for even in Hofmannsthal's essay, the bug in the dark water could also serve as what Freud would call a "screen memory" for the grim scene in the cellar.[21] There are echoes of this grim scene in the circumstances of the beetle. While swimming from one dark shore to the other, it may well have believed it could swim out of its prison, whether a watering can or a well. We do not know whether Hofmannsthal thought of the beetle's possible escape route when he wrote about it. Chandos certainly did not. But Sebald's bug is surely swimming to escape the dark shore of Europe. And it finds that England's shore is just as dark, that there is no escape from memory. This recognition is present in the narrator's shudder at the end of his account of Hamburger's peregrinations, back and forth, from Europe to England.

The journey between Europe and England also tied Sebald to Hamburger. Writing in German while living in England, Sebald, both narrator and author, felt profoundly tied to Hamburger through emigration and a German childhood, along with the transformation, more complete in Hamburger's case than in Sebald's, to an English identity. This personal identification tied him to Hamburger even more profoundly than their shared academic interests in Austrian literature, and Sebald's desire to emulate Hamburger's transition from an academic to a solely literary livelihood. But the narrator Sebald did not rest contentedly with these points in common. In *Rings of Saturn*, his identification with Hamburger escalates into a major theme, and drives him to think up more correlations, many of them trivial coincidences, some of them invented or modified. He builds communality, for example, on the fact that he and Hamburger were each twenty-two years old when they encountered a particular Englishman, even though his arithmetic is erroneous: Hamburger was only twenty when the meeting occurred, and in any case refers to the man in his memoirs as a "Grammar School friend."[22]

The triviality of the alteration suggests the profundity of the identification with Hamburger that gave rise to it. On his first visit to Hamburger's house, the narrator feels "as if I lived or had once lived there, in every respect precisely as he does."[23] Upon seeing a study Hamburger has ceased to use, the narrator feels "as if it were not he who had abandoned that place of work but I, as if the spectacles cases, letters and writing materials that had evidently lain untouched for months in the soft north light had once been my spectacles cases, my letters and my writing materials."[24] The stacks of office material, papers, and books in Hamburger's house (we see photographs of such stacks) appear to Sebald to be his own stacks of books. The intensity of his feeling of being haunted by "the ghosts of repetition" reminds him of a physical inability, tied to loss of blood, "to think, to speak or to move one's limbs, as though, without being aware of it, one had suffered a stroke."[25]

Sebald uses even more subtle means of eliding his identity with that of Hamburger. Quoting from Hamburger's memoirs, Sebald rephrases his words slightly, making them his own. The device of indirect speech, used liberally, allows barely noticeable shifts between the third person and the first person, until the confused reader loses confidence in her ability to distinguish a given speaker, as though identity could shift from person to person. The effect mirrors the loss of Hamburger's German identity, theme of the section of the memoirs from which Sebald quotes. Only a few shreds of memory of his Berlin youth tie Hamburger to his German past, incidental ones, such as "the sunlight and how it fell."[26] Yet this forgotten past, and the fate of Hamburger's deported and murdered grandmother, mingles with the present in his dreams, and in his poems as well, destabilizing his acquired English identity.[27] The embedded occurrences of *sagte* ("said") in turn enable, in literary form, the sliding of identities from Hamburger to Sebald.

The instability of the self occupied the young Hugo von Hofmannsthal as it did Ernst Mach, Hermann Bahr, and others who wrote about the philosophical issue of identity in turn-of-the-century Vienna.[28] In "The Letter of Lord Chandos," Lord Bacon has suggested that Chandos is "sick in mind," and Chandos interprets this to mean that he needs to "sharpen my senses for the condition of my inner self."[29] But this self, according to Chandos, is simply not available to him. He would fain "reveal myself to you entirely, but cannot set about it. Hardly do I know whether I am still the same person to whom your precious letter is addressed."[30] The discontinuity of identity and consequent inability to reveal oneself are at the heart of the "language problem" in Chandos. The instability of the self prevents communication and inhibits, or in this case severs, relationships with others. Although Sebald never wrote about the Chandos

letter, he wrote about the problem of the self in Hofmannsthal's novel *Andreas*. Such "Ich-Schwäche" (weakness of the ego), he wrote, is the precondition for both pathological symptoms and all creative achievement, thereby applying his readings of Freud to his studies of Hofmannsthal's novel.[31]

In "The Letter," the water beetle, because it is real and above all visual, could cut through the shifting field of identity and give it a resting place. Lacking literary elaborations, substituting reality for imagination, it functioned as an antidote to the literary description of the dying rats, and offered its beholder the possibility of a relationship. Chandos really saw the water bug, after all, while he only imagined watching the rats die. Yet if the water bug escapes the literary, it does not follow that it was mute, ordinary, or devoid of symbolic meaning. The strength of the image of the swimming beetle, for example, depends precisely on its swimming in the watery gloom of a half-filled watering can, rather than crawling on the ground in broad daylight. The watering can is dark and minute, like our own small worlds, but even in its depth it reflects the sky as a mirror. "From one dark shore to the other," the bug is the redeeming glimpse of the visual between dark shores of experience, its homeliness, and above all its reality, giving it its claim to significance.

Whether they are seen, reported, or painted, visual images of the mundane, real and imagined, have an enormous impact in Hofmannsthal's writings in other ways as well. A mental image of the Roman orator Crassus, crying over a dead fish, comes to Chandos like a "splinter round which everything festers, throbs, and boils."[32] Visual arts, too, had an impact on Hofmannsthal. The suffering hero of Hofmannsthal's "Letters of the Returnee," an "invented letter" published four years after the Chandos letter, looked to van Gogh's paintings for salvation. While the subjects of these paintings, copper beakers and iron jugs and peasants eating potatoes, were as homely as the water bug, it was not they that rescued the letter writer from his malaise but rather their essences, conveyed in van Gogh's colors.[33] Writers about Hofmannsthal who focus on the crisis of language rarely focus on the overwhelming power that Hofmannsthal ascribes to the visual, or visualized, image.[34]

Of course, not using illustrations, Hofmannsthal, like his hero Chandos, only replaced one verbal image with another, hoping that his readers would find the replacement more minute and specific than the abstract original.[35] Yet his words speak plainly of the visual, of the ways in which the world seems to come directly into the body through the eyes, connecting one human being with everything, and creating an art form more powerful than words. For Hofmannsthal, the crisis of language, if there is one, leads to the apotheosis of the visual image. In later work, he admired, and aspired to, pantomime.[36]

Not everyone in Hofmannsthal's day was as sanguine as Hofmannsthal about vision's ability to redeem words. While the wordsmith Hofmannsthal seemed to despair of words, visual artists often lost their faith in images. Those around Hofmannsthal in fin-de-siècle Vienna who used, studied, or made images questioned the power of representational convention, and began instead to look for validation to ornament and abstraction.[37] Insofar as they shared Hofmannsthal's faith in the saving power of art, the images in which they believed were those of pure sensory experience. As we have seen, both the discourse of touch and the discourse of the index that evolved from it attempted to rescue the image, or to understand how and why it could not be saved.

PAUSE: THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE CAN OFTEN ONLY BE SPECIFIED LATER

When Hofmannsthal's water beetle again paddled across my own writing, in my second book, ten years after the first, a generic, unidentified bug swam, accurately but unremarkably, in a watering can.[38] Unlike the poetic water beetle with its thin rudders, or the dark water beetle with its taut, mirrored surface, this bug served only to make an abstract point. I should have known the bug well enough to understand that to force it to serve as an abstraction was to violate it. After all, the first time that it paddled across a page into my consciousness, I was a graduate student taking a reading course in fin-de-siècle Austrian literature. The professor, the late Manfred Hoppe, great teacher and Hofmannsthal scholar as well as the author of a book on Hofmannsthal's notions of mysticism and magic, also introduced me to Michael Hamburger's work on Hofmannsthal.[39] The significance he patiently impressed on me, of Hofmannsthal's bug as the representative of the particular, should have prevented me from making not only the bad mistake of misquoting the passage but the more subtle mistake of turning it into an abstraction.

As it did not prevent me from making these errors, it seems reasonable to ask how the fly got into the milk in the first place. Perhaps, I thought, I may unconsciously have wished to turn Hofmannsthal's bug into a "fly in my soup" joke. It would indeed become the fly in the ointment of my pleasure in *Rings of Saturn*. But that explanation covers only the fly, not the milk: there are no "fly-in-milk" jokes. The substitution of a pail for a watering can follows from the substitution of milk for water, since no one puts milk in a watering can. Soup was perhaps out of the question, since there aren't likely to be any pails or watering cans full of soup—or ointment—on a farm. But the explanation is unsatisfactory. Why milk? Only now it hits me. The poisoned rats were, after

all, in the "Milchkeller eines meiner Meierhöfe" (the milk-cellar of one of my dairy-farms).[40] By transforming water into milk, I brought the insect closer to the rats it sought to hide, and to the grisly associations from which an image of a fly in a pail of milk had apparently seen fit to shield my conscious mind. Until now.

IN WHICH LORD CHANDOS TAKES UP PHOTOGRAPHY AND SETS OFF TO FIND HIS MOTHER, THE ROSE QUEEN

Given Austria's and Germany's preoccupation with the Holocaust toward the end of the twentieth century, it is perhaps not surprising that when Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and its photographic struggle with memory encountered the powerful discourse of the image already in place in German literature, it immediately became entangled, like Hofmannstahl's water beetle, in a web of Holocaust memories. A second "crisis of language," which followed World War II and is usually traced to Theodor Adorno's pronouncement, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," raised the stakes for representation.[41] This much-discussed remark is often quoted to turn the representation of the Holocaust into a violation of the second biblical commandment against the making of graven images.[42] Occasionally, the discourse of the Holocaust takes on a religious, even a mystical cast, if only because its subject, like that of religion, is thought to surpass what can be said in words: the experience of the absolute defies the capacity of conventional discourse, while the experience of the Holocaust is too horrific for language to convey.

The work of W. G. Sebald frequently elides the two forms of speechlessness, the two crises. He transforms the ineffable into the unspeakable, for example, in a paraphrase of a famous quotation from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921): "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen" (What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence).[43] The statement refers to those ideas that cannot be expressed in logical propositions, primarily ideas of spiritual and emotional importance, the ethical side of life that must be lived rather than enunciated. Some thinkers see mystical overtones in the passage from which the remark comes at the end of the *Tractatus*, and relate it to the *Sprachskepsis* in fin-de-siècle Vienna.[44] In Sebald's *The Emigrants* (1992), a group of four stories about German émigrés, most of them Jewish exiles from the Holocaust, a character remarks, "Und worüber wir nicht reden konnten, darüber schwiegen wir eben" (And that which we could not speak about we passed over in silence).[45] The speaker in Sebald's story, Max Ferber, a painter who fled Germany at the age of fifteen,

turns the phrase into the past definite, and uses it to refer to his family's reluctance during his childhood to speak of the dire events going on around them. A philosophical acknowledgment of inexpressibility becomes the historical reluctance to bear witness to the Holocaust.

Sebald similarly brought Hofmannsthal's response to the fin-de-siècle crisis of representation to bear upon emigration and the Holocaust, but he did so by way of later twentieth-century writings on photography by Roland Barthes, John Berger, and Susan Sontag that appeared in the 1970s. Sebald's reflections on the relationship between photography and literature began in the 1980s, chiefly in a series of studies that led to the book *Unheimliche Heimat* (Uncanny Homeland), on the ambivalence felt toward their homeland by Austrian writers, some of them émigrés.[46] In his discussion of Leopold Kompert's nostalgic literary sketches of the ghetto, written as though this (then still-existing) community had already been destroyed, Sebald evokes Susan Sontag, who

> described photography as the modern equivalent of synthetic ruins. Each photograph suggests, not unlike the artificial ruins of Romanticism, a feeling of the past. This arresting analogy fits just as well the literary genre sketches that anticipate photographic practices. In that the world of the ghetto is represented, it is, before its dissolution is actually in progress, already transformed into a thing of the past.[47]

Sebald applies similar logic to Charles Sealsfield's literary sketches of American Indians written in the early nineteenth century. Sealsfield portrays Native Americans sympathetically, yet accepts their impending demise as justifiable—a stance, as Sebald notes, accepted readily by Sealsfield's Austrian biographer, writing during the Holocaust. "This does not mean that they could not have been 'photographed' [*Aufgenommen*] by the ethnological gaze, which nothing interests more than a species in the act of becoming extinct."[48] Sealsfield's "warmly lit genre scenes of Indian life" are examples of "that technique of 'literary photography, which was discovered long before the chemical kind,' [and] not only wishes to preserve that which is threatened by death, but is often the first to identify it as such."[49] Sebald stops short of implying that this ethnological literary photography actually incites the death of its subjects, but in his essay on Jan Peter Tripp, he cites Roland Barthes bluntly terming photography an "agent of death."[50]

At the very moment that Sebald's citations of Sontag and Barthes regarding photography suggest their influence on his thinking, he positions litera-

ture and photography as competitors, because literature preceded photography in precisely the function in which photography is said to excel. These remarks on photography, literature, and salvage ethnography, which recognize and place into question photography's memorial function, are precursors of Sebald's approach to photography in his last novel, *Austerlitz* (2001), where he uses photography to bring to bear on the Holocaust the problem of the relative validity of words and images.

Jacques Austerlitz, the protagonist of *Austerlitz*, is an English architectural historian devoted to the study of the historicist architecture of the nineteenth century. Although unaware of the fact most of his life, he is a refugee from National Socialism. Raised under another name, Dafydd Elias, by a minister's family in England, Austerlitz discovers his real name as a grammar school student, but the knowledge that he was a Jewish *Kindertransport* child who had lived in Prague until the age of four only reaches him late in life. When it does, he turns the direction of his obsessive research from architecture to his lost roots. Austerlitz discloses all of this to a narrator whose own life story, from the little we read of it, resembles that of W. G. Sebald.

References to the Holocaust early in the book prepare us not only for Austerlitz's revelation but for the connection between *Sprachkritik*, historicist architecture, and the Holocaust. Sebald had already written about Holocaust witness Jean Amery, and his imprisonment and torture in the Belgian fortress Breendonk.[51] Breendonk appears in the novel as one of the first historical monuments whose history the architectural historian Austerlitz traces for the narrator. His narrative stops safely in the period of his own specialization, well before the internment of Amery and other prisoners; but the narrator stumbles into the omitted history the very next day, and is inspired to visit the fortress, now a national memorial. The contrast between the narrator's reaction to Breendonk, and Austerlitz's account of it, thematizes Austerlitz's blind spot.

The passage ties the Holocaust narrative to the crisis of language, because Amery, who rejected his Austrian name, Hans Mayer (Amery is an anagram of the name Mayer), wrote of his identity crisis, rooted in a crisis of language: the Nazis destroyed the German language along with its German-speaking victims. This theft of his native tongue made it painful for Amery to express himself in it. Evoking Amery, Sebald ties the problem of Holocaust representation to the limits of language: "He knows," Sebald writes elsewhere, "that he operates on the borders of the ability of language to communicate" (des sprachlichen Mitteilungsvermögens).[52] While the confrontation between language and experience causes Chandos to lose faith in writing, for Amery it is

torture that turns writing into a doubtful business. Caught between silence, on one hand, and speech and writing on the other, he salvages writing in the end only because to desist from it in the face of torture is even less justifiable than to write.

The reference to Amery in *Austerlitz* touches on another important theme of the novel: the relationship between memory and images.[53] According to Amery, "Diffuse forgetting goes together with a resurgence of images that one can't get out of one's mind, and which in an otherwise evacuated past remain effective as an instance of a pathology bordering on Hypermnesia."[54] The title of the 1988 essay in which Sebald writes about Amery, "With the Eyes of a Nocturnal Bird (Nachtvogel): Jean Amery," evokes the idea of images through the eyes with which one sees them. The title also ties Amery to another early scene in *Austerlitz*, which takes place in the Nocturama (an area that houses nocturnal animals) of the Antwerp Zoo, which the narrator visits before meeting Austerlitz for the first time. The passage is illustrated with photographs of the eyes of night creatures that may represent Jean Amery, who sees through the darkness far more clearly than Austerlitz does. (The human eyes illustrated in the text belong to Ludwig Wittgenstein and the artist Jan Peter Tripp, whose etchings of eyes later appeared in a book accompanied by Sebald's poems.)[55] Vision into the darkness may not be an unalloyed blessing, however. While the novel *Austerlitz* leaves its protagonist still searching and striving, Amery, with his abundance of memory and vision, committed suicide in 1978 at the age of sixty-six. Even Austerlitz's searching and striving may come to nothing: a raccoon that the narrator sees in the Nocturama seems to anticipate Austerlitz; it obsessively washes a piece of apple in a misguided attempt to adjust to life outside its native habitat.[56]

Sebald's photographic discourse reflects his readings of Barthes and Sontag, but the text of *Austerlitz* is strewn with references to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, with the most explicit relationship to the Chandos letter in the main character himself. The book's English hero, Austerlitz, has a number of "models," including Suzi Bechhöfer (a former *Kindertransport* child), an architectural historical friend whose picture is said to be on the cover of the book (see fig. 3.3), and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, on whose resemblance to Austerlitz the narrator remarks.[57] Yet he also bears a resemblance to Hofmannsthal's imaginary letter writer. Like the other Englishman, Lord Chandos, Austerlitz is not to be heard from for years at a time; he also makes similarly great plans. Lord Chandos was not precisely an architectural historian, but his plan to write "descriptions of the greatest and most characteristic architectural monuments in the Netherlands, in France and Italy" resembles

Austerlitz's ambitious work on the architecture of historicism. Historicism, in fact, was the architectural style that surrounded Hofmannsthal in Vienna.[58] "The Letter of Lord Chandos," which referenced and updated the epistolary style of the early seventeenth century, could be seen as a literary analogue of historicism.[59] Sebald, drawing from his own literary studies of the Austrian fin de siècle, referenced and updated the style of Hofmannsthal and other Austrian writers in his prose, giving it an uncannily anachronistic character, which emphasizes the identification between Hofmannsthal, Austerlitz, and Sebald.[60] Indeed, the circle of identification challenges the narrator's identity, just as did the concentric rings of identity in *Rings of Saturn*, where Sebald identifies with Hamburger, who identifies with Hofmannsthal, who identifies with his creation Chandos, as Chandos himself had identified with Crassus, who cried over his fish, a "mirrored image of my Self, reflected across the abyss of centuries."[61]

Austerlitz resembles Chandos most closely in the way he breaks down. His disintegration reenacts the language crisis. Like Chandos, Austerlitz finds himself unable to speak or write of anything coherently: "I could see no connections anymore; the sentences resolved themselves into a series of separate words, the words into random sets of letters, the letters into disjointed signs."[62] Chandos writes, "For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea."[63] The aftermath of the crisis, too, is similar. Both men stop writing, and both cherish images. Chandos does not send his friend his unfinished manuscripts, but only verbally describes visual images with which he comforts himself. Austerlitz buries his words (under a compost heap) but leaves the photographs, inviting the narrator to peruse them, as though pictures gain in eloquence when liberated from words. They will be all that remains, he says, of his life.[64]

While Austerlitz, like Chandos, is obsessed with images, he is also, unlike Lord Chandos (but like Chandos's author, Hofmannsthal), obsessed with photography.[65] Sebald was, too, if one can judge by the number that he used in such "fictions" and other literary efforts.[66] Like his protagonist Austerlitz, as a teenager Sebald spent much of his time in the darkroom.[67] From the evidence of the modernist abstract studies of nature and industry reproduced on the page in which Austerlitz refers to his youthful love affair with photography, his output may have resembled the author's: many a high school- or college-age enthusiast of the 1960s produced such work. By the time he meets the narrator, however, Austerlitz has become a scholar whose photographs of nineteenth-century European architectural monuments are presumably in

the meticulous realistic style of the art historian. He uses for this purpose an "old Ensign with an extendable bellows."[68] In 1967, when the narrator first meets Austerlitz, the rather cumbersome apparatus from a defunct company—the last such model was made in 1958—must have given him an anachronistic appearance suited to a scholar of historicism and a literary creation bearing several layers of historical allusion.[69]

The photographs might appear to be determined by his profession, but perhaps the profession only serves to justify the photographs. As the narrative develops, it reveals that the real function of Austerlitz's photographs—and his profession—may be deeply rooted in his unconscious. Like Chandos, Austerlitz looks closely in order to transport himself elsewhere. His destination, however, is not transcendent and universal but a place of memory; Austerlitz does not repeat, but literalizes Chandos's aspirations. From the vantage point of *Austerlitz*, Chandos's intended title for his own literary work, "Nosce te ipsum" (Know Thyself), takes on a mundane meaning: Austerlitz literally does not know his own identity. In retrospect, his pursuit of the architecture of historicism proves to have been tied to the most decisive event in that lost history: his emigration from Europe to England. His passage landed him in the waiting room of a nineteenth-century railway station like the ones he photographs obsessively, like the one where the narrator first meets him, armed with sketchbook and camera, and where, as he tells the narrator, "he could never quite shake off thoughts of the agony of leave-taking and the fear of foreign places."[70] (Austerlitz's very name, beyond its fame as a Napoleonic battle site, is also the name of a Paris train station, and that of a depot for goods stolen from deported Jews.)[71] Austerlitz's preoccupation with train stations continues until, finally, his memory of his emigration returns in one of them. In his scholarship, he sought to escape his own history by turning to a historical period before it began; yet it led him inexorably to that event. The attempt to forget is really an attempt to remember; for the heroic architectural monuments of the past that he studied themselves became vehicles for the destructive horror of the twentieth century. Austerlitz's photography, then, constituted an attempted act of remembering. He photographed not what he saw but rather what he failed to see. He photographed, perhaps, in order to see, or to represent his desire to see.[72]

Sebald's protagonists always ask a great deal from the act of looking. Like Roland Barthes, they want images to restore the past, to revive lost connections. Like Lord Chandos, who insists that his revelations through images are direct, not allegorical, Sebald's protagonists do not regard images as reminders, as connections to memories, but rather as actual hiding places for them:

they seem to expect their penetrating looks to pry those images open and let the memories loose. As a result, they try to look at images very closely. In *The Emigrants*, Max Ferber examines for hours reproductions of the ceiling paintings by Tiepolo in Würzburg, looking at them not with the unaided eye or a camera but with a magnifying glass, "trying to see further and further into them," in order to see further and further into the memory they aroused of an afternoon in 1936, when his uncle told him of his compulsory retirement and impending emigration.[73] When Austerlitz sees an image of himself as a young man, he, too, reaches for a magnifying glass.[74] Analogously, he inspects a film made by Nazis about the Theresienstadt (Terezin) concentration camp in slow motion, searching it, frame by frame, for his mother.[75]

Austerlitz's persistence shows faith. Magnum photographer Gilles Peress, when refusing to caption his photographs of the recent disaster known as 9/11, wrote, "I don't trust words. I trust pictures." In 9/11, as we shall see in chapter 6, this trust in images was a key factor in sustaining hope that a new community could be born out of the tragedy. Photographic exhibitions, in connection with both 9/11 and the Holocaust, have sought to evoke communal memories of the event and its media coverage, and to create new memories for people who did not experience the tragedy at first hand. In the exhibitions of 9/11, the hope that the galvanizing power of tragedy could change or build community united with the promise of photographic technology. The faith that lives on in photographers like Peress, that images could bring us face to face with something real, has been expressed decades earlier by Lord Chandos, and is shared by Austerlitz as well. Chandos and Austerlitz trust images.

Austerlitz's trust is not rewarded. Indeed, as the past continues to elude him, photographic media are often the vehicle of disappointment. The belief in photographs to which the character Austerlitz adheres is revealed as an illusion by *Austerlitz* the novel, through the borrowed photographic images that the author uses in the text along with borrowed verbal images. Perhaps Austerlitz's relation to photographs explains why none of his photographs ever provide precisely what he is looking for. Austerlitz does not photograph people, after all—"it seemed improper to turn the viewfinder of the camera on individual people."[76] In German, the viewfinder is the *Sucher*, or "seeker," which suggests that Austerlitz deliberately refrains from "seeking" that which he is seeking. Even the photographs he takes of places may prevent him from seeing what is there, as though proving Kafka's alleged remark, "We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds."[77] When his memory returns in the Ladies' Waiting Room of the Liverpool Street train station in London, his camera is not at hand. Not a visual but an aural clue, a radio interview, alerts

him to the precise details of his past, and forces him to comb through archives and read books for more information. Photographs, pictorial embodiments that one might expect to ground words in facts by providing precise details, turn out to be less exacting, even where visual details are at stake, than word images, which are often eloquent and unique.

The limitations of photography become increasingly apparent as Austerlitz, ever more absorbed in self-discovery, continues to use photographic media to piece together his story. When he thinks he sees his mother in the film of Theresienstadt, his old nurse refuses to identify her; when he finds a photograph in a theater archive that seems to correlate with his "dim memory," and Vera authenticates it, the memory stays dim. No Winter Garden Photograph, its discovery almost a footnote, it ends up in the possession of the narrator "as a momento."[78] And indeed, why is one of these pictures identifiably Austerlitz's mother, while the other is not? The women in the pictures are similar.

3.1 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

3.2 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

Vera may not have considered that a season in Theresienstadt can change a beautiful young woman, rounded and pensive, into the gaunt and anxious figure in the background of the shot from *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* (The Führer Gives a City to the Jews). Photographs cannot, after all, make present the person they picture; they repeatedly fail to offer Austerlitz a connection to the past, even when, like Barthes (who well understands the futility of the endeavor), he continues to seek them out and pore over them. The magnifying glass he holds to the photograph of himself as a young boy yields not "the slightest clue" (den geringsten Anhalt).[79] Austerlitz cannot resurrect his lost relationship to his mother in a photograph. Only for the narrator is the photograph of Austerlitz's mother a "momento," of his relationship to Austerlitz.

Photography is not to blame for Austerlitz's loneliness. The relationships at the roots of his search are at fault. He remains alone even when he does find people, such as his nursemaid or the narrator. His obsession with his past is a symptom of his inability to make contact with the outside world. This difficulty, too, Austerlitz shares with characters in Hofmannsthal's works. In his critical study of Austrian literature, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* (Description of Disaster), Sebald describes the character Andreas, in Hofmannsthal's unfinished novel of the same name, in terms that recall Austerlitz. Andreas's inability to be done with the past, his insistence on mulling over and over every single situation of his childhood and boyhood, resembles the obsessiveness of Austerlitz's effort to recover his past. Austerlitz's inhibition against establishing relationships seems similarly due to the lack of an identity clearly established on the basis of his past. His most notable relational failure is his love affair with a French woman, Marie de Verneuil, named for a character from Balzac, as well as, like Austerlitz, a battle site (from the Hundred Years' War).[80] At the end of the novel, armed with his new identity, he hopes to find Marie. Yet, if his relationship with the narrator of *Austerlitz* is any gage of his ability to form attachments, "solving" his identity does not solve Austerlitz's problem. He seems oddly oblivious to his interlocutor, asking him nothing about himself even after years of separation, failing even to remark on the narrator's face, disfigured by an eye problem, and valuing him only as "the kind of listener" he needs in order to tell his story.[81] Our narrator gives no evidence that Austerlitz is someone one would want as a friend.

We might assume that the Holocaust has scarred Austerlitz, probably irreparably, and conclude that the issues of identification thematized by Hofmannsthal and Barthes are here specifically acted out as Holocaust issues. But the circles of identification are more complex. Identification, in the novel, is

not only Austerlitz's problem. It marks the narrator as well. The technique of indirect speech used by Sebald in *Rings of Saturn* is used to even greater effect here, where sentences and paragraphs of indirect speech extend for pages before we are reminded, in an abrupt series of embedded "saids," that Austerlitz, not the narrator, is speaking and that he is reporting the speech of his former nursemaid. The dearth of paragraph separations, which might help identify the speaker, even amplifies the confusion marked by the infrequency of the clarifying "saids."

The derivation of the technique of indirect discourse from another of Sebald's scholarly subjects, Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard, only corroborates its significance: Bernhard's narrators, who tell their stories in indirect discourse and few paragraphs, also have trouble relating to others. Franz Joseph Murau, narrator of Bernhard's last book, *Auslöschung* (Extinction), tells his story of the death of his parents and brother in 650 pages divided into two paragraphs, all found and transmitted after his death through an unnamed someone else. The framing device of the finder of the manuscript rarely appears, and only the occasional interruption of long passages with "hatte ich zu Gambetti gesagt" (I said to Gambetti), or simply, in the midst of a phrase, the name Gambetti in direct address, reminds the reader that the text consists largely of Murau's recollections of narrating his life story to his student in Rome, an interlocutor whose individuality Murau seems to perceive as dimly as Austerlitz perceives the identity of his narrator.[82]

As in *Austerlitz*, photographs play a central role in *Auslöschung*. The first of its two paragraphs recounts thoughts occasioned by Murau's perusal of three photographs of his parents and three siblings after the death of his parents and brother in an automobile accident. In an eerie reversal of *Camera Lucida*, Murau's photographs bring out only negative meditations, full of recriminations against the family, the photographs, and photography as a medium. Murau does not look at the photographs to "find" his mother (and father, and brother), but to lose them. His photographs may even have originated in attempts to extinguish their models.[83]

Austerlitz reverses the scene once again. If Murau recalls what he told his own interlocutor, Austerlitz's interlocutor is the one to relate the story that Austerlitz told him. The narrator of *Austerlitz* is, moreover, a Roland Barthes in reverse. Barthes, a novelist disguised as an essayist, proves himself an unreliable narrator, teasing the reader even about the existence of the famous Winter Garden Photograph. Sebald, calling himself a teller of tales, plays at telling the truth. He furnishes his narrator with the details of his own history, references his birthday at the end of the novel, and even, in perhaps another

playful touch, includes an author portrait on the back cover of the English edition of *Austerlitz* that looks like the childhood photograph of Austerlitz on the front cover, leading some readers to suspect that the author has portrayed himself (see fig. 3.3).[84] He does portray himself in a window reflection at Theresienstadt, where the "faint shadow" is identified as that of Austerlitz.[85]

3.3 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.


HAHN NFG.
DRESDEN
EVA v. d. OSTEN
„Rosenkavalier."

This cover photo, however, reveals yet another layer of identification. The little boy, costumed in eighteenth-century garb, should alert us immediately that we are dealing with a character by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his multilayered historical identifications. The child is costumed as one of Hofmannsthal's most famous characters, Oktavian, the title character of *Rosenkavelier* (Cavalier of the Rose), a libretto Hofmannsthal wrote for the opera by Richard Strauss. Oktavian is a "pants role," a young man played by a mezzo-soprano. Sebald reverses the genders once more: the pants role in *Austerlitz* is played by a boy (Sebald refers to him as a "Kinderkavalier," or child cavalier), and the cavalier's rose is displaced onto the boy's mother, whom Austerlitz recalls as the "rose queen," repeating the name in both German and Czech ("Rosenkönigin" and "ruzove kralovny").[86]

Oktavian, the "Rosenkavalier" in Hofmannsthal's libretto, is a key figure, like Lord Chandos, for the anxiety about time, identity, and the significance of relationships in that identity. In the course of the opera-buffa plot, which involves more than a quartet's-worth of intertwined relations, Oktavian has an affair with a married woman, the Marschallin, and is called on to masquerade as a maidservant; the Marschallin identifies with Oktavian's new love, a young bourgeois girl, Sophie; and the use of a "pants role" (which was Hofmannsthal's idea) heightens the theme of unstable identities, blurring the distinction between the lovers during their duets as the two women's voices merge, whether it be the Marschallin and Oktavian, or Oktavian and Sophie—a confusion that culminates when all three join in a famous trio in the final act.[87]

3.4 Portrait of Eva von Osten in the title role of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Österreichisches Theatermuseum, Vienna. Used with permission.

Austerlitz's memories of his mother's stage career contain a further trace of Hofmannsthal. His search for her leads him to the theater in Prague, where he uses his scholarly architectural credentials as a pretext to see the interior, bribing the caretaker. With no people present, his imagination liberated, he envisions the conductor and the sound of the orchestra, and suddenly believes "that he saw between the head of one of the musicians, and the neck of a bass violin, in the bright strip of light between the wooden floor and the hem of the curtain, a sky blue shoe embroidered with silver tinsel."[88] This shoe walks in, not (only) from Austerlitz's past, but also from Hofmannsthal's unfinished novel, *Andreas*, which Sebald had already analyzed in *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks*.

In *Andreas*, as in *Austerlitz*, the shoe is a childhood memory. Andreas remembers having had friends who lived near a makeshift theater. If he visited them toward evening, he could watch the scenery being carried out, and listen to the murmur of the crowd and the instruments tuning up. In the gap

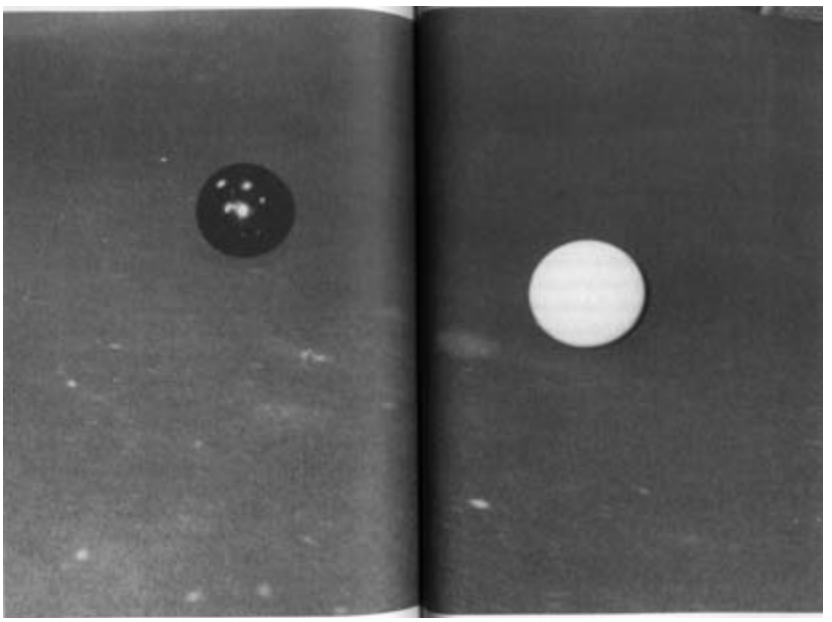
of the uneven, closed curtain, he watched the Jackboots coming and going. "Between the neck of a bass violin and the head of a musician, a sky blue shoe embroidered with tinsel could be seen. The sky blue shoe was more wonderful than everything else." Even after he saw the princess to whom the shoe belonged, in her blue and silver gown, the sight could not match the "the two-edged sword, of the most delicate voluptuousness and inexpressible longing, which penetrated the soul to the point of tears, when the blue shoe was there alone, under the curtain."[89]

Sebald ends his essay on Andreas with this example. Beyond its quintessential description of the tumultuous emotions of the fetishist, however, Sebald had another interpretation: "This passage concerned the unhoped-for epiphany of images, the strength of whose attraction Baudelaire recognized [*agnoszierte*] with the exclamation: 'Les images, ma grande, ma primitive passion'" (Images: my great, my primitive passion).[90] If one seeks one's epiphany in an image, if one looks for the world, for one's mother, in an image, then only the empty shoe, or shell, awaits. The relationship with an image, as thrilling as it might be, is still a fetish. Austerlitz's mistake in looking for his mother in images did not consist in choosing the wrong images. He looked for the wrong thing. The responsibility for his inability to sustain adult relationships lay with the failure of his adoptive parents to provide him with the loving home that could replace that of his early childhood. To recover memories of his home in Prague would not by itself restore that love.

The photographs that Sebald places in the story seem to comment directly on the literary trust in images represented by Hofmannsthal's Chandos. Sometimes blurry, printed in grainy matte finish right on the page, with print from the next page showing through them, his little photos often suggest the insignificant creatures "a dog, a rat, a beetle, a crippled apple tree, a lane winding over the hill, a moss-covered stone," which meant so much to Chandos, but finally were nothing but literature.[91] Sebald makes these "used" and reused photographs equivalent to reused, or appropriated, words, and they resonate as well with appropriated images in contemporary art.[92] "They must not stand out; they must be of the same leaden grain as the rest," he told an interviewer, because they are "part of the text and not illustrations."[93] But while Hofmannsthal's bug was meant to replace words, to be more specific than words, Sebald's images are more abstract than words. All they seem to offer is an eerie presence on the page. They seem almost to relinquish photography's indexical feeling in favor of a generic quality and often a poetic one. Often they frame fluid passages from one thought to another. Two billiard balls represent heavenly bodies that substitute for the real ones when the moon does

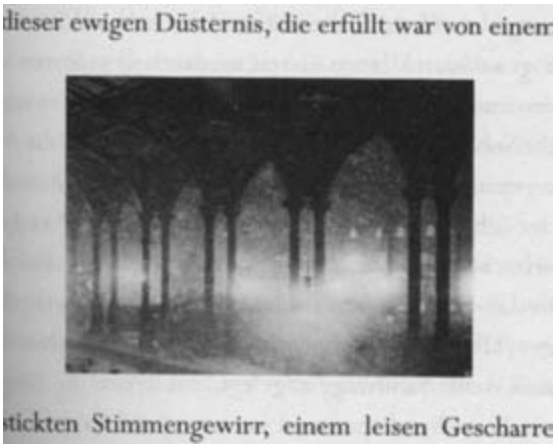
not rise and the inhabitants move from the observatory to the billiard room. At the same time, they mirror chronometers in the observatory at Greenwich that inspired Austerlitz to lecture the narrator on the concept of time, just before he begins his story of the house with the observatory and billiard room.[94] Far from Sebald's stated desire to prevent them from standing out, they arrest the reader's attention, inviting an obsessive concentration reminiscent of that which Austerlitz devoted to photographs.

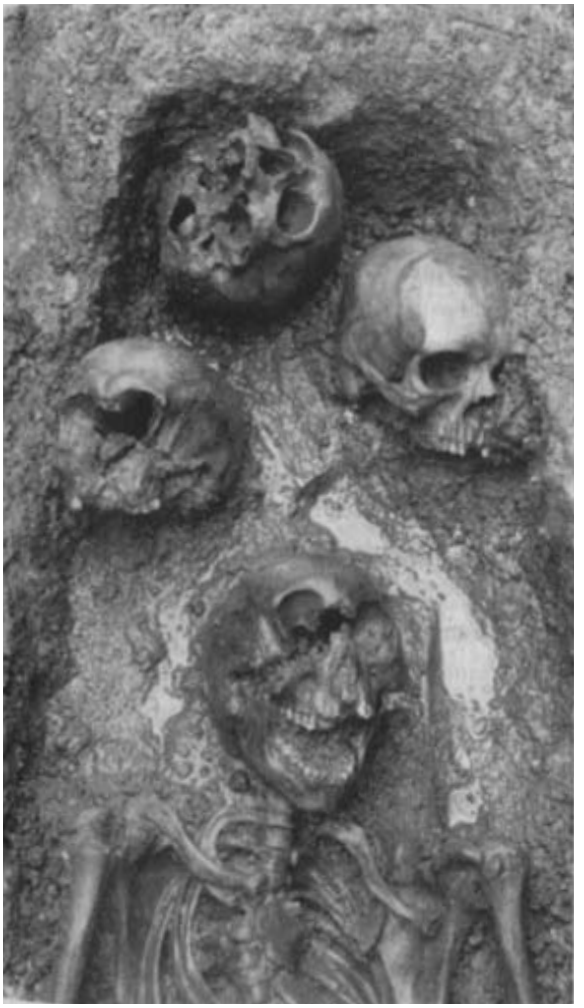
3.5 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.



3.6 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

Two heavily symbolic photographs frame the opening scene of Austerlitz's central discovery. The first is a beautiful, hazy picture of a railway station, printed small, as though seen from a distance, its subject perhaps a room in the Liverpool Street Station where Austerlitz has his epiphany. A few pages later, large and close, is one of the clearest pictures in the book, of skeletons that had recently come to light in the foundations of another London station, an analogue of the metaphorical(?) skeletons beneath the Liverpool Street Station. It is as though the print, emerging from the developer, at first seemed to promise the misty beauty of nineteenth-century grandeur from a distance,





3.7 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

3.8 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

but, when it finally appeared, offered instead a stark close-up of skeletons. The first photograph serves as the screen memory for the second, grisly one, just as the beetle on the surface of Lord Chandos's letter screened from view the rats dying in the cellar. The two photographs bridge the gap between blessed ignorance and austere knowledge: the starkness of the tactile skeletons, reality, replaces the opticality of the distant railway station, their filmy curtain. The skeletons stirred up in excavations of the cellar, whatever they may represent literally, symbolize the death of Austerlitz's parents, victims of the Holocaust. Sebald sets his photographs adrift on a sea of words in which they float, like a bug on the water, with meaning splashing about them but never quite covering them up.

Chandos's swimming bug is not illustrated or mentioned in *Austerlitz*. Another of his insects, however, may well be there implicitly. Lord Chandos, in his "Letter," imaged each of his abandoned projects as a "weary gnat against a somber wall whereon the bright sun of halcyon days no longer lies," each "bloated with a drop of my blood."[95] *Austerlitz*, in turn, describes and (Sebald) illustrates a photograph, not of a gnat replete with blood, but of a moth that has shriveled unnoticed on a bright wall, until it is a dry, empty exoskeleton. If this image, in connection with which Sebald mentions Virginia Woolf's essay, "The Death of the Moth," also alludes to Chandos's gnat, it reverses its model: a bright wall and a dry moth replace the succulent gnat on the dark wall of Chandos's imagination, as though photographs are but the dead exoskeleton of the truth.[96] Indeed, the photograph of a shriveled moth is no match for Sebald's evocative description of the death of such moths, "their tiny claws . . . stiffened in their last agony."[97]

3.9 Illustration from *Austerlitz*. Copyright © W. G. Sebald, used with permission of The Wylie Agency.

Do photographs really avoid the generality of language? Sebald's use of them raises the question. We know this is a picture of a specific person, but we also know it cannot be the specific person about whom the book is written, since the heroes of novels do not exist in a world we can photograph. Yet the photographs have no other names attached. As soon as we try to talk about them, photographs, which seem to entail the single most exact evidence of the intimate, individual, and personal, turn out to be universal. Photographs are like Chandos's bug. Right now, in 1603, or in 1902, here, swimming in this watering can, it metamorphoses into a long-legged girlfriend in a mid-twentieth-century pond, swims in Hamburger's well in 1993, and that same year dumbs down into a fly in my pail of milk. The most individual bug turns into the most universal. It does not even begin to escape the literary as Chandos had wanted it to. By the time Sebald transports it to a well outside Michael Hamburger's home, it has itself become a literary classic. Even the well is literary. Its pump bears the year, 1790, of the birth of Hölderlin, the German poet whose birthday, preceding that of Michael Hamburger by two days, explains why Hamburger "follow(ed) in Hölderlin's footsteps."[98]

Similarly, the moth on Austerlitz's wall, both photographed and described, stands for many moths whose death Austerlitz has witnessed. Both are no more specific than the word *I*. Hegel explained, "When I say 'I,' this singular 'I,' I say in general all 'Is'; everyone is what I say, everyone is 'I,' this singular 'I.'"[99] The word that might seem most personal is really only what linguists call a "shifter," and must have something to point to in order to signify. Even a proper name is a tautology that only "means anyone to whom this name is assigned."[100] The photograph of the moth reveals less than a proper name. It does no more than point, and, like all photographs, changes its meaning as image identifies with image, and as image identifies with word. The photographs are part of the text. No more than words can photographs mean what they say.

FOUR

Putting Down Photographic Roots in Harlem

James VanDerZee

A COLLECTIVE FACE

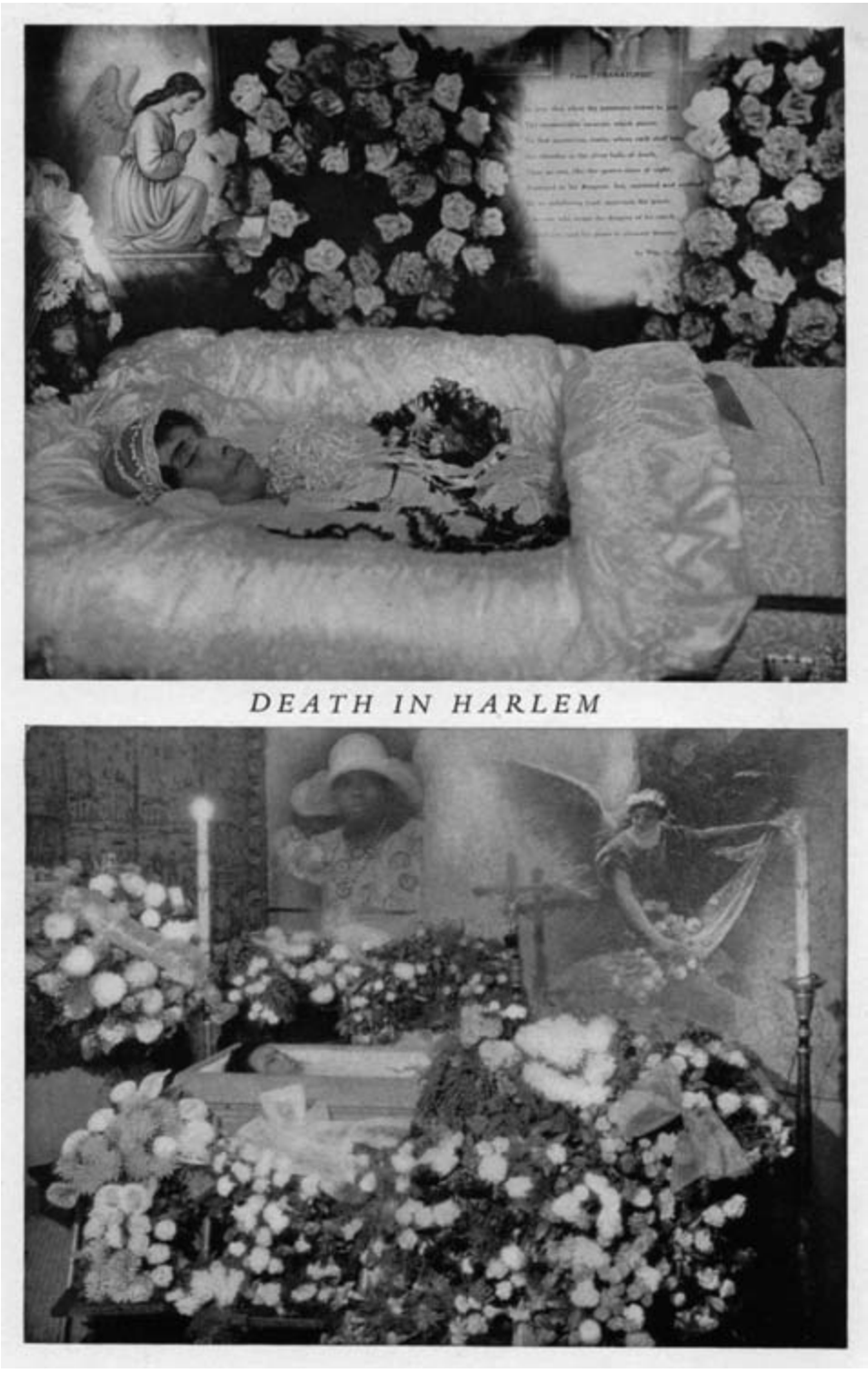
Like Atget, James VanDerZee's project was the collective face of a nation inside a nation—Harlem.
HILTON ALS, "Kafka in Harlem"

In previous chapters we have seen photographs used to establish relationships on the individual, interpersonal level. Yet photographs can also help create or maintain the wider communities that Benedict Anderson referred to as "imagined."[1] Although many of the members of these communities have never met, they feel entwined in a common fate when they find stories in newspapers and novels about the neighborhoods, alleyways, businesses, and institutions that they all recognize. Anderson did not write about the pictorial depictions of byways or celebrities that populated the illustrated media of his imagined communities, but these, too, play a role in making a large geographic region feel like home. Whether wood engravings or lithographs in the *Illustrated London News* made (beginning in the1850s) "from a photograph," early halftones, or lush photographs in glossy mid-twentieth-century magazines, they all create communities because they are shared.[2] An illustration of a place few people have visited can, if seen often by enough people, make that place feel comfortably familiar. Photographs in magazines, newspapers, and books form small communities of their own. They establish milieux for real people, their viewers, to dwell and walk among. Often they are treated, as people in communities may be, too, like part of the furniture, or like the architecture.[3] Yet just as one's home newspaper in someone else's hands marks that person as a member of one's own group, whatever may be written in the newspaper, so photographs help establish community whether or not anyone gives them more than a glance.

Surely the project of the prolific Harlem studio photographer James VanDerZee, active primarily in the 1920s and '30s during the heyday of the "Harlem Renaissance," was not "the collective face of a nation." Unlike German photographer August Sander, he had no grand scheme to follow, no collective "Face of the Time."[4] He did not set out deliberately to change the photographic face of Black America, as did W. E. B. Du Bois.[5] Eugène Atget, the indefatigable creator of an archive of photographic views of Paris early in the twentieth century, did not aim at documenting a "collective face" either. Atget's efforts did, however, resemble the commercial efforts of VanDerZee, in that both men collected their photographs, organized them in categories according to subjects, and thought of strategies to sell them. Furthermore, both were "discovered" late in life, and made famous by audiences who had little to do with them and little understanding of their aims.[6]

VanDerZee's forte was his imagination, with which he created his images and his selling strategies.[7] The Great Migration of African Americans northward created a demand for studio portraits to send back to the homefolk in the South or in Jamaica. As a highly skilled technician, VanderZee could fulfill this demand using flattering and varied poses and meticulously hand-colored negatives, many printed in combination with other negatives to create photomontages. He saw his photographs as texts into which he would incorporate meaningful elements, either written or pictorial. In his funeral portraits, angels would bend down to welcome a deceased woman into heaven, or her past self could observe the funeral; an appropriate poem might accompany a portrait, or sheet music might overlay it (see also fig. 2.2).

He may have learned a great deal about repositioning himself for different markets from his sister and brother-in-law, for whom he worked briefly before the United States entered World War I. Jennie Louise (VanDerZee) Welcome, a musician, painted under the name Mme Touissant. In ads beginning at least in 1911, she called herself "The Foremost Female Artist of the Race."[8] Her husband, Ernest Touissant Welcome, in addition to managing for his wife the Touissant Conservatory of Art and Music and the photographic studio appended to it, devised and advertised numerous ventures focused on African-American identity during the war. The Touissant Motion Picture Exchange advertised a film entitled *Doing Their Bit*, about African-American participation in the war effort, "In Twelve Sterling Chapters of TWO Full Reels Each."[9] The Touissant Pictorial Company published "One Million Patriotic Postcards of Race Soldiers," and reproductions of a series of pictures of black war heroes painted by the Foremost Female Artist of the Race.[10] One of them, *Charge of the Colored Division: Somewhere in France*, shows a black hero, his bayo-



4.1 James VanDerZee, two funeral portraits, ca. 1930. From *Cecil Beaton's New York*, 1939. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee.

net thrust into the breast of a prone German soldier at his feet. Shortly before the end of the war, the War Savings Stamp Committee accepted it for use as a promotional poster.[11] The Touissant Pictorial Company also published a commemorative book, *A Pictorial History of the Negro in the Great War*, which included photographs primarily from governmental sources, but also a few uncredited photos and one by "Touissant Studios," which may conceivably have been taken by VanDerZee.[12]

VanDerZee's quieter activities at his own venture, the Guarantee Studio (later the G.G.G. Studio), founded in 1917, could not match the exuberance of his in-laws' entrepreneurship, but his lens often focused on people and institutions, such as the Adam Clayton Powell family, African-American heroes of World War I, and Marcus Garvey, whom his in-laws had cultivated as well.[13] He also hatched enterprising ideas for making his photography pay, such as devising photographs on sometimes whimsical, sometimes erotic themes suitable for calendars, and, like other studio photographers, fostering relationships with organizations such as Garvey's Pan-Africanist Universal Negro Improvement Association. VanDerZee regularly photographed their events

4.2 Touissant Studios, photograph from *A Pictorial History of the Negro in the Great War*, 1919.

and officials, and his oeuvre contains portraits of Garvey himself. Moreover, beginning with photographing soldiers departing for the Great War, he periodically repositioned himself for changing markets, making individual and group portraits, photographing weddings and funerals, and providing evidence and autopsy photographs for legal cases. In the 1920s, his photographs appeared frequently in local papers, such as Garvey's *Negro World*. At the height of his career, the portraits that Roland Barthes would later interpret as mirroring unattainable aspirations for a middle-class existence probably counted as good evidence of its actual attainment. By the 1940s, however, VanDerZee's success waned, but he continued to seek business where he could, eventually simply restoring old photographs by mail order, before he ran out of angles and gave up in the 1960s after a long career.

None of these projects, even his most successful ventures in Harlem, account for VanDerZee's lasting fame. The undertakings made by others using his photographs were far more effective in giving him his reputation as the photographer of Harlem and his consequent place in the photographic pantheon. Certainly it was not his uniformity and single point of view that made for his eventual fame. Only the diversity of VanDerZee's output, and of interpretations that could be drawn from his photographs, enabled collectors and others to use his work to represent Harlem for the benefit of people whom VanDerZee would never meet, people to whom "Harlem" meant very different things, but for whom VanDerZee became Harlem's eyes, the one who could visualize its imagined community.

Studio photographers, always involved in community development, must adapt to the changing ways in which communities define themselves. They might take group portraits of school groups or athletic teams, or help an individual client feel a part of the community to which he or she aspires, such as the middle class. VanDerZee fulfilled all these roles for his clients, but as we saw in chapter 2, he could also help construct identities for nonclients like Roland Barthes, who used VanDerZee's portrait of a family in Harlem to stand in for his own French family (see figs. 2.2 and 2.4).

Such repositioning is not unusual. Individual photographers often find their work enlisted for tasks that they cannot control. Walker Evans, as we saw in chapter 1, viewed warily the eager young idealists who tried to recruit his photographs of sharecroppers for the cause of social justice. Evans may not have whole-heartedly agreed even with James Agee's interpretation of his photographs in his text for the book on which they collaborated; much of what he later said about the photographs—and did with them—suggests that he did not, or that he had changed his mind. But compared to VanDerZee,

Evans, through his books and exhibitions, wielded considerable influence over the way his photographs were positioned, interpreted, and displayed. Hence although the "collective face of a nation" was not VanDerZee's project, the construction of such a collective face did become the project of his photographs—not the face of provincial France, but of Harlem, or more specifically, Harlems, several of them, all very different, one by one.

VANDERZEE'S FIRST HARLEMS

Not even VanDerZee's own role in the Harlems he depicted stayed the same. The first Harlem that he helped construct for outsiders to that community did not make him become Harlem's eyes, but rather one of its colorful characters. This Harlem was located in *Cecil Beaton's New York*, a metropolis with which VanDerZee may not have been well acquainted. He went nameless in that Harlem. Although Beaton published five wedding photographs and two funeral pictures by the "Harlem photographer," his careful and avowedly comprehensive page of credits ("all the remaining photographs are by Cecil Beaton") mentions none of them, and VanDerZee even goes unnamed in the caption of a photograph of the photographer himself (by Higdon Cato).[14] Both of the "apotheosis" pictures (funeral photographs, identified as his specialty) exploit to the fullest VanDerZee's signature technique of collaging images with other images and texts. The condescending discussion accompanying them relates some of his stories about the deceased subjects, and enumerates various elements incorporated into the image, using the adjective *sentimental* in consecutive sentences to describe the use of such embellishments as a quotation from William Cullen Bryant's poem "Thanatopsis." Beaton also discusses other photographs by the "Buddha-like" photographer not featured in the book, including some intended for use as evidence in lawsuits, since "Negroes revel in litigation."[15] The Harlem described in *Cecil Beaton's New York* is slightly distasteful, the describer condescending, and the photographer presumably left nameless because he is just another homely denizen carrying on a craftsman's tradition.[16]

Beaton does not entrust the photographic representation of Harlem to the "Harlem photographer." Perhaps he regarded VanDerZee's works as fantastic rather than "real," as his description of the wedding photographs as "grandiose" and his concentration on the photomontages would suggest.[17] Beaton made VanDerZee's pictures appear even more ornate by filling the page around them with fussy hearts and roses, writing "Mr. and Mrs.," and repeating, in frilly handwriting, the opening lyrics of a song printed over the

4.3 Cecil Beaton, "Oh Promise Me," with wedding portraits by James VanDerZee, including *top*, *Formal Wedding Party*, ca. 1932, and *lower right*, *Top Hat Wedding*, ca. 1932. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Hand-drawn settings by Cecil Beaton to James VanDerZee's photographs in *Cecil Beaton's New York*, 1939. © National Portrait Gallery, London. Used with permission.

gown of the rose-encircled portrait of a bride. The photographic portraits of Hollywood stars and English royalty for which Beaton was famous are also highly decorative. Yet they do not admit of such ornate—and condescending—flourishes. In *Cecil Beaton's New York*, Beaton contrasts VanDerZee's fanciful Harlem with one that he probably regarded as more real, through gritty street photographs by Ben Shahn and himself. In them, children fish for coins through grates, or old ladies wait on a littered pavement for a clinic to open. Beaton also includes two drawings that show Harlemites dancing with abandon; they illustrate "a race which only three generations before was still

4.4 Ben Shahn, *Clinic Queue*. From *Cecil Beaton's New York*, 1939.
Art © Estate of Ben Shahn / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

savage."[18] In a later edition, he reworded the most egregious passages, such as the ones about litigation and savagery, and omitted the dancers, but the "Harlem photographer" and his photographs remained nameless.[19]

VanDerZee became a recognized name in 1968. No longer the output of an eccentric, his photographs served to represent Harlem itself in the controversial exhibition *Harlem on My Mind* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This multimedia event, atypical for the museum, was not about, and did not serve as a venue for, any artists. Rather, its aim was to describe a neighborhood, Harlem, through recreating it visually and orally, decade by decade. Organized by an independent curator, Allon Schoener, who conceived it as a "communications environment—one that parallels our daily lives, in which we are deluged with information stimuli," the exhibition displayed huge, Masonite-mounted photographic enlargements—for example, a fourteen-by-fifty-two-foot mural of VanDerZee's picture of Adam Clayton Powell Sr. with the 1925 Sunday School class of the Abyssinian Baptist

Church—that could be enjoyed to the accompaniment of vintage recordings of jazz, popular songs, and political speeches as well as videos and slides.[20]

Such exhibitions were not innovative at the time. They were part of a trend that used images, sounds, and visual re-creations to simulate environments for the viewer to traverse. The producers of these presentations recognized the extent to which photographs could be not only visual but also interactive, and built on this potential to make their display environmental in Walter Benjamin's sense. These multisensory experiences were standard at world's fairs and in ethnic, national, or urban historical museums. The photographer Edward Steichen pioneered exhibitions of this type in the United States, beginning with *Road to Victory* in 1942, whose "photographic procession occupie[d] the entire second floor of the Museum."[21] Herbert Bayer, a former student of the German Bauhaus who worked with Steichen on *Road to Victory*, had once participated in designing an exhibition in Nazi Germany that combined techniques of graphic design and architecture to turn photographs into environments.[22] The modern exhibition, according to Bayer, "should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate, and even persuade and lead him to a planned and direct reaction."[23]

Present-day ethnic and local exhibits in natural history museums, which continue to use large-format photographs and sometimes photographic cutouts (now color) to create environments, are part of the legacy of such installations. Since the late 1980s, for example, life-size photographic cutouts have greeted visitors to Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History from behind the counters of its shops in "Tahiti" and at the entrance to each new area of "Africa."

As Neil Harris has argued, art museums joined ethnographic museums in mounting photographic exhibitions out of economic necessity, to become more responsive to a popular, paying audience and gain "commercial and intellectual relevance."[24] The Museum of Modern Art in New York staged Edward Steichen's *Road to Victory*, and later the most famous such exhibition, Steichen's *Family of Man*, which opened in 1955 and traveled for years under the auspices of the State Department.[25] *Harlem on My Mind* distinguished itself primarily because of its venue.[26] Schoener, having recently mounted an exhibition about Manhattan's Lower East Side at the Jewish Museum, set out to depict Harlem in a nearly identical format at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Based on the content of *The Lower East Side: Portal to American Life*, the catalog of the Jewish Museum's exhibition, which eerily resembles that of *Harlem on My Mind*, he succeeded.[27]

4.5 African exhibit at the Field Museum, Chicago, Illinois, 2008.
Photo: Margaret Olin.

Although it displayed photographs in their conventional rectangular form rather than using some cutout images of people as done in later installations, such as the one at the Field Museum, *Harlem on My Mind* (unlike the earlier *Family of Man*, about which more will be said in chapter 6) was not intended as a celebration of photography any more than it was of the other visual arts. The Metropolitan Museum's press release, comparing the exhibition to "one of Rembrandt or Degas," asserted that "the Harlem community becomes the artist" celebrated by the show.[28] Presumably, because the neighborhood took the place of the artist, *Harlem on My Mind* did not need actual artists and so it did not mention any, neither those excluded from the exhibition nor those included in it. It made James VanDerZee's reputation, but its

press release did not mention his name. Schoener's introduction to the first edition of the exhibition catalog, unlike his introduction to the 1995 reprint, says nothing about him. The representational work that VanDerZee and other photographers accomplished was transparent: the subjects of the photographs, not the photographs themselves, were the show's focus, as though the cameras were unmanned.

The heightened relational character of photography as used in the exhibition, as opposed to the contemplative attitude that paintings might have encouraged in an exhibit at the Metropolitan, was directly responsible for this failure to recognize the photographers. Indeed, even more self-consciously than other photographic practices that we have been tracing thus far, Schoener sought to create a relation that took place between the viewer and the people in the photographs, rather than between the viewer and the photographs. This interpretation is borne out by the manner in which reviewers wrote about *Harlem on My Mind*. According to Grace Glueck, its design encouraged confrontation with photographs, exemplified by a four-sided cluster of panels comprising a continuous, nearly life-size photomural of a Harlem breadline. Viewers, forced to thread their way around it via a narrow aisle, came almost eye-to-eye with men on the dole. "The show is completely environmental," Glueck quotes Schoener as saying. "Our principle has been that you must have a physical rapport with the photos themselves. You're forced up against them—the scale becomes overwhelming. You really must confront them."[29] In the catalog he said, more directly, "You felt like you were in a line surrounded by hungry people"—a phenomenological claim suggesting the role of photographs not only to depict but to stand in for people and invite them to interact.[30]

The exhibition was riddled with controversies. One had to do with the catalog introduction, written by recent high school graduate Candice Van Ellison, which angered a portion of the Jewish community because of certain remarks that were taken as anti-Semitic.[31] Mysteriously, no one seemed to object that the catalog printed a high school term paper, even if not identified as such, rather than a contribution by an established African-American scholar. But the major objection to the exhibition was its lack of input from the inhabitants of Harlem and the African-American community at large. The refusal of the organizers to include the work of respected African-American artists such as Romare Beardon led to extensive picketing. A prominent photographer, Roy DeCarava, refused to participate when his wish to have his photographs shown together, rather than scattered throughout the exhibition, was denied. He did not trust the organizers not to misuse them, he said.[32] The relative

anonymity of the show may well have bothered him; indeed his desire for a room to himself may have reflected a distaste for seeing his photographs subordinated to its thematic nature.

The absence of recognized African-American artists in *Harlem on My Mind* helped facilitate the rise of one of the few to participate. As James VanDerZee contributed more than fifty of the exhibition's roughly seven hundred images, he became the new face of Harlem.[33] Thus, while jazz became Harlem's voice in the exhibition, VanDerZee became its eyes by default. He was "discovered" by the organizers because his studio had been active in the crucial 1920s and 1930s, he had photographed many of the community's key players, and he was still alive and available when photographs were being collected for the giant exhibition. Although not really at work anymore, he had at least saved his photographic archive, and had a reputation as a source for inexpensive pictures of jazz musicians.[34] VanDerZee was the best-represented photographer in *Harlem on My Mind* and its catalog, although in the latter he did not dominate and other photographers, Aaron Siskind for example, are represented nearly as well.

VanDerZee's work also stood out for technical reasons. His photographs, made from his large-format glass plates, proved adaptable to the huge enlargements that helped make exhibition visitors feel they were part of the group around the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell. The resolution was high enough, in fact, that a new church building could be cropped out of the picture, leaving only the people to emphasize the sense of confrontation and community.[35] Although VanDerZee's pictures do not bristle with as much detail as Siskind's meticulous view-camera work for the *Harlem Document*, a collaborative work of the 1930s, several images from which were in the show, they offer the viewer a sense of sharing space with the people, most of whom, like good subjects of group portraits, look at the camera. Siskind's modernist closed compositions do not offer such participation, even at their huge scale. His subjects do not look at the camera, and

4.6 *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*. Gallery installation photographed March 25, 1969, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Used with permission.

4.7 Aaron Siskind, Untitled, ca. 1940–41. Photograph: Ann Coleman Torrey / Aaron Siskind Foundation. Courtesy of George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film.

it has been remarked that only the fact that the photos were produced by a large-format camera proves that they could not have been candid.[36] Face to face with the nearly life-size figures in VanDerZee's group portraits, on the other hand, the viewer could feel part of the neighborhood.[37]

Yet Siskind's photographs of the 1930s would seem to correspond better to the setting of the exhibition, New York of the 1960s. Like the photographs by Beaton and Shahn in *Cecil Beaton's New York*, although with more complexity, they concentrate on the working class and the impoverished who were the staple of "concerned photography." They differ strikingly from the photographs by VanDerZee, whose self-portrait with his wife, Gaynella, is repro-

4.8 James VanDerZee, *James and Gaynella VanDerZee*, ca. 1935. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY. Used with permission.

duced on the same page of the catalog for *Harlem on My Mind* as a photograph by Siskind, identified as "Sleeping with white pinups." The man in Siskind's photograph lies on a narrow bed pushed close to a dresser in what appears to be a cramped room. Because he is sleeping, or appears to be, the abjectness of his pose seems to stand for Siskind's objectifying gaze and causes the viewer discomfort, like looking at a real person asleep. Attention has been drawn to the mostly white pinups on the back wall.[38] This is especially relevant, since a later collection of Siskind's Harlem photographs alludes explicitly to the discomforting topic of miscegenation. It is paired, in selections edited by Ann Banks, with a 1938 interview by Frank Byrd of the Federal Writers' Project

that begins with a seedy story involving a "colored boy and a white girl," and goes on to discuss "rent parties" and prostitution.[39] Yet the pinups near the sleeping man, mainly labeled publicity portraits of Hollywood stars, including Edward G. Robinson, Ingrid Bergman, and Burgess Meredith (they are by no means all women), are displayed along with magazine clippings that add another layer of meaning. Indeed, the words on the wall supply irony to this room, arranged to suggest paucity. Hard to read in most reproductions, but crystal clear on the large-format print used in the exhibition, tantalizing headlines like "Holy Terror of Hollywood," "Went Wrong," "Wrong!," and "Called It Off" lend complexity to the scene, seeming to call into question the euphoria of the Hollywood images.

In contrast, VanDerZee's dining room appears cluttered, but not cramped, the table set with white napkins, lace tablecloth, whisky, and a large cake, suggesting a celebration. VanDerZee and his wife represent plenty, not paucity, and they pose together, displaying her cat. Gaynella, although white, is not a pinup and not Hollywood. Viewers may not have speculated about her ethnic origins, which were, according to VanDerZee's biographer, German and Spanish.[40] On the wall and on the surfaces of the room are many examples of VanDerZee's own photographs, including one that his wife took of him playing his violin.

This double portrait is a typical product of VanDerZee's studio. It is not in any strict sense a documentary picture but, like many of VanDerZee's wedding and funeral photographs, the result of two exposures. A square frame of a mirror or picture that appears to hang, suspended in air, both in front of and behind the cat is the only element to give the seeming ordinariness of the photograph an aura of mystery, at least at first glance. But a closer look at the print reveals that the bars of light coming through the Venetian blinds in the background of the photograph penetrate Mr. VanDerZee's shirt, turning him into a partially immaterialized, ghostly presence, at least when viewed under a magnifying glass. The same unlikely viewing conditions reveal that his angelic wife's faint halo is made of squiggly lines drawn with a narrow pen stroke.[41] VanDerZee's complex use of double-printing and drawing on the negative does not make his photograph less real than Siskind's. Both images are carefully staged. While VanDerZee and his wife playfully use technology to exhibit their middle-class lifestyle, Siskind's subject must also have cooperated with his desire to photograph someone who appears to be asleep, and either Siskind or his subject may have introduced changes in the room's decor.

The style of VanDerZee's photographs distinguishes them, not only from the photographs of Siskind and the photography of social concern in

general, but from the photography closely associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Because *Harlem on My Mind* used so many of VanDerZee's photographs of the 1920s, he became known as the photographer of the Harlem Renaissance, a connection that went unquestioned for a long time. VanDerZee, however, did not photograph many of the people now associated most closely with that cultural movement. He was not a member of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, as is sometimes said, and in fact did not care for contemporary musical styles, such as jazz.[42] Visually, the Harlem Renaissance enjoyed a characteristic mode of representation very different from that of VanDerZee, and more in line with the style of a photographer of a younger generation, James Allen.[43] Allen's portraits, which include most canonical Renaissance figures, notably Langston Hughes, are characterized by crisp, modernist, blank backgrounds and unassuming clothing. Allen depicts each writer or poet as an individual whose core personality should mean more than his environment. VanDerZee dressed his subjects and their environment, using painted scenery backdrops and garments hand-colored in the negative in a variety of hues, with extra details printed in until sometimes no corner of the composition remained unaltered. The cars and fur coats worn by his subjects seem as important as the people in them. In his detailed prints, there is room for many a *punctum*.

It is remarkable that the group and individual portraits that VanDerZee exhibited in *Harlem on My Mind*, mainly the standard fare of the good studio photographer, made him famous. Size surely helped. Although photographic enlargements were common at the time, it was unusual to enlarge to mammoth size a group photograph by a studio photographer, or any group photograph not replete with celebrities.[44] The sight of a team or school-group portrait enlarged to the size of a wall gives it an uncanny effect reminiscent, perhaps, of the effect that Courbet's monumental group portraits of villagers at a funeral may have had a century earlier.[45] But only the monographs that followed swiftly on the heels of *Harlem on My Mind* revealed the full range of VanDerZee's oeuvre. The first developed directly out of that exhibition. With Candice Van Ellison again in tow, this time as interviewer, Reginald McGhee published *The World of James VanDerZee*. He used many of the same images that had been in *Harlem on My Mind*. This time, however, the focus was VanDerZee, and the environment expanded beyond Harlem to his "world," which included Lenox, Massachusetts, the Whittier School in Phoebus, Virginia, and other places where black Americans could be recorded. The photograph of the family that touched Roland Barthes was first published here. None of the funeral photographs, however, appeared, and none of the

printed-in images. The VanDerZee whose "world" the world discovered was still a "straight photographer."

VanDerZee survived the criticism of *Harlem on My Mind*. Painters complained about their exclusion, but neither complained about nor commended the use of the one African-American visual artist who was allowed to display his work. Indeed, it was not until several years after the show that VanDerZee, documenter of Harlem, joined the canon of art photographers. Exhibitions and beautifully produced books ensured the appreciation of his sumptuous prints as art that transcended race.[46] His double printing and hand-coloring found an audience in an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago and a discussion in some detail by Colin Westerbeck in the accompanying catalog.[47] Later, in her scathing indictment of *Harlem on My Mind*, Michele Wallace criticizes both the exhibition and the African-American scholars, such as Henry Louis Gates, who have since defended it. She warns her readership against visualizing Harlem from this source. For black photography she sends them instead to three other publications, among them a collection of the photographs of James VanDerZee.[48] Seemingly unaware, she exchanged one of VanDerZee's Harlems for another.

PASSING OVER: *THE HARLEM BOOK OF THE DEAD*

> *The Harlem Book of the Dead* beats *Camera Lucida* at its own game.
>
> JOSÉ E. MUÑOZ, "Photographies of Mourning"[49]

None of VanDerZee's "apotheosis" photographs that bemused Cecil Beaton in 1939 appeared in *Harlem on My Mind*. A monograph of 1973 published two, both of prominent "personalities" printed next to portraits VanDerZee had taken of them when they were alive. A girlhood portrait of Blanche Powell, daughter of Adam Clayton Powell, whose spirit also seems to preside over her funeral, is one of the few examples of VanDerZee's montage technique published until that moment. But the funeral pictures came into their own as the centerpiece of a collaborative project published ten years after *Harlem on My Mind* in 1978, by which time VanDerZee had entered the photographic canon as the dean of African-American photographers. The new book was the idea of the artist Camille Billops, who interviewed VanDerZee for the volume and recruited Owen Dodson to write poetry to accompany the photographs. The novelist Toni Morrison provided the foreword. To Cecil Beaton, a tourist in Harlem, the funeral pictures surely suggested the exotic rituals of the natives. In their new context, the photographs could still appear exotic to viewers

4.9 The authors of *The Harlem Book of the Dead*.
Photograph: Jeannie Black © Hatch-Billops Collection.

who came to them with as little understanding of African-American middle-class culture as had Cecil Beaton or his readers, but they elicited different interpretations.

The common racial identity of the participants, the "remarkable concert of Black subject, Black poet, Black photographer and Black artist," over which Morrison marvels in her introduction, did not ensure that even the collaborators on the volume all viewed VanDerZee's photographs of the dead in the same way.[50] They came, after all, from different worlds. The two artists and two poets represented three generations, several different artistic styles, and different historical experience. Billops, a ceramicist from California and in her mid-forties at the time of the collaboration, would later become known for unabashed independent films about her own family history, including

Finding Christa and *Susanna, Susanna*, which question the roles of gender, race, and age. The future winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, Toni Morrison, was roughly the same age. Dodson, from Brooklyn and in his mid-sixties, had been Morrison's teacher twenty years earlier at Howard University, where he taught theater arts and wrote poetry, sometimes but rarely gesturing toward a "dialect" that he had never spoken.[51] These college-educated contributors to the world of academically sanctioned art and literature were artists of a different, less-commercial sphere than VanDerZee, then in his nineties, around whose photographs their attention coalesced. Around rather than through the photographs, which are sometimes less important than the stories VanDerZee told about them—and indeed, those stories generated more stories.

The collision of the three different worlds that encircle VanDerZee's pictures produces fissures in the collaboration that are inscribed in the book. Dodson's poems reinterpret the sepia-printed photographs, sometimes touchingly, sometimes sardonically, while the younger women treat their "spiritual grandfather" (an expression used by a reviewer) with varying degrees of reverence and irony.[52] "We're treating you like a philosopher, kiddo," Billops told VanDerZee.[53] The heart of the book contains the photographs and poems, and a "very long" interview in which Billops asks VanDerZee dumbfounded questions that the aged photographer answers self-evidently. Not grasping why she would ask whether he found it difficult to photograph his sixteen-year-old daughter in her coffin, he answers, "Not as I recall because she hadn't been with me at the time," adding, helpfully, that he had some "very nice watercolor pictures that Rachel painted before she died."[54] In her questions, Billops playfully calls attention to the gender gap by soliciting VanDerZee's views about the role of women and the gender of God. "He wouldn't be a father if he wasn't male," is the photographer's logical answer, although he obligingly admits that there are "lots of things I've taken for granted."[55]

Owen Dodson's poems have received less attention than VanDerZee's photographs. In her introduction, Billops gives the poems the role of the priest who cleanses the soul, in contrast to VanDerZee, who "helps the undertaker wash the body."[56] According to Morrison's foreword, "life trembles in every metaphor" of the poems, a description that accurately identifies in them an ironic note as well. Both "life" and "trembles" accurately describe Dodson's poems, for the cleansed soul often endures a demanding trial. Those that Dodson wrote for the book seem to take no account of VanDerZee's quotations from Tennyson and Bryant, acting as though there were no texts in the

Rachel Van Der Ze

WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT HER FUNERAL?

I really don't remember. It was a beautiful funeral 'cause all the young girls there were all about her age. She belonged to some club that they all belonged to. It was a very nice funeral. I don't know, I think Rachel's funeral was done at Madame Lane's Funeral Parlor on 136th Street, between Lenox and Seventh Avenue on the downtown side of the street. I don't know whether it's still there or not; it's four or five funeral parlors there.

4.10 James VanDerZee, *Funeral Portrait, Rachel VanDerZee*, 1927. From James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 1978. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee and Camille Billops.

photographs. In fact, they act as a counterpoint. VanDerZee's textual insertions give voice to the mourners, celebrating fatherhood or motherhood, or smoothing over their loss by addressing the deceased reassuringly: "I know you are not dead / you went to live with Jesus / in a home beyond the sky."[57] Dodson's poems often contrast tellingly with these texts.[58] The play of voices begins in the first poem, opposite the opening photograph of a church inte-

rior in which a closed coffin appears, along with a large "Welcome" over the altar. Dodson's poem announces that "Death always happens to someone else, Not the dead."[59] The remaining poems respond to this opening, giving death back to the deceased, speaking with their voices, sometimes using snippets of dialect ("And here you is!"), and inserting an often bitter note of lived experience.[60] Written with the sensibility of a playwright, they draw attention to the narrative element in VanDerZee's photography.

In VanDerZee's interview with Billops, he relates a story about one of the photographs, of a girl "shot by her sweetheart at a party with a noiseless gun." When asked who shot her, she put off the questioners, saying, "I'll tell you tomorrow," in order to give her lover a chance to get away.[61] Dodson retells the story, but from the dead girl's point of view, reassuring her man: "Tomorrow is here / And you out there safe. I'm safe in here, Tootsie."[62] In another photograph, an elegant gentleman lies on a couch underneath a passage from the poem "Thanatopsis," by William Cullen Bryant. A newspaper in his hand announces the death of the singer Florence Mills, a celebrity whom VanDer-

4.11 James VanDerZee, *Funeral Portrait, Brother and Sister*, ca. 1930. From James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 1978. © Donna Mussenden VanDerZee. Used with permission. The poem is by Owen Dodson; used with permission of Camille Billops.

Zee photographed during her lifetime and after her death. Dodson's poem responds to the newspaper: "The obituary page was supposed to be all about me today."[63]

While some poems find a humorous subtext in the photographs, more of them bring death home by addressing the doubts of the preacher, for example, and failed communication between brother and sister.[64] Into the photograph of a dead soldier, VanDerZee printed a typescript of a poem about a soldier who returns from the war, only to become ill and die. It ends, "'Neath the old red white and blue—rest in peace—and fond adieu, Soldier Boy." Next to the photograph, eight acerbic lines written by Dodson and spoken by the soldier slice through the gentle mood with their answer: "Take back your medals," the poem commands, and "Lick my dead wounds, You Mothers."[65] The poems turn VanDerZee's funeral photographs into theatrical sets for the dramatic collision of voices, an effect that probably came out strongly in a performance of the book staged by James Hatch with Billops in Hamburg in 1980, complete with a preacher, mourners, and props.[66]

Toni Morrison has identified *The Harlem Book of the Dead* as an inspiration for her novels *Jazz* and *Beloved*. The photograph of the girl who died without exposing the guilt of her lover, and VanDerZee's story about it, informed *Jazz*, which takes place primarily in Harlem. The Harlem funeral parlor also plays a role.[67] Yet beyond plot, there are other ways in which VanDerZee's funeral portraits could have served Morrison as inspiration. In some of her work, most particularly *Beloved*, she has adapted elements of the gothic novel and magic realism to African-American experience, using African mythical elements that suggest an ancestral tradition but retain the familiar air of an American literary genre.[68] A similar incorporation of the uncanny into the familiar distinguishes VanDerZee's photographs, with their apparitions of religious figures or of a younger version of the deceased, insertions that collapse time and mix photographic and textual genres so that mythical elements seem to penetrate everyday reality.

Many responses to the collection focused on these mythical elements. Even VanDerZee's studio portraits, let alone his funeral pictures, when used by French scholars to show black Americans trying to assimilate, would, as a corollary, reveal how exotic blacks (really) were. To viewers beginning in the 1970s, however, seeming exoticism could be embraced by blacks themselves and used to reclaim their African roots by locating rituals that connect Harlem to Africa. Through its title, Billops gave *The Harlem Book of the Dead* a slight Egyptian flavor. She embroiders on its allusion to the Egyptian Book of the Dead in her introduction, comparing Harlem rituals to ancient ones that she describes as still intact, as though an unbroken thread led from the African past to the American present. But she gives the reputed heritage an ironic edge by comparing it to "the morticians in Toppins' or Micky's South Carolina funeral parlors, with no memory of Thebes, [who] still prepare pots of paint to decorate the dead for the afterlife."[69] Later responses took the Egyptian theme more seriously. One reviewer curiously associated VanDerZee with the death rituals made popular in the then traveling exhibition of King Tutankhamen.[70] A photographic historian, calling the *Harlem Book of the Dead* a "symbol system detailing the continuity of black culture," cited Tut's importance in the Harlem Renaissance, and evoked the Egyptian Book of the Dead itself to tie VanDerZee's photographs to primordial Africa, Haiti, the "African-Venezuelan ritual of the *mampulorio*, a parallel Muslim and hence African belief that angels visit the deceased at death," and many other world funeral customs and beliefs.[71] Alex Haley's *Roots*, published just two years earlier, also appealed to African Americans seeking tradition and lore.[72] In *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, African Americans could see the photographs themselves, and

the signs of their craftsmanship, as evidence of traditional ritualized mourning practices, handed down and adapted from African sources.[73] Referring to VanDerZee, a reviewer wrote, "Our elders have always been our wise men, our founts of wisdom, an integral part of our African heritage. Oral history is our tradition."[74]

VanDerZee, whose photographs were the node around whom this discourse accumulated, was not trying to search out what it means to be black. He did not want Harlem in the title of the collection. He wanted to call the book *Passing Over*, because to him it was about not group identity but the universal—and religious—experience of death. The semiofficial photographer of Marcus Garvey's African separatist movement, though his work was used to bind African Americans to Africa, expressed little interest in black identity or in Africa, and was not part of an Afrocentric movement. The texts that he associated with the photography of the dead do not include the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance or any other African-American sources, but rather poems such as "The Little Toy Soldier" by Eugene Field or "Crossing the Bar" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, which he included in his photograph of his dead daughter.[75] Or the Twenty-Third Psalm. When he quotes the opening verse, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," to Camille Billops, she answers, deflatingly, "Doesn't make sense to me. Everyone wants."[76] Although he photographed both Daddy Grace and Father Divine, two clergy who emphasized the congruence of Jesus and the black man, and although he lived in the midst of the Harlem of the twenties, which saw the consecration of the black man of sorrows, and photographed Countee Cullen, author of "The Black Christ," nevertheless the religious figures that VanDerZee printed into his popular and successful funeral portraits were welcoming white angels and a white Jesus.[77] He was pleased that white people admired his photographs of the dead, and was proud to have clients "downtown." He let his biographer know that "I had as many white customers as black."[78]

VanDerZee's use of white angels and his pride in white clientele accord with his customer base. Despite what he said, the evidence of his published work suggests that he had far more black customers than white. Yet very few of his clients probably felt the pull of the "Harlem Renaissance." Or any avant-garde. When Candice Van Ellison asked him about "Steichen, Stieglitz or Lewis Hine," and later Carl Van Vechten, another photographer associated with the Harlem Renaissance, VanDerZee professes never to have heard of any of them, and identifies his own influences as Eddie Elcha and Walter Baker, photographers presumably new to van Ellison, who transcribes Elcha's name as "Elker."[79] These were African-American studio professionals,

and VanDerZee consistently saw the photographs in terms of his professional practices, and the purposes served by the images. His customers, and hence VanDerZee, would have clung to the traditional use of white angels without challenging the racial assumptions they implied.

At funerals, VanDerZee took charge of his photographic sessions from the beginning; he set the stage, arranged the flowers, or placed the deceased in a lifelike environment. "I always made full-length if they hadn't any flowers, and then I made a close-up after that," he noted.[80] To him, the photographs meant bringing the funeral to mourners who could not attend: the mother who was ill in the hospital when the baby died; the family who lived too far away. His photographs of the dead made it possible for distant family members "to know about the way he was put away."[81] African-American culture demanded both an open casket and the presence of relatives at funerals. These demands became difficult to reconcile after the Great Migration that split many families into northern and southern components. The same considerations that made some families divide the burial, which took place soon after death, from the funeral, which could be held a week or so later, encouraged the use of mortuary photographs to replace the open casket for relatives delayed on the other side of the Mason-Dixon line.[82] The lavishness of both funeral and photograph might assure the mourners that their loved one had been sent off in style. Too distraught to attend his own wife's funeral, VanDerZee sent someone else to photograph it.[83]

Accordingly, the photographs do not show ancient rituals but instead modern funerals, complete with casket, flowers, and mourners gathered around, and texts and images to convey the meaning of the event. Yet while the rituals are common, the imagery and the poetry familiar, the photographs nevertheless appear exotic to some viewers. Why? In fact, the taking of such photographs is traditional not in ancient Egypt but in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, white and black.[84] The two views that VanDerZee mentions, full-view and close-up, are standard.[85] Camille Billops, their editor, was familiar with and interested in the still-extant practice of mortuary photography: her 1982 film *Suzanne, Suzanne*, shot in 1977, begins with a conventional mortuary image of Suzanne's father, Brownie.[86]

Only her act of publishing VanDerZee's images, like Beaton's, made them seem exotic, simply because they appear within the covers of a book. Common though they were, such pictures were considered private, and with few exceptions were seldom shown publicly. More recently, the photographer Elizabeth Heyert collaborated with a Harlem funeral parlor to produce a glossy coffee-table book of mortuary photographs, but this is not the norm.[87]

VanDerZee, who tried to soften their "gruesomeness" by printing in poems, music, and religious imagery, never considered publishing them, nor did his clients, who viewed them through the misty lens of grief.[88] While newspapers occasionally printed photographs of celebrity funerals, VanDerZee would have found little demand for such photographs among the clientele who bought his work for calendars and other decorative purposes. While the avant-garde of the 1920s produced modernist montages, the ornate sensibility of VanDerZee's montages would have seemed out of place among them and positioned his work instead in the company of Victorian photographic curiosities celebrated in the 2000s by photographic historians such as Geoffrey Batchen.[89] Even family albums rarely included postmortem photographs.

Surely to avant-garde artists and writers of the 1970s, neither clients for nor makers of these types of pictures, they were yet another matter. The 1970s brought a new awareness of postmortem portraiture. To a photographic world interested in Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1972), and soon to embrace Joel Peter Witkin's studies of death and distortion, the "gruesomeness" of VanDerZee's images could read as fantastic or bizarre, and his montage elements could feed into an aesthetic that disrupted not only the gruesomeness of death but also the illusion of photographic reality.[90] In the late 1970s, the photographs could seem to confront the unquestioned ethic of reality that governed the street photography of Harlem published by Cecil Beaton, as well as the depression-era pictures of Walker Evans. The photographs could further offer an alternative to the realist photography of social concern as the proper photographic means to transmit African-American experience. With their mixture of historical styles, fanciful montage elements, and text, they turned VanDerZee into a budding postmodern artist.

The postmortem pictures in *Wisconsin Death Trip* resemble those of VanDerZee but are less fanciful. Lesy's context instills an eerie quality into the postmortem pictures he publishes. He assembled a picture of the decline of rural America with quotations from a local newspaper in Wisconsin, the files of an insane asylum, and photographs made from the glass plates of a local photographer's archive, all of which he found at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The whole is meant to bring to life (if *life* is the correct word) a moment very alien to the present. Accordingly, he draws attention to the changes wrought by the passage of time: "What was strange was that in the seventy years between then and now, in the time it takes a healthy man to live, learn a few lessons, grow old, and die—in that time, in one lifetime, all of Charly's pictures and all of the Cooper's newspapers were changed from

4.12 Charles Van Schaick, *Small Girl in Coffin*. WHi-11995, Wisconsin Historical Society. From Michael Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip*, 1973. Used with permission of Wisconsin Historical Society.

the most ordinary records of the most ordinary events into arcane remnants, obscure relics, antique mementos."[91] That is, they became oddities.

Lesy's oddities are darker, more negative than those of *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, if only because the funerals portrayed are less opulent; but like VanDerZee's work, their accumulation creates the community they describe. Indeed, unremitting accounts of gloom and death, when published together, produce a dark, macabre picture, and photograph after photograph gives a sense of a society obsessed with death and decay.[92] In dealing with a photographer who lacked the imagination of a VanDerZee, VanDerZee's motives, and certainly the technical expertise to make photomontages, Lesy makes his own from the material, uniting art and scholarship and enhancing his effect in a method compared in the book's preface to that of Walter Benjamin.[93]

The photographs, part of a photographer's archive, were, like the newspaper articles, not meant to be published together to create an overwhelming sense of gloom. Similarly, the act of grouping VanDerZee's photographs of funerals made him into a photographer of strange death rituals, rather than a studio photographer whose work included class assemblies and weddings. The act of making public the private and the hidden, of exhibiting photographs not meant for publication and some barely intended to be seen, of placing the most private contents of a studio photographer's archive into an ornamental public setting, gives the photographs their alien attraction.

Whether photographs of funerals or of people on holiday, it is the context that changes them into the emblem of a particular social group, the sign of its ancient traditions or an indication of its morbid—or joyous—nature. Just as the isolation of a photograph on the wall of a museum, or even the subtle change in the layout of Walker Evans's work in the second edition of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, can turn a photograph from a record of a community into that of an individual, whether subject or photographer, or of an artistic experience, so can a grouping of photographs create a community, or the illusion of one. In the next chapter, we will watch the community-building effect of photographic practices being taken to a new level as groups seek to use the practices of taking, displaying, and communing with photographs to help the disadvantaged or the traumatized develop communities for healing or political change.

FIVE

Looking through Their Eyes

Photographic Empowerment

In Western Europe the capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to modern man's legitimate claim to being reproduced.

WALTER BENJAMIN, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

I have heard many times, in many languages, children and adults say, "I want to take a picture"—when what they meant was, "I want to be photographed." Who or what is it, I asked myself, that really makes a photograph—the subject or the photographer?

WENDY EWALD, *Secret Games*

DISPOSABLE CAMERAS FOR DISPOSABLE PEOPLE

Wendy Ewald's question to herself points to the matter of agency that Walter Benjamin's passive voice avoids. If modern man has a "legitimate claim to being reproduced," then who has the responsibility to reproduce him (or her)? James VanDerZee's reception, relocating the authenticity of the photograph from the subject to the photographer, begins to raise this issue. Authenticity does not depend on the compliance of the subjects, their trusting gaze into the camera, or their simple presence in front of the lens. VanDerZee's pictures counted as authentic representations of Harlem because VanDerZee counted as the eyes of Harlem: he lived there, photographing his own people in his own neighborhood, the authenticity of the photographer's gaze guaranteeing his pictures. Benjamin's "legitimate claim to being reproduced" turns into the "legitimate claim to do the reproducing oneself." This chapter concerns conscious, persevering efforts steadily to democratize that principle,

to overcome the power of the photographer over the subject, ultimately to transform subjects into photographers or authorities over their own representation.

These efforts are based on a faith in the power of technology like that of Benjamin. His comment, made initially about film, is relevant to photography, because modern man's "legitimate claim to being reproduced" began there, not with film. The same newspaper that makes the citizen's voice heard by publishing his or her letter to the editor reproduces local notables, labor union members on picnics, a school choir. Even before newspapers published photographs in any form, the earliest photographers honored the claim to self-reproduction for the benefit of the upper and middle classes. Members of William Henry Fox Talbot's own family were among the first to claim their reproductions. In his commentary on photographic portraiture accompanying plate 14 of his *Pencil of Nature*, he "observed that family groups are especial favourites," and exclaimed, "What would not be the value to our English Nobility of such a record of their ancestors who lived a century ago?"[1] Proliferating photographic studios made it possible for the middle classes to embark on such a record. Illustrated newspapers extended this opportunity.

It was not long before social reformers and journalists, with varying motives and attitudes toward their subjects, began extending the "right to reproduction" to the underprivileged. These subjects were not invisible. They had long served as models for genre painters and engravers. But photography seemed to demand an interactive element missing from most of these efforts. The reformer Henry Mayhew illustrated his *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–52) with drawings made from daguerreotypes by Richard Beard.[2] In 1877 Adolphe Smith and John Thomson modeled their *Street Life in London* on Mayhew's text, collaborating to gather stories and pictures of the urban poor, as later the journalist James Agee and the photographer Walker Evans would do for the rural poor.[3] Jacob Riis accompanied his lectures on urban tenements with slides of photographs that he later published in *How the Other Half Lives* in 1890.[4] Since then, photo-texts by muckrakers, reformers, journalists, and documentary photographers have persisted in the effort to make the subjects of photographs talk.

They do not always talk. Celebrated photographs by Thomson, Riis, or Evans often end up detached from their text, its stories and recommendations, and bask instead in isolated grandeur in deluxe editions that lie open on coffee tables, or behind frames that adorn the walls of museums, their subjects silenced. Even where the text remains, this "talk" often devolves into ventriloquism, raising issues of believability as though the subjects were characters

in the photographer's novel.[5] Although *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* sought to overcome "art" by forcing the viewer into dialogue with the photographs' very subjects, these subjects nevertheless do not represent themselves, but quietly submit to Evans's lens and allow Agee to speak for them.

Increasingly after 1960, social reformers and concerned photographers saw the domination of photographer over subject as a problem and sought new ways of allowing their subjects to talk back. Danny Lyon, beginning in the 1970s, and Jim Goldberg, beginning in the 1980s, included with their portraits written documents and interviews, as well as writings or artwork by their subjects. Some photographers act more systematically as sociologists. Chilean photographer Camilo Vergara, who photographs and re-photographs over decades the same homes, street corners, storefront churches, and ruins in run-down sections of US inner cities, often collects and organizes the comments of the people who live, work, or worship there.[6] Some photographers seek to make the photographic process still more interactive. They give their subjects cameras in the hopes of providing them with the means to represent themselves; or they offer the members of a community an arena to discuss photographs that pertain to them. To give photographic voice to the dispossessed and silenced became a strategy—and a romance.

Technology seemed to make it possible. Benjamin held out great hope that high technology's potential for mass reproduction would democratize representation. The technologies of "empowerment" that are the subject of this chapter are now even more accessible than those of his day. Some are "low tech," or at least inexpensive tech, including disposable cameras and digital cameras for making images, mimeograph duplicators and photocopiers for reproducing them, and the Internet for publishing them. Polaroid was expensive, but in the late 1960s the Polaroid Foundation began "giving out cameras and film to teachers of what used to be called 'underprivileged children' and sponsoring efforts to plan curricula for these students."[7] After Fujifilm developed disposable cameras in 1986, followed by the Eastman Kodak Company, photographic social workers or their indigenous subjects learned to reload them to save money. Disposable cameras still rival digital ones in places where digital technology is unavailable or prohibitive. Urban projects increasingly use cell phone cameras as well.[8]

Empowerment is understood and implemented in different ways. Social workers deliver cameras to impoverished or suppressed people(s) in first-world ghettos and third-world countries, and encourage them to produce documents of their lives. Many programs that encourage photographic practices among subjugated peoples aim directly at social change through

dissemination of information about poor living or working conditions. An organization called Critical Exposures involves children photographing the peeling plaster and dangerously dilapidated conditions in public schools in the inner cities of Baltimore, Washington, DC, and elsewhere.[9] Social workers dealing with women's health and child labor in Asia, much of their work informed by the "pedagogy of the oppressed" associated with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, use a methodology called Photo Novella or a similar one called Photovoice to "include new voices in policy discussions by facilitating collective learning, expression and action."[10]

The empowerment projects' intended audience is often made up of policy makers, or else the readers of newspapers, as in a commentary in the *New York Times* by Nicholas Kristof, "Disposable Cameras for Disposable People." Impelled by faith in the authenticity of self-made images, or perhaps by the desperation to document, in 2006 Kristof worked through aid organizations to deliver twenty disposable cameras to refugees in Sudanese camps that forbade photography without a permit.[11] Sometimes the photographers themselves are the target audience, as in empowerment techniques used by health services. One experimental program sends aphasiacs out to photograph their world and take their photos to a workshop to encourage them to talk.[12] In another, a doctor sends patients home with cameras in an attempt to counter the one-sided control over image-making involving their disease that contributes to a doctor's authority over the patient.[13]

But the most common use of Polaroids, disposables, and later cheap digital cameras for empowerment stems from a movement often referred to as Kids with Cameras. Such organizations work with children in third-world countries, impoverished areas in the United States, or both. Audiences can include the children, their families, policy makers, funding organizations, and a wider public. The process begins when a photographer gets involved and offers a workshop. Cameras are handed out, and participants are dismissed with instructions for their use and an assignment that may involve photographing anything from one's family and environment to one's fantasies and dreams. After a series of workshops, the project usually ends with an exhibition often limited to families and friends, or occasionally with a publication, the sale of prints, and, rarely, a film that makes the children and their teacher famous, attracts charitable funds for their education and the education of those in similar predicaments, and support for other organizations that use photography to help children. This second technological layer that turns image-makers into images seeks to harness for the cause the very "capitalistic exploitation of the film" about which Benjamin complained.

The documentary *Born into Brothels*, by Ross Kauffmann and Zana Briski, was the second technological layer that brought fame to the Kids with Cameras organization. Briski traveled to Calcutta to document the lives of sex workers in its red-light district. While there, she offered a photography workshop to the workers' children. The film relates the story of this workshop, and portrays the romance of the Kids with Cameras movement. Like many workshops in neighborhood clubs and after-school programs in poorer regions of the United States, Briski's workshop provided the children with inexpensive point-and-shoot cameras. The film moves between their lives, the photographic workshop, and their photographs. Partly through selling these photographs on its website, Kids-With-Cameras.org has raised money for the children to study in India and in the United States, and has set to work on the construction of a home in India for children of prostitutes. Its activities have spread to other locations, including Cairo, Carrefour, Haiti, and Jerusalem, where Jewish and Arab Kids with Cameras are brought together to share the images they produce. Avijit, one of the students in the original Calcutta workshop, came to the United States, where at this writing he studies filmmaking at New York University. A curriculum based on *Born into Brothels* and developed for children by Amnesty International based on Freire's principles can be found on the website of Kids with Cameras.[14]

The movement that places cameras into the hands of underprivileged youth includes many similar organizations, such as Fotokids or Literacy through Photography. It has attracted the attention of academia, which has produced its own conferences and organizations that promote and study such practices.[15] On the website of the Institute for Photographic Empowerment at the University of Southern California, one of the institute's founders, Geoffrey Cowan, writes, "Thanks to disposable cameras, digitalization, and the Internet, a social phenomenon is emerging in countless communities and countries that we think deserves to be celebrated, replicated, studied, and identified. It includes the use of still photography, full motion photography, and sound. But as a collective movement, we call it Photographic Empowerment."[16] The organization was founded in conjunction with Venice Arts, a street arts organization that has expanded beyond its original Southern California neighborhood in Venice to encompass projects in Nigeria and among "African mothers living with HIV/AIDS in shanty towns near Cape Town."[17] Belief in the potential for empowerment of giving cameras to those usually on the receiving end of the lens runs the gamut from hope that a Saturday workshop will keep the children out of trouble for the weekend to a strong faith in the transformative power of the technology. An audience member at

a conference on empowerment once demanded to know why the leader of a photography workshop in the third world could not prevent a participant from later joining an armed militia group.[18]

As this pointed question implies, the role of the facilitator is central. Unlike an organization such as Drik, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a picture agency founded by Shahidul Alam that represents underserved media professionals of the "majority world," empowered but unskilled photographers are generally dependent on facilitators.[19] In the rare instances in which they are left on their own, the results often disappoint the social reformers who provided the cameras. With few exceptions, the images of the refugee camp taken by its inhabitants with Nicholas Kristof's disposable cameras proved unusable (for the newspapers), because the camera operators were unfamiliar with photography and "lacked even its most basic skills."[20] Similarly, an Indian participant in Photo Novella wanted to make the point that a laboring woman had lone responsibility for cultivating a field that was much too large for one person. But her photograph, of a large field with a barely visible woman working it, failed to get its message across, even to the teacher in the program, who suggested that she move closer. Such a photograph would be even less likely to impress government officials. Views differ, however, as to the extent to which the professional should train her subject. Does it matter whether the vision of the child or other amateur comes to correspond to that of the professional trainer? In fact, if the goal is to effect social change, the method may work best when the photographs of a subjugated population resemble those of a photojournalist. Policy makers must recognize a picture as belonging to the genre of social change, while the audience of a documentary film such as *Born into Brothels* must view the children as incipient artists, their work recognizable as "art." To secure its authority, empowered photography, like fair-trade coffee, should look and taste similar to the regular stuff.

All these ways of disseminating photographic activities to people(s) who are suppressed, oppressed, or voiceless, or who belong to an unrecognized nationality dispersed in a diaspora, entail an interaction between a community and a teacher who comes armed with a belief in the empowering potential of photography. How does the voice of the outsider who supplies the technology interact with the voices of the newly empowered?

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

Two pictures, taken by photographers working side by side one day in 1990, show a boy holding an object that one caption calls a "starter pistol," and the other calls a "gun." Jim Hubbard published one of

5.1 Jim Hubbard, untitled. From Jim Hubbard, *American Refugees*, 1991.

5.2 Daniel Hall, *Boy with Gun*. From Jim Hubbard, ed., *Shooting Back*, 1991.

the photographs in his book *American Refugees*, a documentary about homelessness in America. He published the other in *Shooting Back*, a book whose photographs were "selected" by Hubbard but taken by homeless youth. The book includes several pictures by Daniel Hall, the ten-year-old photographer of *Boy with Gun*.

Hubbard was closer to the subject than Daniel was, or was using a longer lens than his young companion. His background is out of focus because of the proximity or the lens, with the result that the garbage lining the walkway is more palpable in Daniel's picture. Jim's composition emphasizes dynamic competing diagonals, Daniel's less so, because he placed the face of the boy at the center of the image, as amateur photographers tend to do. A slight difference in the shooting angle suggests that Daniel was standing to Jim's left. Thus, Daniel missed the telltale doll in the background, a detail that a photojournalist might work to include, and that a viewer who once owned a similar doll might designate a *punctum*. The boy has a wary smile in Jim's picture; in Daniel's, he bites his lip.

These differences between the photographs do not alone condition the way we are asked to look at them. The captions provide clues. A list in the back of *American Refugees* identifies the photographs by dates and locations. Hubbard's caption treats the picture as journalism, documenting homelessness and destined for reproduction, and omits information that would place it in the realm of artistic originals. It reads, "For many homeless children, games have given way to grim reality. This young man is proud of his starter pistol."[21] This "starter pistol," the caption implies, begins not a footrace but the process that will lead to a real weapon.

The caption of Daniel's picture, *Boy with Gun*, is on the facing page. It provides the photograph's dimensions (20 by 24 inches) and the material of the print (silver), along with the name and age of the photographer and the date (1990) and location (Capital Hill Inn) where the photograph was taken. Although exhibition catalogs and museum labels usually print the birth date rather than the age of the photographer, they identify photographs similarly, giving materials and dimensions, dates and other relevant information that suggest that the photograph is an "original" printed for exhibition and perhaps sales.

But Daniel's print is not only "fine art." The small book reproducing his rather large print documents homelessness just as does *American Refugees*, but does so through the work of Shooting Back, an organization founded by Hubbard in 1989 to empower homeless children by giving them access to the material and technical means to document their lives. This aim necessitates a

particular kind of look, as suggested in the text that appears below the picture: "Jim Hubbard with Daniel: *What's up there?* Bullet holes. *Do you hear people shooting guns at night in your neighborhood now?* Yeah. I heard people doing that here, too. People were just running around, doing everything. Sometimes I got scared of people shooting."[22] Because a gun (no starter pistol here) is visible in the photograph but no bullet holes, at least not in the reproduction, the conversation seems not to describe the photograph but rather to supplement it, to round out the image of a dangerous place to live under constant threat of gunfire. Other photographs also have poetic, metaphorical, or supplementary texts. Hubbard pairs the comment of a "schoolchild" with another of Daniel's pictures, of shattered glass through which the viewer dimly perceives the direct gaze of a child: "So many people try so hard to break through," says the schoolchild, perhaps a middle-class visitor to an exhibition of the homeless children's work, "but this barrier is strong and doesn't break too easily. They fall short of their goals and are only able to shatter this barrier."[23] That this image and its interpretation end the book suggests a further layer of meaning: the organization Shooting Back seeks to break barriers, and help is needed.

The introductions to the two books also tell us how to understand them. In *American Refugees*, Jonathan Kozol echoes James Agee's exhortation to look Walker Evans's photograph of Annie Mae Gudger in the eyes: "A little girl stares into the lens, her hair disheveled, in her tiny arms a doll. She looks at us with eyes that no one whose humanity has not been totally congealed can meet without a sense of shame and fear."[24] Robert Coles introduces *Shooting Back* very differently, with reference to another little girl, who is talking to him. He recounts a decisive moment in which, feeling discomfort while looking at her, he "broke eye contact with her, and with my eyes moved my field of vision to the church she had earlier been scrutinizing" (and which had been the subject of her conversation). "Her vision, I began to realize, had given shape to mine."[25] Coles rejected the intersubjectivity celebrated by Agee; he chose not to look into the girl's eyes but rather through them. The point of giving a camera to a homeless child is to see what she sees in the way she sees it, laying the foundation for communication on the basis of shared experience.

In the two pictures of the boy holding not a doll but a pistol, we are asked to look in two directions. In Hubbard's picture, we look into the eyes of the proud boy as Kozol suggests. We feel responsible for him and angry at the laws and neglect that have hijacked his future. We are ready to peruse a list of activist organizations that follows the pictorial section of the book. In the picture

of the same boy in *Shooting Back*, our look is more complex. We look not *at* the boy and *into* his eyes but *through* the eyes of another boy, the photographer. We see his fear at finding himself in the presence of a gun, while we find out through the accompanying text that gunfire is his daily reality. Of course, any photograph of a gun-wielding subject is a picture by a photographer who has faced a gun to get a picture. In that sense, both pictures portray their photographers. But the almost identical photographs differ in the kind of bravery they portray: the journalist's bravery consists in choosing to go to a dangerous neighborhood, where he fortunately encounters only a starter pistol. The younger photographer's bravery is different: he faces a real gun and chooses to "shoot back."

The difference between documentary photography and empowerment photography is not the pictures, which, as we have seen, should look similar (hence it is probably important that Daniel's picture resembles that of his mentor). What distinguishes the two approaches is their perceived interpersonal relations. Documentary photography asks its viewer to look at, to confront, or to interact with a subject. Empowerment photography asks its viewer to look through someone else's eyes, to identify with the photographer. In *American Refugees*, the boy with a gun looks into the viewer's guilt-ridden eyes; in *Shooting Back*, the boy looks into the eyes of a frightened ten-year-old who has to live with the sound of gunfire.

Film theorists and ethnographic filmmakers have long discussed and analyzed the intersubjectivity of documentary film.[26] A film often takes shape over time. Prolonged interaction between the filmmaker and the subjects makes for a complex intersubjectivity. Yet two photographs taken within moments of each other of the same subject by two photographers can suggest an intersubjectivity just as complex, like successive shots in a film that may represent the points of view of different characters whose relationship is unclear. Did Jim Hubbard notice the child with the gun first, or did Daniel Hall? Was Jim looking through Daniel's eyes, or Daniel through Jim's? Or did the "proud" boy with his pistol see the camera(s) and offer to pose? Given that we are told in the preface that the children used expensive cameras under the guidance of their professional owners, perhaps we are looking, in all of Daniel's pictures and the other pictures in the book, at pictures of companionship, where successful photojournalists serve as teachers, companions, and role models for children in need of them; whereas in *Boy with Gun* we are shown in addition a youth who, lacking both camera and role model, has to make do with a weapon.

WHOSE PHOTOGRAPH?

Some artists in the empowerment movement are, like Agee and Evans, concerned with the tension between art and the social activism that their work entails. But their concerns differ from those of Agee and Evans, neither of whom surrendered agency to his subjects. Artists involved in empowerment movements are likely to reflect on the relation between their own artistic need to express themselves and that of their subjects. Concentrating his efforts on one family in a short-term project involving AIDS orphans in Mozambique, Jim Hubbard evoked *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*: "While [Agee and Evans's] legendary work was written and photographed by them I attempted to replicate some aspects of the Evans/Agee praxis through images by the children."[27] Another practitioner of the art of photographic empowerment, Wendy Ewald, has made her relationship with her juvenile students central to her conception of the process. The feeling of loss that permeates a poignant story about two favorite students who lost interest in photography as they entered adolescence suggests how deeply she identified with her subjects.[28] James Agee expressed a concern for the solipsism of art, and a desire to rid his work of it. Ewald would seem, through the surrender of the camera, to have realized this possibility, but in her writing she worries about consequences of the work for her own authorship and the status of the work as art: "Whether I was teaching or photographing the crucial part of my artistic process was human interaction. What was it, finally, that I was doing? Was it some kind of visual anthropology? Was it education? Photography? Could I combine these elements and be an artist too? Was there something less artistic about my work as a teacher than as a photographer?"[29]

Ewald's photographs meld often seamlessly into those of her students, who are usually children. Children might seem more independent of tradition than are adults, and more unpredictable; a child may take pictures that surprise an adult. Yet at the same time, children are more malleable than adults. In addition, the teacher who assigns the task, provides the children with examples and instruction, oversees the printing of the photographs, and chooses the ones to reproduce or display ultimately takes a creative role in making the work. As Ewald writes (and perhaps worries?), "Sometimes I think I disguise myself as a teacher in order to make the pictures I need to see."[30] In a certain sense, then, the child photographer acts as a medium or a tool for the teacher.

Ewald's aim was to create the kind of photographs that could be elicited this way. Her political avant-garde practice amounted to a new means of documentation, with the documented wielding the camera. The photographs that result tend to be artfully uncluttered, often deploying foreground

and background astutely. They are printed elegantly in black and white, the choice that once dominated fine-art photography. When she pursues workshops abroad, Ewald comments on surprising traces of ancient cultures and hallowed artistic traditions that emerge from the photographs. Images made by Dutch children, for example, "bore a striking resemblance—in choice of subject matter (often depopulated of human beings), in composition, and in their overriding sense of precision—to paintings and photographs from the past four centuries of Dutch art." Indeed, her examples contain a number of grassy land- or waterscapes with nearly ruler-straight, low horizons reminiscent of Jan van Goyen or the occasional Jacob van Ruysdael, and interiors reminiscent of Gabriel Metsu. Also "striking" was the resemblance, in Chiapas, Mexico, of the masks children had made "from the gray reverse side of cracker boxes" to "figures in Mayan glyphs."[31] Ewald's texts suggest that she sees these works as embodying a national aesthetic that wells up from the students' unconscious upon possessing a camera. Animal masks like these, however, a "jaguar, another of a demon, and another [of] a devil with horns protruding from the sides of his jaw," from wherever they may ultimately originate, are part of a living tradition of masks that children of the area often create or wear. By training her students in composition, Ewald has surely contributed to the photograph *A Jaguar Is Eating Chicken* (fig. 5.3), which is far better than one of a similar mask, carefully centered in the frame, from the book *Camaristas*, product of another empowerment program (fig. 5.4).[32] Some of Ewald's powerful collaborative photographs corroborate her notion of the national or ethnic identities of her students. Do they result from the attempt to "consciously merge the subject of a picture and the photographer, and create a new picture-making process"?[33]

While Ewald welcomes the slippage between the identity of teacher and that of the student, Carlota Duarte, who initiated the Chiapas Photography Project and worked with the adult indigenous Mayan photographers of the book *Camaristas*, tries hard to minimize what she regards as interference in the creative process, and provides participants in the project primarily with the necessary technical information. Her engagement is not thereby less profound. It also differs from that of Ewald in that she has lived in Chiapas, engaged in this work full time, since 1992.

Duarte began her career as a documentary photographer. She used the photographs that would comprise her 1990 photo-essay, *Odella*, as part of her application to the Rhode Island Institute of Design, where she earned an MFA. Years later, she dedicated the publication of *Odella* to one of her teachers there, Aaron Siskind, whose early work in the 1930s included a documen-

5.3 Salvador Gómez Jiménez, *A Jaguar Is Eating Chicken*, 1991. From Wendy Ewald, *Secret Games—Collaborative Works with Children, 1969–1999*. © Wendy Ewald.

5.4 Pascuala Santíz López, *Li jmuk tey va'al xchi'uk sk'oj / Mi hermana está parada con su mascara / My sister is standing with her mask on*, 1997. From Carlota Duarte, ed., *Camaristas: Chiapas Mayan Photographers*, 1998. Used with permission from the Chiapas Photography Project.

tation of Harlem heavily represented in the exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*.[34] Odella, a neighbor of Duarte's in Boston, exemplifies Ewald's comment that people want to be photographed. Odella initiated the project herself, by asking Duarte to photograph her. She carefully costumed herself, like a latter-day Countess de Castiglione, to play various roles before Duarte's camera, and supplied a running commentary on the photographs.[35] The book represents their collaboration, but it remained Duarte's work.

Eventually, Duarte took the next step of handing the camera itself over to others. In her current practice through the Chiapas Photography Project, the camera is the medium of exchange of images between her and her subjects, who produce not individual photographs, as in most such ventures, but their own photographic texts. A member of a Catholic religious order and the daughter of a Mexican father, Duarte chose to work in Chiapas, Mexico, among impoverished indigenous peoples, many of them women. She seeks to "empower" them by enabling them, not only to express themselves and record their environment, but also to support themselves. They began with disposable cameras that they learned to reload. Supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, they have produced books, with most proceeds returning to the project. Unlike the work of Wendy Ewald, these photographers produce, publish, and sell their prints under their own name, and hold the copyright to their work, as confirmed in the process of obtaining permission to reproduce their photographs in the present text.[36] Their projects, like that of Odella, are self-initiated. At least one participant, Maruch Sántiz Gómez, "graduated" to become a successful photographer whose work is exhibited and collected as art in Mexico and the United States.[37]

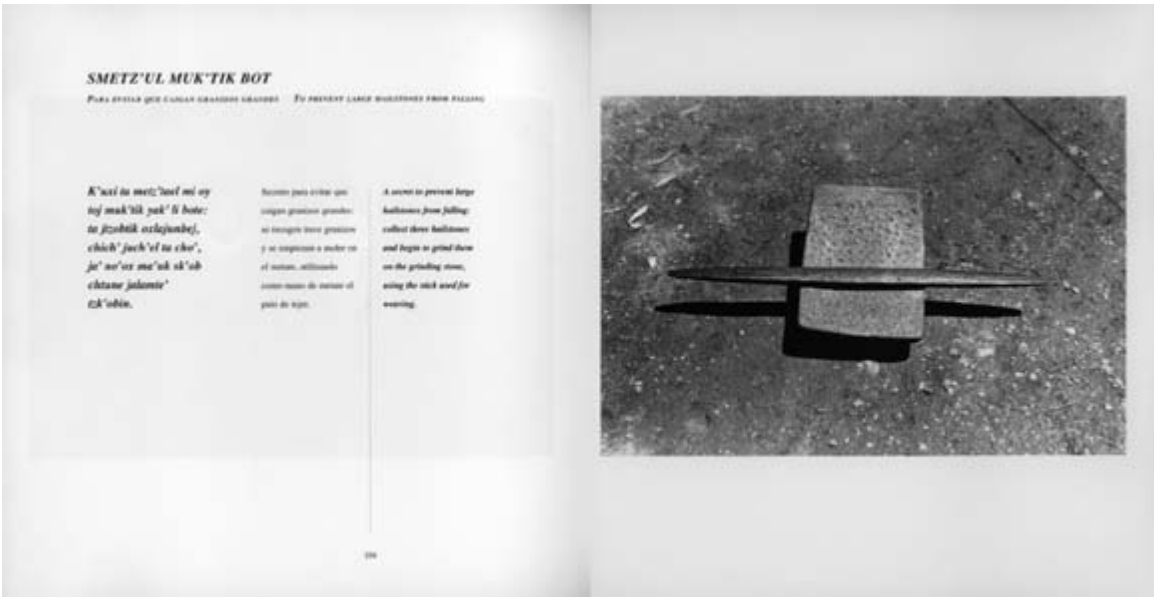
Success in the art market, although it comes to some members of the Chiapas Photography Project, is, however, not the aim of the project, and Duarte has chosen not to direct them toward that goal. Unlike many of her teachers at the Rhode Island School of Design, she tried hard not to school them formally, so as to allow them to develop their own vision. Indeed, their work does not resemble hers. Most work in color, while Duarte's book *Odella* and the photo collage and paper cutouts that she currently produces are in black and white. Also unlike Duarte, and almost any professional photographer in the United States, most of these photographers do everything they can to place their subjects in the center of the shot, and seek painstakingly to keep their compositions symmetrical. The photographers whose work Duarte has nurtured carry on the Chiapas Photography Project by teaching photography to others. Some of them launched their own fledgling operation in 2002, Lok'tamayach, offering workshops and instruction. When Duarte visits their

workshops, she hears them admonish their students, "Always place your subjects in the center," and "Make everything as sharp as you can."[38]

These watchwords may have been derived from the formal influence of the first successful "graduate" of the program. Sántiz Gómez learned some photographic techniques through Duarte, who had been invited by an indigenous writer's cooperative to help construct a darkroom and offer basic skills. Because many members of the community are illiterate, photography was seen as contributing to the cooperative's mission, to support and preserve indigenous culture through visual communication. Sántiz Gómez's project, in line with this mission, was to compile beliefs and maxims through interviews with elders. Like several other members of the cooperative, she received a small grant to carry it out. Her resulting work joins sayings handed down from community elders with photographs of related objects, many of which also appear to have been handed down. The carefully centered individual objects, intended to communicate clearly to illiterates and appearing next to often-mysterious *creencias* (beliefs) rendered aphoristically, had an appeal not only to the indigenous community to whom it was directed, but to an art market that these photographs ultimately reached.

With considerable variations, the photographers of the Chiapas project reflect a style that gives their work a sense of group coherence. The sustained concepts of their books, especially *Nuestro Chile*, *Mi Hermanita*, and *Creencias*, stemming from the notion of a "project" destined to communicate to the illiterate, also evoke the tendency of successful art school students and professionals to work in series. Moreover, the use of symmetry as an aesthetic principle gives the symmetry of the photographs' subjects, such as the chilies of Juana López López, a look different from the symmetry practiced by a ten-year-old Daniel Hall. The colors of the chilies, photographed on shawls and straw mats using a copy stand, are meticulously balanced, like the subjects in the other books. Their painstaking centrality and symmetry, making the viewer aware of the tiny irregularities of each vegetable and, in subtle deviations from plate to plate, of the differences between one chili and another, even those of the same variety, suggest the piquant range that the chili imparts to Mexico's cuisine. The works of the group, distinguished by the use of repetition and subtle variation over a sustained series of images, give the results of Duarte's project, which lacks many resources, the appearance almost of an outreach arm of an American art school. The indigenous Mayan photographers invented modernism.

The Chiapas Photography Project expanded beyond these photo-texts. Duarte initiated an archive so that the photographs may be used to document



5.5 Maruch Sántiz Gómez, *Smetz'ul Muk'tik Bot / Para evitar que ciagan granizos grandes / To prevent large hailstones from falling*, 1994. From Maruch Sántiz Gómez, *Creencias de Nuestros Antepasados*, 1998. Used with permission from the Chiapas Photography Project.

5.6 Juana López López, *Kichtik / Chile / Chile*, 2000. From López López, *Kichtik / Nuestro Chile / Our Chile*, 2002. Used with permission from the Chiapas Photography Project.

the history of the indigenous groups, a *lieu de memoire* that constructed the memories it held and continues to employ some photographers.[39] Others are active in Lok'tamayach, teaching others their skills and their aesthetics. Still others are engaged in community works and wider outreach projects. Like the projects surrounding *Born into Brothels*, curricula have been built around their work. These Mayan projects, however, do not protest the abjectness of the photographers' lives and are not used to frame policies to improve their circumstances, although their integration into Mexican society leaves room for improvement. Instead, the archive functions to retain a record of changing indigenous life, cultural practices, implements, and other themes. Its photographs are used in primers to enhance literacy in indigenous languages, and to teach the wider world about Mayan culture. At this writing, small children in an elementary school in Chicago learn about Mexico through a "culture kit" produced by the indigenous photographers of Chiapas.[40]

The reflections of Ewald and Duarte show that the tension between documentation and art expressed by James Agee has not completely disappeared

5.7 Mayan Culture Kit in use at Francis W. Parker School, Chicago, May, 2008. Photo: Margaret Olin.

in the photographic empowerment movement. Concerns about interference in the lives of others, and whether a project exists as "art," remain. The differences between one photographic empowerment project and another do not only reflect differences between aims and indigenous subjects; they also reflect differences in the attitudes toward art of the photographers guiding the project, and between the kinds of relationships those photographers establish with their students. The famous Mexican silver-craft industry centered in Taxco is not indigenous, but the result of a dialogue between the artist William Spratling, Mexican folk traditions, and the apprentices and other silver workers whom he trained and inspired, many of whom developed their own expressive styles, opened their own studios, and trained others.[41] The less-prosperous but no less interesting indigenous photographic archive in Chiapas is the result of exchanges between Mayans and American artist Carlota Duarte. Once we begin to see through another's eyes, we can no longer see through our eyes alone. The dialogue works in both directions, as a look at Duarte's own work in Chiapas might reveal. We can only be empowered to tell our stories through a blended horizon.[42]

IDENTIFY THE PICTURE

Is it necessary to take the picture ourselves in order to feel empowered by photography? The photographic empowerment movement testifies to the faith in the power of technology to help people meet one another, gather in groups, and unite. The Internet seems similarly empowering to those who wish to organize or comment on pictures, whether or not they have taken them. Any gathering of photographs is a community. The handling of photographs always took part in imagining a nation, especially a diaspora. Postcards helped visualize Palestine for early Zionists. For at least half a century after 1948, when the State of Israel was founded, displacing many Palestinians, postcards helped visualize Palestine for its Arab former inhabitants. With its written message, the postcard could bring people together around the same national monument, even though the people were separated and the monument was out of reach for both sender and receiver.

Recently, however, the Internet has become the most prominent home for such virtual neighborhoods. Placing photographs on the Internet, at its most basic not dissimilar to the experience of creating a scrapbook or an album, is a way of not merely having photographs but creating something with them that can take on a life of its own and attract its own community.[43] Certainly the Internet allows increased access to images; it allows more people to

"handle" them, to use and collect them, and to gather around them; it allows people who have never met to get in "touch," form communities, and "meet." At this writing, Facebook and Flickr are the preferred cyberspace lounges where teenagers, journalists, and many others touch base and trade photographs.[44] The anticipation and excitement about these new communities are perhaps as much a product of the romanticization of technology as the enthusiasm over photo-empowerment itself. The sites, after all, are perhaps no different, although more inclusive, than the "photographic intimacy . . . a new form of friendship" celebrated in the mid-nineteenth century by Oliver Wendell Holmes, acknowledging the contributions of amateur photographers to his work on photography.[45] However, Holmes did not make his parenthetical observation central to his discussion of photography, which, like Talbot before him, continued to invoke the magnifying glass.[46] The social networking websites differ in that, like many modern uses of photography, they regard community as the focus of their interchange. Photographic neighborhoods can create and recreate a neighborhood lost to blight, from which many inhabitants have moved. A website initiated by the photographer Camilo Vergara includes interactive maps of neighborhoods in urban ghettos such as in Camden, New Jersey, where the viewer may watch the changes in each address over a period of twenty or more years. The viewer may comment, although few do.[47] Interactivity is the adhesive used by these technological means of community building. As Daniel Miller, following Alfred Gell, has said about diaspora websites, a webpage, like a storefront, is a means whereby the producer may "entrap," hence engage and gather, its intended community.[48]

A great deal of gathering and commenting has gone on in the website akaKURDISTAN, a project of the photojournalist Susan Meiselas that began in 1998 as a complex attempt to build a national community through photographs, and continues even at this writing, although at a less active pace than in its first decade. Meiselas has experience working to build community through photographs, and her work, like that of Ewald and Duarte, exemplifies the ambivalence between photographs as documents and as community. She became a photographer after some years teaching in the Bronx, where she was active in photographic empowerment projects. Early in her career she edited an anthology of exercises for teaching photography, published by the Polaroid Foundation, which had also aided the early work of Wendy Ewald.[49] Her photo-book *Carnival Strippers*, uniting pictures of the women with their words (and those of male audience members and others), placed her in the company of documentary photographers seeking greater interactivity. Later, she attempted interactive methods in the often-ravaged communities that she

photographed on journalistic assignments as a member of the photo collective Magnum. In 1978, Meiselas photographed the Nicaraguan revolution. The 1991 film *Pictures from a Revolution* documents her travels back to Nicaragua, book of photographs in hand, looking for their subjects to try to build conversations around her photographs. Meiselas has emphasized the importance and the difficulties of making photographic connections. "A car, and a camera," she said in an interview, are "both what connects you and separates you, and there's a constant tension."[50] This tension is perhaps what led to her own attempt to facilitate community around other people's photographs.

akaKURDISTAN began as a component of an exhibition that opened at the Menil Collection in Houston in 1996. An associated book, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History*, appeared a year later. Both the book and the exhibition promoted Kurdish nationalism by bringing into visual existence the actual community that was the subject of that history. The book contains some of Meiselas's photographs, many taken in northern Iraq during the first Gulf War while she was on assignment with a forensic anthropologist for Human Rights Watch. Most of it, however, is a collage of historical photographs, reproduced documents, explanatory text, historical discussions, interviews, quotations from early anthropologists, photographers, or their descendants, or minutes of meetings of galleries and museums, such as the Freer, that collect such photographs. Nonetheless, the central focus of *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* is photography. Meiselas, who is not Kurdish, traces her absorption in the subject matter to her realization—upon finding a historical photograph in a photographer's studio in Iraq—of the significant role photographers played in keeping a national archive. Many texts in the book have to do with the use of photographs in historical study and human rights. One interview relates how a photograph can work as a letter of recommendation: the chief in Barzani would see an Israeli delegation, according to the story, only if it had either a letter from, or, failing that, a photograph of a Kurdish Jew who used to live in his town.[51] The book is a sustained testament to the power of photographs to create national history.

While I have been told that possession of *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* by a Turkish citizen is considered a badge of solidarity with the Kurdish people, the akaKURDISTAN website does the more-active work of developing a "visualized community." The exhibition, in many of its venues, provided scanning stations, to which local members of the Kurdish diaspora and others could take along their photographs.[52] Stories were collected to go with the photographs, and the highly edited and painstakingly designed results were uploaded to a website. Photographs and stories can also be contributed via

5.8 Story map. Screen shot of akaKurdistan.com, 1998–ongoing. © Susan Meiselas / Magnum.

e-mail. The website provides the Kurdish diaspora with a location, identified on the opening page of akakurdistan.com as a "borderless space providing the opportunity to build a collective memory with a people who have no national archive." akaKURDISTAN may be borderless itself, but it offers the web surfer a map of "Kurdistan," prefaced by a disclaimer that explains the source of the map and the disputes surrounding the borders drawn on it.[53] The story map comes with a timeline, thus situating Kurdistan in space and time. This space and time is populated not with people but with about forty photographic essays arranged along it and connected by links to the map.

The site's design is intricate.[54] Essays vary individually: they scroll up and down, or from side to side, or take the form of pages connected by hyperlinks. Images melt into one another, give way to text, or stand still. Some essays have been redesigned during the site's twelve-year existence. They vary in length and in content. Some texts come from books about Kurdish history, or the letters of historical figures such as the archaeologist Gertrude Bell, who traveled in the area in the early twentieth century. Some are from the archives of British colonialist photographers, such as Perceval Richards and Lynette Soane. Richards's grandson, Richard Hesketh, has submitted photographs his grandmother saved: one of an Armenian refugee whose handwritten caption reports her gratitude toward the Kurds for rescuing her son from a massacre, and another that is a pastoral picture of a Kurdish woman winnowing grain. Many stories were excerpted from *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History*. New

stories often take the form of interviews, memoirs, or ruminations on Kurdish identity by photographers still living in Kurdish areas or by Kurds in the diaspora. The stories are about taking or saving photographs, rescuing them, or stealing them to learn more about Kurdish history.

Many of the stories range in tone from the activist to the meditative. They include political accounts of imprisoned Kurdish activists, with links to websites about them, and a story by a forensic anthropologist about an exhumation in a village, Koreme, destroyed in 1988. Journalists with ties to Kurdish and Armenian causes have submitted stories of their involvement and links to human rights websites. In 2000, Dwayne Davidson, a veteran of the first Iraq war, sent pictures of soldiers near devastated villages, along with his apology for leaving Iraq. Other submissions suggest the importance, and the danger, of political photographs. A Kurdish photographer living in Iraq, Jabar Abdulkarim Amin, tells of hiding photographs of Kurds, because his colleagues and relatives had been arrested for carrying them. Other reflections on photographic practices are more self-consciously artistic, like the meditation by a Kurdish artist in New York on photography as an obstacle to memory. The artist, Arezoo, relates how her emotional and sensory memories unravel as she looks "at these photographs from long ago."

Some photographic stories are memorials. At one time, website visitors could access images of four Kurdish officers executed in June 1947 from two different places on the site. Most mourning is more personal, however. A Kurdish Jew named Sa'eeda tells the story of the photograph of herself in her own words, before the writer, Daniel Litwin, reveals himself as her grieving widower: "In this photo, I see the strong-willed determined girl who grew up to be the green-eyed raven-haired beauty whom I married." The power of photographic memorial practices merges with exhumation in a story taken from *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History*, in which a father wants his photo taken with the exhumed body of his son: "I have no photo of me with my son, so please take our picture together."[55]

A few recent entries are essentially portfolios by photographers who visited Kurdish areas. Some Western journalists and photographers seek to equate the people with their history, to make the people into archaeological finds who are part of the land in classic Orientalist fashion. These stories contain links to their contributors' websites, where photographs of Kurdistan and other exotic travel destinations can be purchased. Even a virtual Kurdistan has a tourist industry.

The story map grows only slowly, mediated by layers of editing and design. In contrast, the website itself contains areas of minimally mediated

5.9 Unknown image archive. Screen shot of akaKurdistan.com, 1998–ongoing. © Susan Meiselas / Magnum.

interactivity, such as an extremely active guest book. Most contributors here are Kurds. The guest book begins, in 1998, with congratulatory notes from members of a Kurdish diaspora happy to see their identity reinforced, and from Americans, Italians, and others who profess their pleasure at having the website as a source of information about Kurdish identity. This happy talk changes rather quickly, however. A number of hostile entries appear that attack Kurdish identity and the geography of Kurdistan from the point of view of writers who identify themselves as Turks or occasionally Assyrians.

But the far more interesting feature dominated by Kurds is the section entitled "Unknown Image Archive." The unidentified pictures contained therein demonstrate vividly the role of photography in group identification. The heading of the section proclaims, "The act of memory unlocks the life within each photograph and it reclaims its place in history." The archive invites people to submit unidentified photographs, and to identify those submitted by others. Beyond a questionnaire that asks "who what when," there is no limit on what to say, so the archive remains open-ended. It often strays off the ostensible subject of identifying photographs, and allows for an open exchange of differing viewpoints. Of course, that means that like any public monument, the Unknown Image Archive (and the guest book as well) is vulnerable to graffiti of the "Joe Jones was here" type. For the first several years the site managers allowed this cybergraffiti to continue unabated for the sake of open communication. Eventually though, like spam, it threatened

5.10 *Kurdish Cavalry*. From *World's Work* 36 (July 1918).

to take over and is now occasionally washed away, leaving, at any given moment, only a few remnants: at this writing, the subject of a photograph and its photographer, for example, are both identified by one spammer as the singer-actress Jennifer Lopez. Indeed, such cybergrafitti has driven less-dedicated webmasters to close their guest books under its onslaught.[56] Most writers to akaKURDISTAN, however, are serious. They take the opportunity to identify a photograph so that it identifies the Kurdish people, disallows that identification, positions or repositions its significance.

We might expect the contributors to the "Unknown Image Archive" to sift through evidence in the images, in the spirit of a (later) blog on the *New York Times* website, in which Errol Morris and his interlocutors weighed evidence about whether the nineteenth-century photographer Roger Fenton altered the scene of one of his famous photographs of the Crimean War, *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, by spreading cannonballs across the road. Morris, his interviewees, and letter writers all discuss visual evidence in the photographs.[57] In contrast, on Meiselas's "identify the photograph," the responses vary from almost scholarly to vituperative. A researcher, for example, submits

a photograph, and identifies the 1918 journal the *World's Work* from which he scanned it, the 1909 issue of the *New York Times* in which, as he reports, it was also published, and a third source, a 1916 book about the persecution of the Nestorians, or Assyrian Christians.[58] While some respondents analyze the scarves to determine that the people were from different Kurdish tribes, thus trying to answer a question posed by the researcher who submitted the photo, many ignore the details of the picture: a crowd of mounted soldiers in varied costumes, their scarves tied differently from one another, their horses still, but the soldiers active, guns pointed up, except for one pointed at the camera, and stone habitations against a mountainside barely visible in the background. Instead of these details, the respondents are determined to identify the photo more generically. They place it in the *New York Times*, not during1909 but in 1915, during World War I. Or they locate the event in the 1920s, "in turkish independence war against European countries." It took place in Harran, southeast Turkey, against French attackers, or in northern Kurdistan (probably Erzurum Wan), between 1915 and 1920. Those who identify the image with the Armenian genocide are careful to refer to the Turkish instigation of the massacre or the extenuating circumstances of the Kurds, pushed up against the hills with no accessible supplies.

The dates given for when the photograph was taken fall between 1880 and 1940; the people pictured are from every part of Kurdistan; they are fighting Ottomans, Europeans, or just the French or the Russians. A respondent identifying himself as an MBA student in California writes, "There is nothing about kurds here!! they were Ottoman troops which mixed Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Arnavuts and so on." In the postings, the photographer is German, Turkish, English, or French, because there were no Kurdish photographers. Or "I think it is taken by a Kurdish photographer who wanted to take a picture before these people went to the battlefield." The respondents argue with one another in their postings. The people are the heads of tribes, because only they would have horses. They are not the heads of tribes, because they are going into battle, and no one would send the heads of tribes into battle. Between 2006 and 2008, the members of a group of young people photographed in Kurdish costume in front of a banner reading "Kurdish Student Society in Europe" are given various names; their location is given as Prague, somewhere in England, or somewhere in Germany; and the dates given for the photograph range from 1960 to 1975. An unlocked memory gives a photograph a tenuous place in history.

Sometimes, like other communities, akaKURDISTAN is subject to inflammatory attacks that are not examples of cybergraffiti. The site managers

left the angry outbursts in Turkish, but during the Iraq war a rash of threats crashed the site, and they had a hard time getting it up again.[59] One photograph that attracts angry remarks portrays a group of people lying facedown on what appears to be a street, with tanks and soldiers in the background. In the early 1980s, a Kurdish man had given this photograph, along with other images of assaults on Kurds, to the Danish photographic agency 2Maj. He wished the agency to distribute them in order to show the oppression of the Kurdish population.[60] "We never use it. Nobody ever asks for it," wrote the head of the agency when he sent the photograph to Meiselas.[61]

The photograph unleashed a cacophony of irate responses. Along with passionate statements about Kurdish freedom fighters and "Turks who are against Kurds" watching them ("I SHOULDNT EVEN CALL THEM PEOPLE"), the photograph set off retaliatory comments about the ill treatment of Turkish minorities, massacres that Armenians are said to have perpetrated, abuses disregarded by nations and authorities worldwide, and other infuriated responses about, for example, the "PKK KILLIN BABIES."[62] Possible dates given for the picture range from the 1930s to the 1990s. Indeed, akaKURDISTAN, like a "real" community, evokes reactions, not just from people who identify

5.11 Unknown image archive. Screen shot of akaKurdistan.com, 1998–ongoing. © Susan Meiselas / Magnum.

themselves as belonging to the community, but also from those who identify themselves as outside observers, friendly or hostile, either to the idea of Kurdish nationality or to Kurds themselves. If the opportunity to act like a real community makes for a "real" community, then the photographic archive of akaKURDISTAN is indeed empowering.

Too often, when writing about how communities are visualized, one assumes that an image mirrors identity. Sometimes, it is thought, an image used for nation-building tries to visualize the nation as unproblematically self-identified and unified. But akaKURDISTAN demonstrates that communities are not necessarily unified, and that the community's relation to its image reflects this lack of unity. People who stumble into the website react as they would if they had landed in a strange country, or found themselves suddenly back in their homeland. And their reactions are by no means uniform. An image does not draw a people together because it reflects a basic truth about that people, or because it represents their myth about themselves. It draws them together because they can interact through it. Photographs seem to represent an undeniable truth, but because no one knows what that truth is, people can disagree about it and remain a community. Photographs are useful because the eyes that look at them all see something different. akaKURDISTAN does not visualize a community so much as allow one to form around a photograph, like a pearl forms around a grain of sand in an oyster. A grain of sand is irritating, not comforting. And the community itself is not necessarily a pearl.

SIX

Five Stories of 9/11

Even in quiet moments, social practices are never completely stable. The often unspoken rules governing them help people cope not only with the unexpected and unforeseeable but also with variations in routines (these practices, in fact, make up most routines). When major events do occur, the practices honed by routine help people to normalize their life in changing circumstances. The apparatus of photography, its snapshot and studio cameras, albums, newspapers and magazines, archives, exhibitions, and more, helps members of contemporary society cope with the special, the festive, or the merely unusual. One learns social rules through observation and practice, and adapts them to new situations. The next generation will learn the rules differently.

Many of the practices we have observed in this book pertain to issues of memory, separation, and death. These were never more at issue when, on September 11, 2001, two passenger jets, piloted by hijackers, crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, while another plane hit the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and a third crashed near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Catastrophic events of such magnitude test the limits of habitual coping mechanisms, and can potentially change a rule along with its practice. To study changing photographic practices in an aberrant moment has the potential to reveal ways in which forces of change confront forces that prevent change. People turned to photographic practices of many different kinds to try to process the events that have come to be known as 9/11. Amateurs and professionals photographed the event, published and displayed photographs, and sought to use photography publicly and privately to maintain, restore, and challenge the status quo. These practices demanded the use of the whole range of intersubjective experience with which photography negotiates. They demonstrate graphically the extent to which photographs replace, represent,

and transform themselves into people and make their absence palpable, and a study of them clarifies the source of many of the "mis-takes" traced throughout this book.

I have chosen to recount five "stories" about photographic practices. The first three are brief attempts to show, first, the photographs appearing in the media that constituted the ways in which most people became familiar with the world of images surrounding the World Trade Center attacks, with the inevitable formation of genres and narratives and potential for cooptation; second, the photographic activity that characterized those who gathered around the site in New York City; and finally, the sense of authorization and responsibility that attached to some photographers, journalists, and well-known photographers in the art world, and gave their works the authority to chronicle the event. These stories, which reflect well-established photographic practices followed during many catastrophes, establish a context for the extended narratives of the last two "stories," which center on two types of photographic exhibition that, while certainly having precedents, nevertheless evolved in unique and surprising directions in response to the events of September 11.

9/11 is a temporal term.[1] The events for which it stands took place at three geographical sites and in the air. The five stories I offer here concern 9/11 at the location most frequently evoked, the place in lower Manhattan known as Ground Zero, where two commercial passenger jet airliners hit and destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The stories, therefore, begin there on September 11, 2001, or thereabouts. Most of them end there, or nearby, on or before September 11, 2002. But not all of them end.

WE KNOW THESE PICTURES

If you do not know these pictures, you are probably not reading this chapter. Even New Yorkers often found out about the event through the media, usually TV, before they climbed to their rooftops to photograph the burning towers. And although photographs of 9/11 abound—almost anyone with a camera who found themselves anywhere near the event seized it to capture at least a few shots—the photographs of 9/11 that most people know best remain the dramatic, often beautiful images that appeared in the mass media in the days after the attacks. Many readers of this book have probably held in their hands newspapers with the first published photographs, which revealed the striking colors of flame against a brilliant blue sky, and showed people running through a brown haze

or amid a snowstorm of ash and debris. Swiftly, a few genres emerged to represent the event. A chronological sequence of buildings burning, then falling, seemed not only to capture the process of conflagration as it happened, but to suggest the frames of a moving picture, recalling (or actually reproducing) the endlessly repeated television coverage that made the event known.[2] In the quiet days that followed the first chaotic hours, elegiac, Gothic-inspired photographs of the ruins lent a dignified beauty to the site. Faces of onlookers in shock, rescue workers in a vast wasteland, and surfaces covered with flyers seeking information about the missing shaped public awareness of Ground Zero.

Other photographs emphasized the American flag. An emblematic image of patriotism emerged from this genre. Modeled on the iconic photograph of soldiers struggling to raise the flag over Iwo Jima during World War II, this photograph of firefighters struggling to raise the flag at Ground Zero supported a new identity for a United States at war. It reappeared, therefore, in many different genres and was adapted to many different uses. Beginning on September 14, ABC used it as a "crisis network ID" and called it "Patriotic Tribute."[3] The photo of the flag replaced pictures of that network's prime-time shows, because 9/11 had become its prime-time show. The US Postal Service put the image on its "heroes" stamp. To be sure, the resemblance of this image to its military model had the effect of appearing to sanction a military response to the attack. More generally, however, and probably in keeping with the mixed motivations for raising the American flag in the first place, it had the virtue of pulling, along with that flag, a redemptive moment from the disaster. Our flag, it said, was still there.[4] The redemptive possibility it offered may have facilitated acceptance of the wars that followed.

The photographic genres of 9/11 crystallized quickly, before the whitish dust of the attack had even settled. By September 14, 2001, the national day of mourning for the victims of the attacks, when memorial services were held around the country, the genres in which to picture 9/11 were firmly in place. These influenced the published photographs of the memorial services themselves, replete with uniforms and flags, as the wartime association strengthened along with the resolve of the US government to find and punish perpetrators. A photographic series on the website of the *New York Times*, "Day of Prayer," which marked the September 14 memorial services in twenty-one photographs, typified this genre. Beginning with an image of two young men in Brooklyn lighting candles for the victims, it moved, in subsequent pictures, across the country, to large cities and to Middle America, before heading to


RESCUERS, BOMB ATTACK SITES,
USANDS ARE PRESUMED DEAD;
ACKING HIJACKERS' MOVEMENTS

6.2


e Case for Rage and Retribution
What's needed is a unified, unifying, Pearl Harbor sort of purple American fury—a ruthless indignation that doesn't leak away in a week or two

6.1


FIRST-CLASS
HEROES
USA
2001
FIRST-CLASS
HEROES
USA
2001

6.3

6.4

commemorations around the world to show pious Africans and Asians and even Palestinians commiserating with Americans over their loss. The message of world solidarity with America in its grief was solidified in the final photograph: a shot of NATO members observing three minutes of silence at the headquarters in Brussels, a quiet moment for the allies, in preparation, presumably, for the outbreak of war.

GETTING INTO THE PICTURE

My second story begins as the dust of 9/11 settled enough to be written in and about, but before it was cleaned away, its messages erased. New Yorkers, residents of nearby towns, and a few others gathered at the police barricades to look at Ground Zero. Some sheepishly brought along cameras. A man holding a camera to his eye was possibly only using it to try to see something beyond the police barricade, which blocked almost everything. September 11 itself was over, and amateur

6.5

6.6

6.7

photographers were no longer authorized to take pictures. They were literally not authorized: to get into Ground Zero took authorization. But even Red Cross volunteers admitted to the site were not authorized to photograph it.[5] Beyond these restrictions, amateur photographers were figuratively unauthorized as well: a photograph of Ground Zero demanded a kind of ethical license. What kind of photographer might take a picture, and of what?

Of something, surely. Although the heart of Ground Zero was unavailable for pictures, on its periphery developed the beginnings of a photogenic display. Anyone could snap a picture of an ATM station papered over with notes. Such displays constituted something to look at in the neighborhood of Ground Zero besides the ruins themselves. So did the scrappy beginnings of a market. However small they might be, any activities that could be considered touristy were bound to irritate someone. Beginning on September 17, a handwritten sign, red on yellow, from "firegirl," begged people with cameras to

6.8

6.9

6.10

remember that the scene was "a tragedy site, not a tourist attraction. . . . I kept wondering," she continued, "what makes us think we can capture the pain, the loss, the pride and the confusion—this complexity—onto a 4 x 5 glossy."[6] In October, the cartoonist Garry Trudeau, creator of the syndicated comic strip *Doonesbury*, captured these hostile feelings in a strip in which celebrity-spotting at Ground Zero sets off a flurry of excited photographic activity and resentment.[7] "Doesn't FEMA have bouncers?" asks a bemused Mike Doonesbury from behind the barricade in the final frame. A tourist scene was well under way.

By 2002, when little remained to be seen on the Ground Zero side of the barricade, there was plenty to look at on the spectator side. Almost no one came to the site without a camera. But a corner had been turned. In fact, the people taking pictures had turned. With their backs now to the barrier around Ground Zero, they were having pictures taken of themselves. Most of them were happy and ready to mingle with other visitors. Not only did they take pictures for their own photo album, they showed their solidarity with fellow visitors by spontaneously posing for mine.[8] Ground Zero had transformed itself. Although some visitors, still in a state of shock, approached it as a crime scene, they shared the space with others for whom it had become a nice place to take the kids on an outing.

These visitors were engaged in one of tourism's rituals. According to Dean MacCannell, who has examined the practice in many of its varieties, tourists, like sociologists, travel to satisfy a thirst for knowledge and broad, authentic experience, and the desire to make sense of it all. These aims can clash: the tourist wishes to experience the diversity of life, but may view understanding as the formation only of a totalizing world picture. In their search for an authentic experience, tourists become part of a community that forms among strangers around an attraction.[9] Even if the attraction is a disaster area and/or a place of mourning, like Ground Zero, the accepted practice of tourism authorizes photography there. The resulting photographs signify authenticity, and often stand in for the 'knowledge" obtained. Their highly ritualized nature suggests the uniform world picture that tourism encourages.

To photograph the attraction itself is to take away a trace of it, confirming its authenticity. To have our own picture taken in front of the attraction is better: it confirms the authenticity of our experience. Perhaps the moment when people take their own picture is the moment when a place becomes a tourist site. When was this moment at Ground Zero? Was it this early?

6.11

Some volunteers took pictures of themselves in their unaccustomed gear almost this early, but although they were numerous, they did not make up the bulk of the visitors. Hundreds if not thousands of cameras captured the World Trade Center towers burning on September 11, but I imagine that few of those present that day had their own pictures taken (or those of their friends or family) with their backs to the towers in the pose of the typical tourist. I know of only three such pictures. The one that I have chosen to reproduce belongs to Tim Soter, a photographer living in Brooklyn. He told me that he had asked his roommate to take the picture because of the historic moment involved, the most important one in his life so far. He imagined showing this artifact to his grandchildren, and telling them about the experience when they would read about the event in a textbook.[10]

6.12

But perhaps one reason why he could articulate his motivations so well is that he had practice. A close friend objected to his photograph, forcing him consciously to account for his actions according to an ethics of photography. There are limits, he said, to what he would photograph. He did not, he protested, photograph mourners in Union Square in lower Manhattan, where a spontaneous display of mourning took place, beginning shortly after the attacks and continuing throughout the weekend of September 14. He photographed neither those whose emotions were sincere nor those who exaggerated them for the benefit of photographers. He said he was horrified by photographers who roamed the crowd, pushing their lenses into as many tearful faces as they could, even relighting extinguished candles to maintain an atmospheric setting. His own self-portrait intruded on no one. I was told that Tim never had an opportunity to justify himself to the volunteers at the photographic exhibition *Here Is New York*. They hung his picture not in the exhibition but upstairs on a "wall of shame."[11] Soter's behavior, and the reaction to it of his friend and of some volunteers at *Here Is New York*, is evidence of a limit beyond which it is unacceptable to photograph. The placement of this line varies; indeed, the same organizer of *Here Is New York* who told me about the "wall of shame" said he saw nothing objectionable about the photograph,

which the organizers included on the website and in the exhibition publication. But for those who see and observe such a boundary, it is as secure as a police barrier.

GETTING AUTHORIZED

Some photographers felt authorized to photograph from the beginning, and to make their way into Ground Zero to continue photographing. These were professionals; some of them were on assignment no doubt, but many came on their own, propelled to the scene like the off-duty firefighters and police officers who knew they were needed without being told. Some of them professed themselves, through their superior talent and training, not only authorized to cover the event but more than usually responsible for preparing an archive of it. In happier days, the well-known photographer Joel Meyerowitz had taken several elegant views of the then-intact twin towers from his studio window. After 9/11, the series traveled widely as an impromptu memorial.[12] In the weeks afterward, commissioned by the Museum of the City of New York, Meyerowitz photographed the cleanup operation in the heart of Ground Zero. In a statement about his work, he recounted his elevation from an unauthorized member of the public, who raised his camera simply to see behind the police barrier, to a photographer whose sense of responsibility and privilege demanded his presence at Ground Zero.

6.5, detail

> Standing in the crowds at the perimeter five blocks north of the zone, I raised my camera simply to see what could be seen and was reminded by a police officer that I was standing in a crime scene and no photographs were allowed, so I left. Yet, within a few blocks the echo of that reminder turned into consciousness and I saw what I had to do. To me, no photographs meant no history. I decided at that moment that I would find my way in and make an archive for the City of New York.[13]

Given the number of such photographs, it seems unlikely that a police officer could actually have tried to prevent anyone from photographing the World Trade Center site from

behind a police barrier, except out of personal motives like those recounted on "firegirl's" handmade sign. Meyerowitz's eventual authorization, however, went beyond any such formal permission. With the sponsorship of the Museum of the City of New York, and access to the premises granted by the police department, he embarked on a months-long project to create an archive. "It is a privilege to work at 'Ground Zero,'" Meyerowitz wrote, referring to the nobility of the men and women with whom he kept company. Yet he was privileged in another sense as well: the scenes he photographed were in close proximity but unavailable to the photographer kept from the site by a barricade. An exhibition of selections from his work that traveled around the world carried the seal of the US State Department. The arrangement was similar to that by which the United States Information Agency (which was folded into the State Department in 1999) sent on tour the famous exhibition *The Family of Man* nearly fifty years earlier.[14] *The Family of Man* had been accompanied by brief aphorisms, most of them by sages, such as Confucius and Einstein. Meyerowitz's exhibition was accompanied by pious and belligerent quotations by American leaders, such as George W. Bush and Colin Powell.[15]

6.13

6.14

Meyerowitz's level of authorization was higher than most photographers'. But there are other ways to think about authorization. Photographers connected with Magnum, the well-known photographic cooperative, produced the most traditionally beautiful and elegant exhibition in the aftermath of 9/11. Magnum is an international, self-run organization of eminent photojournalists. Several of its photographers had been represented in *The Family of Man*. In September 2001, the organization had scheduled a meeting in New York City, where many of its members live. Consequently, these photographers were on the scene in lower Manhattan during and after the attacks. The New-York Historical Society exhibited the results, *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers*, beginning on November 20. Magnum then published a book, donating "a portion of the proceeds" to the New York Times Neediest Fund for the Benefit of the Victims of September 11. The exhibition on which the book was based traveled to several cities. At the

6.15

Chicago Historical Society (now the Chicago History Museum), the large, grainy prints were mounted on a silvery background; they were much too large to be handled.[16] First-person accounts by the Magnum photographers themselves accompanied them. Some captioned their work descriptively—we are told that people looking at scraps of paper on the dusty street seemed dazed and "sorted through the debris." Others used symbolic captions. To Susan Meiselas, the ash-covered sculpture of a businessman by Seward Johnson that she had photographed "seemed to stand for all those who were gone."[17] Steve McCurry, whose series of photos of the World Trade Center burning was reprinted in many magazines and newspapers, provided an exciting account of his struggle to cover the story. After photographing the collapse of the twin towers from his rooftop, the police denied him permission to enter the site. So he rose at 3 a.m. to enter under cover of darkness, crawling along concrete barriers and cutting his way through a cyclone fence. "I was just not going to be stopped," reads one of his captions.[18]

McCurry's caption makes the photographer a hero, a hero witness. Evan Fairbanks, whose film of the event accompanied the Magnum installation, felt the same sense of responsibility: "I felt a knot in my stomach that told me that

I had just become responsible for recording one of the most significant events of my lifetime."[19] Only one photographer refused to describe the scene, tell us what it meant, or recount his experiences. To accompany his photographs, Gilles Peress wrote only the following: "I don't trust words. I trust pictures."

Other acts of responsibility were possible. The career of a war photographer such as James Nachtwey is a reminder of how strongly some people believe in the power of photography—not only to give viewers an authentic, immediate experience, but more important, to give people an immediate experience so strong that it can potentially put an end to war. The belief can be so powerful that, like religion or family, one will risk one's life for it.[20] In reference to his expeditions to war zones, Nachtwey showed himself conscious of his responsibility: "Every minute I was there, I wanted to flee. I did not want to see this. Would I cut and run, or would I deal with the responsibility of being there with a camera?"[21] Nachtwey, like the photographers of Magnum, of which he had until recently been a member, was at home in New York on September 11. Presumably because of his aversion to war, a special number of the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, provocatively titled "Dissent from the Homeland" and highly critical of the Bush administration's belligerent response to 9/11, published a portfolio of his photographs of Ground Zero. The editors drew on Nachtwey's account of the responsibility of witnessing in their introduction, taken from *Inferno*, his book of what he called his "anti-war photographs."[22] But Nachtwey was also a contract photographer with *Time* magazine. Across from the headline, "The Case for Rage and Retribution," of one of the more belligerent commentaries in the early days after the attack, Nachtwey's photograph of an American flag at Ground Zero seemed to support the words in the callout to Lance Morrow's back-page essay: "What's needed is a unified, unifying, Pearl Harbor sort of purple American fury—a ruthless indignation that doesn't leak away in a week or two."[23] Perhaps in publishing his portfolio from the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Nachtwey wished to atone or compensate for *Time*'s use of his work.[24]

New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers, like the photographs by Nachtwey, understood documentation as a project for professionals. Whether the photographs are displayed on the walls of museums, in *Time* magazine, or in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, they give credence to their context, not only by dint of their indexical origin, but also because of the authority of the professional photographer. While offering the viewer a sight of Ground Zero, they remind her that she is not there, that the responsibility of documenting must be left in the hands of professionals, like the Magnum photographers. Beyond the content of the exhibition, its power derives from the beauty of the photo-

6.16

graphs, their installation or layout, and the awe one feels for the consummate photographers who, like many print journalists, may risk their lives to take a picture. Although the words of print journalists may always be challenged, the authority of the photographs that accompany these words goes unquestioned. "I don't trust words. I trust pictures."

BINDER CLIPS

If the touristic ventures of amateur photographers were excoriated by some, the amateurs found their work authorized in alternative ways. The photographs published widely in journals and displayed in exhibitions and on official Internet sites did not exhaust the uses of photography in confronting 9/11. Exhibitions also used photography to enhance alternative means of addressing the loss of the twin towers, some of which seemed to challenge the authority of the anointed photographers. One show emphasized the practice of photography in the context of expressing grief. Its organizer, Michael Feldschuh, had distributed leaflets in public squares after the attacks, asking

people, "Are you taking pictures in response to the tragedy?" and inviting submissions. He mounted the exhibition, *The September 11 Photo Project*, with the aim of allowing mourners to express themselves in words and photographs.

The show opened on October 13 in a Soho gallery space. Techniques on display varied widely; black-and-white and color photographs kept company with collages and even three-dimensional photographs, made to be viewed using special glasses. The uninhibited use of Photoshop enhancements was much in evidence. These efforts at high art or creative distortion were often (but not always) as amateurish in appearance as a grainy black-and-white print submitted by Feldschuh himself. Adding to the unpretentious appearance of the exhibition, the unframed photographs were hung with office binder clips, and secured to the wall with pushpins. Some contributions were signed; some remained anonymous, at the discretion of the exhibitor. Captions were optional, and many exhibitors omitted them, but sometimes a long caption overwhelmed a tiny, almost illegible photograph. Expressive spontaneity, and the signs of it, integral to the effect of the exhibition, gave the installation a homemade, handcrafted look that led a reviewer on the Amazon.com website to call *The September 11 Photo Project*, the companion book to the exhibition, a "scrapbook put together by the people."[25]

Like *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers*, *The September 11 Photo Project* claimed authenticity. But it did not seek to turn photographers into heroes. For Feldschuh, emotion, not heroism or even skill, underlay authenticity.[26] When the project was published as a book, his introduction, "The Heart Is the Truest Eye," described the exhibition as an "indoor public space, safe from the elements . . . that no one would sweep away, censor, or remove."[27] The reference was to the removal of the memorials on Union Square during the night of September 24–25, 2001. Although, as we have seen, some regarded even Union Square as vulnerable to manipulation by the media, until the signs, candles, and makeshift altars of all kinds that comprised its tributes were swept away, to the chagrin of many participants and sympathizers, Union Square best represented the attempt to redeem the tragedy by allowing its memorial to assist at the birth of a populist movement.[28] As a photographic memorial, *The September 11 Photo Project* harbored a similar goal.

Another exhibition, which began with some of the same ambitions as *The September 11 Photo Project*, underwent a more complex design process. As he tells it, the writer Michael Shulan placed a photograph of the World Trade Center towers with the Statue of Liberty in the window of his vacant Soho storefront on September 12, 2001. The crowd that gathered around it sur-

6.17

prised him and gave him an idea for a temporary photographic exhibit. He placed a sign in the window inviting more photographs. Together with three friends, Charles Traub, the head of the graduate program in photography at the School of Visual Arts; Alice Rose George, a photo editor; and Gilles Peress, the Magnum photographer who distrusted words, Shulan designed the exhibition *Here Is New York: A Democracy of Photographs*.

The complex program devised by this team consisted of scanning all submitted photographs and printing them uniformly on eleven-by-seventeen-inch paper. They used binder clips for hanging the photos, as *The September 11 Photo Project* would later, but rather than pinning the clips with the photographs on them to the wall, the organizers—and eventually volunteers as well—hung them on lines strung along the wall and across the ceiling. As though in accordance with Peress's abhorrence of captions, the pictures were displayed without words, anonymously, their subjects unidentified. Identical prints could be ordered for $25 each, the proceeds destined for the Children's

Aid Society, to benefit children affected by the attacks. The exhibit opened on September 25, and was set to close three weeks later, on October 14.

Instead, after repeated extensions and a few interruptions, it lasted a year, and accepted new photographs for most of that time. It included 6,398 photographs by 2,900 photographers, sold 60,000 prints, and collected over $850,000 for charity, with hopes, as of the summer of 2003, that publication of the accompanying book would put the total proceeds at over $1 million.[29] The initial visitors were primarily New York residents who willingly waited an hour or more for the opportunity to visit the crowded gallery. Soon the clientele included tourists, many of them international, and the exhibit accordingly traveled to meet its public. It visited thirty different cities in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

The metonymic subtitle of the exhibition, *A Democracy of Photographs*, as if the photographs, not (only) the people who took them, were citizens, suggests the visual representation of democracy. The large numbers of photos in the exhibition represent the masses of people in a democracy, and their anonymity suggests the way one votes. The uniformity in which they were scanned and printed made all the photographs equal. Photographs that previously appeared in the media and those submitted by famous photographers were included along with those by amateurs, and those by people who would not even aspire to the title of amateur. Some photographs, from both the amateur and the professional categories, appeared in the published version of both *Here Is New York* and *The September 11 Photo Project*, where one can more easily find out who took them, and sometimes under what circumstances.

In a democracy, however, while people are theoretically treated as equals, they do not necessarily present themselves identically. Union Square, for example, and its photographic imitator, *The September 11 Photo Project*, meant to provide an opportunity for people to display themselves openly, individually, and in diverse fashions. The conception of democracy represented in *Here Is New York* is a somewhat different, ideal conception of a particular high-modernist type. It even used the quintessential high-modernist typeface Helvetica to represent it.[30] In its insistence on lower-case only, the typography of *Here Is New York* proclaimed that all words are equal.

The early nineteenth-century German philologist and folklorist Jacob Grimm used all-lowercase letters in his dictionary and fairy tales, even for common nouns, customarily capitalized in German. When Adolf Loos in Vienna followed Grimm's lead nearly a century later, it accorded with his admiration of English styles, which appeared to extend to the more-democratic politics practiced on the other side of the Channel.[31] Artists of the Bauhaus

6.18

in Germany then pioneered a highly influential single-case alphabet, whose aspirations are echoed in the typography used by *Here Is New York*, just as they are echoed in the design of the computer, a Macintosh, used to produce it.[32]

The event that leveled the twin towers of the World Trade Center was construed by many as also leveling society. Death, which happens to everyone, is the great leveler. In the terrorist attacks of 9/11, patriotic working-class firefighters, illegal aliens in menial jobs, and stockbrokers all died together, a "democracy of death" or a "democratic tomb," reinforced by countless short biographies of the victims published by the *New York Times* as "Portraits of Grief."[33] The event was seen as one that makes ordinary people rise to the level of heroes. In *Here Is New York*, amateur photographers or just people taking pictures rose to the level of professionals.

Professionals, meanwhile, were brought down to the level of amateurs, or perhaps workers. Besides the uniform size and quality of the photographs,

the method of hanging them, evenly distributed via clips on lines, made them equal. In one of the venues of *Here Is New York*, a picture of laundry on a clothesline was displayed, exceptionally, with a caption: "This snapshot of Naples, Italy, inspired the method of hanging the photographs."[34] Photographs hung on lines, then, were meant to suggest laundry, specifically in Naples, where the photograph shows it hanging across the streets between buildings. Naples may or may not represent a simpler time and place, perhaps even a primitive one, to New Yorkers, but certainly laundry hung outside to dry suggests members of the working class, the ones most likely to use clotheslines instead of dryers. Certainly, clotheslines seem far removed from the technical innovations that made this exhibit possible. But these innovations were meant to be kept at a minimum, in order to avoid glorifying technology for its own sake. Even the monitors that produced the exhibition's changing displays, and cost thousands of dollars, were subject to the attempt to downgrade technical wizardry. The expensive mounting clamps that came with them were discarded, and the monitors hung using wire from the hardware store instead. The monitors could display multiple photographs by many people without expensive decorations. As for the technique used to scan the images, the book version of *Here Is New York* ends with an explanation, in a section titled "Try This at Home."[35] The rhetoric suggests that images are powerful, and people can take power by grabbing hold of them.

Celebrated professional photographers may have been moved to contribute to the show to compensate for the heroic persona imputed to them by some of the other exhibitions in which they participated. In the context of a national crisis they may have preferred to see themselves as citizens first, and some surely had a difficult time coping with becoming the beneficiaries of a tragedy in their own country. Even to lend their name to charity exhibitions could, after all, still amount to self-aggrandizement. Many photographers contributed in both ways. One of the photographs in *Here Is New York*, of two people falling from the World Trade Center towers, had appeared in several high-profile publications, including *Time*, and earned its photographer, David Surowiecki, an honorable mention in the World Press Photo contest that year (third prize was awarded to Richard Drew's picture, which had appeared in the *New York Times*, of one person falling from the World Trade Center). Other photographs, by Susan Meiselas, Gilles Peress, and others, appeared in the *New York Times* and other major media, and also helped earn money for charity as part of *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers*.

Another way to think of *Here Is New York* is suggested by the title of a similar show briefly mounted by the same group: *History Unframed*. The photos

in all the exhibits discussed here were literally unframed, in accordance with contemporary journalistic photographic exhibition practices; but in *Here Is New York* and *History Unframed*, they were unframed metaphorically as well, by master narratives. The professional photographers of Magnum enfolded their event in personal, often comforting narratives of mastery. The photographers of *The September 11 Photo Project* sought, through their narratives or their comments, to express themselves and to master their own feelings. Narrative, because it presents a framework within which one can understand events, offers the viewer a moral underpinning—the bravery of the witnesses and their moral imperative to record—as well as a catalyst for action, perhaps war.[36]

By excluding captions, *Here Is New York* seemed to disrupt this master(ing) narrative. Indeed, the exhibition sought to avoid any kind of traditional narrative that would have resulted from grouping the photographs. The arrangement of the photographs was governed not by subjects or chronology but by the arbitrary and momentary choices of volunteers, with some attention to variety—black-and-whites strewn among color photos, verticals amid horizontals. The viewers did not discover whether a belligerent sign outside tract housing had been taken in Upstate New York or in Merrillville, Indiana, unless they noticed the same photograph with a caption in *The September 11 Photo Project*.[37]

The prenarrative confusion out of which its leveling occurred was partly responsible for the bewildering effect of the exhibition *Here Is New York*, as though a new society were born out of destruction. Yet a narrative existed, because the visitors all knew it. When the events of 9/11 will have been forgotten, or known only in vague terms, the book *Here Is New York* may well acquire a mysterious quality as people look through the uncaptioned pictures, trying to determine what part of the story, very likely canonical by then, any particular image represents.[38] The exhibition, however, did offer an opportunity to create one's own narrative, because photographers and others were encouraged to enter a small room, rather like the instant photograph booths still seen in some train stations, to tell their stories in private to a video camera. With little direction, they were allowed to speak briefly or at length at their own discretion. These narratives, however, were separated from the photographs themselves.[39]

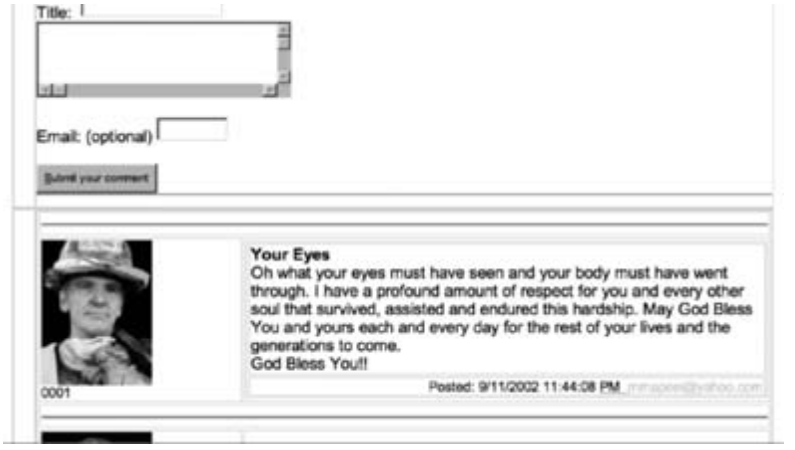
Unframed also suggests something of the relation, a lack of media(tion)—frame—between the image and the viewer, as though the absence of captions could force a confrontation between the two, like the strategy followed by Evans and Agee, who segregated words from images in their collaboration, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.[40] A visitor to *Here Is New York* could not look at

6.19

the captions and ignore the photographs, as can be done in so many museums and exhibitions. There were no distractions from the vision of the disaster itself, or so it would seem.

Yet the visitor to *Here Is New York* made contact not only with photographs but also with the volunteers working there. A kindly lady greeted people who came in to submit their photos and tell their story, while a sign, Give Us Your Pictures, marked the ritual of giving and taking photographs with a play on a line from Emma Lazarus's poem about the Statue of Liberty.[41] While the installation included the usual signs requesting visitors not to touch the photographs, the laying on of hands at selected moments added to the immediacy of the experience: one documentary about *Here Is New York* shows viewers disobeying the signs; another emphasizes the touching of the pictures by their purchasers.[42] This contrasts with *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers*, where the pictures kept their distance, hung in pristine surroundings, and could only be purchased within the smaller format of the catalog.

6.20


Title:
Email: (optional)
Submit your comment
Your Eyes
Oh what your eyes must have seen and your body must have went through. I have a profound amount of respect for you and every other soul that survived, assisted and endured this hardship. May God Bless You and yours each and every day for the rest of your lives and the generations to come.
God Bless You!!
Posted: 9/11/2002 11:44:08 PM
0001

6.21

The emphasis on contact between people and contact with photographs standing in for people served a major aim of both *The September 11 Photo Project* and *Here Is New York*: the nurturing of community. The collaborators of *The September 11 Photo Project* crowded together in their gallery for their group portrait. Those of *Here Is New York*, in a larger space, flashed their cameras simultaneously to create a brilliant effect. The demographics of these predominantly white, middle-class groups may not reflect those of the United States, or even of New York City, but they may reflect those of the community energized by 9/11 to express itself in photography.

Newspaper coverage of *Here Is New York* seemed to recognize the exhibition's goal of creating community. While articles about an exhibition of paintings or tapestries are conventionally illustrated with one of the works in the show, newspapers covering *Here Is New York* often included a mention of the crowds or the way the lack of hierarchy affected "the experience of viewing" the images, accompanied by a picture of visitors looking at the photographs.[43] Cyberspace intensified the sense of community. To post a message on the exhibition's website, the site visitor clicked on a button labeled "Help us build our community." Once there, he or she could communicate directly with a picture. Or, the visitor could discuss a picture: "I think this image truly captures the essence of what people were feeling that day . . . utter disbelief and shock," read one post. A few months later, another writer, identifying herself as the wife of one of the men in the photograph, replied that "the horror is seen just looking at their faces."[44] In mid-March 2003, long after the exhibition had closed, the website continued to build community. Many of the postings at that time referred to the developing war with Iraq, and expressed sentiments such as the following, included in a posting entitled "pain and dispair" [*sic*]: "i think we should go over to iraq and kill the miserable person that did this to our beautiful places in this world and blow him up and every piece that is shattered of that person is for everyone to spit on."[45]

The Bundesamt für politische Erziehung (Federal Office for Political Education) brought *Here Is New York* to several German cities, among them Berlin, where high school students trooped through the exhibition in groups. Perhaps in accordance with their educational mission, the organizers provided a context deliberately missing in *Here Is New York* itself: in an adjoining room, two video monitors played the "voices of 9.11" interviews made during the showing in Soho. They also made available publications pertaining to the events of 9/11 and their aftermath. Arranged on several long tables in a separate study room, these represented a wide range of opinions, some originally written in German, some translated from other languages. These

6.22

additions replaced the still-absent captions, which was important because, according to the organizers of the Berlin show, *Here Is New York* represented a way of getting past the media images to a deeper understanding of the events of 9/11. In the photographs, Germans would find out how everyday life was affected. The pamphlet published by *Here Is New York* in Germany argued that despite the continuous coverage, there was no way to make the event real, because Germans could not get answers to questions like "how do people in New York feel?" *Here Is New York* was imported to fill that gap. Its justification, accordingly, was its claim to authenticity.

6.23

But how does the claim to authenticity made by this exhibition differ from that made by "the media"? "When you have 5,000 prints," said cofounder Michael Shulan, "the question as to the truth of photography is moot. Whether all photography lies, or whether a photo is proof. There's got to be truth there somewhere." His comments, perhaps made only because I pressed him on the topic, suggest a concept of democracy as a kind of consensus.[46] If the photos have an equal vote, however, what are they voting on? Is it the truth? Where, then, are the dissenting votes, the discussion, the quarrels that we see in, for example, the website akaKURDISTAN? Perhaps in the "media"? Do people, then, read these 500 or 5,000 photos to see where the media went wrong? Or do they wrest the photographs of 9/11 out of the hands of the media? These questions arise because many of these "pictures we know" also appeared anonymously in *Here Is New York*: *Time* magazine's cover photograph of the burning towers, for example. Alex Webb's famous picture of a woman feeding her baby on a roof while the twin towers burn in the background appeared in *Here Is New York* next to a photograph by Rod Dubitsky, securities analyst and amateur photographer, and in *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers* alongside photographs by Thomas Hoepker, who also contributed his best-known work to *Here Is New York*. Among the photographs of the sculpture of the businessman shown in *Here Is New York*, one by Susan Meiselas was published in the volume of Magnum photographs, and another by Jeff Mermelstein was published in the *New York Times Magazine* on September 24, 2001. Other photographs from the exhibition simply look like the media photos. The photographer, for example, may be skilled or even an aspiring professional, and/or may have seen a famous published image in time to make one like it. Or the photographer may simply have imitated the canonized genre. *Here Is New York* contained several serially printed images of the towers burning, just as did *Time*, *Life*, and the exhibition and publication by Magnum photographers. It was also possible for students just taking their first classes in photography to realize the established genre well enough to create images that began to proliferate on their own in exhibitions and on the occasional book cover.[47]

Other issues of intertextuality also arise. It is difficult to look at the image of a distraught young woman amid the debris, published in *Time* and in *Here Is New York*, without thinking of the iconic image of a girl running down a road, her clothes burned off by napalm, during the Vietnam War. The image made New Yorkers into victims of war, like the Vietnamese had once been. The famous photograph of the flag-raising at Ground Zero was not part of *Here Is*

6.24

6.25

New York, but another photograph of the same event taken at the same time from another angle was.

Thus, the images of *Here Is New York* were predominantly either media pictures or photographs in genres created by the media. The familiarity of these images made captions unnecessary; they were familiar, not because

6.26

6.27

many of the visitors to the exhibition had seen the event firsthand, but because they had seen published versions of the same images or ones like them.

Why, then, did so many people choose to attend an exhibition to see photographs like those that they could see in the newspapers? What is it that made this showing of photographs that one has already seen so enticing? One

attraction of *Here Is New York* centered on the particular kind of intersubjectivity it offered. To try to address it leads in two directions. The first is to theorizations of tourism, just as at Ground Zero itself.

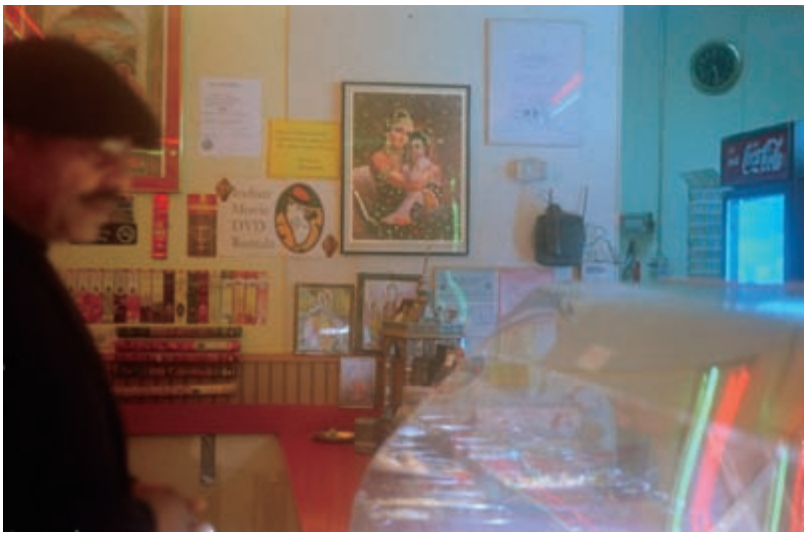
By September 12 it was already too late to take a picture of oneself in front of the burning buildings. For those who missed this opportunity, *Here Is New York* offered a recompense that a trip to Ground Zero did not: a temporal trip to September 11, 2001. The exhibition offered the opportunity to be in the event after the fact, and to bring home images of it. In fact, whether in Berlin, Tokyo, or New York City, the democracy of images, like Ground Zero itself, gradually metamorphosed from a place of deep and urgent mourning into a tourist site. And as it grew to resemble a tourist site, it provided some of the amenities of one. Like the artist stalls and postcard stands around most sightseers' points of interest, for example, *Here Is New York* offered assistance in its website, and in its venues away from Manhattan, in ascertaining the canonical views. For example, below the statement of price and shipping fee for Internet orders were thumbnails of eight photographs with a caption stating, "This is a sample of some of our more frequently requested photographs."[48]

6.28

The introduction of canonical views and tourist conventions possibly narrowed some of the open-ended possibilities of the show. Tourist snapshots of New York City, for example, were offered to visitors of *Here Is New York*'s Berlin venue as a means of making their own connection with the disaster, through a display of photographs of the twin towers taken by Berlin residents during their visits to New York. The connection with the disaster could also have been served, perhaps better even, by drawing attention to the location of the exhibit itself. It was held not in a storefront, as at most of its American locations, but in the Martin Gropius Bau, an important venue for exhibitions. This significant example of nineteenth-century architecture, originally the city's museum of arts and crafts, sustained severe damage in World War II. The building was later restored meticulously, but until 1989, the Berlin Wall ran directly in front of it, and a remnant of that wall is still preserved nearby. An important outdoor photography exhibit, *The Topography of Terror*, which chronicles the activities of the Gestapo, adjoined one wall of the Martin Gropius Bau, in what was left of the no-man's-land by the wall near the newly redeveloped Potsdamer Platz.[49] Insofar as the organizers of *Here Is New York* emphasized personal mourning for a fondly remembered foreign tourist site, rather than relate events in New York City to the catastrophic history of Berlin, they obscured their historical perspective, and allowed the events to take on the global color of international tourism.

6.29

To characterize the gaze of the visitor to *Here Is New York*, I turn for help in an unlikely direction. Christopher Pinney, a Western anthropologist who has written of photographic practices in India, invokes the contrast between two kinds of seeing, which are confused in the case of a particular Indian photographic project. What he calls the "High Victorian concept of moral portraiture" assumes that one can read the virtues of a face from its portrait, the classic Victorian portrait, which aims at showing a unique individual. We are not meant to commune with this model, but to read its virtues close-



6.30

ly. Pinney contrasts this mode of seeing with the Hindu concept of *darshan*: the experience of divine contiguity, of seeing and being seen by a deity, who is in fact a (divine) image.[50] As opposed to the Victorian portrait, *darshan* may be sought only from a generic image; to draw attention to itself by its uniqueness would prevent visual "contact." If certain typological constraints are modified, the modification draws our attention and distracts us from our veneration, which itself should distract us from the details of the image.

It is not necessary to turn to India to find photographs substituting for the object of veneration. The generic form of family photographs that sit on desks in cubicles could be explained in this way. The Chabad movement used photographs of its Rebbe similarly, as Maya Katz has demonstrated, distributing photographs with comments like the following: "To fulfill the desires and requests of our pure and noteworthy friends who live in faraway lands across the seas and who do not have the wherewithal to come and bask in the presence of the holiness (*pnei Kodesh*) of the master (*admor*), we have included a picture for their use."[51] These portraits, interestingly, make use of many of the conventions of the Victorian portrait.

The tourist photograph, too, however educational it might seem, does not, like the moral portrait, aim at being unique, but rather generic—because only a generic, that is, recognizable, photograph can help the tourist feel authentically a part of the event. This Western practice relates to *darshan*, to the family portrait, and to the Rebbe portrait, but it does not seek a blessing from

6.31

a deity, a rabbi, or a family member, and it encompasses images that differ from any of these standard images. The kind of seeing that it entails is best characterized as "basking" in an image. We bask in an image to obtain what we need from it, much as we bask in the sun or under a sunlamp, to obtain the benefits of light. Only a certain kind of image can keep this therapeutic connection open. There has to be less to look at. To paraphrase Sartre, if you see the image, you cannot bask in its gaze.[52]

Did the viewers of *Here Is New York* closely examine images of 9/11, or did they bask in them? The space, with images hung everywhere above and around, some of them flashing and changing, would have suggested basking, or immersion, rather than examination. Captions, if they offered information about the pictures that viewers did not already know, might have deepened the experience, but would have interfered with the ability to bask in it. In fact, *Here Is New York* worked because the photos it displayed are generic. One is blessed by contact with New York City. Western viewers of photographs, I am convinced, often believe themselves to be examining images when they

are actually basking in them, in a slippage between examination (seeing) and basking (touching). Perhaps one notices things in a photograph of an event that one might not notice at the event itself. More likely, however, the image is there to bask in. What matters is contact with it.

Rosalind Krauss writes of something similar in her famous essay, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral." Irving Penn's page spreads for Clinique, she notes, "close the visual space of the magazine against any intrusion from outside."[53] They immerse the viewer in an environment dictated by the cosmetics company. The person in front of the spread is in contact with a luxurious, euphoric world. The same applies, of course, to most spreads in large-format magazines such as *Vogue*.

In his effort to depart from commerce and participate in "art," Penn started to make memento mori photographs: artistic, serious still lives. They echo, however, the form of the ads, which thus make claims within Penn's "art"—"the return of the repressed."[54] Did *Here Is New York*, with its program not of art but of authenticity and populism, find that the repressed returned also? Its pictures worked, not because they are authentic, but because they are generic, and created an environment for basking. Not only tourists need to bask, however; real mourners also need to bask. The tourist needs to have the experience; the mourner, to handle it.

This Western form of *darshan* is tinged with anxiety, as though the viewer is not happy to have his or her aim exposed. This anxiety is reflected in a famous discussion, by Jacques Lacan, of not being seen by a sardine can.[55] As a young man, he wanted to escape from civilization, also known as "Paris," and so he traveled to Brittany, where he spent time on a small boat with a family of fishermen. One of them, "Petite Jean," played a cynical little joke on him. Pointing to a sardine can floating and glinting on the waves, he asked, "Do you see that sardine can? Well, it doesn't see you!" Lacan's feelings were hurt; that is, he did not find the joke funny. It showed that Petite Jean did not think Lacan belonged (although he surely belonged no less than the sardine can, which is not a coastal dweller either).[56] Actually, Lacan was so intent on living the primitive life that he probably saw the sparkling anachronism only when it was pointed out to him, and his own false premises were exposed. Sardine cans had no place in a generic image, such as the picture of young Jacques in front of that quaint boat, perhaps with his arm around the fishermen who thought he was an outsider (so close he could touch them). The image may have adorned the Lacan family album so that Lacan, even though he could not be seen, could be touched by his proximity to real people. Like the "Glanz auf der Nase" (gleam on the nose, or "glance at" the nose, which stands in for the

phallus in Freud's interlinguistic pun), the message that the fisherman wished to give with the gleam on the sardine can could be addressed only indirectly, or in the form of a joke.[57] Although he later told the story as a famous psychoanalyst in a seminar, the young Lacan did not wish to have his merely touristic condition revealed.

Similarly, only a few people really belong to the tragedy in New York City. Thus, we need to photograph ourselves there, to place ourselves in the spot and to have visited *Here Is New York* so that we could see ourselves there even if the sardine can did not. I say "we," because this part of my research certainly includes me, and probably at least some of my readers. Even though I did not ask anyone to take my own picture at Ground Zero, many of the photographs of that site published here are my own—some taken when I was impelled there by forces similar to some of those I am describing. I am aware that others did not take photographs or look at them, and resent having such photographs thrust upon them. These actions, too, involve decisions reflecting attitudes toward photographic practices. All relate to the sense of presence offered by photographs, that one can confront them, avoid them, bask in them.

I have never been impelled to visit Auschwitz, where far more people died than at Ground Zero, but the forces that send people there are perhaps similar to those responsible for tourism at Ground Zero.[58] The visitor to Ground Zero does not go there to seek knowledge about 9/11, but to bask in it; to let it see itself in us. The proximity of that site promotes healing, not by putting it in a context that raises difficult questions, but by just being there to be mastered with others of one's faith, a homeopathic remedy like a visit to Auschwitz. Not information but reassurance awaits us there. That is the kind of totality formed by a visit to the site of a great tragedy. Like a visit to a non-Western culture that one regards as primitive—or a Western one, in Naples with its laundry or Brittany with its sardine boats—a visit to New York integrates into life the primordial, brusque nature of death.

Here Is New York, perhaps consciously, defined itself against another exhibition of primarily journalistic photographs: *The Family of Man*, over five hundred photographs originally mounted by Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This exhibition celebrated humanity, its images organized into themes that appeared to link the world's peoples in their shared concern for family, the life cycle, work, education, and wise thinkers. It also seemed, as a subtext, to celebrate the photographers who were able to capture these shared concerns in images; hence it probably was the first inspiration for many future photographers in the generation that came of age

in the 1950s. Yet *The Family of Man* was attacked as an example of American imperialism by many critics and later theorists, because of its reduction of the diversity of world cultures to uniformity in the image of American culture and its worldwide dissemination by the United States Information Agency during the cold war.[59]

6.32

Here Is New York sought to reverse many of the strategies of *The Family of Man*. While the exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art presented 503 images ranging from 8 by 10 inches to 8 by 10 feet, the more than 6,000 photographs of *Here Is New York* were uniformly printed at 11 by 17 inches. The idea gestated in two weeks rather than three years; the exhibition led the viewer in no complex route; the order was studiously random, not the product of lengthy reflection. *Here Is New York* was presented in a storefront, not at the Museum of Modern Art; and in its travels it sought to procure similar storefront spaces, to avoid intimidating the viewer through associations with high art, and to attract the kind of viewer who never visits museums.

Yet *The Family of Man* began with similar aims to *Here Is New York*. In it, Steichen sought to use a visual text to unify people and to oppose (nuclear) war, just as the *Democracy of Photographs* sought to unify people, starting with the people of New York City.[60] Eventually, by asserting that "after 9/11, New York is Everywhere," *Here Is New York* asserted that the world, if no longer

6.33

connected by the threat of nuclear war, shared the threats of terrorism and war.[61] Even the printing of the photographs in *The Family of Man*, as different as it may seem from *Here Is New York*, was interpreted similarly democratically. It was said of that presentation, "The exhibition's basic theme—that all people are fundamentally the same—required that all photographs seem fundamentally the same."[62] Both exhibitions had the effect of becoming a celebration of photography. Even though the photographs in *The Family of Man* came primarily from the archives of *Life* magazine, and many still think of the exhibition as a celebration of the great photojournalists of past and present, it nevertheless included anonymous photographers. It downplayed the names of the photographers in its labels and captions, and sought to maintain the aura of amateur production.[63] Its opening label introduced its photographers as "amateurs and professionals, famed and unknown," a stance similar to that of *Here Is New York*, many of whose images similarly originated in the popular press. Both exhibitions displayed a boundless faith in photography. Both "envelope[d] the viewer in a world of images."[64] Both seemed to attract viewers who were visiting a museum for the first time.[65] And both sought to claim universality for their own experience. Man is one great family. "New York is Everywhere." As *The Family of Man* showed, everyone has laundry, even in the United States.

In *Here Is New York*, great care and a sophisticated understanding of the forces of commercialism and exploitation could not completely preserve the exhibition from a touristic destiny that outran its intentions. In this respect, *The Family of Man* may turn out to be an analogous example, not a contrasting one. Starting from similar aims, the two exhibitions shared a similar fate. Like the mission of *The Family of Man* to avert the threat of nuclear war, the social aim of *Here Is New York* may also be downplayed in the future. Both shows may ultimately be remembered as celebrations of photography, or worse, *Here Is New York* may, now or in the future, find itself harnessed by forces its organizers might oppose.

The same forces that turned *The Family of Man* into a depiction of American hegemony, and transformed Ground Zero from a place of mourning into a tourist site, may turn *Here Is New York* into *The Family of Man*.

TAPE

The earliest exhibitions on the topic of 9/11 were site specific. Flyers of the "missing" were mounted on the walls of buildings near Ground Zero or placed at bus stop shelters, hospitals, and other public places, beginning on the day of the attack. They contained a photograph of the "missing" person and a

6.34

6.35

description. At first, such images might have seemed analogous to those of runaway or abducted children, but not for long. As people began to realize that the "missing" would not be found, makeshift memorials formed beneath and around these photocopied photographs. Scraps of paper were added, containing messages. Flowers were taped to them or placed on the sidewalks below them. Piles of spent candles sat in scrap heaps nearby. Sometimes wrinkled, lumpy plastic covered the entire ensemble, the attempt to preserve the fading words and images only making it all the harder to distinguish them from the garbage that lines the streets in the best of times.

6.36

Displays of photographs of the "missing" have been common sights elsewhere. Walls of neatly arranged pictures of the *desaparacidos* have appeared in South America, where agents of the state "disappeared" people regularly, especially in the 1970s during Argentina's "dirty war." The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and other groups have used such displays in their efforts to find or memorialize the victims and protest the actions of the perpetrators.[66] In the United States, The AIDS Memorial Quilt serves a similar purpose of public mourning, but walls of pictures of people lost to the disease have been rare. When the photographic displays spontaneously appeared after 9/11, the customs that grew up around them differed from those that surrounded the pictures of those who were "disappeared" through state terrorism. Only in their longevity did they resemble some of those displays. Many of the Missing exhibits remained fixed at the sites where they had been first posted for several months. A folding screen of Missing poster that became a fixture in Grand Central Station, for example, stayed up for a year.

6.37

The flyers, with their smiling faces, are touching, and talk began almost immediately about incorporating them into a permanent memorial.[67] Ordinarily, flyers on walls are usually considered fair game, if anyone wants them. If nobody does, most are eventually defaced. But nobody defaced these flyers. Graffiti was extensive, but it asked for God's blessing, offered love and support, or decorated the background with flags or hearts. Tourists and journalists photographed the Missing photo exhibits freely. Some of the families of the lost had their pictures taken in front of their flyers; but, unlike the perimeter of St. Paul's Chapel at Ground Zero, tourists refrained from taking pictures of themselves there. Did these photographs retain their connection to the dead? Did tourists who flocked to Ground Zero to seek contact with it understand that they are not in that company, and wish to keep a respectful distance? Were these photographs alone among all the others in retaining their connection to the dead?

Or were the photographs, after all, integrated into a community of the living? I don't know who placed the candles at the bus stops, who added handwritten blessings on the flyers, and, least of all, what the relatives who posted the flyers were feeling. But Missing displays did gather and represent a community of photographs, or rather of people as photographs. As if to prove this, posters eventually went up for victims who could not be counted among the missing, simply because their bodies had been found. Unlike the posters surrounding it, whose captions say "missing," "help us find," or "Any Information," a flyer of a man in a yellow tie, David Rice, was explicitly a memorial: it contained his dates of birth and death, and the caption "Missed By All." Missed, not missing. Mr. Rice's two siblings had posted it on the wall of flyers at St. Vincent Hospital after his funeral, because, as one of them wrote for *September 11 Photo Project*, "I felt like he should be a part of the memorial."[68]

Although I know little about the people who posted the flyers, I know something of the curators of the exhibits. Because, for all their undeniable spontaneity, these displays, no less than *Here Is New York* or *New York, September 11th by Magnum Photographers*, resulted from decisions, albeit made under pressure; and entailed conferences, many of them hastily convened; and needed curators. The first decision was whether to have the Missing exhibit, that is, to allow such flyers to be posted. Within eight hours after the terrorist attacks, a few flyers were attached to the bronze doors of the largest municipal hospital near ground zero. Bellevue Hospital Center was near the medical information office temporarily established by the City of New York in the Armory in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, where thousands of people had gone to inquire after their relatives, coworkers, and friends. The associate director of

6.38

6.39

security, Sam Carrigy, consulted with officials. Should he remove the flyers? People had asked permission to post the flyers where the hospital staff would be able to see them as they entered the building. Rather than dispose of the flyers, Carrigy suggested that officials allow people to use the eight-foot-high, blue plywood construction fence, which ran along a covered alley leading to the archway entrance of the hospital.[69] The suggestion was accepted, and soon the wall was filled with nearly two hundred feet of posters. Early in the pro-

cess, one staff member, Evelyn Borges, requested permission to make a banner naming the display the "Wall of Prayers." Not all agreed on the suitability of the word *prayers*, but permission was granted, and the Wall of Prayers took on a life of its own. In the weeks that followed, as families from out of town were finally able to reach Manhattan to seek their lost members, the wall grew.

Once made, the decision to post Missing flyers necessitated other decisions. Some Bellevue staff members covered the wall with plastic to protect it from the weather. A close look at the wall also shows that someone also must have provided the tape. At bus stop shelters, Scotch tape shared space with masking tape and duct tape. This happened at Bellevue as well. But as the Scotch tape, masking tape, and duct tape let go, and the flyers began to fall off, construction workers and the hospital staff replaced them. The construction workers used duct tape and their staple guns. But many of the posters were attached uniformly, with pieces of tape placed diagonally at the corners. The office staff used blank white address labels. As anyone who has had to tangle with these knows, they almost never come off. There was also another white tape on the wall, more translucent, like the kind that sometimes secures the bit of cotton or gauze marking the place where the injection went in: water-

6.40

proof, hypoallergenic paper tape that adheres well. Rain does not wash such tape away. Some of the hospital staff must have grasped at the healing power of surgical tape.[70]

If the operative fastener for the photo installations was the binder clip, the operative fastener for the Missing installations was tape. Tape is a surrogate for the hand. Surgical tape stood in for the physical healing power that the hospital could not provide. On the morning of September 11, New York City hospitals had put their disaster plans into effect, canceling elective surgeries and calling in the night shift early. Emergency personnel either rushed to the site or waited at their respective hospitals for victims to arrive. In vain. Hospital staff found themselves ministering to the emotional, rather than physical, wounds of survivors and the families of victims, who came to the hospitals where they hoped their loved one was undergoing treatment. The walls of flyers became important, not only to the friends and relatives of victims, or to the "public," but to hospital employees, who had to confront their own feelings of helplessness in the face of a disaster that left many dead, but few seriously injured.[71] For several weeks, Bellevue staffed the Wall of Prayers with psychological counselors twenty-four hours a day. Staffers learned by heart the names of the people in the flyers. Nearly two years later, they still referred to many of them, respectfully, by their surnames. The Wall of Prayers made some of them uncomfortable, though. It symbolized their inability to help. The situation is dire when an enormous city hospital, full of resources, resorts to tape, like a child with a broken toy.

The flyers, those perishable pieces of paper, many of them, like at Bellevue, tacked onto temporary surfaces, could not stay up forever. Yet, having been left where they had been posted and having been protected for a long time, they could no longer just be pulled down without consequences. When the walls were to come down, they left the people who made them (possible) bewildered about how to lay them to rest. The rains had severely damaged the wall of posters outside the temporary office of information. But the day after officials removed it, some people cried upon finding it gone. One such person, an administrator at Bellevue, said that it was as though the people had been washed away. At Bellevue, the people would not be washed away.

A funeral was conducted at the demise of the Bellevue Wall of Prayers. After several postponements and a great deal of hesitation, the wall was about to be donated to the Museum of the City of New York. The museum was collecting mementos of 9/11, and had promised to preserve it as a whole.[72] The funeral was private, a ceremony for the staff of the hospital on November 8, 2001, that marked the wall's removal. It incorporated an honor guard,

6.41

6.42

Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant religious leaders, and representatives from the museum and the mayor's office. Soon afterward, Bellevue memorialized the wall with a video and a poster. The memorial activities, like the life of the wall, were brief, but these photographs had to be given a proper burial.

Not all missing walls, however, were buried. They have their own stories, some of which may be read on the walls themselves: Pabon, Pepe, Perez, Prior, Pruim. Why do so many of these people's names begin with *P*? The closest hospital to Ground Zero was St. Vincent Hospital and Medical Center.

Like Bellevue, it made its staff available for counseling in the aftermath of the attacks, but at St. Vincent the job of dealing with the flyers landed in the perhaps self-appointed lap (somebody had to take responsibility) of a small, middle-aged lady named Rosemarie Gambale Greene. Ms. Greene was a part-time staff member responsible for the Family Caregiver Center at St. Vincent, her position funded by a grant from an organization that encourages patient advocacy. As the flyers started to proliferate, many of the staff members grew concerned.[73] The papers looked messy. They were becoming a nuisance. Ms. Greene was the one who decided to take them down. She and some of the hospital administrators took the flyers to her office, and all of them tried to think of some other way to exhibit them besides letting them cover the hospital walls, inside and out, and paper the ambulances. Ms. Greene's solution was inspired by English churches, where she had seen memorial books that commemorate those fallen in the two world wars. It involved placing one copy of each flyer carefully in a clear, three-holed page protector in a notebook from

6.43

6.44

Office Depot, and making the notebook available in the hospital chapel. In preparation, she began to alphabetize her growing archive. The proposal, however, was rejected as too sectarian for a multireligious community, or because of the logistical problems posed by the admission of the public to the chapel, or the security hazard it might pose. In any case, it was not done.

Instead, a brick exterior wall under a portico by the emergency room was chosen as an exhibition space. Whereas the city hospital evoked religion in its Wall of Prayers, the Catholic hospital was carefully ecumenical in its title, the Wall of Hope and Remembrance, as printed on a banner donated by a sign company. Some officials wanted to post the flyers up to a height of eight feet, but the five-foot, two-inch Ms. Greene would not hear of it. She continued to keep her notebook up to date, but, having extra copies of all the flyers, she began posting them on the wall, four feet high, in alphabetical order. She used magnets and metal rods or panels at first, so she could move them easily to add new ones in the right places. But the flyers blew away. So, like Bellevue, she became reconciled to tape. Day after day, she stood on a ladder at the wall, a small woman with armloads of tape, patiently posting and reposting the alphabetized flyers directly to the wall. It was heavy tape, the kind that comes on huge rolls and has little lines of fiberglass reinforcement running through it. Ms. Greene unrolled this tape over and over the smiling faces, from one end of the *M*s to the other. People stopped to help. In the ratio of tape to flyer, this

6.45


MISSING - WTC #2
FDNY
NYPD
NYPD...MIA
JOHNNY, WE HARDLY KNEW YOU
1-718-823-5585
1-201-963-1412
LOVED AND MISSED BY ALL
Mary Lou Hague
WTC2, 39th Floor

6.46

one woman and her volunteer helpers far outdid the staff at the Bellevue Wall of Prayers.

As curator of St. Vincent's wall, Ms. Greene and her helpers tended it as though it were already a gravesite, regularly gathering the offerings left there by the public. At first these offerings surprised her. Only gradually did she become accustomed to seeing people add to the flyers arbitrarily on their own. Did it seem strange to see David Rice's bereaved brother and sister carelessly post his memorial flyer among the *G*s and the *H*s instead of with the other *R*s? Presumably, they did not know about Ms. Greene's alphabetical order. But her attempt to cope alphabetically with 9/11 intersected with their attempt to cope with their loss; otherwise they would have had nowhere to post their picture of their unmissing brother. Surely an unspoken etiquette would have prevented them from merely posting his photograph at a bus stop.

For her part, the curator of the Wall of Hope and Remembrance made decisions about which flowers and notes were to be left, and which were to be removed. She swept away the teddy bears but left the new flyers, and the flowers until they wilted, and she left the Christmas tree standing. But by the time Christmas came, it was the moment to think about the future of the wall.

6.47

The hospital's archivist was called in. He took one look at the tape and shook his head. The cost of archiving the wall would be prohibitive. As he explained it, the adhesive used in St. Vincent's tape is comparable to duct tape. The problems are particularly bad if it is exposed to extremes of weather. In cold weather, the adhesive crystallizes, lets go of its plastic binder, migrates elsewhere on the paper, and spreads out, coating the paper. Then, when it gets warm again, the adhesive liquefies and acts as a magnet for dust and dirt. The fiberglass in the tape is difficult to remove, too. It might cause abrasions on

6.48


AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER
FIRE DEPARTMENT
CONNECTION SUPPLIES
LINK BUILDING
THIS SIAMESE CONNECTION
MISSING

6.49

6.50

the paper, and when heat is used to remove the adhesive, the fiberglass, which conducts heat, might scorch the paper. If a giant refrigerator were obtainable, the cold might help to remove the adhesive; but a refrigerator large enough to treat a seven-foot wall would cost a fortune, and it would be almost impossible to work inside it.[74]

Instead, a construction company that worked for St. Vincent donated a Plexiglas covering. Now all the offerings were cleared away.[75] No more messages could be written on the posters, no flags taped to them.

New poster continued to be produced until at least June 2002, but they could not be placed on St. Vincent's wall.[76] The wall became untouchable, the Magnum of Missing installations, a venue for institutional forms of homage, like the hospital's ceremony on the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks. After nearly two years, the wall at St. Vincent remained untouched, but the flyers began to fade under the Plexiglas, until, in places, little remained to be seen but tape.

Few people came to visit. The administrators of St. Vincent still faced the wrenching decision of what to do with the wall, or the flyers, when the hospital would begin construction on the Rudolph W. Giuliani Trauma Center, then destined to replace the narrow plaza on which the wall stood. They spoke of dismantling it and setting it up somewhere else, perhaps indoors, of making it a permanent part of some wall, somewhere. They were not prepared to let the go of the Wall of Hope and Remembrance. They did not know how.

They should have buried it, like Bellevue did, and put an end to the story. But perhaps not. The story of Bellevue's wall did not end as finally as it might have seemed in November 2001. The promise that the Museum of the City of New York had made to the hospital turned out to be difficult to keep. The Wall of Prayers, after all, had tape, too. The Smithsonian Institution, whose conservation department promised to help with its preservation, found the task daunting, and too expensive. "This is a huge tape-removal project, one of the largest I have ever seen," said Lynne Gilliland, senior paper conservator at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.[77] Some expected the hospital to try to raise funds for it. The public relations officer found himself frequently revisiting the events of September 11 through such requests, along with periodic interviews by visiting academics.

Then the exhibitions, which had been site specific, began to travel. Indeed, they began to travel only a few months after the attack, when a set of five hundred framed missing-person poster traveled to several US cities in an exhibition entitled *Missing—Last Seen at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.*[78]

6.51

6.52

Bellevue's Wall of Prayers traveled, too. One of its panels was on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History from September 11, 2002, to July 6, 2003, where the Smithsonian website listed it as a highlight of the exhibition *September 11: Bearing Witness to History*. There it sat for nearly a year, from the fall of 2002 to the summer of 2003, next to the megaphone used by George Bush at Ground Zero, the cell phone used by Mayor Giuliani throughout the day on September 11, and the flag unfurled at Ground Zero.[79]

6.53

6.54

Regarding that phone, one of the administrators I interviewed at Bellevue Hospital that year commented in exasperation, "I'm still using mine," ruefully pulling it out of his pocket. Should St. Vincent relinquish its wall, I wondered, so that its employees' cell phones can stay in use?

The question is now rhetorical. In early 2005, the wall's Plexiglas cover blew off in a storm, and the soggy flyers disintegrated. St. Vincent's administrators fielded requests from tour guides to reinstate it somehow, and a Mylar memorial to the memorial briefly stood in the square across the street. It was quickly dismantled, because the hospital had neglected to procure the requisite permit for it. Leaves from the books that Ms. Greene had assembled (she had left the hospital the previous year) were lent to the Tribute Center at Ground Zero, and during the memorial on the fifth anniversary of the attack, the books were finally displayed in the chapel as she had originally wanted.

At the same time, parts of Bellevue's wall were displayed at its new home, the Museum of the City of New York. They had just gone through a grueling restoration lasting over a year. Expert conservators painstakingly removed each piece of tape and cleaned off the adhesives. They then returned each piece to its original place using an archival-quality adhesive, and inserted a piece of Melinex, a film similar to Mylar and cut to the exact shape of the tape segment, between tape and flyer. They cleaned the flyers, repaired those they thought needed repairing, and duplicated each one to make a permanent record of images that despite all efforts may eventually fade, leaving the ephemeral nature of the original exhibition to have the final word.[80]

The stories of 9/11 continued well after September 11, 2001. New photographic practices arose from old ones as events necessitated ever-new ways of coping with life and with photographs, the equating of photographs with lives giving rise to efforts at conservation that overwhelmed the power of institutions to cope. The stories of 9/11 are not only about the attacks in lower Manhattan, however, and no story should end with the dilemma of what to do with the photographs. The new exhibitions and displays forged new practices, even before the exhibitions themselves were removed. A number of "binder clip" displays were mounted in storefronts, sometimes merely tame displays of theater posters. New exhibitions based on tape also sprang up. As the attacks in Manhattan led to other attacks, a "snapshot action" sent a group of young artists to Baghdad in late 2002 to photograph mostly middle-class people there while war loomed. In January and February 2003, the group posted flyers using the pictures on the Internet in downloadable PDF format, with only *Baghdad* and the date on which the photograph was taken printed on them. In stealth actions, the Baghdad flyers were posted around Manhattan. The action

6.55

6.56

6.57

was meant to impress on the public and politicians the humanity of the people who would soon be bombed in retaliation for the humanity destroyed in the World Trade Center.

After the war with Iraq began, an artist in Chicago constructed the *Façade Project: A Commemorative Work in Progress*, which displayed in windows pictures of American soldiers killed in Iraq. The installation played on both the Missing displays and the "Portraits of Grief" series in the *New York Times*. By 2003, these and many other installations, performances, and projects showed that the posters of the "missing" had become a genre that activists could use and refer to in actions intended to end the war.

At this writing, such actions continue. So do the stories. And the war.

PHOTO CREDITS

6.1, 6.4–10, 6.18–19, 6.26–28, 6.30, 6.33–37, 6.39, 6.41–50, 6.53–57: Margaret Olin.
6.2: Photo: Steve McCurry / Magnum Photos.
6.3: United States Postal Service; Photo: Thomas E. Franklin.
6.11: Photo: Tim Soter.
6.12: Photo: Alex Marx.
6.13: Photo: Copyright Joel Meyerowitz, courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.
6.14: Installation photo courtesy Chicago History Museum. Photos, *left*: Thomas Hoepker / Magnum Photos; *center and right*: Alex Webb / Magnum Photos.
6.15: Photo: © Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos.
6.16: Photo: © michele b.f. campo; installation photo: James Salzano.
6.17: Photo: Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett.
6.20: Photo: Chris Callis.
6.21: Photo: © by Holger Keifel.
6.22: Photo Margaret Olin. Photos in rear, *left*: Rod Dubitsky; *right*: Alex Webb / Magnum Photos.
6.23: Photo: © Mickey Kerr.
6.24: Photo: AP / Wide World Photos / Nick Ut.
6.25: Photo © Robert Stolarik / Polaris.
6.29: Image copyright © Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.
6.31: Photo: Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett.
6.32: Photo: Elliott Erwitt / Magnum Photos.
6.38, 6.54: Used with permission of the Museum of the City of New York and the North East Document Conservation Center. Photo: Margaret Olin.
6.40: Used with permission of Bellevue Hospital, New York.
6.51: Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*.
6.52: Division of Work and Industry, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

EPILOGUE

Bad Pictures

This is a good picture. We get a good sense of how these people live. And though there is a sadness in it, and though it's hard to face, we must look at it because it is truth.

AVIJIT, in *Born into Brothels*

We have been looking at "good pictures" throughout this book, pictures used to ameliorate poverty, mourn the loss of relatives, and cope with the effects of disaster and war. But what if it's a bad picture? In this epilogue, I wish to challenge my view of photography's relational function by exposing it to photographs that offer no solace or empathy, with which it is difficult to commune, and that may have been intended for no "good" purpose. My vehicles will be photographs made in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003, and a theorist of photography who has haunted these pages from their beginning. While few find the Abu Ghraib photographs pleasing and comforting, a discourse of communing insinuates itself in them, as it does in the more-touching photographic discourses that have been our main subject.

"Photographers of conscience," as the writer Susan Sontag called them, risk their lives to bring the suffering caused by war, famine, and tyranny before the eyes of distant people.[1] The work of photojournalists like James Nachtwey rests on almost unlimited faith in the power of photography and in their own power as ethical witnesses. Most would agree that neither these photographers, nor the installations, photo "actions," and projects like the ones discussed in the last few chapters and "stories," have succeeded in ending injustice and war. Yet most would also agree that if photography were so powerful as to move mankind to put an end to injustice and war, no personal risk would be deemed too great to make it worth practicing.

Some writers criticize war photographers because their photographs lend themselves to co-optation, exploitation for unintended purposes, and commercialization. Worse, a war photograph can incite revenge and provoke a battle as senseless and violent as the one in the photograph. If it does, is it fair to blame the photographer? Is the making of a photograph always responsible for whatever happens in its wake? Sontag recognized the power of a photograph, seeking to understand how it functioned in capitalism, and how it could be subverted. With the contexts of photographs steadily in her gaze, she tried consistently to keep photographs from supplanting the reality they depicted and distinguished them repeatedly from that reality.

Her investment in photographs began and ended with atrocity. By Sontag's own testimony, she first encountered photographs of Nazi concentration camps at the age of twelve, when browsing in a bookstore in Santa Monica, California. "Nothing I have seen—in photographs or in real life—ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously."[2] She found herself confronted with an atrocity that she could do nothing about, an archetypal photographic situation. The last atrocity photographs that arrested her attention were taken in 2003 in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, by American servicemen and women who were torturing detainees there. This time, she sought to do something about them, by writing.

Influenced by Roland Barthes's reflections on photography (which she influenced in turn), Sontag's first essays about photographs reflected on their function within sign systems, their meaning changing as they move from newspaper to magazine to the white walls of galleries. In essays collected in her 1977 book *On Photography*, she scrutinized the dialogue between photography and art and meditated on the saturation of contemporary life with photographs. For her, photographs not only were touching, but were intended to be touched. When photographs literally could be touched, in newspapers, for example, they had more power to move people to action than photographs in museums. Photographs were "material realities in their own right, richly informative deposits left in the wake of whatever emitted them, potent means for turning the tables on reality."[3]

Photographs of concentration camps and other horrors were only one theme of *On Photography*. But the potential of photographs disturbed Sontag: she was concerned that the pervasiveness of photographs in contemporary life could make the viewer insensitive to them or even to reality. She worried that photographs could serve capitalists as spectacles for the masses, and the government as a means of surveillance. She feared that an excess of photographs could lead people to lose faith in unphotographed experience, whether their

own or that of others, and result in a proliferation of pointless event-confirming snapshots. In her book, she called for an "ecology of the image."[4]

Sontag had already begun to modify these views when, almost twenty-five years after the publication of *On Photography*, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, seemed to introduce a new era in the photography of disaster, inspiring new masses of photographs by professionals and amateurs and producing new viewing contexts. Soon after, her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* rescinded her earlier call for an "ecology of the image," perhaps because she recognized that it amounted to a form of censorship.[5] In any case, she was now convinced that the power of the photograph could not be controlled but only analyzed critically, its context scrupulously examined.

The photograph never creates its own context. Sontag must have realized this, because implicit in *Regarding the Pain of Others* is the notion that a photograph is always ripped out of its place in the world (the scene of picture taking) and established in other contexts. The relation between a photograph and its subject came to matter less to her than what happened to a photograph after it has been taken, developed, printed, and, perhaps, published: the moment that it is set in a context. The photographer may place it in its context, but so may anyone else who comes in contact with it, adding a caption or a frame, creating an installation, real or virtual.

Sontag's call for an "ecology of the image" and her later rejection of it both came from the notion that "photographs . . . alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe. They are . . . an ethics of seeing."[6] She did not hold the photographer responsible for everything that happens to a photograph and also absolved the photograph itself of responsibility. The people who use photographs are responsible: "As Wittgenstein argued for words, that the meaning *is* the use—so for each photograph."[7] A photographic ethic is perhaps most urgent during a disaster. Here, historical context is everything. Who caused the suffering, or failed to help its victims? A photograph cannot tell us. "Neither is the photo supposed to repair our ignorance about the history and causes of the suffering it picks out and frames."[8] To the complaint that a photograph allows us to see suffering only from a distance, she answered, "as if there were some other way of watching."[9] "Compassion fatigue," whereby photographs and stories of pain lose their power, is caused not by an excess of photographs, she argued, but by powerlessness itself: the inability to do anything to ameliorate the suffering that photographs represent.[10]

Neutrality about photographs and photographers is hard to maintain when photographers take charge of their own exhibitions and publicity.

When people fail to take action, it is tempting to blame the photographs. Sontag objected to Sabastiao Salgado's photographs of a wide world of impoverishment, but not because Salgado published them in beautiful coffee table books and hung them in elegant exhibitions. "The problem is in the pictures themselves, not how and where they are exhibited." The photographs were based on the premise of powerlessness itself. "It is significant that the powerless were not named in the captions." Presumably Sontag meant to blame not the photographs for their subjects' anonymity but rather Salgado, who failed to provide names for the people he photographed. Even this complaint, however, is not really about photographs, which are always anonymous, but rather about context. His grouping of "migration pictures . . . taken in thirty-nine countries . . . under this single heading" is the context that is to blame for the subjects' anonymity, and for that anonymity's consequence: making poverty and war seem so universal that they cannot be helped.[11] Salgado's exhibitions are just one possible context for photographs that, reorganized, might send a different message.

Sontag fought generalizations, assumptions, and stereotypes. She also made mistakes, through carelessness or superficiality, or by slipping from one idea to another in a manner that furthered stereotypes and generalizations. But, like the other mistakes we have witnessed in this book, her mistakes were not trivial, and they lead to insight—particularly her reflections on photography after September 11, 2001.

Sontag mentioned the photographic exhibition *Here Is New York* in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, but her major intervention in photographs about 9/11 came in the context of the consequent war in Iraq. Her essay "Regarding the Torture of Others," devoted to the photographs taken by American torturers of their work in the prison at Abu Ghraib, appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* less than a year after the publication of *Regarding the Pain of Others*. She complained that the US government seemed more disturbed by the publication of the pictures than by the events they depicted; but she did not stop with this often-repeated observation. Not only did the photographs shock her, but also the fact that the torturers photographed themselves with their victims. She explained these actions with reference to her long-held conviction that people need photographs to verify their experiences, that they need photographs to live, or, as she had written in *On Photography*, to believe their own experience. The "sexual theme," in addition to the physically painful situations depicted in the photographs, seemed to Sontag evidence of the need to experience through photography: "An erotic life is, for more and more people, that which can be captured in digital photographs and on video."[12]

Remarkably, she seized immediately on an exception. "One exception, already canonical," she wrote, "is the photograph of the man made to stand on a box, hooded and sprouting wires, reportedly told he would be electrocuted if he fell off." Wishing to underline the fact that this treatment also counted as torture, she added, "Yet pictures of prisoners bound in painful positions, or made to stand with outstretched arms, are infrequent. That they count as torture cannot be doubted. You have only to look at the terror on the victim's face."[13]

7.1 Sabrina Harman, photograph of an inmate in the Abu Ghraib prison, another photograph of whom became known as the "hooded man." Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, November 4, 2003.

I like to think that Sontag's premise about the erotic life is wrong. Surely, although the use of visual perception and images in erotic life is undeniable, as demonstrated by studies of the erotics of vision and of the pornography industry, the belief that photographs are necessary to enjoy an experience fully, especially an erotic one, could be included among the romantic ideas of photography studied in this book.[14] But this subject pertains less to our purposes in introducing Sontag's criticism here than does her subtle movement away from the erotic: from topic to topic, from the erotic to the one exception, to the exhortation to the reader to look at the "terror on the victim's face." Her "one exception" is a mysterious pivotal moment in the transition between eroticism and a more painfully physical form of torture. For while the photograph of the man on the box is certainly not erotic, and surely represents torture, it is impossible to follow her command to look at the terror on the victim's face: his (hooded) face is hidden, like that of every victim in the photographs published in the article.

Perhaps unintentionally (she meant, presumably, to direct the reader to other unillustrated pictures where the bound prisoners' faces are visible), Sontag's observation of her "exception" has hit on something that helps illuminate the effect of the photographs. At the moment that she wrote, the "canonical" photograph of the hooded man was the most frequently reproduced of all the photographs. Opponents of the Iraq war exhibited it, painted it on walls, or drew it in graphic abstractions. They acted it out in protest marches and used it as an emblem against the war. Many have suggested reasons for the canonicity of this particular image. Piles of bodies have a greater power to shock, but, as many have suggested in the case of Holocaust images, their power may be their weakness: such obscene images do not work as standard bearers; the viewer may turn away from them and block them out instead of lining up behind them.[15] The hooded man, however, has no visible wounds; and many other reasons, such as the power and simplicity of the figure's outline, explain why the photograph lends itself to reproduction and dissemination as an iconic figure. Here, however, I would like to stress that the very fact that no gaze meets the viewer's eye, holds it, and implores, contributes to its power. Not because we do not read his terror, however. The repeated use of the image of the hooded man is only possible because his terror is in fact very readable, even though the man's face cannot be seen. We are aware of his face because he faces us, and blindly looks into our faces. His terror is as visible behind the hood as it would have been were the hood transparent. We do see his terror, though we do not see his look. It is as though without eyes he entreats us like Annie Mae Gudger, the tenant farmer's wife.

The hooded man's gesture of complete submission, with his arms outstretched, his hands open, palms out toward the viewer, seems to ask us to take responsibility. In an appeal, he addresses to us an ethical demand. Certainly this appeal to a Western audience is analogous to the type of a Christ image; it has been suggested that in the openness of his hands he resembles the Man of Sorrows.[16] But is it the association with Christ that is the source of the power, or does the openness of the Man of Sorrows image itself contribute to making Christ, the Christ story, and perhaps Christianity itself, for that matter, so compelling? Babies raise their arms when they wish to be picked up. The boy in the famous picture of the Warsaw Ghetto also raises his hands. Presumably he does so in response to a German soldier's "hands-up," yet in the photograph the gesture operates as the boy's command to the viewer, to participate in his fear. His direct gaze is created less by his eyes than by his arms.

7.2 Jews arrested during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 1943. From Jürgen Stroop, "Es gibt keinen jüdischen Wohnbezirk in Warschau mehr" ("The Stroop Report"), 1943.

The child of the Warsaw Ghetto can stand for all children, for children are generic, like an image from which one seeks *darshan*.[17] Adults are rarely generic, but the hooded man's hood makes him so. It is said that terrorists cover the faces of their victims to dehumanize them and make them easier to kill. Photographs are different, however, from the people for whom they stand. The covered face of a person in a photograph need not be dehumanizing. The cover provides a depicted face with the element that enables a viewer to commune. The photograph is looking *because* the eye is not seen.

One need not be American to feel addressed by the hooded man's outstretched arms. The picture is as canonical in Muslim as in Christian lands. The hidden face allows everyone who sees it to use his memory or imagination to supply the face of a son, a friend or colleague, or a distinguished stranger. No one face became the symbol for all the missing people of 9/11, although individual reporters had their favorites.[18] The hooded man, lacking a face, could become a symbol for all tortured prisoners.

Efforts were made to give the faceless man a face and, just as important, a name. One candidate, Ali Shalal Qaissi, who put the image on his business card and embarked on a speaking tour, fooled the *New York Times*, eliciting a series of commentaries, including one by the filmmaker Errol Morris.[19] A replacement name is now generally accepted, Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh, nicknamed Gilligan by his American guards, but the man still lacks a face. The boy pictured in the famous photograph of the Warsaw Ghetto has also been identified more than once, and many possible identities have similarly been disputed.[20] Descriptions often embellish the photograph of the boy, adorning his bare coat with a Star of David, surrounding him with "laughing German soldiers," and training "many" Nazi machine guns on him, when the one visibly pointing at him in the picture was surely enough.[21] Mistakes abound when photographs are powerful.

The hooded man is not the only one to look at the viewer from the photographs of Abu Ghraib. As Sontag and others have pointed out, other gazes do beckon the viewer. But these gazes come from torturers. The photographs that show the perpetrators of the torture at Abu Ghraib assume photography's participatory nature. They urge participation in the perpetrator's activity, and we have to be willing to comply in order to bear looking at the photograph. But no one willingly accepts an invitation to form a relationship with a torturer. Coming from a person engaged in such acts, what does that form of address, with its implicit trust and its exhortation to responsibility, even mean? As we have seen, photographs, like a person, can offer not only a relationship but also a responsibility. A photograph is not only the "certificate

7.3 US soldier Lynndie England with Iraqi prisoner, Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, November 7, 2003.

of presence" that Roland Barthes saw in it: it shows not only that someone existed, but also that someone else was looking at her. Further, it is a permit: one may still look. The pictured "hooded man" seems still to entreat his viewers, willingly to give himself over to the gaze if not to his punishment, and, like the tenant farmer's wife, even—as French philosopher Emanuel Levinas would have put it, had he regarded photographs as "faces"—to command the viewer not to kill him.[22]

But how are we to react when the person who engages us with what appears to be a proud, direct gaze is engaged in torture? The photograph represents the insupportable dissonance created by the request to take responsibility for a torturer. Is the promise of the tenant farmer's wife's gaze in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* cruelly withdrawn in the photographs of Abu Ghraib, the trust of the gaze violated? The viewers, not the photographs, are responsible for their own reaction. If they refuse to take responsibility and instead turn

away because the presence of the immediate perpetrators in the picture repels them, they may miss the opportunity to question whether what appears to be a proud, direct gaze actually is one; whether the perpetrator has run amok, engages happily; or whether her participation is enforced by a combination of sexual harassment and the order of a high command.[23] The viewer's failure to take responsibility may facilitate the creation of scapegoats.

If we shrink from the gaze of the torturers, it does not mean that we are always innocent of torture, but merely that we are not happy to look into its face. We may occasionally view willingly the bodies of those who are tortured or killed. In fact, reproduction in newspapers and on the Internet of dead bodies for which one's own soldiers are responsible is often acceptable. The heads of Saddam Hussein's two sons were widely reproduced in American newspapers after their capture and killing signaled US "victory" and made them "news." What if these two heads had been photographed with leering men—or women—in US military uniforms holding them up for the world to see? Would that have been acceptable? Would our bluff have been called?

"Our" bluff is that we must look at a photograph "because it is truth," because it can motivate us to act, whether or not we look carefully at it, whether or not it is painful to see, whether or not it contains text that makes the viewer's task easier. It is appropriate to end this book with a reference to Sontag, a public intellectual who sought to use the world of words and pictures to impact the world outside words and pictures. Yet as Susan Sontag knew, people act when they are not being "viewers" or, for that matter, readers. Touching really begins when the photograph has been put away, the newspaper recycled, and the book closed. Now it is time to close the book.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Among many sources of information on Talbot, see Larry J. Schaaf, *Out of the Shadows: Herschel, Talbot, and the Invention of Photography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Gail Buckland, *Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography* (Boston: David Godine, 1980); and Vered Maimon, "Talbot and Herschel: Photography as a Site of Knowledge in Early Nineteenth-Century England" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2006). For a penetrating reading of his *The Pencil of Nature*, see also Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843–1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 107–78.

2. See the discussion of stereo photographs in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 116–36.

3. The expression "metaphors we photograph by" paraphrases the title of the book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; 2nd ed., 2003). Lakoff and Johnson show how metaphors inform our concepts actively, rather than mirroring them passively, and also clarify metaphor's entailment with social values.

4. Jane Gallop, *Living with His Camera* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 166–76; Pierre Bourdieu with Luc Boltansky, *Photography: A Middlebrow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 22–23. Marianne Hirsch discusses the complex permutations of gender relations in photography in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

5. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1974, 1992), 16–17.

6. Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 12n; Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 48; Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Leet's Island Books, 1980), 202; Alfred

Döblin, "Von Gesichtern, Bildern und ihrer Wahrheit," introduction to August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit: 60 Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1929; Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1990), 7–15; and chapters 2 and 4 of the present text.

7. See, for example, Daniel Okrent, "The Public Editor: No Picture Tells the Truth. The Best Do Better Than That," *New York Times*, January 9, 2005.

8. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), 196.

9. Although journalists have long traveled with the people and events that they cover, the term *embedded journalism* has been used since 2003 to describe the practice of assigning journalists to military units beginning in the war with Iraq.

10. Michael Ann Holly, "Mourning and Method," *Art Bulletin* 84 (December 2002): 660.

11. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 240. For historical treatments of Benjamin's concept, see Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 37–101; and Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 81–98. The word Benjamin used, *Zerstreuung*, is etymologically unrelated to touch. The English *distraction* is perhaps related to the Latin *tractare*, "to handle."

12. This is a paraphrase of Sartre, who actually expressed the reverse: "If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 258.

13. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 85–90.

14. Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 46.

15. "Riddick Bowe Has Family in Scarsdale," *New York Times*, February 3, 1993, quoted in Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 41.

16. Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 211.

17. For this and other references to Barthes in this introduction, see chapter 2 of the present text.

18. This function should not surprise a reader of anthropology. See Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 9.

19. See the discussion of attentiveness in Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," *Art Bulletin* 71, no. 2 (June 1989): 285–99.

20. George Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (Dublin, 1709), section 59.

21. Michael J. Morgan, *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch, and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

22. Denis Diderot, *Letter on the Blind* (1749), in *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, trans. and ed. Margaret Jourdain (1916; reprint, New York: AMS, 1973), 68–141; see also Nicholas Pastore, *Selective History of Theories of Visual Perception 1650–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

23. Oliver Sacks, "To See and Not See," in *An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven Paradoxical Tales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 108–52.

24. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Treatise on the Sensations*, trans. Geraldine Carr (1754; Los Angeles: School of Philosophy, University of Southern California, 1930), 73; see also 144–85.

25. Hermann Helmholtz, "Recent Progress of the Theory of Vision," in *Helmholtz on Perception: Its Physiology and Development*, by Richard M. Warren and Roslyn P. Warren (New York: Wiley, 1968), 108.

26. David Howes, introduction to *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 5.

27. On notions of visual perception among the impressionists and symbolists, see Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

28. Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan, 33 vols. (Berlin, 1877–1913), 4:45, 52. I have translated his term *fühlbarer* as "palpable."

29. See particularly his discussion of Giotto. Bernhard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 3–19.

30. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (1908; New York, 1953), 16.

31. Among his far-flung admirers were T. E. Hulme, who disseminated Worringer's influence to the early modernists in England, such as Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound. See T. E. Hulme, "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," in *T. E. Hulme: Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness (New York: Routledge, 2003), 94–113.

32. The relation between touch and vision can be considered a subset of Bruno Latour's understanding of the relation between nature and culture in modernity, which depends on hybridization of the two domains and yet calls for repeated "purification," or attempts at their conceptual separation. *Touch*, in this respect, would generally fall under the category of nature, *vision* under the category of culture. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). For a discussion of perception and art theory in a different context, see Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), esp. 132–37.

33. German interpretations of impressionism tended to concentrate on the delineation of atmosphere rather than perception or imagination. For them, optical perception seemed to unite the subjectivity of artistic vision with the objectivity of the external world. See Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, 3 vols. (London, 1895–96), 2:718–96. For a discussion of the relation of touch and vision in French painting especially, see Richard Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality: The Politics of Touch," in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129–80.

34. Margaret Olin, "Validation by Touch in Kandinsky's Early Abstract Art," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1989): 144–72.

35. Berkeley, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, paragraphs 67–71. The "moon illusion" was a staple of perceptual theory, and continues to appear in modern discussions of perception. See, for example, Helen E. Ross and Cornelis Plug, *The Mystery of the Moon Illusion: Exploring Size Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

36. Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *Tradition of the New* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 23–39; and Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986–93), 4:85–93.

37. See Michael Taussig's interpretation of this and other aspects of Benjamin's perceptual theory. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 19–32.

38. For a summation of Piaget's ideas on the coordinated use of the senses in the development of intelligence, see Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 3–50.

39. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," and Richard Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality: The Politics of Touch," in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991), 129–81.

40. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 261. The comment comes in the course of a discussion of the phenomenon of "constancy," according to which an object seems to maintain its size and shape, whatever the distance or angle from which we view it.

41. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt" (1945), in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 15. On this essay and others, see Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality," 150–54.

42. See Margaret Olin, "The Gaze," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

43. Recently, scholars have begun to appreciate again the potential of the sense of touch to help understand the visual. Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); and Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

44. See Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

45. These examples are all from the work of the installation artist Eduardo Kac. See Eduardo Kac, *Telepresence & Bio Art: Networking Humans, Rabbits, & Robots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

46. I use C. S. Peirce's terms because they are used more consistently in art-historical analysis, even though Peirce's argument is actually thereby distorted. See C. S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 98–119. For art-theoretical treatments of the "index," see, for example, Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 196–219. For challenges to these usages of Peirce, see Michael Leja, "Peirce, Visuality, and Art," *Representations* 72 (2000): 97–122; and James Elkins, "What Does Peirce's Sign System Have to Say to Art History?" *Culture, Theory, and Critique* 44 (2003): 5–22.

47. The critiques of what would later be known as photography's indexicality began before the widespread use of the term *index*, as early as Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, in "Photography, Vision, and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1975): 143–69. For more recent critiques, see William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

48. Hubert Damisch, "L'intraitable," in *La Dénivelée: À l'épreuve de la photographie: Essais* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 15–24.

49. On tourists, see Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For an interesting view of a birthday party picture, see Gallop, *Living with His Camera*, 163–66.

50. Sophie Calle, *Suite Vénitienne*, and Jean Baudrillard, *Please Follow Me*, trans. Dany Barash and Danny Hatfield (Seattle: Bay, 1988), 52.

51. Daniel Seymour, *A Loud Song* ([New York:] Lustrum, 1971); Larry Clark, *Tulsa* (New York: Clark, 1971); and Nan Goldin, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, ed. Nan Goldin with Marvin Heiferman, Mark Holborn, and Suzanne Fletcher (New York: Aperture Foundation, 1986).

52. Louis Kaplan has written perceptively about the representation of community in his *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

53. On the social nature of photography, see also Gisèle Freund, *Photography & Society* (Boston: D. R. Godine, 1980); and John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

54. Among many excellent studies of such practices, see Hirsch, *Family Frames*; Bourdieu, *Photography*; Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. R. Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); and Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*. See also the useful short essays in Mark Durden and Craig Richardson, eds., *Face on: Photography as Social Exchange* (London: Black Dog, 2000), particularly the ones by Joanna Lowry and Craig Richardson.

55. Pierre Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977). I have adapted my notion of practice from this book. Bourdieu's earlier thoughts on photography itself can be found in *Photography: A Middlebrow Art*. See Gallop, *Living with His Camera*, 130–79.

56. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images Malgré Tout* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2003), 47–50.

57. Genesis 31:43–32:3. I have been aided in my thinking about the relation between photography and biblical witness by interchanges with Jonathan Bordo.

58. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 238, but see the extended discussion of the relation between the archive and the churinga, 237–44.

59. Ibid., 242.

60. The materiality of the photograph has been significantly emphasized in Elizabeth

Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999): 221–36.

61. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), plate 13.

CHAPTER 1

An earlier verion of this chapter appeared in *Art Hisotry* 14 (1991): 92–115.

1. See William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 261–66, on the genesis of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. We will have occasion again to refer to Stott's cogent analysis of the book.

2. On the significance of photography to the social documentary movement, see ibid., 75–77, 211–37; and Jefferson Hunter, *Image and Word: The Interaction of Twentieth Century Photographs and Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), esp. 65–113.

3. It offered social activism of the 1960s a precedent that was mostly projected into the book. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 246–47.

4. James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941; 2nd ed., 1960), 13. Subsequent page references are to this edition and will appear in the text.

5. The introductory essay to the exhibition catalog, by Lincoln Kirstein, makes subtle distinctions between the consciously artistic work of "art photographers" and the documentary "poetry" of Evans. Walker Evans, *American Photographs* (1938; 3rd ed., New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 187–98.

6. For a literary analysis of Agee's pursuit of "actuality," see Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 272–86.

7. The classic essay on this subject as it pertains to modern American art is Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 55–91.

8. Two examples: "A roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*." F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism, 1909," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio and trans. Robert Brain et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 55–91. Speaking of an automobile ride on the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike, Tony Smith said, "It seemed that there had been a reality there that had not had any expression in art. . . . I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it." Samuel Wagstaff Jr., "Talking with Tony Smith," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1968), 386.

9. The last sentence reads, in part, "These matters had in that time the extreme clearness, and edge, and honor, which I shall now try to give you" (Agee and Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 471).

10. Classic statements are Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (Hagerstown [MD]: Harper & Row, 1985), 35–46; Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), 116–47.

11. See Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 155–69. Many of the ideas in this chapter are also discussed in Margaret Olin, "Gaze," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 318–29. The most exhaustive study of attitudes toward the gaze in twentieth-century French thought is Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

12. The classic feminist statement about the power of the gaze is Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14–26.

13. In formal analytical art history, Alois Riegl repeatedly used the term *subordination* to characterize the effect of being watched in *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (1902; Los Angeles: Getty Research Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999). On the Picasso painting, see Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel," *October* 44 (Spring 1988): 7–74.

14. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

15. The photograph of Annie Mae Gudger has since become one of the most famous of Walker Evans and of the Farm Security Administration. In keeping with my understanding of this text as a constructed narrative, I will refer to the sharecroppers, without further use of quotation marks, by the fictional names given them in the text of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, not by the names of Evans's photographic subjects recorded in numerous sources, among them *Walker Evans: Photographs for the Farm Security Administration, 1935–1938* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975).

16. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 340–400.

17. But, in Sartre, the fact that this objectification is never complete means that our being is always for the Other.

18. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Allain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 84–85.

19. Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and the Face," in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 194–219.

20. This use of the term *respect* is also found in Riegl. See Olin, *Forms of Representation*.

21. See 7, 8, 400, 412, passim.

22. "Entretiens Emmanuel Lévinas François Poiré," in François Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas: Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 94.

23. Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (New York: Viking Press, 1937; reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

24. There is a fine discussion of the relationship between the book by Bourke-White and Caldwell and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in Carol Schloss, *In Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer, 1840–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181–87. One error in her account: not Agee but William Stott noted the ethical significance of Bourke-White's remark that "when we first discussed plans for *You Have Seen Their Faces*, the first thought was of lighting." Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 223. See also John Raeburn, *A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 207–18.

25. Martha Rosler critiques the hypocrisy of an article in the *New York Times* that condemns Agee and Evans for their treatment of the tenant farmers. Martha Rosler, "In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," in *Three Works* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981), 68–69, 76–77. A savage, book-length critique appeared later. Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson, *And Their Children after Them: The Legacy of "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," James Agee, Walker Evans, and the Rise and Fall of Cotton in the South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989). Bourke-White's text has also come in for reevaluations. See Alan Trachtenberg, foreword to the reprint edition of *You Have Seen Their Faces* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), v–viii.

26. T. V. Reed notes the relationship of the reversal of ending and beginning to the newly formed relationship with the reader. "Unimagined Existence and the Fiction of the Real: Postmodernist Realism in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 169.

27. See Stott's illuminating discussion of the choice of photographs in the two editions. Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 267–89.

28. Interestingly, the wife of Bud Woods is not granted this role but is only allowed to look at the viewer in the company of her husband or family. Even one of these images is omitted in the second edition. Her youth in relation to her husband, patriarch of all three families, may disqualify her from the position of equality with him. It is also possible that Evans allowed the hostility toward her evinced by the other tenants, and her besmirched reputation, to determine

her photographic status as well. But the reason may also relate directly to the issue at hand, the gaze. Agee makes the comment that Ivy's "eyes go to bed with every man she sees" (372). Such a characterization of her gaze already rationalizes her exclusion from the individual treatment granted the other women and even the children in the book. This explanation, of course, does not exonerate Agee or Evans from the charge of sexism, and Agee's denial of "any 'attitude' toward this," and his remark that "Pearl's mother and grandmother . . . appeared to be by far the best satisfied and satisfying women, of their class or of any other, whom I happened to see during this time in the south," does nothing to alter the patronizing tone (280).

29. Lionel Trilling, "Greatness with One Fault in It," *Kenyon Review* 4 (Winter 1942): 100–101.

30. Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 284–87. At least two of the infrequent references to specific photographs in Agee's text pertain to such images, included in neither edition: 38–43, 369.

31. If Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "polyglossia" pertains to the book, as has been suggested, it only confirms Paul de Man's objection to Bakhtin's dialogism, since it tends to demean the tenants whenever it seeks to speak for, rather than to, them. Certainly, however, as polyglossia is the ideal toward which the book aspires, the gaze is a figure for it. Reed, "Unimagined Existence and the Fiction of the Real"; Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 303–5; and Paul de Man, "Dialogue and Dialogism," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 106–14.

32. Agee anticipates Pierre Bourdieu's unapologetic position, which, however, Bourdieu applies to any aesthetic appreciation. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

33. James C. Curtis and Sheila Grannen identify a "functionalism" related to the streamlined look of "Depression Modern" in Evans's photographs. "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15 (Spring 1980): 4–5.

34. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (1932; 2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1966), 40.

35. Ibid, 45.

36. Ibid.

37. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Working Theses" (1923), in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, trans. Michael Bullock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 75.

38. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "On Form in Architecture" (1927), in Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, 102. See also Arthur Korn, "Analytical and Utopian Architecture," in ibid., 76–77. Hannes Meyer states that "the new dwelling becomes . . . a biological apparatus." See Hannes Meyer, "Building," in Hans Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, trans. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert and ed. Joseph Stein (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 153.

39. Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 69.

40. Ibid., 59–60.

41. The identity of the cloth as a flour sack was important to Evans, for his criticism of the engraver's proofs of this image reads: "Strengthen stamping a little to make very clear that this is a flour sack." Getty Museum, Collection of Photography, folder 84.XG.963, "Evans, Walker, Ephemera I."

42. See, for example, Adolf Loos, "Hands Off," in *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*, ed. Adolf Opel and trans. Michael Mitchell (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), 179–83.

43. Curtis and Grannen, "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs," 20. The authors provide convincing evidence for this and other instances of Evans's tampering with furniture and household items in the tenants' households.

44. W. J. T. Mitchell has drawn attention to the relationship between formalist media "purity" and the separation of words and images in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, identifying it, however, as part of an ethical strategy, destined to make us uneasy about our aesthetic appreciation of the Gudgers' misery. "The Ethics of Form in the Photographic Essay," *Afterimage* 16

(January 1989): 9–10.

45. Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 44. The exhibition took place in 1973.

46. Quoted in Schloss, *In Visible Light*, 190. See also Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 246.

47. In his reading, Reed perhaps makes overly sanguine political claims for the book, considering its heavily religious overtones. Reed, "Unimagined Existence and the Fiction of the Real."

48. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 346.

49. Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics" (1909), in *Vision and Design*, ed. J. B. Bullen (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 12–27.

50. Leo Tolstoi, "What Is Art?" (1898), in *"What Is Art?" and Essays on Art*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 65–312.

51. Such interactive art was perhaps lampooned in Andy Warhol's *Dance Diagram-Tango* (1962) and other works. Occasionally, such works call for behavior on the part of spectators that could cause them to be arrested. An example is the installation by Scott Tyler, *What Is the Proper Way to Display the U.S. Flag?*, presented at the Gallery of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the spring of 1989, which gave the viewer the opportunity to step on the American flag. See Carol Becker, "Art Thrust into the Public Sphere," *Art Journal* 50, no. 3, Censorship I (Autumn 1991): 65–68.

52. For an early example, see Allan Sekula, "School Is a Factory," in *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 197–234; also, numerous contemporary installations, for which Thomas Hirschhorn's *Presence and Production* artworks in public space, such as the Musée Précaire Albinet of 2004 in a Paris suburb, can serve as examples. Other artists sought to make their works in museums and galleries critique the privileged status of the gallery, as in the early work of Hans Haacke. See Brian Wallis, ed., *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

53. For an example of such a gaze, see Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 298–99.

54. Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, 7–13.

55. See, for example, the prison documents and letters used in Danny Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead: Photographs of Prison Life with the Letters and Drawings of Billy McCune #122054* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). The photographs were made in 1967–68. The device is also used in more personal photo-texts, such as the memoir. See Daniel Seymour, *A Loud Song* (New York: Lustrum Press, 1971).

56. Works of Michael Oatman, Mark Dion, Dan Peterman, Georges Adeagbo, and numerous others testify to this widespread concern, as do hybrid forms of scholarship. See Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Routledge, 2005), 102–27.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter was previously published as "Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's 'Mistaken' Identification," *Representations* 80 (2002): 99–118.

1. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

2. A key example of the growing literature on identification is Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

3. Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1980); translated as *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). I will cite the English translation, sometimes amended (abbreviated *CL*, with page references to the French edition immediately following those of the US edition). The bibliography on Barthes's interest in photography, and more specifically on *Camera Lucida*, is too vast to enumerate. Besides the sources mentioned below, see especially Jean Delord, *Roland Barthes et la photographie* (Paris: Créatis, 1981); Nancy M. Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on Photography: The Critical Tradition in Perspective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997); and the

essays in Jean-Michel Rabaté, ed., *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), and in Geoffrey Batchen, ed., *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's "Camera Lucida"* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

4. In two excellent essays, Johnnie Gratton has explored the staging of Barthes's individuality in *Camera Lucida*. Johnnie Gratton, "The Subject of Enunciation in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*," in *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, ed. Diana Knight (New York: G. K. Hall, 2000), 266–78; and Johnnie Gratton, "Text, Image, Reference in Roland Barthes's *La Chambre Claire*," *Modern Language Review* 91 (1996): 355–64. I will place Barthes's name in quotation marks when I believe the reader is in danger of taking the narrator of *Camera Lucida*—unproblematically—for the writer Roland Barthes.

5. Most of them were originally published in the journal *Les lettres nouvelles*, beginning in 1953. They were collected in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957). A smaller number were translated in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

6. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 21–40.

7. Ibid., 34, original emphasis.

8. *CL*, 87/135.

9. *CL*, 76/120, original emphasis.

10. *CL*, 81/126–27.

11. *CL*, 80–81/126. On the medieval theory of visual rays, which involved the controversy between intromission (Barthes's position) and extramission, see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 61–85. On the haptic rhetoric of *Camera Lucida*, see also Kenneth Scott, "Personal Effects: Rilke, Barthes, and the Matter of Photography," *Modern Language Notes* 113, no. 3 (1998): 612–34, esp. 12–618.

12. *CL*, 3/13.

13. *CL*, 77/120–21. In the French edition, this essence is referred to in Latin as the "interfuit," and in French as the "*ça-a-été*."

14. *CL*, 26/48.

15. *CL*, 26/49.

16. James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1978).

17. Louis-Jean Calvet, *Roland Barthes: A Biography*, trans. Sarah Wykes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 233.

18. *CL*, 43/73.

19. See Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Face and Voice of Blackness," in Guy C. McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710–1940*, ed. Christopher C. French (San Francisco: Bedford Arts; Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990), xxix–xlvi; and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* (Fall 1988): 129–55. See also Melville J. Herskovits, "The Negro's Americanism," in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (1925; New York: Atheneum, 1969), 353–60, and other essays in this important collection of the movement.

20. Roger C. Birt, "A Life in American Photography," in *VanDerZee: Photographer, 1886–1983*, ed. Deborah Willis-Braithwaite (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1998), 46–48.

21. Ibid., 44–45, and Donna VanDerZee, conversation with the author, August 11, 2010.

22. See chapter 4 of the present text for a discussion of VanDerZee, his habitus, and his reception.

23. Barthes lists his photographic sources in the French edition only. Barthes, *La chambre claire*, 187.

24. [Robert Delpire?], in "Special Photo/2," ed. Robert Delpire, special issue on photography, *Le nouvel observateur* (November 1977), 19.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Barthes uses the concept of an *imaginaire* (translated "image repertoire") in *CL*, 11/25,

and in Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (1975; 2nd ed., Paris: Seuil, 1995), 98–99. In the English translation, *imaginaire* is rendered "image system": Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 105. Hereafter the US edition of this work will be cited, with references to the French edition immediately following. The concept echoes ideas in Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire: Psychologie-phénoménologique de l'imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940); translated as *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948). Barthes dedicates *La chambre claire* "In Homage to *L'Imaginaire* by Jean-Paul Sartre."

28. For example, Roland Barthes, "Bichon and the Blacks," in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 35–38. The essay appeared in the original French edition of *Mythologies*.

29. *CL*, 43/73–74, original emphasis.

30. *CL*, 53/87, italics in the English translation only.

31. *CL*, 53/87–88.

32. Derek Attridge writes, in a footnote, "It is Barthes who identifies the necklace as a 'slender ribbon of braided gold': one cannot see this in the reproduction, where it looks white and rather thick—and identical to the other necklace in the picture, from which no *punctum* shoots. This discrepancy is of no account, however; even if we did see what Barthes describes, we would remain impervious to the *punctum*'s laceration." Attridge, "Roland Barthes's Obtuse, Sharp Meaning and the Responsibilities of Commentary," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 88n4. Diana Knight refers to "the supposed retrospective punctum of her necklace." Knight, *Barthes and Utopia: Space, Travel, Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 263.

33. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 4, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1953), 277–309.

34. The "camera lucida" is contrasted with the "camera obscura" in chapter 44 (*CL*, 106/164).

35. Art Spiegelman, "Mein Kampf (My Struggle)," in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), 100.

36. *CL*, 53/88, translation slightly revised.

37. The French author Georges Perec records a subjective mistake concerning a family photograph in a novel originally published in 1975. His narrator records his own mistake, however. Barthes, perhaps intentionally, allows the reader to find his narrator's mistake. Georges Perec, *W; or, The Memory of Childhood*, trans. David Bellow (Boston: D. R. Godine, 1988), 27, 33n1. I am grateful to my former student Timothy Straveler for the reference to Perec.

38. *CL*, 96/148.

39. *CL*, 96/148–50.

40. *CL*, 67/106.

41. *CL*, 67–69/106.

42. Walter Benjamin, "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie" (1931), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. 2, bk. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 375; translated as "A Short History of Photography," trans. P. Patton, in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 206.

43. Walter Benjamin, "Les analphabetes de l'avenier," in "Special Photo/2," ed. Robert Delpire, special issue on photography, *Le nouvel observateur* (November 1977), 16.

44. [Delpire?], in "Special Photo/2," 19.

45. Carol Armstrong, "From Clementina to Käsebier: The Photographic Attainment of the 'Lady Amateur,'" *October* 91 (2000): 106; and Ralph Sarkonak, "Roland Barthes and the Spectre of Photography," *L'esprit créateur* 22 (1982): 56–57. Liliane Weissberg assumes that "The Stock" is "open to speculation: it may represent the author's family and it may not." Weissberg, "Circulating Images: Notes on the Photographic Exchange," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 113.

46. Knight raises the issue in *Barthes and Utopia*, 265–66. See, for an example of a response, the rather hesitant reference to Knight's "suggestion" in Attridge, "Roland Barthes's Obtuse, Sharp Meaning," 86, 89n9. It never seriously occurred to me that there really was a Winter Gar-

den Photograph, but, like Knight, I have had mixed success convincing others.

47. Diana Knight refers to Edgar Allan Poe in relation to the Winter Garden Photograph in *Barthes and Utopia*, 266. Barthes used the Poe story as a parable relating to the concealment of meaning; see Daniel Ferrer, "Genetic Criticism in the Wake of Barthes," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 225.

48. *CL*, 105/163–64, translation slightly amended.

49. Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, 104.

50. Margaret Iversen brings out Lacanian elements in Barthes, including that of the important relation to Lacan's discussion of the gaze. Margaret Iversen, "What Is a Photograph?," in *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 113–30. See also Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Hogarth Press, 1977), 65–119.

51. *CL*, 72/112.

52. Ibid., 103/161.

53. Knight, *Barthes and Utopia*, 264.

54. Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 14/20.

55. Ibid., 22/28. In the US edition, a slight change in spacing made the caption for this photograph look as though it went with a different photograph, of Barthes as a toddler.

56. Although to some in the audiences to which I have spoken it has mattered a lot.

57. *CL*, 57/90–91.

58. Calvet, *Roland Barthes*, 43.

59. *CL*, 45/74, 50/82. Among many excellent readings of minorities in *Camera Lucida*, see the essays by Carol Mavor and Shawn Michelle Smith, in Batchen, *Photography Degree Zero*.

60. Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 131/118.

61. This speculation is my response to a series of astute observations on the photographs by Sally Stein.

62. Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 357.

63. *CL*, 3/13.

CHAPTER 3

1. W. G. Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), 227–28; translated as *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1999), 190, translation slightly altered. I will cite the English translation, with page references to the German edition immediately following those of the US edition.

2. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden: Erzählungen, Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen*, ed. Bernd Schoeller (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), 468–69, translated as "The Letter of Lord Chandos," in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger and Tania and James Stern ([New York:] Pantheon Books [1952]), 137, translation modified. Subsequent references will be to the US edition; references to the German edition, when given, immediately follow.

3. Ibid. The translator breaks the sentence up to fit English usage. In the German version, the sentence is not nearly over at this point.

4. Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Penn State University, 1992), 185.

5. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 132.

6. Ibid., 137.

7. Ibid., 138.

8. Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 120; Gustav Landauer, *Skepsis und Mystik: Versuche im Anschluß an Mauthners Sprachkritik* (Berlin: Egon Sleischel, 1903), 150–53. On the language crisis, see also Allen Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster,

1973). The quotation is from Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Ad me ipsum*, in *Gesammelte Werke: Reden und Aufsätze III, 1925–1929; Bücher der Freunde, Aufzeichnungen 1889–1929*, ed. Bernd Schoeller (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), 601.

9. Roland Spahr, Hubert Spiegel, and Oliver Vogel, eds., *"Lieber Lord Chandos": Antworten auf einen Brief* (Frankfurt am Main: S.-Fischer-Verlag, 2002). Also, Friederike Mayröcker, "Brief an Lord Chandos," *Hofmannsthal-Jahrbuch . . . zur europäischen Moderne* 11 (2003): 137–38.

10. Karl Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis und Sprachmagie im Werk des jungen Hofmannsthal* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1958), 116–26; Rainer Nagele, "Die Sprachkrise und ihr dichterischer Ausdruck bei Hofmannsthal," *German Quarterly* 43 (November 1970): 720–32; Benjamin Bennett, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: The Theaters of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 105–41; Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris and ed. Ritchie Robertson (New York: Continuum, 1993), 48–51; and Hansgeorg Schmidt-Bergmann, "Der Gestus des Verstummens: Hugo von Hofmannsthals 'Chandos-Brief' und seine kritische Prosa," in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Brief Des Lord Chandos: Poetologische Schriften, Reden und Erfundene Gespräche*, ed. Hansgeorg Schmidt-Bergmann (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2000), 287–99.

11. See Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 31, *Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe*, ed. Ellen Ritter (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1991), esp. the introduction, 231–47.

12. A typical remark: "Der Schimmkäfer auf dem dunklen Wasserspiegel und die Moräne des Crassus scheinen Gleichnisse für das Ich inmitten des „Lebens" zu sein und daraus ihre Faszinationskraft zu erhalten." Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis und Sprachmagie*, 119.

13. Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," trans. Anthony Bonner, in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 45–56.

14. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 137.

15. Ibid., 136–37.

16. Michael Hamburger, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal," in *A Proliferation of Prophets* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1983), 96.

17. Ibid., 90. The quotation from Hofmannsthal is from Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Silvian in Stern*, ed. Martin Stern (Bern: P. Haupt, 1959), 114.

18. Ibid., 89–90.

19. Michael Hamburger, *String of Beginnings: Intermittent Memoirs, 1924–1954* (London: Skoob Books, 1973), 273.

20. The term *backshadowing* is from Michael Andre Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

21. Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories" (1899), in *Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachy et. al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1953–74), 3:301–22.

22. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 185–86/220–23; Hamburger, *String of Beginnings*, 137.

23. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 183/218.

24. Ibid., 183/219.

25. Ibid., 184/187.

26. This is a line from Hamburger's poem "The Moment," from which Hamburger quotes in his memoir and Sebald borrows in *Rings of Saturn*, leaving the line in English. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 177/211; Hamburger, *String of Beginnings*, 28; Michael Hamburger, "The Moment," in *Collected Poems 1941–1994* (London: Anvil Press, 1995), 90.

27. Hamburger, "In a Cold Season," in *Collected Poems*, 109–12; Hamburger, *String of Beginnings*, 183–86; Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 178–81/212–16.

28. See Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*.

29. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 129.

30. Ibid.

31. W. G. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks: Zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1994), 64.

32. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 140/471. See also Pestalozzi, who recognized the relation between the image of Crassus and the fish in his pond to the beetle in the watering can. Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis und Sprachmagie*, 119.

33. Hofmannsthal, "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," in Hoffmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden: Erzählungen, Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen*, 544–71.

34. The growing list of exceptions includes Walter Naumann, "Das Visuelle und das Plastische bei Hofmannsthal: Eine Deutung zur Hofmannsthals 'Ad me ipsum,'" in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Sibylle Bauer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 121–64; Carlpeter Braegger, *Das Visuelle und das Plastische: Hugo von Hofmannsthal und die bildende Kunst* (Bern: Francke, 1971); and Ursula Renner, *"Die Zauberschrift der Bilder": Bildende Kunst in Hofmannsthals Texten* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Rombach, 2000). Heinz Hiebler, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal und die Medienkultur der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2003), also contains a wealth of material on Hofmannsthal's relation to the visual. On visuality in literature, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), and Ellen Esrock, *The Reader's Eye: Visual Imaging as Reader Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

35. Given the literary nature of most of Chandos's mystical experiences, it is likely that Hofmannsthal never intended to lead his reader to a world beyond literature. See Manfred Hoppe, *Literatentum, Magie und Mystik in Frühwerk Hugo von Hofmannsthals* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 125–26.

36. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Über die Pantomime," in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden: Reden und Aufsätze I: 1891–1913*, 502–5.

37. Olin, *Forms of Representation*; Margaret Olin, "Validation by Touch in Kandinsky's Early Abstract Art," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1989): 144–72; and Margaret Olin, "Self Representation: Resemblance and Convention in Two Nineteenth Century Theories of Architecture and the Applied Arts," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 49 (1986): 376–97.

38. Olin, *The Nation without Art*, 120.

39. Hoppe, *Literatentum, Magie und Mystik in Frühwerk Hugo von Hofmannsthals*.

40. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 136/467.

41. Theodor Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 34.

42. See Olin, *The Nation without Art*, 187–89.

43. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Humanities Press, 1961), 150–51.

44. For example, see Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, esp. 167–201, and, with a very different assessment, Ernest Gellner, *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski, and the Habsburg Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 41–110.

45. W. G. Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1992), 273, translated as *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1996). The passage corresponds to p. 183 in the English edition, but the translation is my own.

46. W. G. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat: Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1991). The title, *Unheimliche Heimat*, is a play on words. *Unheimlich*, which literally means "unhomelike," is usually translated as "uncanny," although "provoking of anxiety or dread" might be more accurate, while *Heimat* means "homeland. See Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion*, ed. Benjamin Nelson (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 122–61. Sebald tells of his interest in the writings of Sontag, Berger, and Barthes in an interview with Kenneth Baker, "W. G. Sebald: Up Against Historical Amnesia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 7, 2001.

47. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat*, 44. This and subsequent passages from this work are my own translation. Sebald's remarks (and those of Susan Sontag, from *On Photography* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977], 80) apply well to the images of such photographers as Roman Vishniac, who photographed the Polish Jewish community in its waning days before the establishment of the Nazi ghettos. Carol Zemel, "Imaging the Shtetl: Diaspora Culture, Photography and Eastern European Jews," in *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2000), 193–206; Carol Zemel, "Z'chor! Roman Vishniac's Photo-Eulogy of East European Jews," in *Shaping Losses: Cultural Memory and the Holocaust*, ed. Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 75–86.

48. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat*, 31.

49. Ibid., 31–32. Sebald quotes Rudolf von Gottschall, *Literarische Charakterköpfe* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1870), 87, and finds the notion of a literary photography in Eduard Castle, ed., *Das Geheimnis des großen Unbekannten Charles Sealsfield-Carl Postl: Die Quellenschriften* (Vienna: Wiener Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft, 1943), 134.

50. W. G. Sebald, *Logis in Einem Landhaus: Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und Andere* (Munich: Hanser, 1998), 178.

51. W. G. Sebald, "Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels: Über Jean Améry" (1988), in *Campo Santo*, ed. Sven Meyer (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2003), 149–70. See also Irene Heidelberger-Leonard, "Jean Amérys Werk—Urtext zu W. G. Sebalds *Austerlitz*?," in *W. G. Sebald: Mémoire, transferts, images = Erinnerung, Übertragungen, Bilder*, ed. Ruth Vogel-Klein (Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, 2005), 117–28.

52. Sebald, "Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels," 156.

53. W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Hanser, 2001), 42; published in English under the same title, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2001), 26. I will cite the English translation, with page references to the German edition immediately following those of the US edition.

54. Sebald, "Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels," 153. My translation.

55. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 4–5/11; W. G. Sebald, "Jan Peter Tripp," in *Unerzählt* (München: Hanser, 2003).

56. For related interpretations, see Helmut Schmitz, "'. . . Only Signs Everywhere of the Annihilation'—W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*," in *On Their Own Terms: The Legacy of National Socialism in Post-1990 German Fiction* (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 2002), 297–98; Mark Ilsemann, "Going Astray: Melancholy, Natural History, and the Image of Exile in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*," in *W. G. Sebald: History—Memory—Trauma*, ed. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 301–14.

57. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 40–41/62–64. Susi Bechhöfer's story has striking similarities to that of the character Austerlitz. See Jeremy Josephs with Susi Bechhöfer, *Rosa's Child: The True Story of One Woman's Quest for a Lost Mother and a Vanished Past* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996). *Austerlitz* was inspired in part by a television interview, probably with Bechhöfer, which Sebald viewed in the early 1990s. Maya Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: W. G. Sebald; Recovered Memories," *Guardian* (Manchester), September 22, 2001. The other models for *Austerlitz* are frequently mentioned in the literature on Sebald.

58. On the symbolism of the Ringstrasse buildings in Vienna, built during Hofmannsthal's youth, see Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 27–46. The classic work on the style is still Renate Wagner-Rieger, *Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Österreichisches Bundesverlag, 1970). Hofmannsthal was born toward the end of the period that Wagner-Rieger calls "Strict Historicism."

59. On the relationship of Hofmannsthal's style to Elizabethan prose, and to his other historical analogues, see H. Stefan Schultz, "Hofmannsthal and Bacon: The Sources of the Chandos Letter," *Comparative Literature* 13 (Winter 1961): 1–15.

60. Sebald mentions the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter as a stylistic influence in an interview with Michael Silverblatt, KCRW, December 6, 2001, but Hofmannsthal is surely relevant as well. The interview is available online at http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/bw/bw011206w_g_sebald (accessed March 9, 2011)

61. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 69/471.

62. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 124/184.

63. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 134.

64. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 124–25/184; 293/414.

65. Hofmannsthal collected photographs, and surrounded himself with photographs of friends, colleagues, and places he had been or wished to visit. For a fascinating account of Hofmannsthal's relationship to photography and other media, see Hiebler, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal und die Medienkultur*, esp. 296–347, on photography.

66. Besides the works discussed in this chapter, see also W. G. Sebald, *Schwindel: Gefühl* (Frankfurt am Main: Vito on Eichborn, 1990), translated as *Vertigo*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1999); and W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Munich: Hanser, 1999),

translated as *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003).

67. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 76/115–16. "In school I was always in the darkroom." Quoted in Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile."

68. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 7/15 (translation modified).

69. The English company that made the Ensign, a folding camera with a bellows made first by Houghton and then by Ross-Ensign, closed in 1961. The last bellows-style camera, like the one Austerlitz probably used, the Autorange 820, was in production from approximately 1955 until around 1959. *Ensign Cameras, a History*. Copyright 1997 Adrian Richmond, last updated June 3, 2009. *Online at* http://www.ensign.demon.co.uk/autorange820.htm (accessed April 17, 2010). See also Norman Channing and Mike Dunn, *British Camera Makers: An A–Z Guide to Companies and Products* (Surrey: Parkland Designs, 1995), s.v. "Barnet Ensign Ltd/Barnet Ensign Ross Ltd/Ross Ensign Ltd, Houghton & Son, G/Houghtons Ltd." See also http://www.cosmonet.org/camera/ensign_e.htm, Takao Kubo et al., *The Classic Camera*, last modified July 19, 1996 (accessed April 17 2010). If Austerlitz used a "telescopic bellows," as per the English edition, it would have been even a few decades older. Either would have had an anachronistic feel by 1967.

70. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 14/25.

71. Ibid., 285–90/404–9. See James L. Cowan, "Sebald's Austerlitz and the Great Library: History, Fiction, Memory," *Monatshefte* 102 (2010): 51–81, 192–207.

72. See George Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout* (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 2003), 143, for the notion that photographs can be pictures of the act of taking them. Didi-Huberman cites Sartre for the notion that the image is not a thing but an act. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imagination* (Paris: Nouvelle encyclopédie philosophique, 1936), 162.

73. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, 184–85 (US)/275–76 (German).

74. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 184/268.

75. Ibid., 246–53/353–61.

76. Ibid., 77/117, translation modified.

77. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 53. The original quotation is from Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, trans. Goronwy Rees (New York: New Directions, 1971), 31.

78. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 253/361. See also Elinor Shaffer, "W. G. Sebald's Photographic Narrative," in *The Anatomist of Melancholy: Essays in Memory of W. G. Sebald*, ed. Rüdiger Görner (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 2003), 57; and Schmitz, "'. . . Only Signs Everywhere of the Annihilation,'" 291–321.

79. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 184/268.

80. Marie de Verneuil is a character in Balzac, *Les Chouans; ou, La Bretagne en 1799* (1829). The Battle of Verneuil was fought on August 17, 1424.

81. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 43–44/68.

82. Thomas Bernhard, *Auslöschung: Ein Zerfall* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

83. See the provocative essay on the role of photographs in Bernard by J. J. Long, "'Die Teufelskunst unserer Zeit'? Photographic Negotiations in Bernhard's *Auslöschung*," *Modern Austrian Literature* 35 (2002): 79–96.

84. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 298/421. Sebald thought that May 18 was also the birthday of Suzi Bechhöfer, the Kindertransport child who was a model for Austerlitz. Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile." Bechhöfer's birthday, however, was May 17. Bechhöfer and Josephs, *Rosa's Child*, 10. At least one reviewer thought the photograph on the cover was Sebald. Charles Saumarez Smith, "Another Time, Another Place; It May or May Not Be Fiction, but W. G. Sebald's Wartime Narrative, Austerlitz, Provides a Hypnotic Sense of the Power of History," *Observer* (London), September 30, 2001. The author portrait referred to is by Isolde Ohlbaum. It appears on the back cover of the Modern Library edition of *Austerlitz*.

85. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 197/285.

86. Ibid., 183–84/267–68. Nicholas Sawicki kindly translated the Czech.

87. To explain the kind of role he had in mind, Hofmannstahl mentioned Mary Garden as an example in a letter to Strauss of 1901 about plans for the opera, quoted in Alan Jefferson, *Richard Strauss, Der Rosenkavalier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2. He

probably wanted Strauss to think of her performance in *Cherubin*, an opera by Massenet first produced in 1905. The title character, written for Garden, is the amorous page from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, now grown up. To accentuate the reference to Austria's eighteenth-century past, Hofmannsthal gave the Marshallin the name Marie Therese, after the Habsburg empress.

88. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 161/236.

89. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 30: *Andreas, der Herzog von Reichstadt, Philipp II, und Don Juan d'Austria*, ed. Manfred Pape (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1982), 45–46. An English translation of this passage from *Andreas*, which I modified in my translation, is available in Hofmannsthal, *Selected Prose*, 10. Sebald quotes the passage in *Die Beschreibung des Unglucks*, 77, but leaves in ellipses the phrase about the bass violin and the musicians that he would later appropriate in *Austerlitz*.

90. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglucks*, 77. Translation from both languages is my own.

91. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 137/469.

92. On appropriation, see that entry by Robert S. Nelson in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 160–73.

93. Christopher Bigsby, ed., *Writers in Conversation*, vol. 2 (East Anglia, Norwich: EAS, for Arthur Miller Center, 2001), 154.

94. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 99, 106–7/148, 158–59.

95. Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," 131.

96. Michael Silverblatt, interview with Sebald. Virginia Woolf, *"The Death of the Moth," and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1970 [1942]), 3–6.

97. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 93–94/140–41.

98. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 182.

99. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 62.

100. Roman Jakobson, "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, *Word and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 131.

CHAPTER 4

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

2. See Peter W. Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the* Illustrated London News (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998), 65; Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1958–68), vol. 4, esp. 144–54; and Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded-Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), which explains both the technique and the interactive dynamics of early photographic illustration. See also the very useful American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) History E-Book Project (electronic edition, 2003), with supplemental illustrations; online at www.historyebook.org.

3. See chapter 1 for a discussion of distraction as a component of photographic reception.

4. August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit: Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Transmare Verlag [1929]).

5. Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

6. On Atget's aims and discoverers, see Molly Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

7. Major sources on VanDerZee's biography include Rodger C. Birt, "A Life in American Photography," in *VanDerZee: Photographer, 1886–1993*, by Deborah Willis-Braithwaite (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 26–73; and Jim Haskins, *James VanDerZee: the Picture Takin' Man* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991). Much of the factual material in the following account comes from these two sources, unless another secondary or primary source is cited.

8. An ad in *The Crisis*, illustrated in Keith Byerman, "Disrupting the Discourse: DuBois and

the Construction of Blackness," *Philosophia Africana* 7 (March 2004): 3–14. An article about her appeared in the *Chicago Defender*, August 24, 1918.

9. I have found no evidence of the film, although another film of that name, about a pair of Irish orphans caught up in the war, was made that year. The film by Touissant Motion Picture Exchange is announced in the *Chicago Defender*, June 8, 1918.

10. Ads in the *Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1918, and December 7, 1918.

11. The ad mentioning the War Stamp Committee poster can be found in the *Chicago Defender*, August 24, 1918. Other relevant ads appear in the paper frequently between June and October. The picture is also mentioned by VanDerZee, who writes that the German soldier "looked more surprised by that black face than he was by the predicament he was in." James VanDerZee, Owen Dodson, and Camille Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan and Morgan, 1978), 59. VanDerZee told Billops that he gave the painting, after his sister's death, to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, where it now resides (accession no. PA.X.007). Camille Billops, interview with James VanDerZee, November 27, 1977, archive tapes, Hatch-Billops Archives of African American Cultural History, New York, NY.

12. *A Pictorial History of the Negro in the Great War* (New York: Touissant Pictorial, 1919).

13. VanDerZee photographed Blanche Powell at the Touissant Studios in 1915; he later photographed her funeral, in 1926. He is also well known for his photographs of the war heroes Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts. For these images, see Willis-Braithwaite, *VanDerZee: Photographer*, 18, 80, 142–43. According to Robert A. Hill, portraits of Marcus Garvey in the *Negro World* are labeled as "Touissant Studios" as late as 1921, while VanDerZee photographed Garvey at least from 1922, and became the official photographer for the UNIA in 1924. Robert A. Hill, "Making Noise: Marcus Garvey's *Dada*, August 1922," in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: New Press, 1994), 184, 188. See also Rodger C. Birt, "For the Record: James VanDerZee, Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Photographs," *International Review of African American Art* 8 (1989): 39–48.

14. Cecil Beaton, *Cecil Beaton's New York* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1938), photo credits. Cato's image is on p. 170. See also Birt, "A Life in American Photography," 50–51. Birt misattributes the photograph of VanDerZee, however, to Beaton.

15. Beaton, *Cecil Beaton's New York*, 179–80.

16. These ideas have benefited from my conversations with Kym Pinder.

17. Beaton, *Cecil Beaton's New York*, 179.

18. Ibid., 168.

19. In the second edition, Beaton replaces the questionable phrases about litigious character and former savagery with the following: "Negroes are often involved in litigation," and "a proud race robbed of its pride by the unscrupulously enterprising white men." Cecil Beaton, *Portrait of New York* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1948), 104, 105.

20. Allon Schoener, editor's preface to the original edition, in the exhibition catalog *Harlem On My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*, ed. Allon Schoener (1968; New York: New Press, 1995), n.p.

21. Monroe Wheeler, "*Road to Victory*: A Procession of Photographs of the Nation at War," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, 9, no. 5/6 (June 1942): 19. For images of the exhibition, see pp. 2–17.

22. Bayer was in charge of the graphic design for the exhibition *Deutsches Volk Deutsches Arbeit*, shown in Berlin in 1934.

23. Herbert Bayer, quoted in Christopher Phillips, "The Judgement Seat of Photography," *October* 22 (Autumn 1982): 43. See also Phillips's discussion of *Road to Victory*.

24. Neil Harris, "Museums and Controversy: Some Introductory Reflections," *Journal of American History* (December 1995): 1108.

25. Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The "Family of Man" and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Sandeen also discusses, briefly, *The Road to Victory* (p. 44).

26. Grace Gluck, "Art: Harlem on My Mind, in Slides, Tapes, and Photos," *New York Times*, January 17, 1969.

27. Allon Schoener, *Portal to America: The Lower East Side, 1870–1925* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston [1967]).

28. Metropolitan Museum of Art press release, November 16, 1967, quoted in Allon Schoener, introduction to the 1995 edition, *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*, n.p.

29. Grace Glueck, "Art Notes: Adam C., Mother Brown, Malcolm X," *New York Times*, January 12, 1969.

30. Schoener, introduction to the 1995 edition, *Harlem on My Mind*, n.p.

31. See, for example, Martin Arnold, "Museum Edited Essay by Girl, 17," *New York Times*, February 1, 1969, and numerous discussions, including those in Steven C. Dubin, *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 30–35; and Susan E. Cahan, "Performing Identity and Persuading a Public: The *Harlem On My Mind* Controversy," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 13, no. 4 (2007): 433–35.

32. Dubin, *Displays of Power*, 30, 38.

33. Cahan, "Performing Identity and Persuading a Public," 428.

34. According to Schoener, introduction to the 1995 edition, *Harlem on My Mind*, n.p. See also Reginald McGhee, introduction to *The World of James VanDerZee: A Visual Record of Black Americans* (New York: Grove Press, 1969), n.p.

35. As Susan E. Cahan has pointed out, the new building was Powell's great achievement of the moment. To leave it out meant omitting that which was probably a major motive for VanDerZee's commission. Cahan, "Performing Identity and Persuading a Public," 436.

36. Deborah Willis-Braithwaite, "They Knew Their Names," in *VanDerZee: Photographer*, 24.

37. Most of the visual materials for the exhibition are now in the I. P. Stanback Museum and Planetarium of South Carolina State University, including the enlarged, mounted photographs, signage, and diagrams of the original installation. All are available for study or loan. At this writing, a traveling exhibition is anticipated.

38. See the analysis by Sara Blair, *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 46–47.

39. Ann Banks, ed., "Text from Federal Writers' Project," in Aaron Siskind, *Harlem Photographs 1932–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 71–73.

40. Birt, "A Life in American Photography," 40.

41. This is nearly invisible in reproductions, but can be seen clearly in the print in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession no. 1970.539.14.

42. Haskins, *James Van Der Zee*, 120; VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 25.

43. See Camara Dia Holloway, "James Latimer Allen, Artist-Photographer of the New Negro," in *Portraiture and the Harlem Renaissance: The Photographs of James L. Allen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1999), 5–39.

44. Art Kane's famous photograph of legendary jazz musicians, for example, posed in Harlem in 1958, was intended for *Esquire* magazine, not for display as a wall-size blowup in a museum.

45. On Gustav Courbet's *A Burial at Ornans*, see Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 111–47. I mention this reading rather than many other fine readings of this important work because of its concentration on the structure of intersubjectivity.

46. For example, Liliane De Cock and Reginald McGhee, eds., *James VanDerZee* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1973); and later, Willis-Braithwaite, *VanDerZee: Photographer*.

47. Colin Westerbeck, *The James VanDerZee Studio*, exhibition catalog (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

48. Michele Wallace, *Dark Designs and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 384–85. The publication she mentions is Willis-Braithwaite, *VanDerZee*. Gates's defense of *Harlem on My Mind* is in his foreword to the 1995 edition of the exhibition catalog.

49. José E Muñoz, "Photographies of Mourning: Melancholia and Ambivalence in Van Der

Zee, Mapplethorpe, and *Looking for Langston*," in *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, ed. Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 348. Muñoz noted the "petty racism" of Roland Barthes's remarks, but understood the communality of sentiment between the two men.

50. The quotation is from the foreword by Toni Morrison to VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, n.p.

51. James V. Hatch, *Sorrow Is the Only Faithful One: The Life of Owen Dodson* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 103, 236.

52. Dolores Ashley, writing in *The Photo Newsletter of the James Van Derzee Institute* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1973): 6. The essay, part of a birthday tribute to VanDerZee, has no title.

53. Camille Billops, interview with James VanDerZee, August 8, 1977, Hatch-Billops Archives, New York.

54. James VanDerZee, quoted in VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 30.

55. Ibid., 69.

56. Billops, introduction to ibid., 1.

57. Ibid., 75.

58. Morrison, foreword to VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, n.p.

59. Owen Dodson, in VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 6–7.

60. Ibid., 77.

61. James VanDerZee, in ibid., 84.

62. Dodson, in ibid., 52.

63. Ibid., 23.

64. Ibid., 78–79. Hilton Als thought Dodson's poem about a deceased brother and sister to be his best, and quotes it in his book *The Women* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1996), 144.

65. Ibid., 62–63.

66. The performance took place at Buchhandlung Welt, July 7, 1980. A tape of it is in the Hatch-Billops Archives, New York.

67. Toni Morrison also named the same photograph (and story) in *The Harlem Book of the Dead* as inspiration for part of *Beloved*. Morrison, in *The Before Columbus Foundation Fiction Anthology*, ed. Ismael Reed (New York: Norton, 1992), 442–43.

68. See, for example, David Dudley, "Toni Morrison (1931–)," in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller, and Frederick S. Frank (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 295–302.

69. Billops, introduction to VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 1. Toppins and Micky's are mentioned by VanDerZee. Ibid., 82, 85.

70. M.R., review of *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, in *Studio Photography: The Magazine for the Professional Portrait and Commercial Photographer* 15, no. 2 (February 1979): n.p.

71. Diana Emery Hulick, "James Van Der Zee's *Harlem Book of the Dead*: A Study in Cultural Relationships," *History of Photography* 17 (1993): 277–83.

72. Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).

73. For the relation between African-American funeral traditions and those of West Africa, see, for example, Karla F. C. Holloway, *Passed On: African American Mourning Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 173–75.

74. Ashley, in *The Photo Newsletter of the James Van Derzee Institute*.

75. VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 31.

76. Billops, interview with VanDerZee, November 27, 1977, Hatch-Billops Archives. He quoted "The Little Toy Soldier" by Eugene Field in an interview with Eleanor Bowles, January 24, 1979; archive tape, Hatch-Billops Archives.

77. On images of a black Jesus in twentieth-century America and related matters, see Kymberly N. Pinder, "'Our Father, God; our Brother, Christ; or are We Bastard Kin?': Images of Christ in African American Painting," *African American Review* 31 (Summer 1997): 223–33.

78. Haskins, *James Van DerZee*, 105.

79. Candice van Ellison, "Interview with James VanDeZee (July 3, 1969)," in McGhee, introduction to *The World of James VanDerZee*, n.p.

80. VanDerZee, in VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 84.

81. James VanDerZee, quoted in David Attie et al., *Portrait Theory*, ed. Kelly Wise (New York: Lustrum Press, 1981), 157.

82. Holloway, *Passed On*, 29–30.

83. VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 50.

84. On photographic postmortem practices, see Jay Ruby's illuminating study *Securing the Shadow* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); also Stanley B. Burns, *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* (Altadena, CA: Twelvetrees Press, 1990); and Dan Meinwald, "Memento Mori: Death in 19th C. Photography," *California Museum of Photography Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (1990); online at http://vv.arts.ucla.edu/terminals/meinwald/meinwald1.html (accessed March 2011).

85. Ruby, *Securing the Shadow*, 77. Figures 31 and 32 illustrate the two views that VanDerZee mentions. Although Ruby writes that except for rare exceptions like James VanDerZee, professional photographers "completely stopped trying to portray the dead," the two figures just mentioned are from the 1940s, and he later says that although the commissions are rarities, "more than half of the professional photographers in Pennsylvania have taken funeral pictures in the last decade." Ibid., 75, 77.

86. Camille Billops and James Hatch, *Suzanne Suzanne*, 1982, 30 min. See Valerie Smith, "Telling Family Secrets: Narrative and Ideology in *Suzanne Suzanne*," in *Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video*, ed. Valerie Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 205–15.

87. Elizabeth Heyert, *The Travelers* (Zurich: Scalo, 2006).

88. VanDerZee, Dodson, and Billops, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, 4, 82.

89. Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006).

90. Michael Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip* (New York: Pantheon Books, [1973]).

91. Ibid., n.p.

92. Reviews and critiques make this point. See, for example, Richard W. Stoffle and Henry F. Dobyns, review of *Wisconsin Death Trip*, *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974): 171–72.

93. Warren I. Susman, preface to Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip*, n.p.

CHAPTER 5

1. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844; New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), plate 14.

2. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–52), selections by Victor Neuburg (London: Penguin, 1985).

3. John Thompson and Adolphe Smith, *Street Life in London: With Permanent Photographic Illustrations Taken from Life Expressly for This Publication* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, [1877–78]). See also Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, 3rd ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997).

4. Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890; Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1997).

5. See the discussion of dialogism in the novel by Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, Theory and History of Literature 8 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 5–46, 283–302.

6. Camilo José Vergara, *How the Other Half Worships* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

7. Wendy Ewald, *Secret Games: Collaborative Works with Children 1969–1999* (Zurich: Scalo, 2000), 21; Susan Meiselas, *Learn to See: A Sourcebook of 101 Photography Projects by Teachers and Students* (Cambridge, MA: Polaroid Foundation, 1974). This is also a period when visual anthropologists Sol Worth and John Adair taught Navajo students how to make their own films, for a project that culminated in Sol Worth and John Adair, *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972).

8. Megafone.net provides cell phones to a variety of "citizen ethnographers," including motorcycle couriers, taxi drivers, sex workers, and people with disabilities, on four continents.

See François [Bar], "Sao Paolo's motoboy ethnographers," http://abaporu.wordpress.com/category/creolization/, and zexe.net, both sites last accessed March 2011.

9. www.criticalexposure.org/ (accessed March 2011).

10. Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, "Empowerment through Photo Novella: Portraits of Participation," *Health Education Quarterly* 21 (Summer 1994): 172. See also "Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Women's Health," *Journal of Women's Health* 8 (1999): 185–92; "Photovoice as a Participatory Health Promotion Strategy," *Health Promotion International* 13 (1998): 75–86; and Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2007).

11. Nicholas Kristof, "Disposable Cameras for Disposable People," *New York Times*, February 12, 2006.

12. http://www.aphasiatalks.org/ (accessed March 2011).

13. Henrik Enquist, "Bridging the Gap between Clinical and Patient-Provided Images," in *Visual Literacy*, ed. James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2008), 145–63.

14. Amnesty International USA, Human Rights Education Program, and Kids with Cameras, *Born into Brothels, Companion Curriculum*, n.d. Downloadable at www.amnestyusa.org/education or www.kids-with-cameras.org (accessed June 2010).

15. Numerous resources and a bibliography are listed in a "toolkit" published in the spring of 2007 as a result of one conference, "Visible Rights: Photography for and by Youth," held at Centro Universitário Senac, São Paolo, December 7–9, 2006. Since then, another conference has been held: "Visible Rights: Photography for and by Children/Youth, II," held at Harvard University, December 14–15, 2007. The conference website contains a wealth of material, including several useful essays by the many participants. The toolkit can be downloaded at http://www.kids-with-cameras.org/community/culturalagents-toolkit.pdf (accessed March 2011). Fotokids (www.fotokids.org) is an organization in Central America, while the Literacy through Photography Project, led by Wendy Ewald, operates from Duke University.

16. http://joinipe.org/welcome/?p=72 (accessed March 2011).

17. http://joinipe.org/welcome/?p=164 (accessed March 2011).

18. Secondhand communication, perhaps exaggerated (by me), about a conference that took place at Harvard University in 2007.

19. www.Drik.net (accessed March 2011). Alam has also worked in the photoempowerment movement. See his "Photography by Children," online at ZoneZero.com (accessed March 2011).

20. Kristof, "Disposable Cameras for Disposable People."

21. Jim Hubbard, *American Refugees* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 27.

22. Jim Hubbard, ed., *Shooting Back* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991), 105. Bold and italics in the original.

23. Ibid., 115.

24. Jonathan Kozol, foreword to Hubbard, *American Refugees*, n.p. Kozol likely refers to a photograph in the book in which a girl looks up at the camera winsomely. Her hair is not disheveled, however, but only slightly windblown.

25. Robert Coles, foreword to Hubbard, *Shooting Back*, 2.

26. See especially David MacDougall, "Whose Story Is It?," in *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R. 1990–1994*, ed. Lucien Taylor (New York: Routledge, 1994), 26–36; David MacDougall, "The Subjective Voice in Ethnographic Film," in *Fields of Vision*, ed. Leslie Devereaux (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 217–55; Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 36 (1983): 17–30.

27. Jim Hubbard, "Shooting Back™: Photographic Empowerment and Participatory Photography 2007," p. 5. An unpublished paper obtainable through culturalagents.org (accessed March 2011).

28. Wendy Ewald, *Portraits and Dreams: Photographs and Stories by Children of the Appalachians* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1985), 18–20.

29. Ewald, *Secret Games*, 325.

30. Ibid., 326.

31. Ibid., 132.

32. Carlota Duarte, ed., *Camaristas: Fotógrafos mayas de Chiapas* (México: Centro de la Imagen; CIESAS; Casa de las Imágenes, 1998).

33. Ewald, *Secret Games*, 17.

34. On Carlota Duarte, see Richard Pitnick, "The Chiapas Photography Project," *B&W* 51 (2007): 50–57.

35. Carlota Duarte, *Odella, a Hidden Survivor: A Photographic Essay* (Albuquerque: Distributed by University of New Mexico Press, 1990); Pierre Apraxine and Xavier Demange, *"La Divine Comtesse": Photographs of the Countess de Castiglione* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2000). Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Legs of the Countess," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 65–108.

36. The group decided to print their pictures anonymously in the book *Camaristas*. That it was the photographers' decision to remain anonymous and to call themselves the "Camaristas" comes from my telephone interview with Carlota Duarte, March 28, 2008. To these nonnative Spanish speakers, the word *Camaristas* suggested women with cameras, not "chambermaid" in accordance with the Spanish word. See also Pitnick, "The Chiapas Photography Project"; Margarett Loke, "Photography Review: Even in the Harshest Conditions, Precious Life Somehow Prevails," *New York Times*, October 6, 2000.

37. Maruch Sántiz Gómez, *Creencias de Nuestros Antepasados* (México: Centro de la Imagen; CIESAS; Casa de los Imágenes, 1998); Frank Cancian, review of *Creencias de Nuestros Antepasados* by Maruch Sántiz Gómez, *American Anthropologist* 101 (1999): 173–76.

38. Carlota Duarte, telephone conversation with the author, March 28, 2008.

39. The term "lieu de memoire" refers to the multivolume work edited by Pierre Nora: *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1984–92). See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire" [1984], *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25.

40. Francis W. Parker School in Chicago uses the Mayan Culture Kit in its lower-school unit on Mexico. I would like to thank Christine Beh and Ann Hills of the school for their hospitality.

41. Joan T. Mark, *The Silver Gringo: William Spratling and Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); Taylor D. Littleton, *The Color of Silver: William Spratling, His Life and Art* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

42. The hermeneutic concept of a blended horizon is elucidated by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 333–41.

43. Kris Cohen, "What Does the Photoblog Want?," *Media, Culture and Society* 27, no. 6 (2005): 882–901, conveys many of the nuances of this pleasure in web dissemination.

44. A substantial bibliography is developing on the subject of Internet and community. For resources, approaches, and bibliography, cf. Mary Chayko, *Connecting: How We Form Social Bonds and Communities in the Internet Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Michele A. Willson, *Technically Together: Re-Thinking Community within Techno-Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Clay Shirky, *How Digital Networks Transform Our Ability to Gather and Cooperate* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

45. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Soundings from the Atlantic* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), 279.

46. For example, "Nothing but the vision of a Laputan . . . could have reached such a height of delirium as to rave about the time when . . . a multitudinous wilderness of forest foliage . . . stamp itself, in a moment, so faithfully and so minutely, that one may creep over the surface of the picture with his microscope and find every leaf perfect." Ibid., 127.

47. This may be changing as the site grows, including, for example, a documentation of Harlem.

48. Daniel Miller, "The Fame of Trinis: Websites as Traps," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 137–55.

49. Meiselas, *Learn to See*, 74.

50. Susan Meiselas, in "New York Film Festival 1991: Q&A with Filmmakers," special

feature in Susan Meiselas, *Pictures from a Revolution* (1991), DVD edition (New York: Docurama Films, G M R Films, [2007]).

51. Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 263.

52. Many of the stories from the diaspora on the website's timeline come from The Netherlands, the venue of the exhibition most closely connected to the book. The exhibition ran from late 1998 to early 1999.

53. The disclaimer, which is on the screen briefly before the map appears, reads as follows: "The map you are about to see was presented at the San Francisco Conference by the Kurdish League Delegation on March 30, 1945. The borders shown here remain in dispute amongst the peoples of the region. We use this map as a reference to the region, in that Kurdistan is not shown on any contemporary map." www.akakurdistan.com/kurds/stories/index.html (accessed March 2011).

54. All the stories that follow are online at www.akakurdistan.com/stories/index.html (accessed March 2011).

55. For the story in the book, see Meiselas, *Kurdistan*, 258–59.

56. In 2004, the webmaster of Angels Online, a memorial site, placed the following statement on the opening page of his website: "Please note: Dear Friends, I am closing all the guest books on Angels Online. I regret this step, but the spammers and the porn sites have forced me to do it. There are some sick and disgusting people out there! If you want your guest book, please save it to your local computer. I am sorry!" www.angelsonline.com, August 10, 2004. On memorial Internet sites, see Margaret Olin, "The Winter Garden and Virtual Heaven," in *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, ed. Margaret Olin and Robert S. Nelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 145–47.

57. Errol Morris's blog on the Fenton image ran in the *New York Times* online edition (nytimes.com) from September 25 to December 18, 2007.

58. Abraham Yohannan, *The Death of a Nation; or, The Ever Persecuted Nestorians or Assyrian Christians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916).

59. Susan Meiselas, telephone conversation with the author, June 14, 2004.

60. Personal e-mail communication to the author by Henrik Saxgren, July 29, 2010.

61. From the website, http://www.akakurdistan.com/kurds/identify/index.html (accessed March 2011). The sender, Henrik, is identified as a "photographer friend in Holland."

62. The first quotation is from a writer who identifies himself as a personal banking manager from London, writing on July 4, 2008. The other, unidentified quotation was written in 2006 or early 2007.

CHAPTER 6

An earlier version of this chapter was published as "Tape," in *Presence*, ed. Julien Robson (Louisville, KY: Speed Art Museum, 2006), 148–65.

1. 9/11 is an indefinite temporal term at best. I have been enlightened by the argument for using 9/11/01 instead in Robert Storr, *September: A History Painting by Gerhard Richter* (London: Tate, 2010), 11n1. The argument came too late for me to follow suit very easily. Perhaps my use of 9/11 is in some way justified, however, by the fact that my chapter concerns the myth; that is, it concerns the forces that sought to make the event generic, and these forces are the same as those that turned the date from the specific 9/11/01 into the universal 9/11.

2. For example, see the cover of *Time*, September 24, 2001.

3. Thanks to Pamela Haskins for information about the use of Thomas Franklin's image.

4. See Susan Willis, "Old Glory," in "Dissent from the Homeland: Essays after September 11," ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia, special issue, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 375–83.

5. According to Alex Marx, who kindly discussed his experiences and offered his journal of the experience and several pictures on his website, www.alexmarx.com, still accessible as of March 2011.

6. The full text reads, "All of you Taking Photos I wonder if you're so concerned with

getting that perfect shot that you've forgotten this is a tragedy site, not a tourist attraction. As I continually had to move 'out of someone's way' as they carefully tried to frame this place [of] mourning, I kept wondering what makes us think we can capture the pain, the loss, the pride and the confusion—this complexity—onto a 4 x 5 glossy. I [picture of heart] my city—firegirl, NYC, 09–17–01." A photograph of the sign is printed in Alice Rose George, Gilles Peress, Michael Shulan, and Charles Traub, eds., *Here Is New York: A Democracy of Photographs* (Zurich: Scalo, 2002), 815.

7. See www.doonesberry.com, strip dated October 20, 2001.

8. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 203.

9. Ibid., 151–55.

10. Tim Soter, telephone interview with the author, May 20, 2003.

11. According to Michael Shulan, one of the organizers of the exhibition.

12. Such a memorial exhibition, *A Memory of the World Trade Center: Photographs by Joel Meyerowitz*, was held at the Art Institute of Chicago October 20, 2001—February 3, 2002. A traveling exhibition of photographs by Camilo José Vergara also memorialized the towers. Camilo José Vergara, *Twin Towers Remembered* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press; Washington, DC: National Building Museum, 2001).

13. Joel Meyerwitz, artist's statement, from "After September 11: Images from Ground Zero," http://www.911exhibit.state.gov/index.cfm (accessed January 2003).

14. On *The Family of Man*, see Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: "The Family of Man" and 1950's America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Monique Berlier, "The *Family of Man*: Readings of an Exhibition," in *Picturing the Past: Media, History and Photography*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 206–41, and Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 59–103.

15. Powell's statement, on the exhibition's website, reads, "We will not rest until the perpetrators have been brought to justice." http://www.911exhibit.state.gov/index.cfm (accessed January 2003).

16. Even for the kind of photographs that are normally handled, exhibition design often discourages handling, and even inhibits the idea that photographs are to be handled. Books, for example, are normally handled, but an exhibition of a book of photographs by Rudi Burckhardt, *A Walk through Astoria and Other Places in Queens*, at the Museum of Modern Art's Queens location discouraged the idea of seeing the photographs as (facing) pages in an album by mounting and framing them separately, although the spacing of the images made subtle references to the layout of the book. The same is true, of course, for exhibitions of other art forms that are at least ostensibly designed to be handled, such as artists' books. In exhibitions of designed objects such as chairs or teapots, those objects are often placed in such a way that they look like they could be used, even though Do Not Touch signs inform the viewer otherwise.

17. The sculpture was Seward Johnson's *Double Check* (1982), which was installed in Liberty Plaza.

18. Steve McCurry, in Magnum Photos, *New York September 11* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2001), 10.

19. From the titles of the film as shown in the exhibition, *New York September 11 by Magnum Photographers*, Chicago Historical Society (now the Chicago History Museum).

20. A writer like Susan Sontag, who places this myth in perspective and argues cogently against this power, risks at most her career. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). For more discussion of this, see the epilogue to the present text.

21. James Nachtwey, in *War Photographer*, by Christian Frei (Switzerland, 2001), DVD, 96 min. (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 2003). The quotation is from the cover of the video.

22. Luc Sante, introduction to James Nachtwey, *Inferno* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 9.

23. Lance Morrow, "The Case for Rage and Retribution," *Time*, special issue, September 11, 2001. Nachtwey's picture appears opposite the one-page article.

24. In May 2003, an exhibition of his photographs taken in Iraq was featured on *Time*'s website.

25. *The September 11 Photo Project* was sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, which had sponsored the WTC residency program for artists, and supports public participation in the arts. The review on the Amazon.com website, which gave the book five stars, is signed, "A reader from Los Angeles, CA, USA," and dated April 18, 2002.

26. The organizer handed out flyers in "public squares" (Union Square), asking, "Are you taking pictures in response to the tragedy?" The flyers were also posted on walls, along with posters memorializing the "missing."

27. Michael Feldschuh, ed., *The September 11 Photo Project* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), viii.

28. Union Square emerged quickly as the signifier of a populist, and pacifist, response to 9/11. *The September 11 Photo Project* was not the only one to model its own populist intentions on Union Square. See, for example, the "Virtual Union Square" of the Museum of the City of New York, to which anyone was invited to submit responses to the events of 9/11: http://www.mcny.org/Exhibitions/virtunsq/virtusq.htm (accessed July 2003).

29. Mark Lubell, who worked at *Here Is New York* during 2002, kindly provided this information about the exhibition.

30. "As a Modernist Swiss-school graphic designer in the late sixties, I knew we were going to remake the world in Helvetica." Katherine McCoy, quoted in Ellen and Julia Lupton, "Univers Strikes Back" (2007), in *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field*, ed. Helen Armstrong (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 133.

31. Adolf Loos, *Ins Leere Gesprochen*, translated as *Spoken into the Void*, trans. Jane O. Newman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 2. See also the numerous references to English style throughout the volume.

32. Like many an American artist of his generation, Charles Traub can be considered a descendant of the Bauhaus, having studied in the photography department of the Institute of Design, Chicago, the heir of former Bauhaus instructor Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus and the US venue for a vast Bauhaus exhibition during Traub's years there. *50 Jahre Bauhaus: Ausstellung* (Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1968). Illustrations of the characteristic typeface of the Bauhaus, developed primarily by Herbert Bayer, can be found in that publication. The actual typography of *Here Is New York*, however, came from Michael Shulan's Macintosh computer.

33. Howell Raines, foreword to *Portraits: 9/11/01; The Collected "Portraits of Grief" from* The New York Times (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), vii; Richard Bernstein, *Out of the Blue: The Story of September 11, 2001* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 9.

34. This information was imparted in wall copy from the Berlin installation of *Here Is New York*.

35. George, Peress, Shulan, and Traub, *Here Is New York*, 859.

36. On the power of narratives, see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

37. Feldschuh, *The September 11 Photo Project*, 189 (photo: Jeanny Tsai); George, Peress, Shulan, and Traub, *Here Is New York*, 698.

38. Susan Sontag also pointed out that captions would one day be necessary. She had probably not seen the uncaptioned publication of *Here Is New York* by the time she wrote these words. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 29.

39. This project was called Voices of 9/11. As of this writing, one can access some of the testimonies at http://hereisnewyork.org/gallery/voices.asp (accessed March 2011), where there is a note: "For more information on Voices of 9.11 please contact Ruth Sergel at: rsergel@streetpictures.com."

40. See chapter 1 of the present text. With very different effect, Christian Boltanski, like the organizers of *Here Is New York*, has published photographs without any captions. Christian Boltanski, *Menschlich* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung W. König, 1994).

41. Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame.
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

EMMA LAZARUS (1849–1887), "The New Colossus"

42. Leslie Woodhead, *Here Is New York*, DVD, 60 min. (Great Britain: BBC, 2002).

43. Vince Aletti, "Start Making Sense: Eyewitness Photographers at Ground Zero," *Village Voice*, October 1, 2001, illustrated with a photograph of viewers at the exhibition by Jay Muhlin.

44. Website of *Here Is New York*, postings dated September 2, 2002, and January 10, 2003. The size of the guest book was kept small, and some of these and other postings I cite remained on the website for only a limited time.

45. Posting, website of *Here Is New York*, dated March 13, 2003.

46. Another time, he said simply that people came to *Here Is New York* in order to see something they hadn't seen before.

47. Mickey Kerr had taken "a couple photography classes" when he took the picture at Ground Zero that landed on the cover of Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin, *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and another book, Elliot Weinberger, *12 de Septiembre* (Mexico D.F.: Ediciones Era, 2003). In 2006 this and other photographs were in Kerr's exhibition *Aftermath: Sept. 14*, in the gallery M. Y. Art Prospects, New York. Personal communication to the author by the artist, August 27, 2010.

48. According to Shulan, he resisted this practice, which was done for the sake of efficiency. The webmasters, he said, and the managers of individual exhibition sites, must have singled out canonical views on their own authority.

49. Erika Bucholtz and Reihard Rürup, eds., *Topographie des Terrors* (Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, 2000).

50. Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 106, 109.

51. Maya Katz, "On the Master-Disciple Relationship in Hasidic Visual Culture: The Life and Afterlife of Rebbe Portraits in Habad, 1798–2006," *Images* 1 (2007): 65.

52. This is a paraphrase of a statement by Jean-Paul Sartre: "If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 258.

53. Rosalind Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," in *Overexposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers (New York: New Press, 1999), 180.

54. Ibid., 181.

55. Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Principles of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 95.

56. Although the sardine industry supplied the living for the fisherman, its products belong, like Lacan, in cities, not on the coast of Brittany. I owe this observation to Doug Torgerson.

57. Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," trans. Joan Riviere, in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon and Schuster), 1963), 204–9.

58. Jack Kugelmass, "Why We Go to Poland: Holocaust Tourism as Secular Ritual," in *The Art of Memory: The Holocaust in History*, ed. James Young (New York: Jewish Museum, 1994), 175–83.

59. See, for example, Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 100–102.

60. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 39.

61. The quotation is from a sign in *Here Is New York*, Prince Street, New York, seen on July 23, 2002.

62. J. Szarkowski, quoted in Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 59. See also p. 69.

63. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 69.

64. Ibid., 40.

65. Ibid., 61.

66. On the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, see Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 183–222.

67. See, for example, the letter by Barbara Lorber, *New York Times*, October 28, 2001.

68. Amy Rice, in Feldschuh, *The September 11 Photo Project*, 96.

69. Much of my information about the early history of Bellevue's Wall of Prayers comes from an interview with James N. Saunders, director of public affairs, and Terry Miles, chief operating officer, Bellevue Hospital Center, Manhattan, on June 10, 2003, as well as an interview with Mr. Saunders on July 22, 2003. See also J. N. Saunders, A. Ocasio, and J. Lopez, "Bellevue's Response to the Attack on the World Trade Center and Its Contribution to New York City," *Bellevue View* 1 (Spring 2002): 4–5. I am also grateful to Sam Carrigy for speaking to me about his role in the Bellevue wall.

70. I am grateful to Ellin Burke, chief registrar, Museum of the City of New York, whose e-mail provided me with preliminary information about the adhesives used on the Bellevue wall, and to Walter Newman, Northeast Document Conservation Center, Andover, MA, for contributing authoritative information.

71. On the difficulties of hospitals, see "Caring for Our Own," special issue, *Joint Commission Perspectives*, 21, no. 12 (December 2001).

72. Thanks to Sarah Henry, vice president for programs of the Museum of the City of New York, for responding to my queries.

73. The information about St. Vincent Hospital comes from my interviews with Ms. Greene as well as a number of other administrators. I would like to express my gratitude especially to Sister Miriam Kevin Phillips, senior vice president of mission, for repeated interviews and patient answers to my questions.

74. Thanks to James Leach, an independent conservator under contract with St. Vincent Hospital.

75. This eventually happened along the fence at St. Paul's Chapel at Ground Zero also. Rev. Dr. Daniel Paul Matthews, rector of Trinity Church/St. Paul's, interview with the author.

76. On the lone poster from June 2002, see Kevin T. Jones and Todd V. Lewis, "The Rhetorical Juxtaposition of Public and Private Grief in Corporate Trauma: The September 11th Missing Person Posters and Wall of Prayers," unpublished paper.

77. Lynne Gilliland, quoted in Jason Edward Kaufman, "Wall of Memories," *Smithsonian Magazine* 33 (April 2002), 42. Accessed through web.ebscohost.com.

78. See http://www.bronston.com/missing/ (accessed March 2011). The exhibition was organized by Louis Nevaer, and included photographs by Bronston Jones.

79. On the exhibition, see Amy Fried, "The Personalization of Collective Memory: The Smithsonian's September 11 Exhibit," *Political Communication* 23 (2006): 387–405. The exhibition website was http://americanhistory.si.edu/september11/exhibition/index.asp.

80. I am grateful to Ann Russell, former director of the Northeast Document Conservation Center, and to Walter Newman, director of paper conservation, and his excellent staff for their hospitality during the summer of 2005, and for sharing their wealth of information about the conservation of the Bellevue Wall of Prayers.

EPILOGUE

1. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 120.

2. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 20.

3. Ibid., 180.

4. Ibid.

5. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 108.

6. Sontag, *On Photography*, 3.

7. Ibid., 106.

8. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 117.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 101. See also Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sells Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

11. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 78–79.

12. Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *New York Times*, May 23, 2004. I have quoted the corrected version amended in the online edition: http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html?scp=1&sq=regarding%20the%20torture%20of%20others&st=cse (last accessed March 2011).

13. Ibid.

14. See, for example, Ronald Weitzer, ed., *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2000), esp. 47–111; and especially Kelly Dennis, *Art/Porn: A History of Seeing and Touching* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

15. See, for example, the references cited in Richard Raskin, *A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study in the Life of a Photo* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2004), 11–23, including essays by Marianne Hirsch and Vicki Goldberg, among others.

16. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Echoes of a Christian Symbol," *Chicago Tribune*, June 27, 2004; and in more detail in the section "Cloning Jesus," from W. J. T. Mitchell, "Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 2001–2004," in *The Life and Death of Images: Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 198–207. On the photos, see also Stephen F. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle and Abu Ghraib," *Radical History Review* 95 (2006): 21–44.

17. See chapter 6 of the present text.

18. Marshall Sella, "Missing," *New York Times*, October 7, 2001.

19. Errol Morris, "Will the *Real* Hooded Man Please Stand Up?," Zoom, *New York Times* online edition, August 15, 2007: http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/15/will-the-real-hooded-man-please-stand-up/?scp=1&sq=will%20the%20real%20hooded%20man%20please%20stand%20up&st=cse (accessed March 2011). Also, Byron Calame, "The Wrong Man: Deception, Mistaken Identity and Journalistic Lapses," *New York Times*, March 26, 2006. The original article was Hassam M. Fattah, "Symbol of Abu Ghraib Seeks to Spare Others His Nightmare," *New York Times*, March 11, 2006.

20. Raskin, *A Child at Gunpoint*, 82–92.

21. Ibid., 12.

22. See chapter 1 of the present text.

23. For some of these interpretations see, for example, Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

INDEX