

**Klaus Hesse, Philipp Springer, Reinhard Rürup.** *Vor aller Augen: Fotodokumente des nationalsozialistischen Terrors in der Provinz.* Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2002. 216 S. + 335 s/w Abb. EUR 19.90, broschiert, ISBN 978-3-88474-950-0.



**Sven Kramer.** *Die Shoah im Bild.* München: Edition Text + Kritik im Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2003. 300 S. EUR 23.00, broschiert, ISBN 978-3-88377-669-9.



**Rolf Sachsse.** *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat.* Dresden: Philo Fine Arts Verlag, 2003. 453 pp , , ,

**Rolf Sachsse.** *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat.* Dresden: Verlag der Kunst - Philo Fine Arts, 2003. 453 S. EUR 42.00, gebunden, ISBN 978-3-364-00390-0.



**Janina Struk.** *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence.* London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004. xii + 251 pp. \$27.50, paper, ISBN 978-1-86064-546-4.



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**Published on** H-German (September, 2006)

David Freedberg has urged that "we take more seriously than we are accustomed those commonplaces, similes, and metaphors which reveal the power of images." [1] Images, he observes, have the capacity to produce intense emotional responses: "People are sexually aroused by pictures and sculptures; they break pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them, and go on journeys to them; they are claimed by them, stirred by them, and incited to revolt." [2] If this is true, then visual materials from the past may provide access to emotions, experiences and memories that cannot easily be found in the written documents that historians normally explore. Certain forms of visual documentation may also pose questions about the past that are quite different from those presented by the written record. Yet when most historians think about images, they tend to see only illustrations for the arguments they have already derived from the documents in the archives. Few consider images to be sources in their own right which require their own specific modes of analysis and interpretation. Michael Wilson observes that "[h]istorians regard images as supplemental in the sense that they augment a method of inquiry firmly grounded in language ... historians are unlikely to see images ... as having interest in themselves, or as having the power to generate ideas and preconceptions." [3] Yet, images exert an enormous influence on how we understand the past as well as the present. [4] Modern technical means of reproducing and publishing images have made it possible for pictures of the past—especially photographs—to circulate widely in popular histories, school textbooks and illustrated magazines, not to mention historical films on TV and in the cinema. [5] Alan Sekula warns that, as a result, "awareness of history as an interpretation of the past succumbs to a faith in history as representation. The

viewer is confronted, not by historical-writing, but by the appearance of history itself." [6]

Germany produced some of the earliest and most influential theoretical writing on photographic images (such as the work of Kracauer and Benjamin). For the past twenty five years, a well-established major journal, *Fotogeschichte*, has promoted active, often very sophisticated engagement with the history of photography. [7] German handbooks on pedagogy offer thoughtful guidelines for the use and critique of historical images in secondary school education. [8] Yet these initiatives have until recently not produced a significant impact on mainstream historical research. [9] The books under review here do suggest, however, that academic historians of Germany are increasingly prepared to think seriously about the possibilities and problems of images—particularly photographic images—as historical sources and about the ways in which photographs have been used by Germans in the past. [10]

The Nazi dictatorship attempted to create a state monopoly on the production and circulation of the photographic images that would appear in public and of the meanings that could be ascribed to these pictures. It also wanted to control the types of photographs that were produced for private consumption and use. Although convinced of the "power of images," Nazi officials did not necessarily feel that images could achieve more or even different results than written texts. The Nazi regime was also suspicious of the malleability of images, of the multiple ways in which the same image might be read—unless that picture was firmly embedded in textual commentaries and captions that clearly guided the viewer towards the desired meaning and away from any other possibilities.

Rolf Sachsse's *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen. Fotografie im NS-Staat* argues that the Nazis' primary aim with regard to both the public distribution and the private production of photographs was the creation of positive memories of German life under Nazism. Focusing upon these positive images encouraged Germans to "look away" from the terror and the atrocities committed by the regime. The Nazis banned or drove out of the country all the professional photographers whose pictures might have challenged the way the regime wanted to depict itself visually. The photographs that Germans looked at in illustrated magazines and picture books were those the Nazis wanted them to see. Sachsse points to the visual representation of Autobahn construction as an example of the kinds of images the Nazis wanted Germans to consume: "In the history of the Nazi state, it is hard to conceive of a bigger and longer-lasting propaganda success than this mixture of technical fascination, picturesque idyll, and technical competence in the wide distribution of the visual material. It is the basis of 'looking-away', of the blockage of memory with happy pictures" (p. 73).

Promoting the private production of desirable images proved to be a much more challenging task than censoring the circulation of photographic images in Nazi publications. Private photographs tended to document events (such as births, marriages, christenings and family reunions) that were important in the history of individual families. These images certainly did not challenge the visual priorities of the regime, yet they also did not actively promote the Nazi agenda. The Nazis tried to introduce racial themes into private photography. From 1936, for example, the German Labor Front (DAF) in Berlin offered courses in which the taking of family photographs was meant to serve "as a racist exercise" (p. 138). As Janina Struk observes in her book, "German families were encouraged to reflect on their racial superiority through family photographs and albums.... amateur photography magazines published 'tips'

on how to produce 'racially impeccable' photo albums" (pp. 23-24). Germans were also to be taught what pictures they should prefer as tourists on the highly-touted vacation trips promoted by the regime. When, for example, the "Strength through Joy" (*Kraft durch Freude*) organization started to offer holidays on cruise ships, well-known photographers, journalists who wrote for amateur photo magazines or DAF functionaries were on board to give instruction to the passengers. Yet photographic production for private use was simply too informal and too infrequent to lend itself readily to close control by the authorities, or even by the photographic clubs of amateurs through which the regime tried to influence canons of taste and subject matter. Only during the war, from the end of 1943, when film and other photographic materials were no longer available to most ordinary Germans, could the regime be reasonably sure that the "simple snapshot-photographer (*einfacher Knipser*)" would not be able to take any undesirable photos.

The victims of Nazi terror certainly took their own pictures. But this photographic production seems to have constituted less a "contrary picture world" (*Gegenbildwelten*), as Sachsse suggests, than simply a different world of images, which did little to challenge the Nazi visual monopoly. Pictures taken by Jewish photographers such as Abraham Pisarek circulated in Jewish publications, so long as these were allowed. Non-Jewish Germans would probably not have seen them. Even if they did, they would not have observed revealing images of Nazi persecution of the Jews, but rather photographs of Jewish children "that stand as models for a Jewish future" (p. 171). Pisarek used his own children as subjects. In a particularly ironic twist, a picture of Pisarek's infant son taken before 1933 that had made its way into a German photo archive was reproduced several times in non-Jewish publications as an example of "Aryan" looks.[11] Pisarek and other Jewish photographers tended also to concentrate upon images of Jewish cultural, educational and charita-

ble achievement within the increasingly limited, ghettoized public spaces that Nazi Germany continued to allow Jews before the war. In short, these were not pictures that were likely to disrupt the "positive" memories of the Third Reich that the regime wanted to cultivate in the minds and hearts of non-Jewish Germans. Nor did the admittedly quite limited German resistance to Hitler produce very much in the way of visual documentation. Photographs of the major figures of the German resistance were restricted to innocuous snapshots taken by one of the inner circle that otherwise looked like any other normal gatherings of family or friends. Most Germans came to know that there was a German opposition only through the films of the humiliating show trials that condemned to death the participants in the July 20, 1944, attempt to kill Hitler.

The war made it impossible for the Nazis to preserve the veneer of positive pictures and memories that had helped to support their regime in peacetime. Many German soldiers and civilians witnessed and some photographed the widespread atrocities that defined the German war in the East. Sachsse argues, however, that by this time most Germans had become so well trained in looking away that they were quite capable of, for example, including photographs of partisans hanging from lamp posts in Kiev in the same photo album (sometimes on the very same page) with snapshots of a group of front-line comrades, damaged buildings, landscapes, orthodox churches or other examples of local "color": "Here, teaching Germans to look away had quite clearly led to abnormal performance with regard to repression" (p. 219). At this point, however, we might well ask whether Sachsse is not pushing his main argument too far. Is the bizarre insertion of a picture of violence into a series of picturesque images not to be seen as a celebration of the destruction of Germany's enemies, or simply a macabre fascination with the dead bodies of people many Germans had in any case already come to see as not human? That such atrocity pictures were taken,

that they were traded with comrades, that they were shown to family and relatives suggests a morbid fascination with looking at rather than any desire or ability to look away from German crimes and atrocities.

The encyclopedic scope of Sachsse's book makes it a wonderful reference work. Scarcely an area of photography is left untouched; professional photography, organized amateur photography, the occasional photographic production of the "snapshot-taker" (*Knipser*), photo-journalism and the press industry, photographic exhibitions, the use of photography in the schools. The book is packed with interesting facts. We learn, for example, that during the war, a photographic studio in Cologne took "erotic locker pictures" of the nude wives of soldiers at the front so as to stimulate their husbands' "will to victory" (p. 192). Sachsse's own analysis is supplemented by 127 pages of original documents drawn from publications of the period and from archival sources. He also supplies very useful short biographies for several hundred lesser as well as better-known photographers. Yet, as Sachsse moves from one topic to another without always clearly explaining where we are going, he risks losing the thread of his main argument. And his central claim might have been more convincing had he shown us how "teaching Germans how to look away" actually worked in specific photographs or series of photographic images. The reproductions of contemporary photographs included in the book are too small and too few to allow this kind of detailed analysis.

In Nazi racial policy we can certainly detect a more reciprocal and more violent connection between the idyllic and the horrific than Sachsse seems prepared to acknowledge. Many of the horrors of the Nazi regime were in fact generated by its attempts to impose a racist aesthetics upon actual human bodies. Eric Rentschler has observed that "Nazism's ideals of physical strength and beauty were inextricably bound to its disdain for degenerate, diseased, and disabled bodies".[12]

Photography was heavily implicated in this pernicious aesthetic enterprise. Insisting that "pictures speak," one brochure relied heavily on photographs of "healthy" and "deformed" bodies to convince its readers of the necessity of Nazi racial and population policy.[13] An article in an illustrated newspaper depicted the photographer as a "racial researcher" whose images graphically contrasted Aryan with Jewish bodies. The story presented a photograph of muscular, male Aryan Germans in swimsuits at the seaside accompanied by a second image which showed four solid Upper Bavarian peasants in traditional costume. These first two photos were juxtaposed with a third image of two Jews on the street in Vienna caught, so the caption maintained, "in the waddling movements, typical of their race, that betray their shady wheeling and dealing." [14] In Nazi-dominated Europe, the promotion of Aryan "beauty" eventually resulted in the physical destruction of Jewish bodies.[15] Many Germans condoned or even participated in this violent "aesthetic" project.[16]

Sachsse's main argument rests heavily upon his claim that there was little room for the production of photos that would have disrupted the steady flow of "happy pictures" (*Glücksbilder*) with which the Nazi regime saturated the public sphere. Pictures of Nazi terror, he insists, were quite limited in number (p. 161). One of the other volumes reviewed in this essay, *Vor aller Augen*, edited by Klaus Hesse and Philipp Springer, shows quite clearly, however, that Germans actually took more of these types of pictures than Sachsse acknowledges. *Vor aller Augen* also demonstrates that the persecution of Nazi victims--whether these were Communists, Jews or German women accused of "race defilement" (that is, sex with foreign forced laborers)--frequently took place "in plain sight" of large numbers of ordinary Germans. This persecution, which often took the form of ritual humiliation, was staged publicly for the instruction and, sometimes, indeed, for the pleasure of an audience of ordinary German citizens.

Without this audience, much of what we see in this photographic record of Nazi terror would not make a great deal of sense.

In 1998, the Topography of Terror Foundation in Berlin began to track down relatively unknown Nazi-era photographs in local archives. Inquiries were sent to almost 1,500 archives asking whether they had in their collections photos "which document the local terror during the Nazi period" (p. 8). 80 percent responded and some 238 archives and other collections made photos available. *Vor aller Augen* presents a selection of these local photographs. When it has been possible to determine who actually took these pictures, the photographers often turn out to have been either a local Gestapo agent or a municipal official. Some of these photographic images do, however, reveal tell-tale signs of a candid camera shot taken surreptitiously by an amateur photographer. It is often easier to figure out what people in the picture are doing than why the person behind the camera took the picture. Philipp Springer observes in his contribution to this volume that photographs of Nazi terror were sometimes part of the crime itself--an extra visual layer of humiliation and persecution-- but they might also be the product of mere curiosity about an unusual spectacle deemed to be worth recording (pp. 24-25). It is difficult to ascertain how often these pictures made their way into the public sphere. Did they in fact circulate in public at all before the project initiated by the Topography of Terror brought them out of the local archives in which they sat for the past half century?

What these photographs do demonstrate quite emphatically is that in many provincial German towns, large numbers of Germans were direct eyewitnesses of Nazi persecution and violence because the Nazi terror was literally performed on an open public stage. *Vor aller Augen* confirms visually what Michael Wildt has already established using documents from the archives, namely that local communities were deeply impli-

cated in violence against Jews well before the nationwide pogrom in 1938.[17] But do these photographs also reveal qualities of this violence that are not to be gleaned from the documentary record?

What these images may be able to tell us cannot easily be separated from their emotional impact upon us. Roland Barthes maintained that photographs can have two different effects upon the viewer which are associated with different mental or emotional states. The first he terms the "studium": "What I feel about these photographs derives from an average affect, almost from a certain training ... It is by studium that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in studium) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions." [18] Much more rarely, however, a "second element will break (or punctuate) the studium. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of studium with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me." [19] It remains unclear in Barthes' discussion what exactly this "punctum" is and whether it can be described in terms that are not merely subjective, arbitrary or individual responses. Nevertheless, the distinction Barthes draws can be suggestive and important; many photographs, he insists, "have no punctum in them ... they are invested with no more than studium." [20] Several of the photographs reproduced in *Vor Aller Augen* seem, at least to me as a German historian, to project the punctum to which Barthes draws attention. But why? Barthes suggests that "often the punctum is a "detail," i.e. a partial object." [21] It may well be, however, that this detail is not only different from one individual to another but that a historian will see a different detail as the punctum of a photograph than a non-historian.

We can explore what I mean here by examining what can be termed the "incongruous" or at least, "unsettling" smile found in some of the pictures reproduced in *Vor Aller Augen*. Take, for example, picture number 203, on page 130, which shows two women having their hair cut off in public by two men. Both women already wear signs around their necks making clear that they have placed themselves outside the *Volksgemeinschaft* because they have had sex with foreign workers during the war. For me, the unsettling punctum of this particular photograph is the fact that the woman on the right hand side of the image is smiling and also apparently talking to the other woman on the left. This detail is not what I expect to find. It challenges my assumptions about the effects that this ritual of public humiliation of German women was intended to achieve. How could any victim of such degradation actually be smiling? And certainly, I am deprived of the obvious answer that it is a natural (or at least culturally learned) reflex to smile for the camera even in the most incongruous of situations. This woman is not looking at the camera, may not even know that her picture is being taken. But where do I go from here? It is unlikely that there is any written documentation which would even describe, let alone explain, this "incongruous smile."

Other photographs reproduced in *Vor aller Augen* are challenging not because of any single detail but because of the subject or activity they depict. Among the numerous disturbing images presented in the second chapter on "Anti-Jewish Actions and Discrimination," few are more troubling than a sequence of five pictures of *Fastnacht* (Shrovetide; carnival) processions between 1934 and 1939 in three different German towns (pictures 89, 90, 91, 92, 93). The first picture, found in the Singen municipal archive, shows a float built by the local inn-keepers' association and by the small-bore shooting association to represent a small railroad train passenger car taking Jews, as the sign under one of the windows indicates,

"From Berlin to Palestine." [22] Inside the passenger wagon, three "club members dressed as Jews" are smiling and looking out the windows. This float won first prize in the local *Fastnacht* procession for 1934. The next photograph, number 90, was taken in the university town of Marburg in February 1936. It shows several men, dressed as "Jews" wearing top hats or bowlers sitting on a float that is also loaded with furniture. Although clearly also leaving Germany for Palestine, these "Jews" are smiling, evidently happy to depart. The lower left-hand corner of the photograph shows three women who are part of the crowd lining the street to view the parade. One of them, an older woman, laughs as this particular float passes by.

Picture 91 was taken during the 1936 *Faschingszug* (carnival procession) in Schwabach. This photograph shows a moving truck on the street flanked on either side by a crowd of onlookers. The truck is carrying what looks like a life-size model of a shop window. A sign above the window frame announces "change of ownership" and in the window itself, a shade drawn partially down carries the name David Bleichstein (pale stone). The caption supplied by the editors of *Vor aller Augen* explains that two Jewish firms, one owned by David Bleicher, the other by Moritz Rosenstein, were closed (and presumably taken over by "Aryan" owners) in 1935. In the next picture (number 92), teachers and students from the Ekkehard School in Singen, dressed as "Jews" with large false noses, bowler hats and overcoats, parade along a street in front of large crowds during the 1938 *Fastnacht* parade. The theme of this particular procession was "The last Lebanese Tiroleans beat it." This sequence of photographs ends with a picture of an elaborate float from the 1939 *Fastnacht* procession in Singen. The float is a moving flat-bed lorry which has been transformed into a huge crocodile. Men who worked at the local Aluminum Rolling Mill, dressed as "Jews," appear to be climbing into the open mouth

of the crocodile. A large sign on the side of the float reads: "The Jew-eater (Der Judenfresser)."

These are all extremely disturbing pictures. They perform a type of visual violence which deserves more attention than it has received from historians of Nazi Germany. Saul Friedländer argues that the major anti-Jewish measures implemented in the 1930s "were not only acts of terror but also symbolic statements"; the tenets of Nazi ideology "had to be ritually re-asserted, with the persecution of chosen victims as part of the ongoing ritual." [23] In these carnival procession photos, the victims are, however, present as horrid caricatures of Jews "played" by Aryan-German "actors" for the amusement of other Germans in the context of long-established popular rituals of *Karneval*. The authors of *Vor Aller Augen* have restricted their commentaries on these photographic images to succinct identifications of subject, place and date. What we would clearly like to know, however, requires a thicker, deeper analysis of the role of *Karneval* under the Nazis which could situate these images in a wider context of changing *Karneval* practices after 1933. Who, exactly, was responsible for what we see on these floats? We know that the Nazis, especially Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front, and even Joseph Goebbels thought it was important to exert considerable influence on the organization and staging of *Karneval*. The changes made after 1933 were, however, not merely imposed from above. Often enough, *Karneval* associations fell into line of their own accord: "The Führer principle was introduced into the associations, the Horst-Wessel song was sung at meetings, the 'Sieg-Heil' greeting was used, and the Third Reich was celebrated in the carnival speech. Floats in the processions with slogans ... served the cause of Jew-baiting." [24] However, we would certainly need more detailed research on the specific localities pictured in the five *Karneval* photos published in *Vor aller Augen* before we could properly understand the contexts which produced them. The sparse commentary

provided by the authors is not adequate to this task.

In his contribution to *Vor Aller Augen*, Klaus Hesse provides a detailed discussion of a sequence of photographs depicting the deportation of Jews from German cities. The other photographic images presented in this book would have benefited greatly from this kind of "thick description"--especially the sad and evocative pictures included in the epilogue on "The Exploitation of Jewish Property," which shows us, among other things, storerooms full of the furniture and other household items that belonged to Jews who had been deported, probably already murdered. What these pictures do not show is what eventually happened to these now "ownerless objects." Who took possession of them? We know, for example, that in Hamburg, during the war "furnishings of all sorts could be sold and auctioned off to prospective buyers.... Public auctions began on a large scale in February 1941." [25] Which Aryan households now proudly displayed these items?

Janina Struk's *Photographing the Holocaust. Interpretations of the Evidence* tells us a great deal about the production, circulation, use and misuse of photographic images of the Holocaust. One of the most interesting sections of her book explores three different types of photographic representation of the Warsaw and other ghettos. In German hands, the camera became not just an instrument of propaganda but a weapon to degrade and humiliate Jewish victims. One German propaganda unit even went so far as to film young, beautiful Jewish women and strong, young men who had been compelled to strip naked and engage in "lewd and obscene acts imitating the sexual behavior of animals" (p. 81) in a ghetto bathhouse. Ordinary German soldiers entered the Warsaw ghetto with their cameras as if it was "simply a kind of 'Baedeker sight' with picturesque scenes to be photographed" (p.76). Some of these German soldiers even took their girlfriends with them on photographic expeditions to

the ghetto cemetery where they gleefully snapped pictures of families burying their dead or of the piles of dead bodies that grew as conditions in the ghetto degenerated. With the exception of the pictures taken by Willy Georg and Joe Heydecker, most of these German images displayed no empathy for the sufferings of their subjects. These German soldier-photographers "did not see the ghettos as products of the Nazi regime but as the natural habitat of the Jews" (p. 76).

Jewish photographers took quite different ghetto pictures. Officially, Jewish photographers were only allowed to produce photographs of subjects that had been commissioned by the Jewish Council (Judenrat), the body which the Nazis made responsible for the direct, day-to-day administration of the ghetto. Jewish photographers were assigned to take pictures of workers in factories and workshops and of the products they made in an attempt to convince the Germans that Jewish labor was vital to the German war effort. Photo-albums were also prepared as gifts to ghetto leaders to gain their favor. In 1942, for example, Chaim Rumkowski, the notorious head of the Lodz ghetto, was given an album, one page of which consisted of a photomontage with a large picture of Rumkowski himself flanked by Jewish factory workers. A page from another album showed how Jewish workers transformed waste materials into new boots. It did not reveal, however, that some of this waste material consisted of clothes and shoes stolen from Jews who had been murdered in the gas chambers of the extermination camps.

Not all Jewish photographers were willing to camouflage the reality of the ghetto. A secret photo album put together by Arie ben-Menachem--known then as Artur Printz--satirized Judenrat propaganda in creative photo-montages that drew attention to the Lodz ghetto inhabitants already sent to their deaths: "45,000 evacuated from the ghetto vanished into thin air" (p. 90). Other Jewish photographers took clandestine pictures of depor-



tations. Some of these photographers were determined that their pictures should survive even if they themselves were killed by the Nazis. Henryk Rozenchwajg-Ross buried his negatives in barrels. Mordechaj Mendel Grosman hid some 10,000 negatives in the walls of the house in which he was living when it became clear that he would be deported.

In the extermination centers, Jews had scarcely any opportunities to take photographs. Jewish workers in the crematorium Sonderkommando at Auschwitz-Birkenau were able surreptitiously to photograph bodies being burned and to smuggle these images out of the camp (pp. 112-114). But for the most part, Jewish and other prisoners could only make drawings of the crimes they witnessed. The great majority of photographic images from the death camps were produced by the SS to document, commemorate, even to celebrate their own crimes. In his contribution to the volume edited by Sven Kramer, Detlef Hoffmann shows that the photographic imbalance between perpetrators and victims has put the visual testimony of the victims at a distinct disadvantage. Still evidently believing in the superior ability of photographs to tell the "truth" about Nazi crimes, newspapers and magazines have repeatedly preferred to illustrate their articles with photographs taken by the SS rather than with drawings by an unknown artist-inmate (p. 186). Struk does, however, find ironic justice in the fact that SS photographs were used after the war in trials as evidence of Nazi atrocities and have subsequently been exhibited in museums and published in history books to condemn Nazi crimes.

In the final chapters of her book, Struk traces the varied ways in which the pictures she has analyzed were used to construct postwar memories of the Second World War and the Holocaust. She shows that "[a]s each nation's interpretation of the events of the war changed, so did the use of the pictures" (p. 150). The images of the camps which now stand as symbols of the Nazi persecu-

tion and annihilation of the Jews were seen quite differently fifty years ago. Memory followed national paths which often had no space for the Jews. In the six-volume British series *The War in Pictures* (1940-46), for example, only four pages were devoted to Belsen. In the West, thousands of photographs taken by resisters, Jews and perpetrators remained undisturbed in private and public collections for the next fifty years (p. 158). In Great Britain, feature films about the war portrayed Nazis persecuting British heroes, not Jewish victims. In Poland, it was the Poles, not the Jews, who were depicted as the main victims of Nazism.

Struk's book is particularly informative about the ways that the Cold War influenced the use of Holocaust photographs. Images of Nazi atrocities deployed by the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries to warn against the rise of neo-Nazism in the West or to attack the formation of NATO and the rearmament of West Germany were tainted in western eyes. Any film from eastern Europe that criticized West Germany was greeted with suspicion. It would take decades until Soviet images of Auschwitz-Birkenau would become well known in the West (p. 149). Ironically, pictures that for many years had appeared mainly in Eastern Europe or which had been forgotten altogether have now become important visual staples of Holocaust museums and exhibitions in the West.

Struk's critique of what she regards as the commercialization of the Holocaust includes an unnecessary tirade against the film *Schindler's List* (1993) and the way that it has encouraged Holocaust tourism in Krakow and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Yet this section of the book does include interesting information and suggestions. For example, Struk wonders whether Majdanek is today less well known than Auschwitz-Birkenau and less visited not because it was less important, but because there are simply fewer pictures of the Majdanek extermination center. Is what is not

pictured more difficult to imagine, hence less interesting to tourists? Struk also shows that the opening of new Holocaust museums has expanded the market for Holocaust images and inflated both prices and the numbers of fakes; "it is now reckoned that Nazi photo albums, which occasionally turn up in auction houses, will fetch higher prices if they contain atrocity photographs. Predictably, 'extra atrocity photographs' are copied from books, aged and added to albums before being offered for sale" (pp. 192-193).

The book edited by Sven Kramer, *Die Shoah im Bild*, challenges historians to think seriously about not only the photographic images which count as documentary evidence but also about the fictional pictures of the Shoah created by cinema, TV and the arts. The ephemeral nature of film and TV, combined with the reluctance of many historians to take audio-visual media seriously as sources have, until quite recently, made it all too easy for scholars to ignore the impact of these fictional visual worlds on the transmission and reception of images of the Holocaust. Kramer suggests, however, that all pictures of the Shoah--whether fictional or factual--probably exert a more rapid global influence on popular imagining of the genocide than written texts because these images can be consumed without translation; "the internationalization of picture memory happens more quickly and smoothly than the internationalization of literary discourse" (pp. 9-10).

The double-meaning that Joachim Peach has chosen as the title for his essay--"displaced/horrific memory" (*Ent/setzte Erinnerung*)--points to a central dilemma of the relationship between images and the depiction of the Shoah. The frequently repeated argument that the Holocaust is unrepresentable must contend with the absolutely endless flood of pictures "which re-arrange and often disfigure the phenomenon of the Holocaust" (p. 13). If photography becomes a "site of memory, then the photograph itself becomes a "displaced/horrific memory," even though photographic im-

ages cannot penetrate to the "interior space" (*Innenraum*) of the experience of the Holocaust (pp. 19-20). The fundamental issue, therefore, is whether we can prevent pictures from becoming surrogates for the inaccessible experience of the Holocaust.

In her contribution to the book, Cornelia Brink shows that photography's presumed ability to document reality did not create shared understandings of what had been captured on film. When the Allies liberated the concentration camps in the spring of 1945, they took large numbers of photographs of what they had found--dying inmates and piles of corpses--as evidence of Nazi atrocities. The Allied military authorities were convinced that these photographic "facts" could be used to instruct ordinary Germans about their moral complicity in Nazi terror. Most of the Germans who saw these atrocity photos did not deny that what the images depicted was real. German viewers did, however, refuse to accept the moral and ethical meanings the Allies meant these pictures to convey. Instead of regarding these photographs as evidence of their own involvement in Nazi crimes, most Germans claimed that these pictures showed a concentration camp universe they knew little about and over which they had in any case been unable to exert any real influence. Some even managed to turn the tables on the Allies' visual campaign by asking: "Why did the Germans need to be informed ... if they were supposed already to have known about the camps?" (p. 64).

Habbo Knoch's excellent article provides a dense, distilled introduction to the arguments he has developed at much greater length in his impressive book, *Die Tat als Bild. Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (2001). Knoch suggests that a public "picture memory" of Nazi crimes established itself in the Federal Republic in the years between 1955 and 1965 which remained the basic source of images and visual patterns well into the 1990s. He argues

that the German confrontation with Allied photos of the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945 imposed lasting after-effects upon the West German culture of remembering, "because defense against the visual shock was inscribed in the genesis of [West Germany's] own picture memory" (p. 93). The piles of bodies and half-dead inmates which the Allies had discovered became negative reference points against which "visual taboo zones" were constructed in the Federal Republic. It was much easier for Germans to identify with their "own corpses on the front or in the bombing war, which were so similar to those in the liberated camps. Here already there began the visual over-writing of the victims of the Germans through the imagining of Germans as a community of victims" (p. 93).

The "limits of what could be shown" in illustrated magazines, newspaper articles or school-books between 1955 and 1965 were determined more by the self-image of West German society than by any "limits of representation" imposed by the nature of the Holocaust itself. In the 1950s, for example, barbed wire and shaved heads were certainly elements of the West German "image economy," yet these pictures were used exclusively as signs for the suffering of German POWs in Soviet captivity. Germans were also more often likely to see pictures of the perpetrators than of the bodies of their victims. Knoch has found that images of dead bodies accounted for less than 10 percent of the pictures in published works. They were completely absent from school books.

In the 1960s, photographs of Auschwitz began to overlay and reshape the existing field of media images of the Nazi crimes (p. 109). The selections on the ramp at Auschwitz came to symbolize the entire process of annihilation. Yet images of this single moment reduced the complex workings of the extermination camp to the simple gesture of an SS officer's hand (p. 110). Raw physical violence was displaced into symbolic acts and supplemented by pictures which did not show the

consequences of violence but only represented it symbolically. The empty interiors of the gas chambers replaced the pictures of dead bodies in the liberated concentration camps. Germans could continue to reject any hint of their direct involvement in mass murder which the depiction of dead bodies might have suggested. Images of Auschwitz exported Nazi crimes to a modern "death factory" located far away in Poland and hence to a location in the collective imagination that was far removed from Germany itself.

Knoch argues that the visual languages and practices of contemporary film and advertising exerted a powerful influence upon West German modes of visual representation of Nazi crimes (pp. 101-102). In his article, Knut Hickethier shows that in the 1950s, West German cinema screens were filled with pictures of the recent war. In this single decade, German movie houses screened at least 600 war films or films with military themes. Yet well into the 1960s, it seemed unobjectionable to depict World War Two without referring to the mass murder of European Jews. Television's "status under public law" gave it the potential to be more challenging than film. Financed by the fees each TV owner paid, television enjoyed a greater independence from its audience which might have permitted it "to be provocative and to confront the general public with unwelcome truths" (p. 121). Yet until the late 1950s, West German television broadcast few images of World War Two and even fewer of the Holocaust. Those working in this new medium argued that television's natural focus was the present, not the past. By the 1960s, however, West German television had begun to acknowledge that understanding contemporary Germany would require a more direct confrontation with the legacy of the Nazi past. This new attention to Nazism and to the consequences of the war took a mainly fictional form. Resistance figured prominently, with special emphasis upon the ways that Germans had helped Jews. Sometimes, it even appeared that most Germans had not persecuted their Jewish fellow citi-

zens but had instead hidden and saved them. Other television dramas, such as *So weit die Füße tragen* (1959), concentrated upon the suffering of German POWs in Soviet camps.

The extremely original and unusual article by Jörg Friess shows how historical photographs and film shots were presented in eastern as well as in western European documentary films after 1945. Friess concentrates upon compilation films, a type of documentary that heavily utilizes still photographs and film footage shot between 1933 and 1945. He begins with a discussion of a well-known compilation film, *Mein Kampf*, made in 1959 by the German-Swedish writer and director Erwin Leiser. *Mein Kampf* suggests that not only the events it depicts but the actual film images it presents come directly from the past. Viewers are encouraged to feel that they are actually witnessing history. In the film credits, the long list of archives consulted enhances this sense of immediacy and authenticity. Compilation films like *Mein Kampf* also try to convey the impression that the images they use have not been re-worked. Friess shows, however, that compilation films place images in a new order and in new contexts which can significantly alter their meaning. In *Mein Kampf*, the music that accompanies the ghetto pictures taken by the Nazis creates a reception experience opposed to Nazi intentions. By concentrating on images of the faces of those who have been humiliated, the film also attempts to arouse empathy and pity.

Eastern European documentary films developed unusual ways of dealing with Nazi propaganda images and Allied film material. In some of these productions, the images themselves became objects of reflection. Sound or the absence of sound could play an important role. In the Polish film, *Requiem for 500,000* (*Requiem dla 500.000*, 1963), images from the archives were systematically embedded in a new musical context. The music (most of which, curiously, was drawn from the classical canon of German-speaking culture)

gave the film the character of a mass for the dead. In another Polish film, *The Everyday Life of the Gestapo Man Schmidt* (*Powszedni dzien gestapowca Szmidta*, 1964), the absence of any music and the sparse use of voice-over encouraged viewers to concentrate on their reactions to the images they were shown from a photo-album put together by a Gestapo agent during the German occupation. The film challenged the audience to understand these photographic images as evidence of sadistic desires and racist attitudes. In the Soviet film, *Ordinary Fascism* (*Obyknowennyj Faschism*, 1965), on the other hand, the commentator told the viewers what he saw in the individual pictures and how he understood his own perceptions.

Sven Kramer's own contribution to his volume focuses upon nakedness in Holocaust photos and films. He identifies three forms of nudity. The first was the result of the Nazi exploitation of bodies as resources. Bodies stripped of their clothes in the death camps were signs of the Nazis' intentions to utilize them in every conceivable manner, but then also to destroy these bodies. Secondly, nakedness functioned as a shock element within the Allied program of enlightenment about Nazi crimes. Yet, these naked corpses were a difficult motif for Allied photography. In these pictures, two forms of obscenity overlap one another; the atrocities committed by the Nazis and the shameless gaze of the Allied photographer. The images produced by Allied photographers of those still alive demonstrate this visual transgression even more than their photos of the dead. Allied photographers took pictures of the naked bodies of the living, including the genitals, because they displayed the unbelievable weakness of those liberated and the wounds they had suffered.

Kramer turns finally to the ways nakedness has been deployed in fiction films about the Holocaust or Nazism. In *Schindler's List*, for example, libidinally charged images of beautiful female bodies engage the (male) viewer on the side of the

victim. In other films, the viewer is encouraged to adopt the perspective of the perpetrator. Only in Pier Paolo Pasolini's film, *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* (*Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, 1975), is this voyeuristic positioning transformed into a critique which encourages viewers to ask whether, along with the characters depicted in the film, they too enjoy the scenes of torture of naked bodies that Pasolini has staged.

In the final contribution to the volume, Anja Oster and Walter Uka look at recent comedy films about the Holocaust. Their primary concern is whether comedy (or tragi-comedy) offers a way to discuss the unrepresentable which bypasses the problems involved in the debates about authenticity that plague both documentary and fictional films about the Holocaust. As early as 1989, Annette Insdorf suggested that we should at least ask what other explanations can be gained from a comic perspective on the Holocaust. But the real inspiration for this last article in Kramer's book is Walter Benjamin's assertion that "for thinking there is no better place to start than with laughter.... side-splitting humor offers thought better chances than [agitation] of the mind" (p. 256). Recent "Holocaust-comedies" have consciously refused to place the problem of authenticity at their center, recognizing that it cannot be solved. Neither repressing nor relativizing the gruesome character of the Holocaust, these comedy-films attempt to create visual forms of representation that touch the core of this horror where—as paradoxical as this may sound—it may be evoked through laughter.

Photography's peculiar power would appear in no small degree to depend upon its claim to reflect reality. What we see in a photograph is a real material trace of something that actually happened in the past—the person in the photograph once actually stood before the photographer.[26] Yet a photograph can only show that something or someone once existed in the past. By itself, a photographic image cannot explain why the event it

depicts happened or what were the consequences of this particular event. The books considered here ask us to think not just about what is present in these particular historical photos but about what these images have meant to the Germans (and others) who have looked at them over the past seven decades.

In the wake of the scandal about the misattribution of several pictures in the traveling exhibition about the "Crimes of the German Army," German historians have become extremely sensitive to the importance of establishing who took any particular photograph, where, when and under what conditions.[27] Paying close attention to the provenance of any picture or series of photographs with a view to preventing their misuse should clearly be a high priority for historians. Yet we need also to be aware that it is an often quite remarkable disregard for provenance and even for establishing what exactly any given photograph did in fact show that has made it possible, for example, for certain Holocaust photographs to circulate so widely and to represent the Holocaust in such different contexts. As Struk puts it: "There were no hard rules about the use of photographs; the only consideration was what they appeared to show. Photographs of the specific were used as examples of the general and vice versa" (p. 38). Most historians will be dismayed to learn of the promiscuous lives that some photographs have lived. As an example, Struk points to the ways that Julian Bryan's photograph of elderly Orthodox Jews digging earth in Warsaw to help build defenses before the Nazi invasion in September 1939 is "still used in exhibitions, museums and books about the Holocaust to illustrate the oppressive measures taken against the Jews in Poland" (p. 39) during the Nazi occupation. What does this do to the truth value of a photograph? Does it mean that it cannot be used as evidence? Or is its very malleability evidence of another sort, testimony to the symbolic functions of photography?

Mobility of meaning is not merely the result, in a few aberrant and isolated instances, of carelessness in the reproduction and use of photographic images or even of conscious efforts to deceive, but rather a possibility inherent in the normal conditions of production, sale and circulation of photographs. Photographers frequently do not own the images they have made. Photographs are deposited in commercial archives which "constitute a territory of images; the unity of an archive is first and foremost that imposed by ownership ... not only are the pictures in archives often literally for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs.... The purchase of reproduction rights under copyright law is also the purchase of a certain semantic licence." [28] Knowing who originally took a specific photograph, under what circumstances and for what reasons will therefore provide an insufficient guide to the meanings that have been attributed to or imposed upon this image over the course of its subsequent social life. Since "photographic meaning depends largely on context," the original significance of a photograph can be lost in the translation from one viewing context to another. [29] A famous photograph of Jews being rounded up by the SS at the end of the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising has, for example, appeared repeatedly in history textbooks and illustrated magazines. There it has usually been presented as a symbol of Jewish resistance to Nazi terror, even though this picture and a number of other photographs were taken by the SS to celebrate its "triumph" over the Jews who had dared to resist being deported to extermination camps. [30]

Germans have not looked at, responded to and understood individual photographs or series of photographic images in isolation from all the other images that populate German "visual worlds." Documentary and fictional images consort with one another. An earlier historical image can influence responses to a picture of a subsequent event. Nor is the German visual world restricted by this nation's political boundaries. Espe-

cially when confronting the Holocaust, the German visual imagination has repeatedly been challenged by an international "visual economy" of images produced by non-Germans and by image-makers outside of Germany, whether these are the Allied photographers of the liberation of the camps in 1945, the Eastern Bloc Cold War propaganda machine, or the Hollywood film industry. [31] Think, for example, of the enormous impact in West Germany of the 1979 screening of the American TV mini-series "Holocaust." [32]

Germans have seldom looked at photographs without also reading texts about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. Indeed, photographic images are usually embedded in written or spoken texts. What is the relationship between these textual and visual representations? Do texts and images reinforce each other or do they work at cross-purposes even within the same publication? What are the similarities and the differences in the ways that images and texts create meaning? Are visual materials able to provide ways of knowing not to be found in written texts? Can the images in the mind that a written text produces seem more powerful than photographs? What theories and what methodologies do we need to "read the visual" that are different from the instruments we utilize in "reading texts"?

Many Germans have come to regard photographic images as important sites of memory even when these pictures do not depict scenes from their own life histories or experiences. Marianne Hirsch's notion of "postmemory" may help to explain this impulse towards vicarious identification; "postmemory characterizes the experience of those ... whose own belated stories are displaced by the powerful stories of the previous generation, shaped by the monumental traumatic events that resist understanding." [33] Hirsch is referring here to the responses of the post-survivor generations to stories and images of the Holocaust. However, her description of "postmemory" could also apply to the postwar generation of Ger-

mans, in both East and West, who grew up with the stories their parents told them about the war, the bombing or their desperate flight from the advancing Red Army. These young Germans inherited "structures of feeling" from their parents that were profoundly influenced by these traumatic wartime experiences.[34]

In the 1920s, Brecht, Kracauer and Benjamin questioned photography's ability to tell us anything meaningful about reality. Photography could depict only the surfaces of historical phenomena. As Kracauer put it: "In a photograph, a person's history is buried as if under a layer of snow." [35] Despite these warnings, many Germans have continued to assume that in a historical photograph they can quite literally see the past. Exploring this apparent contradiction should be a high priority for future research.[36] The photographs themselves can provide some of the answers. Recent work on photography suggests that photographic images contain deeper layers of latent meaning and participate in more complex relationships with "reality" than theorists like Kracauer were prepared to acknowledge.[37] Yet, we must also move beyond the borders of the images themselves to explore the needs, desires and fantasies that continue to encourage Germans to look for the past in photographs.

#### Notes

[1]. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. xxiii.

[2]. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[3]. Michael L. Wilson, "Visual Culture. A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?" in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 29.

[4]. Thomas Lindenberger has recently suggested that it is particularly important for historians of the twentieth century to think more seri-

ously than they have thus far been inclined to do about what Germans have seen and also heard in the past. In the twentieth century the visual worlds of ordinary Germans have been vastly expanded and at the same time filtered through the mass media so that "[t]he media production is already a component of the event." See Thomas Lindenberger, "Vergangenes Hören und Sehen. Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuelle Medien," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 1 (2004), p. 81.

[5]. Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. Drei Studien zur Kunstsoziologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977).

[6]. Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1999), pp. 187-188.

[7]. See <<http://www.fotogeschichte.info/>>.

[8]. See Michael Sauer, *Bilder im Geschichtsunterricht. Typen, Interpretationsmethoden, Unterrichtsverfahren* (Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000) and Christoph Hamann, *Bilderwelten und Weltbilder. Fotos, die Geschichte(n) mach(t)en*, ed. Berliner Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien (Teetz: Hentrich and Hentrich, 2002).

[9]. For a first attempt to make the history of photography accessible to a broader academic audience, see Jens Jäger, *Photographie. Bilder der Neuzeit. Einführung in die Historische Bildforschung* (Tübingen; edition diskord, 2000).

[10]. For examples of a "visual turn" in cultural studies of the Holocaust see Barbie Zelizer, ed., *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

[11]. Hazel Rosenstrauch, ed., *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden. Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933-1942* (Berlin: Transitverlag, 1988), p. 32.

[12]. Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 51.

[13]. Friedrich Mau, *Warum Rassen-und Bevölkerungspolitik? Bilder sprechen, Schriftenreihe des Rassenpolitischen Amtes der NSDAP u. des Reichsbundes der Kinderreichen*, Heft 15; n.d., n.p.

[14]. The article was pasted into a scrapbook kept by a young German woman. The album bears the hand-written title, "Jugend/ Rassefragen/ Bevölkerungspolitik/ Kolonialpolitik/ Auslandsdeutschtum." This particular article, "Der Objektiv erfasst die Welt. Der Photograph als Rassenforscher," had presumably been taken from the *Völkische Beobachter* (author's collection).

[15]. See, for example, the film by Peter Cohen, "Undergångens arkitektur [The architecture of doom]," Sweden, 1989.

[16]. Saul Friedländer reminds us that "Belonging to the national community implied acceptance of the exclusions it imposed." See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. Volume I. The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), p. 116.

[17]. Michael Wildt, "Gewalt gegen Juden in Deutschland 1933 bis 1939," *WerkstattGeschichte* 18 (1997): pp. 59-80 and "Gewaltpolitik, Volksgemeinschaft und Judenverfolgung in der deutschen Provinz 1932 bis 1935," *WerkstattGeschichte* 35 (2003): pp. 23-43.

[18]. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 26.

[19]. Barthes, p. 26.

[20]. Barthes, p. 27.

[21]. Barthes, p. 43.

[22]. On sharpshooting clubs see David Imhoof, "Sharpshooting in Göttingen: A Case Study of Cultural Integration in Weimar and Nazi Germany," *German History* 23 (2005): pp. 460-493.

[23]. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, pp. 12-13.

[24]. Herbert Schwedt, "Karneval," in *Deutsche Erinnerungs-Orte*, vol. III, ed. Etienne François und Hagen Schulze (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), p. 448.

[25]. Frank Bajohr, *'Aryanisation' in Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their Property in Nazi Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), p. 278.

[26]. Cornelia Brink, *"Auschwitz in der Paulskirche". Erinnerungspolitik in Fotoausstellungen der sechziger Jahre* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2002), p. 73.

[27]. For a description of the original exhibition, see Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, ed., *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944. Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996).

[28]. Sekula, pp. 182-183.

[29]. Sekula, p. 184.

[30]. See: < <http://veritas3.holocaust-history.org/works/stroop-report/htm/strp034.htm.de> >. Christopher Pinney suggests that: "A greater sense of the fragility and instability of the relationship between images and their contexts might allow the exploration of why certain images prove capable of recoding while others are more resistant, and many others are completely intractable." Christopher Pinney, "Introduction: 'How the Other Half ...,'" in *Photography's Other Histories*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 4.

[31]. For the concept of a "visual economy," see Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[32]. Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, eds., *Betrifft "Holocaust". Zuschauer schreiben an den WDR* (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1983).



[33]. Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," in Zelizer, ed., *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, p. 221.

[34]. See Dorothee Wierling, "Mission to Happiness: The Cohort of 1949 and the Making of East and West Germans," in *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 110-125 and Gesa Koch-Wagner, *Gefühlserbschaften aus Kriegs- und Nazizeit. Mutter-Tochter-Beziehungen unter dem Einfluss von Kriegstraumen und nationalsozialistischen Ideologiefragmenten* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2001).

[35]. Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. Siegfried Kracauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 51.

[36]. For a thoughtful discussion of these issues, see Raphael Samuel, "The Eye of History," in *Theatres of Memory. Volume 1. Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 315-336.

[37]. Pinney, p. 6.

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**Citation:** David Crew. Review of Hesse, Klaus; Springer, Philipp; Rürup, Reinhard. *Vor aller Augen: Fotodokumente des nationalsozialistischen Terrors in der Provinz.* ; Kramer, Sven. *Die Shoah im Bild.* ; Rolf Sachsse. *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat.* ; Sachsse, Rolf. *Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat.* ; Struk, Janina. *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. September, 2006.

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