

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Essays and Photography on Jewish Matters

Marcel Herbst

HEFTN Edition

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To Jacqueline, and to our children — and to their children

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PREFACE

THIS BOOKLET contains three essays, one on photography as such, one dealing with the Jewish past in Eastern Europe, and one focusing on my path to photography and Jewish issues — plus some of my photographs. The first essay was meant to convey my personal view of photography, its historical root, and a likely future that conflicts to some extent with its modern digital sibling. I start my argument with a common observation that I challenge, namely, that art, that photography, speaks for itself: no, it needs interpretation. The photographs that start me on that argument are famous ones, included — dewily and uncommented — in Steichen’s collection of *The Family of Man* (1955), and they were taken within the Warsaw ghetto presumably by SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Franz Konrad and members of the KdS (*Sicherheitspolizei*) who had worked for Jürgen Stroop, the SS-commander of the ghetto. The uncommented inclusion of these photographs prompted a critical reception in the post-World War II years — and it set off my views of documentary photography in that and other settings. That essay was originally written in German and published in a shortened English version [Herbst, 2019b] not containing most material referring to Jewish matters; it is included here with that extended focus in my translation. It was meant as a chapter in an essay collection entitled *SichtWeisen*, but found yet no publisher.

The second essay is a republication of a book review in *The European Legacy* [Herbst, 2019a] on a voluminous edition on Hasidism, a movement I became somewhat familiar with after reading the Hasidic tales of Martin Buber (I received that book on my *Bar Mitzvah*); it gave me the opportunity to deepen my views on Judaism that I had pursued, as an agnostic Jew, in an earlier essay, *Judaism and Religion* [Herbst, 2016] and republished in an essay collection of mine entitled *Reflections on Society and Academia: Cultures Adrift* [Herbst, 2018].

The third essay is a version that appeared in *The European Journal of Life Writing* (EJoLW) [Herbst, 2020]; it was meant as an introduction to a book on photographs that is realized, in a different format, here. Life Writing is the professional focus of a friend of mine, Tom Couser, but it is naturally a direction of older people. My father died in 1974 while I still lived in the US, and I was too young, and too distant — both geographically and emotionally — to ask many pertinent questions. That essay is an attempt to untangle the life of my father (with the help of our daughter, Rebecca), it is an example of writings yet to come, and it provides a context and frame for my photography of Jewish sites that I pursue since the past four decades.

The booklet is being published on the occasion of an exhibition organised jointly by Omanut and BINZ39 in the Winter of 2023 in Zürich, a show that combines the work of Dalit Arnold, a Swiss/Israeli artist and representative of a younger generation, with that of mine. My warm thanks go to Marc Bundi (BINZ39) and Karen Roth (Omanut) who had combined their efforts to bring about this show. I should also thank others who have helped me in these projects, or have read and commented on versions of the notes or its photographs: Michal Arend, Guido Baselgia, Daniela Bittman, G. Thomas Couser, Stefan Danylyshyn, Ron Epstein, Daniel Espinoza, Pavel Frankl, Teresa Gruber, Pieke Hirdes, Aviva Keller-Reich, Herb Kells, Mischa Liatowitsch, Hanno Loewy, Johanna Lohse, Wilhelm Lothar, Vasyl Pokynchereda, Edna Rosenthal, Earl Jeffrey Richards, Neri Sevenier, Bob Simha, Thomas Skalsky, Monica Soeting, Ethan Taub, Avihu Yona, Barbara Zabel, and two anonymous reviewers of the EJoLW.

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ON PHOTOGRAPHY (ONCE AGAIN)

PHOTOGRAPHY is an amorphous medium, diverse in its form, in its purpose, its genres and reception. The images produced during the past two millennia include portraits, documentaries, pornography, mug shots, landscapes, street scenes, architecture, fashion, object photographs, war reports, movie stills, sports, floral arrangements, window dressings, pin-ups, pets; they served personal memory, advertising and political propaganda, illustration, documentation and information, art; amateurs or professional photographers took the pictures and a wide variety of equipment was used.

Photography in its present form sinks into ubiquity. The pictorial work replaces the word, the flood of images supplants reflection. Where images are taken and exchanged, captured in electronic form, sent via networks, stored or dispatched again, what is published in the conventional press and disseminated, duplicated or supplemented in new media, appears as gluttony. As the quantity of images grows, so does their triviality, their banality. Grandchildren and lovers, cakes and champagne, turtles on Galápagos, Alexander Pereira with company at

the opera ball, the *Piazza San Pietro* or the Eiffel Tower, the face with snorkel, the first day of school, the cat, José Manuel Barroso in front of the microphone, the girlfriend, the tennis round, et cetera, all this has to be captured, snatched from the moment in order to pass it on as a trophy of one's own existence or as a document of history.

The flood of images obscures the content. The image no longer shows, it covers up.



Photography is not merely expression, it is also work, craft. Art and photography live from authorship, from the artist. However, the conjunction of art (product) and artist (author) has been questioned on various occasions. When Marcel Duchamp (1917) presented his *ready-made* of a urinal (*fountain*), he de-familiarized an object that could be taken from a construction catalog. It was that alienation, that *Verfremdung*, that identified this object as an object of art. Other artists, such as Jeff Koons, proceed in a similar way.

If one follows this logic, there is often no difference between making and collecting art. The collector declares art, the artist offers it. As a rule, the roles are distributed a priori: between artist and collector, between musician and music lover, between architect and principal. Both roles symbiotically depend on each other: Adolf Loos would probably not have become well known if he had had other clients; Michael Jackson would not have become the *king of pop* without his following, and Ferdinand Hodler not the painter we cherish without his patrons. The artist is also ascribed or delegated roles that one would like to take on oneself, but cannot, or is not allowed to, or is not confident with — but are obscurely experienced in the symbiosis with the artist: that of the *bohémien*, the *femme fatale*, the outsider, the non-conformist.

At times, the artist also reverses the roles: he collects. In his art, he collects clichés, everyday objects, comics, children's toys, patterns, knickknacks — and amplifies them through his collecting. Especially the photographer collects: rar-

ities to draw attention to; beauties to share, to present as trophies; things to document; people to adorn oneself with; exoticism; voluptuousness to nourish; curiosities; political, sporting or cultural events, heroic deeds; artefacts and architectures; nature and landscapes. Martin Parr is one of those photographers who collects: pictures and books, his own and those of others. Henri Cartier-Bresson collected *The Decisive Moment* (1952). But one does not simply collect, collecting is also accompanied by an implicit assessment of the collected by the collector. The assignment of roles concerning creation and collection, formation and consumption, becomes diffuse. In the flood of images, collecting, curating, selecting, and assembling become decisive.



In 1956, Kenneth E. Boulding [1961] published a booklet entitled *The Image*. The image Boulding evoked was a mental one. He wanted to state that we think in images, and that images, mental images, express our understanding, our concepts, and guide our actions. Science lives within images: it draws pictures of what we see or want. What is read, experienced or wanted is assembled into collages, and images are calibrated, in turn, on experiences and conceptions.

Boulding's study was not directed at scientists, but it painted a picture of modern philosophy of science in a felicitous — readable — way. What we see, what people perceive, what is understood depends on internal, mental, and usually socialized delineations, which in turn influence and modify existing pictures. This is not to say that the creation of scientific images is a purely individual matter, that they do not acquire social — or, as Thomas S. Kuhn [1962] has put it, paradigmatic — relevance. Images, scientific models or theories, are essentially social constructs, even when they are images of reality.

Boulding makes clear the difference between what we explore and the image we form of the object of exploration. We never see reality, we see the image of that reality. This is not to say that we should pay no attention to reality, to objectivity, that images are pure imagination. It is experience, it is our assessment of

objectivity that forbids us to follow Alan Sokal's ironic advice to jump out of the window of his — high-rise — study at *New York University* if we should think that the laws of physics are non-binding constructions [Sokal and Bricmont, 1998].




In 1955, Edward Steichen presented a photography exhibition at the *Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA) in New York entitled *The Family of Man*, an exhibition he had been working on since 1951. The goals of that show were ambitious, not only in terms of the scope of the works exhibited, but also with regard to its content, and they may have stemmed from the postwar *Zeitgeist* of presenting mankind, after all the turmoil of World War II, as one family, as — as Steichen put it in the introduction to the exhibition's catalog — a

mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life — as a mirror of the universal oneness of mankind throughout the world.

To meet this objective, photographs were assembled that would cover a wide spectrum of human diversity, from the baby to the philosopher, from kindergarten to university, from indigenous people to United Nations bodies; images of lovers, marriage, and birth; of families and their joys, their challenges and sorrows, their devotion, their strife; of homes, with all their warmth and splendor, their heart-break and elation; images of the individual and the family unit in relation to the emerging life, and to death and burial; photographs dealing with man's environment, attesting to the beauty and richness of the earth, but also bearing witness to the handling of the legacy, the good and the bad, the stupid and the destructive; pictures dealing with the religious rather than with religions; with the human rather than the social consciousness; photographs outlining people's dreams and aspirations, and images of the creative power of love, and the corrosive evil of lies.

I think I saw *The Family of Man* at the then *Kunstgewerbemuseum* in Zurich, which showed the traveling exhibition in the winter of 1958. The images seemed icons to



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me. Some of the photographers I knew from their work, Gotthard Schuh, for example, or Werner Bischof, Robert Capa, and Henri Cartier-Bresson perhaps also, but most of the photographers whose work was compiled in this compendium I did not know. Individual impressions stuck in my memory because they had to do with my self-awareness as a Jew, including photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto. I found one of these pictures particularly attractive: it showed a little boy, and behind him young women, mothers and other children, with their hands raised, proud figures, it seemed to me, led away by the SS. I was now looking for the picture with the little boy in the catalog of which I do not know the edition (the imprint mentions the year 1955), but the picture I was looking for I did not find¹.

In the early 1960s I acquired a copy of the Stroop report which was used as an

¹The little boy is associated with Tsvi C. Nussbaum (1935-2012), a survivor. However, there are doubts about this identity; see also Porat [2010].



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incriminating document in the 1946 Nuremberg trial and published in 1960 by Andrzej Wirth [1960] (Warsaw) in the Luchterhand Verlag: “There is no longer a Jewish residential district!”. The report which was available in three original copies (slightly different from each other) and reproduced by Wirth in a facsimile edition, was written by “SS and police leader of the district of Warsaw[,] SS-Brigadier Commander and Major General of the police”, Jürgen Stroop^{2 3}. It is a report of the liq-

²SS- und Polizeiführer im Distrikt Warschau[,] SS-Brigadeführer u[nd] Generalmajor der Polizei [,].

³The first of these copies was intended for Heinrich Himmler; the second for Friedrich-Wilhelm

uidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, covering the period from April 19 to May 16, 1943. It is devoted first to the eight persons who “fell in battle in the extermination of Jews⁴ and bandits in the former Jewish residential district in Warsaw”, “for [...] *Führer* and [...] *Vaterland*”. Then come the 85 wounded, broken down by date. It is noticeable that the first day of action, April 19, 1943, showed particularly high losses for the Germans, with 24 wounded. One page is devoted to statistics on the task forces, and twelve pages to a derivation and summary of the action: in late autumn 1940 a “Jewish residential district” was created in Warsaw, which was then inhabited by about four hundred thousand Jews; these persons lived in dwellings with nearly 6 persons per room; by October 1942, 310,322 Jews had been “exiled” from this district; the inhabitants resisted further “resettlement”:

[...] on the 23.4.1943 the order was issued [...] to carry out the combing of the ghetto in Warsaw with the greatest severity and relentless tenacity; [Jürgen Stroop] therefore decided [...] now to carry out the total annihilation of the Jewish residential district by burning down all the apartment blocks [...].

The following pages contain the “daily messages”, and finally there is an appendix, a picture report with 52 photographs, provided with legends in Sütterlin script. The actual authors of these photographs remain anonymous⁵.

Two images that I remember assigned to the collection of *The Family of Man* are found there as documents 6/2022-Inv. 4500 and 12/2022-Inv. 4506, both subtitled “Taken by force from houses”. Only the first photograph I found in my copy of the exhibition catalog; the second, with the little boy, which achieved much greater notoriety, I searched in vain (page 6). However, both pictures were actually shown in the exhibition (and in part 28, *Man’s Inhumanity to Man*): Viktoria Krüger; and the third for Stroop himself.

⁴In these lines, and subsequently, the term ‘Jew’ is used liberally, in the sense also as Nazis understood it.

⁵According to Porat [2010, 107] (who bases himself on trial documents), the photographs were taken by SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Franz Konrad and members of the KdS (Security Police).

Schmidt-Linsenhoff [2004] documents this in her article “*Verleugnete Bilder. The Family of Man and the Shoa*”. Why the second photograph does not appear in the catalog I do not know.

Schmidt-Linsenhoff objects primarily to the “striking banality of the central message [of the exhibition] that people are people”, to the cloying inclusion of images from the Stroop report, and to the non-inclusion of photographs of the Shoa that were available, even from photographers whose images became part of the exhibition. By Lee Miller, for example, a photograph of a “cute” toddler with cat is shown, exhibited in thematic unit 37, *children*, but just not images Miller took at the Dachau concentration camp (1945). A half-dozen images of Margareth Bourke White are also shown, but none that she made at Buchenwald (1945). “The exhibition *The Family of Man*”, Schmidt-Linsenhoff opines, “makes facets [of a] rupture visible — not by depicting these events but with the visual vehemence of their denial.”

I would like to point out another aspect here, namely the connection between the reception of an image and its authorship. On the background of what I elaborated on Boulding, the reception of images would have to be called an image of images, a meta-image perhaps. It seems evident that the authors of the photographs of the Stroop report read the images they “shot” or “appropriated” (to speak with Susan Sontag) differently than I did. What filled me with pride, what brought tears to my eyes, what I saw as beauty, is referred to in the Stroop report with epitaphs like “bandits”, “slob”, “scum”. “The Family of Man” as fiction, as white-wash; the Stroop report as blasphemy.

The possible non-coherence of image and interpretation appears to me as a central theme of photography, also in connection with the present interpretation of the two photographs of the Stroop report mentioned above. Here Peter Hayes [2017, 198f] writes:

The only children spared in Łódź were those of the Jewish policemen and firemen who helped round up all others [,] and those of the Jewish ghetto administrators.

Almost certainly, the same was true in Warsaw, and the children [...] in those two photographs are the offsprings of people in or well connected to the Jewish Warsaw ghetto administration, people with enough clout there to shield their children from deportation [...], people who probably had argued against resistance so long as their positions gave them chance to survival. We actually know who the girl was, unlike the boy [...]. Her name was Neyer, and she was walking beside [...] her mother, Yehudit, her paternal grandmother, and her father, Avraham, who was a member of the Bund Party [General Jewish Workers Union] and the only person in this family who survived the war. Now that you have the backstory of these children and what their parents may or may not have done, do you feel any less sympathy for any of them than you did when you first saw their images? I hope not.



The non-coherence of image and content, the information on exclusion, on suppression, is another theme. In 2007, the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* informed the public about a photo album that it was newly in a position to add to its collection. It was an album of private photographs by a Karl-Friedrich Höcker. This Höcker worked in Auschwitz since the spring of 1944 as an *aide-de-camp* to the camp commandant Richard Baer, and it was during this time (May to December 1944) that the 116 photographs in this album were taken.

Most of these photographs show SS members in their daily activities and on excursions in the surrounding area. They document shooting exercises, socializing over a mug of beer, the burial of “SS camera men” after a terrorist attack, cheerful wine drinking, excursions (with “SS maidens”) to the Sola hut (in the valley of the Sola, about 30 km outside Auschwitz), eating blueberries, visiting a coal mine in Jawischowitz⁶, sunbathing “on the terrace in front of the hut”, escaping “rain out of the blue”, the inauguration of an SS hospital, the Yule celebration in 1944 (with the lighting of the candles of a decorated Christmas tree), a country drive, a drive

⁶Jawischowitz housed a concentration camp subcamp of Auschwitz whose inmates had to do drudgery in the mine.

Höcker_4new.jpg

Höcker_1new.jpg

Höcker_2new.jpg

hunt (with hunted game), Karl Höcker with his shepherd dog. Especially the pictures of an escape from “rain out of the blue” have an eerie, ghostly quality (see above): group shots with Höcker in the center, laughing charmingly, on the far left as well as on the far right male SS persons, one of them with a hand harmonica, as well as ten female SS helpers, neatly dressed, obviously surprised by an upcoming shower and animated by it to exuberant merriment of those present.



Photography only seemingly refers to the dichotomy between image (copy) and reality (original) [Sontag, 1977 (1973), 154], even if portraits of us are pasted into passports and maps are made on the basis of aerial photographs. “A simple reproduction of reality”, Brecht asserts, “[says] little about reality”. Photography refers primarily to the idea of what we show, what we want to see. This has changed little throughout the history of photography, but has become merely accentuated, even — or especially — in documentary photography.

Early photography was elaborate, the apparatuses bulky, the gestation difficult, the processes slow. Static subjects could be photographed, and stasis as well as apparatuses called for composition: the focus was on the object to be shown, foreground and background had to be distinguished, depth of field had to be controlled, gray scale gradations had to be established. Photographic cameras were built specifically for one task or another, for landscape photography or portraiture or product photography, and glass negatives and photographic papers were chosen according to their suitability and creative ductus.

Photography was never simply technique: from the beginning it had the claim to show, to convey, to capture what was seen — and perhaps to exaggerate it archetypically. The technique forced a choice: Focal length, framing, composition, aperture, exposure time, film and positive material were determinants of the appearance, of the impression of the photograph. The photographic image itself is a selection, a moment in the scene of what we perceive, what the photographer sees and wants to represent: this is especially true for the early photography.

When Benjamin Baltzly (1871, with John Hammond) participated as a photographer in an expedition to British Columbia (Canada), which lasted about four months, he brought back about 125 negatives (the exact number can no longer be determined). The effort for these photographs was great, not to mention the endeavor alienated for the expedition itself: besides the 8×10 inch and stereoscopic plate cameras and tripods, the equipment also included a darkroom tent with all the corresponding chemicals and utensils (collodion, silver nitrate, developer, fix-

ing chemicals, glass plates). The photographs represented a palette of impressions that affected the expedition members and the photographers, and they were precious in the true sense — for their beauty, their rarity.

Every photograph is an extract, a product of art. Ansel Adams believed that the beauty of the landscape, the motifs that presented themselves to him, could only be encountered impressionistically. His interpretations of landscapes and his way of photographing them eventually achieved cult status — and they created a shallow epigonism oriented primarily to his technique, to his motifs, not to content. Adams' landscape paintings seem apolitical, even naive in a certain sense, but they are hardly that, since he was (for decades) associated with the Sierra Club and jointly responsible for the protection of existing — as well as the creation of new — national parks. His 1943 documentation of Manzanar, a Japanese-American internment camp, also indicates his political involvement. Today's photographers may contextualize landscape differently, such as Adams' namesake Robert Adams.

The photographs of the *Stroop-Bericht* mentioned earlier are also interpretations. The pictures themselves are by no means of inferior quality, on the contrary (otherwise Steichen would not have included these pictures in his collection at all); and the photographers (if there were several of them) are not photography illiterates. On the other hand, the uncommented inclusion of these images in the context of the exhibition of *The Family of Man* was wrong and objectionable, indeed an actual fraud, an (unintentional) transfiguration or negation of recent history; one, as it Marianne Hirsch [2001, 8] framed, a

[...] radical decontextualization from their original context of production and reception.

This would only be justifiable if pictures (which is often claimed by artists) spoke for themselves, if they followed a generally understood — and universal — pictorial language on the basis of which they could be deciphered in terms of content (a position Steichen seems to advocate in the exhibition). But this they do not: they

require narration, interpretation.



Robert Adams [1994, 31] wrote:

Art is by nature self-explanatory. We call it art precisely because of its sufficiency.

If one approves Adams' position, and if one approves at the same time the stance I have just stated, then the pictures of the Strop report, which found their way into *The Family of Man*, are not art. One can live well with that. But does Adams' position apply in general? Does it make sense to label art in this way? Why do study groups exist to dissect James Joyce's *Ulysses*? Why is a subject like art history cultivated? Does art speak for itself? Then Adams relents:

if the audience lives in the same time and culture as does the artist, and if the audience is familiar with the history of the medium, there is no need to append to art a preface or another secondary apparatus.



Documentary photography is a term that became widespread only after 1930. However, documentary photography existed earlier, and photographers such as Benjamin Baltzly may be considered documentary photographers: they attempt to document, to substantiate, to show, to prove. Documentary photography usually has a positive connotation, since it takes on the task of showing, bearing witness, but the approving sense does not apply throughout: the photographs in the Strop report are also documentary. If one were to deny the documentary nature of these photographs, then one would be obliged to ascribe to the rest of the — documentary — photographs a truth that could not be verified.

It has often been pointed out that the pictures (and films) of the ghettos and concentration camps (before their liberation) were usually taken by Nazis, and

that most of these pictures (and films) were staged⁷. Stroop, who after all wanted to show himself in good light to Krüger and Himmler, must have instructed his photographers, and he specifically selected the shots that eventually found a place in his report as visual testimonies. Whether, and to what extent, the images of the Stroop report were staged is difficult to say; in the context of my thoughts (about the connection between the reception of an image and its authorship, and the non-coherence of image and content), the question of staging seems to me irrelevant: are the photographs of Karl-Friedrich Höcker stagings? what reality do they depict? for whom were they intended?



Aperture published a photo-book about the Warsaw ghetto, edited by Rafael F. Scharf [1993]. The photographs included in this book were taken by one Willy (Willi) George, a professional photographer who was a German soldier — stationed in Warsaw (outside the ghetto) as a radio operator. George found access to the ghetto for one day (apparently to satisfy the curiosity of his comrades) and exposed four rolls of film from his Leica during that day; the fifth was confiscated from him by a German police patrol. George’s four rolls of film found their way to Scharf after five decades, and Scharf still had occasion to question George on the matter.

At the time these photographs were taken (in the summer of 1941), the ghetto had existed for about half a year: it was now, as the Stroop report puts it, “separated from the rest of the city by [...] separation walls and by bricking up streets, windows, doors, gaps between buildings”. The photographs show a rapport between photographer and photographed, as we know it from other contexts: the

⁷Such a film also exists of the Warsaw Ghetto, made in May 1942 — by the Nazis — but apparently never completed. I first saw excerpts from this film in one of Erwin Leiser’s documentaries. A treatment of this material was also made by Yael Hersonski: “A Film Unfinished (SHTIKAT HAARCHION)” (2009).

people look into the camera; whole crowds grouped around the photographer, often smiling, rather interested than seemingly forced to do so, sometimes thoughtful; the pictures are composed, directed towards individual people or groups of people. Few snapshots. They are photographs of the exotic, of women and the pious, of children and cripples, of beggars and citizens, and some of those depicted seem to encounter the photographer (was he in uniform or in civilian clothes?) as indigenous people used to encounter tourists. What strikes us today, of course, is the condition in which the ghetto inmates found themselves (after six months); it would be almost two more years before Stroop's action (and the uprising).

Why George let five decades pass before he looked at his photographs again and passed them on is not documented by Scharf:

It would have been tempting to ask him how he felt then, fifty years ago, when he came, unprepared, upon that horrific scene [...],

writes Scharf; however, he deliberately did not ask the question: it would have led nowhere. Scharf was evidently glad to have received the four films; and he registers the ambivalence of judgment that we may encounter in looking at photographs — and that we also encountered in the Stroop report:

These photographers and their masters were clearly unaware of the reverse effect of their work — ultimately, the images degrade not the victims but those who created them.

Scharf sees the beauty and dignity of the people photographed in the Stroop report here as well:

It now seems clear that these faces, etched with worry and wisdom, lit with inner light, otherworldly, Rembrandtesque, were inexpressibly beautiful.

The ambivalence of photography, the possible non-coherence of image, interpretation, and content, is inherent. Photography does not, as Sontag writes (seems to think?), transform reality into a tautology.



In September 1941, an amateur photographer visited the Warsaw Ghetto: Heinrich Jöst, who on his birthday went on an exploratory tour — perhaps also a shopping spree (goods, except food, were cheap) — and captured his insights with his Rolleiflex. Four decades later, in November 1982, he contacted Günther Schwarberg [2001] to sell these pictures to the German magazine *Stern* (*Stern* “apparently did not want” to publish them); Schwarberg subsequently gave the photographs (after Jöst’s death in 1983) to YAD VASHEM and published the convolute — virtually without comment — later by Steidl, with his own captions based on his interviews with Jöst from the early 1980s.

The reception of the photographs was embarrassed, perplexed, ashamed; people wanted to appraise the street scenes, the images of corpses and starving people, but did not know how. Survivors recognized relatives and were grateful to have found a last image of their loved ones. Daniel Magilow [2008] interprets this reception. He distinguishes (following Marianne Hirsch [2003]) between *perpetrator photography* and *victim photography*. He sees *victim photography* as

a kind of photography that fulfills a moral imperative to record facts, document crimes, and bear visual witness to atrocity [44],

and he wonders, apparently, what category these images fall into. In the case of the image from the Strop report already discussed, showing the little boy with his arms raised, he is sure of the category assignment:

The iconic image of the young boy [...] with his arms above his head marching out of the Warsaw ghetto under an armed SS man’s watchful eye is the gold standard of victim photography [...]. [44],

a strange attribution that probably results from the flawed coordinate system — *perpetrator photography* versus *victim photography* — and the notion that photographs, by virtue of their apparent statement or interpretation, can be assigned to either category:

[...] perpetrator [or victim] images also owe their status as such to their discursive deployment, or lack thereof [53].

Marianne Hirsch herself sees a different attribution for this image, for the *poster child of the Holocaust* [19]:

The little boy's picture is a perpetrator photograph, taken by perpetrators as an integral part of their machinery of destruction [...] [21].



Photography, as an interpretation of what is to be represented — and what is to be omitted — works similarly to language, only its power of suggestion is often stronger, more illusionary. Photography seduces with its apparent authenticity, with what it captures, beyond the obvious retouching. The omission, the silence, is as significant as the showing, the talking; and the shown seems more difficult to interpret than the linguistically composed testimony.

Decades after the end of World War II, Loewy and Schoenberner [1990] publishes another find, a compendium of color faded slide images taken in the Litzmannstadt (Łódź) ghetto, attributed to one Walter Genewein, an NSDAP member who worked as a chief accountant in the German ghetto administration. The pictures were intended to demonstrate the “efficiency” of the ghetto workshops, and so the Agfa slides also show mostly business enterprises, the people depicted as extras: “the entire [ghetto] appears as an orderly, clean, disciplined industrial enterprise, without misery, without hardship”; the ambulatory death machinery of Kulmhof (Chelmo) is left out, with the exception of an eventual reference, “Papianice *Juden-Bad*” (figure 393); the “pictorial histories — historical images” show “what they do not depict, what they conceal” [50-58].

One of these photographs is, to me at least, particularly disturbing (figure 311). It shows carpet weaving, weavers seated behind the vertically stretched chain threads, their gaze turned toward the photographer, the viewer of the image, the

unfinished flat-weave in the foreground, a finished tapestry in the background. The weavings are, from their designs, simple and beautiful, as if they were designed by Gunta Stölzl, made in Bauhaus workshops; perhaps they hang now in some parlor. G.W. Sebald [2013 (1992)] refers in *Die Ausgewanderten* (in a way fictitiously) to the photographs of Genewein — he calls them “peculiar empty pictures” — , and he refers in particular to the picture with the weaving frame and the young women and to the “irregular geometric pattern” of the tapestry [336]⁸:

Who the young women are I do not know. The light falls on them from the window in the background, so I cannot make out their eyes clearly, but I sense that all three of them are looking across at me, since I am standing on the very spot where Genewein the accountant stood with his camera. The young woman in the middle is blonde and has the air of a bride about her. The weaver to her left has inclined her head a little to one side, whilst the woman on the right is looking at me with so steady and relentless a gaze that I cannot meet it for long. I wonder what the three women’s names were — Roza, Luisa and Lea, or Nona, Decuma and Morta, the daughters of night, with spindle, scissors and thread.

In my search on eBay platforms (2015) for photographs of this type, I see that several hundreds of photo albums from the period of World War II can be found. Many albums, bound in leather or cloth, are empty or half-empty, the photos removed, others are still filled: “War Memories”, with an embossed armored vehicle on the cover; an album with photos of the German Air Force (Braunschweig Air Base); “*Meine Dienstzeit*”, with a spruced up steel helmet on the jacket (without pictures); “*Polizei-Bataillon Russlandfeldzug, auf der Partisanenjagt*” (with 167 pictures). Apparently photography was widespread and logistically supported (developing, enlarging); and apparently there was a need to bear witness at home to what happened to one as a lance corporal, as an officer candidate, in the *Wehrmacht*.

Some years ago, on one of my photography trips to the Val di Mello, I stopped outside Morbegno at a small market next to the road that offered all kinds of antiques for sale. One of the dealers was from Poland, and to my amazement I found

⁸The citation is from the English edition, *The Emigrants*, translated by Michael Hulse.

several Leica IIIs for sale, with retractable 50mm Elmarit lenses, specially made for the German *Wehrmacht* (with engraved lettering). Right next to these Leicas were items that matched the precision cameras from Wetzlar: several silver pointer sticks, a miniaturized hand (YAD) used to read from the TORAH. I remembered my relatives from POYLN who did not die a natural death, and drove on.



There are also pictures of Jewish photographers, taken in the special zones established by the Nazis for the Jews. Two of these photographers who worked in the Łódź ghetto were Mendel Grossman [Szner and Sened, 1977; Loewy and Schoenberger, 1990] and Henryk Rozenkwajg-Ross [Sutnik, 2015].

Mendel Grossman was a visual artist, Henryk Ross a photojournalist. Both worked in the ghetto as photographers for the Jewish ghetto administration, and both also followed events in the ghetto. Their survival depended on producing images that were useful to the ghetto administration [Sutnik, 2015, 204]:

Ross and his colleague Mendel Grossman (1913-1945) were charged with taking portraits of ghetto officials, documenting official meetings, producing passport-size photographs of every ghetto inmate for identity cards, making a visual record of unidentified corpses abandoned in the streets, tracking physical changes in the ghetto as buildings were pulled down, and chronicling the efficiency of the ghetto workshops.

The ‘private’ photographing, meanwhile, was not approved, indeed explicitly forbidden: Grossman as well as Ross were told by the *Judenrat* of the Łódź ghetto, by its chairman, Chaim Rumkowski, on December 8, 1941, that they were to strictly refrain from “private” documentation of ghetto life.

Grossman took photographs in the ghetto through a hole in his coat pocket; but he also photographed his family members and their gradual wasting, starving, and dying. He himself died of exhaustion during the last days of World War II, after the Nazis had already evacuated the camp, at the age of 32. His negatives,

hidden in the ghetto, were found after the war by his sister Fayge and brought to Palestine: ten thousand of these pictures were kept in Kibbutz Nitzanim (located between Ashkelon and Ashdod). In the 1948 War of Independence, the kibbutz was the scene of a battle: initially captured by the Egyptian forces, the kibbutz was re-taken three days later by the Haganah. In the course of these actions, Grossman's negatives were destroyed. All that remained were prints that were still found in various places (and which eventually formed the basis of the book published by Schocken).

Like Grossman, Henryk Ross did not merely photograph in the service of his patrons: he photographed — often quite conspicuously — secretly, documenting his private surroundings, and drawing pictures of daily events and horrors. Like Grossman, Ross buried his (some six thousand) negatives, only to dig them up again after the liberation of the ghetto by the Red Army in January 1945⁹. About half of the negatives were damaged, unusable, but the remaining images formed an archive that Ross was able to take with him (and used on the witness stand at the Eichmann trial) when he moved to Israel in 1956. Ross's documents subsequently found little echo. A combination of shame, ignorance, and pride prevented an open reception, and Ross, the survivor, was denied the recognition of a Mendel Grossman, the one who perished [Sutnik, 2015, 205]:

[...] the images of the few who belonged to the ghetto elite — members of the ghetto administration and the Jewish ghetto police and their families — have baffled many historians and iconographers of the Holocaust: what to do with the visual evidence of the privileged Jews spending merry moments with colleagues, friends and family? This part of the Ross collection remained a no-go area until the publication, in 2004, of a small collection of the more controversial images of the Łódź Ghetto Album [Ross and Weber, 2004].

⁹The practice of burying documents and diaries in sealed canisters in order to bear witness with them was brought to bear in various places. In this way, harrowing — incomprehensible — accounts of experience were preserved for posterity — see, for example, Sloan [1958]; Shapiro and Epsztein [2010].

Looking at the prints and cutouts of Grossman's photographs as well as Ross's negative enlargements and contact copies, one is struck by how different they both are from the images of a Willy Georg. There is nothing of a duality between indigenous people (inmates of the ghetto) and tourists (photographers): photographer and photographed came from the same community. This is especially true of Grossman's images as we know them.

Ross's photographs are rarely dated; they were rearranged by Ross himself in Israel in an effort to publish them and bear witness, but his editions often made dating difficult or impossible. The lack of a chronological scheme is coupled with an ambivalence of interpretation: is it the early ghetto that appears in the picture, or is it the privileged position of those portrayed (employees of the ghetto administration such as Grossman and Ross, members of the internal police, the fire department, etc.) that was captured? Moreover, the distinction between 'official' and 'private' photographs is not always given a priori, and the striking — testifying — photographs arguably span both categories. One series of images, for example, shows the removal of excrements on carts pulled and pushed by people, and the images have a pathos as if Helene Weigel as Mother Courage were pulling the cart, as if Bertold Brecht had re-enacted and directed the scene. Other images show gallows and executions, people being murdered, people being seized by force. In some of these pictures, which present the ghetto police at their "work" or which display imminent "expulsions" (to death), the composition of the image makes it clear that the corresponding photographs were taken clandestinely.



In 1982 (or so I think) I attended a slide lecture by Roman Vishniac which he gave as part of his exhibition organized by the *Fotostiftung Schweiz* at the Kunsthaus Zürich. I don't know when I first came across Vishniac, but I own a signed copy of a publication by the *ICP Library of Photographers* [Capa and Karia, 1974], which was given to me on the occasion of my 40th birthday (1978); and I own another document, a special edition presented to the members of the Omanut Asso-

ciation on ROSH HASHANAH 5740 (1979) — with a dedication by Roman Vishniac [1965].

To the lecture I went with some expectations. The images of Vishniac, those of the *Vanished World*, moved me deeply. I saw in them a projection field for my longing for the lost, the erased. The Shoah does not only capture millions of murdered people, it also denotes the loss of cultures, of Jewish culture and language, of a home. It is perhaps this second aspect that I treasure the most, an aspect which seems difficult to be grasped, which can hardly be comprehended by the normal population, and which must be counteracted.

To my astonishment, Vishniac did not show his famous pictures in his slide presentation, but photographs from the Fex Tal (in the Engadin). Vishniac used to spend the summer months there for years, in the Pensiu Crasta, and he showed his audience landscapes with which they were familiar, geraniums on the window sills: colored “postcards”, as Evelyn Hofer pejoratively called such shots¹⁰. I was disturbed. Yes, I knew the Fex Tal (in winter), but we feel more comfortable in Bregaglia. In the Lower Engadin, in the Bernina, in Bregaglia, in the Val di Spluga, in the Val Masino and Val di Mello I photographed and photograph myself. Vishniac’s pictures were trivial. They were especially trivial on the background of his earlier works: I was really disgruntled, disappointed, unsettled. I wondered why Vishniac’s assessment of his photographs (shown at the time) differed from mine (perhaps this was how he sought to confront his grief over what had been erased); and I wanted to know to what extent the subject determined the quality of a photograph: *In photography*, says Sontag, *the subject matter always pushes through [...]*.

Writing down this reminder led me to look at Vishniac’s Œvre at the *International Center of Photography* (ICP) (online). 8,886 photographs are listed there, of which 486 are from POYLN (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine), incl. duplicates, the region of his famous and touching photographs. The yield of these photographs is very high: often every second image is remarkable, with many icons among them.

¹⁰Personal communication.

Vishniac did not follow Henri Cartier-Bresson's diction that an image should never be cropped (Cartier-Bresson, with a life's work of some seventy thousand negatives, and a known oeuvre of a few hundred images, could afford this form of expression — unlike Vishniac). Vishniac cropped many images, as the ICP reports, and thus — retrospectively — focused the image on those aspects of the shot that seemed important to him to highlight: grandiose compositions often.

The Vishniac archive shows 1,047 pictures from Germany, taken (usually) before his famous shots from POYLN (1920-30) or even after the war, children, portraits of people, events, chess players, flowers, school classes, et cetera, or landscape shots from shattered Berlin, but few of the pre-war photographs have the density and expressiveness of his shots from POYLN (I will not go into the post-war shots here; they refer to other subjects). In the collection there are portraits of Joseph Schmidt, and also one or two fine portraits of Julius Bab, a photograph from the Berlin Zoo (dated early 1930s)¹¹, shots of his daughter Mara in front of a shop window advertising products for “race care” (1933), then, abruptly, an excellent image of an egg crate¹², taken around 1938 in a Jewish educational country estate in preparation for a possible emigration to Palestine (*Gut Winkel*, Spreehagen in der Mark, Brandenburg); but as a rule, the photos are no better than those that could probably be found in many photo albums of that time.

Then, Switzerland: here 169 pictures of this collection were taken with the designated location, pictures from the 1920s (but also from later years of the post-war period), from the Engadin (and other places); besides, I think I can identify some pictures from Switzerland (and the Fex Tal) that have no location indication: Landscapes, thunderclouds, grasses, splashing waters, winter and summer shots, snow crystals, tree lichen, rootstocks, houses, viper snakes, pigeons, people, family and acquaintances. Then, again abruptly, a sky reflected in the roof of a car¹³. I

¹¹Accession Number: RVB_2005_329_53_007.

¹²Accession Number: RVB_2005_329_061_017.

¹³Accession Number: RV_13_030_025.

can't find the color photos from the Fex Tal that irritated me so much (but I didn't find the time to work my way through the whole archive of more than eight thousand shots) — and now I'm not quite sure if the slides I saw then were in color.

For all the pictures that were not taken in POYLN, Vishniac's art is hard to see: the yield of good visuals is small, and the few very good photographs may have been the result of chance rather than mastery. A similar argument can probably be made regarding Henri Cartier-Bresson or Robert Frank (whose negative archives I never saw)¹⁴. Vishniac's high quality shots from POYLN must be related to his empathy — but also to the subject matter.



Language is usually understood as an idiom, as language written or spoken by individuals with all the peculiarities that are distinctive for these persons. Language in the generic sense, as understood by a Duden commission, lies outside the normal meaning. If language is the subject of a “literary club”, then the personalized language of individual writers is addressed, their idiom. Photography would be understood in a similar way.

Any photograph has multiple meanings, [says Sontag]; [s]trictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph; [and,] [t]he ethical content of photographs is fragile; [and,] photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it; [however, photographs] are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing.

Photography is possessive, voyeuristic, appropriating, banal, documenting, engaging, distinguishing, enlightening, æstheticizing, invasive, ritualized, denying, seductive, deceptive, deceiving. Walter Benjamin's much-quoted statement about “the rise and decline of photography”, about the “[pre-industrial] flowering of photography”, is reinterpreted by Benjamin himself. Photography is a medium, like language; its content is not obvious: it is a matter of deciphering it.

¹⁴In the meantime, however, I saw *Don't Blink — Robert Frank* (2016) by Laura Israel, and it seems likely that Frank had a very good yield in his early photography.



The “Little History of Photography” as reflected by Benjamin (1930) names photographers of formative importance: Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), Louis Daguerre (1787-1851), Hippolyte Bayard (1801-87), David Octavius Hill (1802-70), Carl Ferdinand Stelzner (1805-94), Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79), Carl Albert Dauthendey (1819-96), Nadar [pseudonym for Gaspard-Félix Tournachon] (1820-1910), Pierre-Louis Pierson (1822-1913), Charles-Victor Hugo (1826-71), Eugène Atget (1857-1927), Karl Bloßfeld (1865-1932), August Sander (1876-1964), László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), and Germaine Krull (1897-1985). With the exception of the latter two, all these photographers practiced a slow, lasting, contemplative photography, such as is peculiar to the 19th century — of necessity, it should be added.

Photography is closely related to technique. The early daguerrotypes that became widespread in the 1840s were unique, as were the new Polaroid pictures 100 years later. The low light sensitivity of the coated copper plates required long exposure times, which, according to Benjamin, gave the daguerrotypes a “magical value”. Subsequent photography of large-format negatives (glass and film) was also characterized by a tranquility of rendering, with rich detail, depth of field, and delicate hues of the positive images. The movement — the rustle of the leaves, the flow of the water, the blink of an eye — was not frozen, but recorded as a breath or entirely covered by the duration: “even the wrinkles that a robe throws in these pictures last longer”. The snapshot became possible only with the introduction of the flash or light-sensitive films.

Painting and photography were once close and mutually influenced each other. The — pictorialist — photography was oriented towards painting, and painting made use of photography. Today, the focus is more on the influence of photography on painting — or on fine art in general. Similar relationships can be shown between literature — or journalism — and photography. Literary men photographed; or they had their texts accompanied by photographs which they contributed themselves or found within their environment.

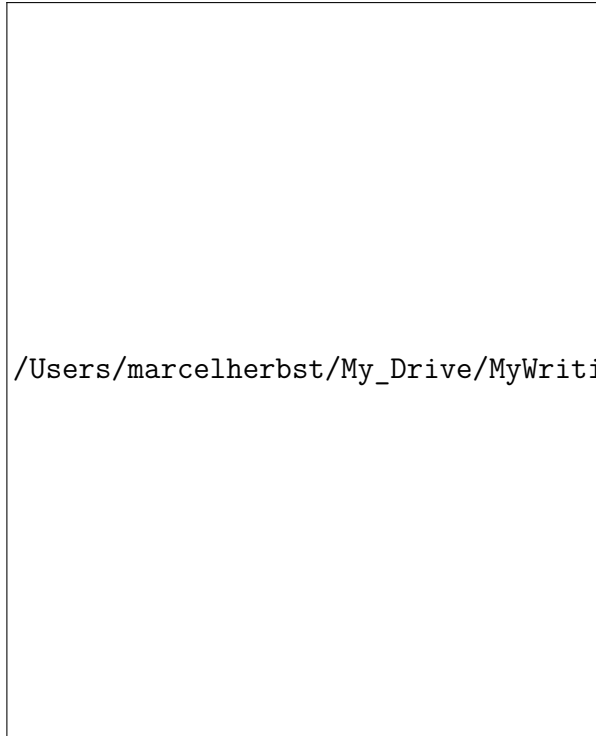
Jacob A. Riis, a socially critical journalist who worked in New York at the end of the 19th century and documented in writing the misery, the distressing circumstances of immigrants in their dwellings, turned to photography, first in collaboration with assistants, and soon after on his own. Riis depended on flash photography, which first became widespread at this time, and he distinguished himself as one of the first photojournalists and ‘investigative’ journalists. His writing, *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890, mobilized the public for a politics of reform.

Another socially critical photographer is Lewis Hine who found photography in the early 20th century. Hine worked for a number of institutions that allowed him to critically follow social conditions, such as the *National Child Labor Committee*, the *American Red Cross*, the *Tennessee Valley Authority*, and the *Works Progress Administration*; he also documented the construction of the *Empire State Building* in New York, and with this reportage perhaps created those images with which contemporary reception primarily associates him.

Documentary — socially critical — photography was not the only direction of the new medium. More significant in terms of resonance were probably other tendencies, especially after World War I: fashion, product photography, political propaganda, sports, experimental photography, art. Photography and film, photography and graphics influenced each other, especially in the early USSR and in Germany. Around 1920, 35mm and medium format photography gained importance and successively displaced larger negative formats from some applications in Europe. This led to a stylistic break that separated Europe from the U.S. which can be traced until after 1970.



North American photography in the early twentieth century oscillated between art and documentary photography. Fashion and fashion journals (*Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*) combined with a photography of “inner visions”, as F. Jack Hurley



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[1974, 13] paraphrases it, of “abstract beauty” as cultivated by masters such as Steichen, Stieglitz, Strand, and Weston. Alongside this was the practice of documentary photography which was indebted to the media and authorities, but also intended to function as part of a social science.

A precursor to institutional documentary photography, as later championed by agencies such as Magnum, was the Farm Security Administration (FSA) as part of the U.S. Resettlement Administration (RA), established under the Roosevelt Administration in 1935 by Rexford G. Tugwell, an economist. Tugwell was one of

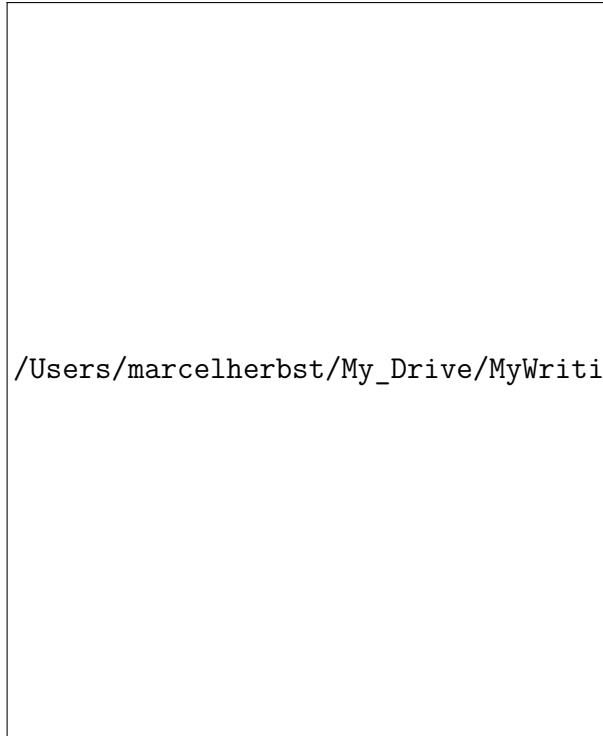
those social scientists who used photography in his work [Munro et al., 1925], and he assigned Roy Stryker, one of his co-authors, to head the new — photographic-documentary — FSA. Stryker, who found photography (which he never practiced) through this work but curated in a creative way, appointed photographers to the task who would put a formative face on documentary photography, including Dorothea Lange, John Vachon, Ben Shahn, Carl Mydans, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, Theodor Jung, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, John Collier, Gordon Parks, and Jack Delano.

The FSA set a broad goal, a “pictorial record of life in the United States”, as Arthur Rothstein (1964) put it, and it worked in the service of a governmental authority that sought to implement the *New Deal* in planning terms. But it was not servanthood that distinguished the FSA, for it had great freedom in interpreting its mission; it operated in a subsidiary manner. The freedom in the fulfillment of a task that was not meant to last forever and that we do not even know (anymore) in today’s age of *agency theory* and “performance mandates” was, of course, in contrast to a hierarchically organized, authority-believing bureaucracy to which officials like Adolf Eichmann referred. What distinguished the work of the FSA and made it a monument to American photography was its decentralized humanism, which imbued all of these photographs, regardless of their authorship.



In today’s reception of the FSA, two of the photographers, Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, are prominent. Lange’s reportage and iconic images symbolize the FSA for many; and Walker Evans’s depictions of the *vernacular architecture*, the posters and bill-boards, its interiors, storefronts and churches, ramshackle mansions, graves, suburbs, and railroad viaducts, are considered influential in landscape photography — but also in the pop art — of later generations.

Focusing on two of the photographers, however, hardly does the FSA justice and may have its origins in an ahistorical view of the period that ignores the pho-



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tographers' personalities, seniority, and subsequent careers: Marion Post Wolcott, for example, married and gave up professional photography as a mother; Ben Shahn later returned to his painting; Walker Evans was fortunate that the *Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA) devoted an exhibition to him in 1938, *American Photographs*, the first photography exhibition ever granted by MoMA to a single photographer. When I first went through the FSA material at the *Library of Congress* in 1970, I was impressed, even euphorized, by the qualitative coherence of the documents.

What is amazing about the FSA is the unity that characterizes the oeuvre, de-

spite the diversity of talents and training paths. Although the photographers rarely worked with each other, saw each other little or never, they were bound together through Roy Stryker's *genius*, as Lange calls it, through Stryker's close guidance of the photographers¹⁵, through his comparative image discussions, his detailed scripts, which were not to be followed, but were to be stimulating. A largely shared visual language, a collective style, was the result¹⁶.

FSA's photography was engaged, it was meant to be useful, but it was not manipulative in a programmatic sense. Nevertheless, FSA faced accusations of inappropriate use of photographs. Two cases may illustrate this. In 1936 Dorothea Lange photographed a woman, Florence Owens Thompson, whom she approached only fleetingly without entering into an actual dialogue with her, and whose portrait, under the name *Migrant Mother* (1936), achieved world fame — and notoriety — (page 27):

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me¹⁷.

¹⁵Lange and Evans may be the exception here: Lange worked in California, and communication between her and Stryker was usually in writing; Evans was happy to be employed by the FSA, but worked independently, according to his own vision (which Stryker, who appreciated Evans, accepted).

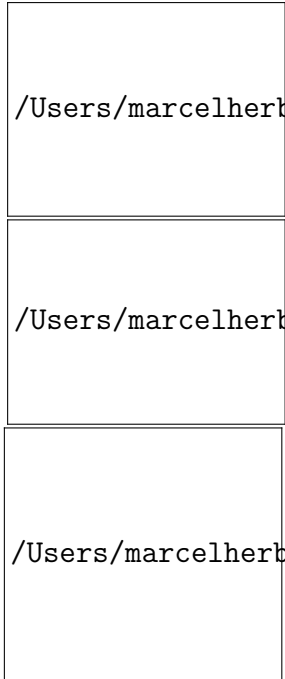
¹⁶Contemporary projects differ greatly from the work of the FSA, for example, the work launched by Frédéric Brenner on Israel and the West Bank — with photographers Brenner, Wendy Ewald, Martin Kollar, Josef Koudelka, Jungjin Lee, Gilles Peress, Fazal Sheikh, Stephen Shore, Rosalind Solomon, Thomas Struth, Jeff Wall, and Nick Waplingtonas [Cotton, 2014].

¹⁷Cited by www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html, resp. *Popular Photography*, Feb. 1960.

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The contrast between the eventual omnipresence of the portrait and the actual un-observance of the portrayed proved burdensome to the *quid pro quo* that Lange claimed.

The second case concerns a recording by Arthur Rothstein, *The Skull* (1936). Rothstein documented the infamous sandstorms that exposed soils and rendered fields barren, a catastrophe of great dimension — and cause of a migration that Lange also sought to accompany. Rothstein had been on the road for weeks, and had completed the tasks Stryker assigned him, but a salina, a dried salt depression or *arroyo* he saw next to his route piqued his interest: he saw it as symbolic of the



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dry spell the region was suffering from, which was to be documented, and he also found a bleached cattle skull (which were not uncommon in the area) in its immediate vicinity (page 32):

I found myself in South Dakota on cracked earth where there was a skull, and I made a lot of photographic exercises using the skull, the texture of the earth, the cracks in the soil, the lighting, how the lighting changed from the east to the west as the sun went down. I spent a good part of the day taking pictures of it, near a piece of cactus, on grass — you know — and experimenting with it.

Rothstein sent all these pictures to the FSA. There they were unearthed by a picture editor of the *Associated Press* (AP), who then distributed them, exemplifying

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the drought. The editor of the *Fargo Forum* (North Dakota), a local daily newspaper, receiving these images through AP, caused a storm of outrage among political opponents of the Roosevelt Administration, who classified the photographs as staged: *It's A Fake* [Hurley, 1974, 86f]¹⁸. “Scenes” such as these point to a theme inherent in documentary photography — humanitarian or not [Zelizer, 1998].



Today’s focus on Lange and Evans eclipses an aspect of the FSA’s work that should be expanded or rediscovered: its work with color, and the FSA’s pioneering

¹⁸*Fake News* is, of course, a modern phenomenon that probably gained some prominence around 1940, but that finally mutated into a term after 2000, with the proliferation of electronic social media.

role with photographs by William Eggleston and Stephen Shore. Contemporary photographers working in color have been inspired by FSA images in general; the extended question would be whether FSA's color work fed into such inspirations.

In 1935, the year the FSA began its work, Kodachrome slide film was introduced, a film of excellent quality and subtle color expressiveness. Walker Evans and Carl Mydans, and later Dorothea Lange, left the FSA before this new medium became widely available; Gordon Parks initially stuck with his black-and-white work; but seven of the FSA photographers made use of the new possibilities: John Collier, Jack Delano, Russell Lee (page 33), Louise Rosskam, Arthur Rothstein, John Vachon, and Marion Post Wolcott. About 100 reports used color photography; and Jack Delano was that FSA photographer who used the new medium most frequently.

For the photographers themselves, color photography was a new challenge. It was now not just gradations of gray that had to lend plasticity to an image, but shades of color, harmonious or contrasting, garish or pastel. The exaggerations that could be peeled out in black-and-white photography with the light-dark discrepancy, with the development of negative and positive, with any selenium or sulfur toning, were now more complex: it was no longer so easy for the photographer to emphasize the essentials and place them in the foreground. The early stylistic confidence of the FSA photographers is all the more astonishing, as if they had taken their cue from the portraits and still lifes of Renaissance painting, from the landscapes of Flemish painting.



Roland Barthes [1980] describes photography (in *Le chambre claire*) in the context of the triangle of (i) photographer (author), (ii) subject of photography (object), and (iii) viewing of the image (viewer) — and hereby refers to Morris' semiotics or Peirce's *theory of signs*¹⁹. Literature can be imagined in a similar way: writing

¹⁹I found, subsequently, two authors (of questionable merit) to have used that triangular rela-

(author), the described (*plot*), reading (reader). The three vertices of the triangle allow for three two-way relationships (author and object, viewer and object, and author and viewer), which would have to be explained and explored in the context of a critical examination of the subject matter. This is precisely what Steichen's *Family of Man* did not do. When Robert Adams (viewer) writes about Paul Strand (author) and his portrait of (some) Mr. Bennett (object), made as part of a series of photographs *Time in New England* in 1944, he paints a picture of harmony that has the glow of an El Greco. Strand's love of his homeland finds a correspondence in that of Adams, and Strand's affinity vis-à-vis Mr. Bennett, a local person, finds an echo in Adams' emotions toward the portrayed. No dissonance is found here.

Do great images exist that are marked by dissonance? Of course²⁰. Let's take, for example, the series of images that Gabriele Basilico brought home from the shattered Beirut (1991). The view of the photographer as well as that of the (normal) viewer towards the object, the destroyed city, run parallel. Beirut, the Paris of the Middle East, shows itself after the civil war (1975-90) in all misery — as a city. No people are necessary in the photographs to make this catastrophe tangible; the bare rebar, the shot facades, brought out with all the brilliance of his photographic art, suffice. Lynn Cohen's images of deserted offices, waiting rooms, stairwells, hairdressing salons, classrooms, lobbies, reception rooms, flight simulators, banquet halls, et cetera, which she groups together under the title *Occupied Territory*, are much more ambivalent in this respect, because a cultural critique resonates that appeals to the trained viewer. Martin Parr proceeds similarly with his glistening colorful images of a British working class feasting on sausages, beer, and ketchup, or of an upscale society with its décolletés and diamonds, whereby the statement oscillates in its ambiguity between arrogance and affection.

tionship around the same time or before: Hans Robert Jauß [1982], and Hubertus Lossow [1941].

²⁰Images from the Stroop report have, after all, already been presented. Dissonance here refers (for us) not so much to the relation of photographer and object, but to the pairing of photographer and viewer

The relationship ‘viewer-object’ naturally plays a significant role. The openings of the photo galleries are frequented by *habitués* and representatives of the cultural scene who feast on the imagery of the “other” — on poverty, the favelas, the maltreated of war, drug addicts, prostitutes; or at the stages of the strong and the beautiful, the palm fenced azure swimming pools, the tanned faces of rock stars, the ice floes of Antarctica, the skyline of Dubai; or at nude pictures, staged like perfume flacons. Both the fascination with the other and with the strong and beautiful have an oppressive side that goes hand in hand with a clarification of the situation from which one is viewing. The viewer-object relationship, the reception of photography, is usually that of a voyeur; and the author-viewer relationship is affected by the commercial calculation, the sellout. Just as the tourist destroys indigenous cultures with his buying behavior by perverting the original with his ideas of taste, the consumer also influences photography; or he inspires an obsessively working Nobuyoshi Araki:

Artists sometimes claim [writes Robert Adams [1994, 29]] that they work without thought of an audience — that they make pictures just for themselves. We are not deceived. The only reward worth that much effort is a response, and if no one pays attention, or if the artist cannot live on hope, then he or she is lost.



A few years ago I saw an exhibition of striking images by Susan Meiselas at the *International Center of Photography* in New York (2008-09). I even think I was present at the opening, but this may be wrong: perhaps I am just imagining this. In my memory I see white covered tables, appetizing finger food, white wine, mineral water. I see an interested public, art aficionados, photography enthusiasts, women and men neatly and fashionably dressed, engaged in conversation or even looking at the photographs.

The contrast with Meiselas’ images could not have been greater. One of these photographs particularly stuck in my memory. It showed a dead man in a hilly,

tropical landscape in Nicaragua, not far probably from Lago Xolotlan or the sea. The lower body of this dead man was clothed, the blue jeans wrapped around it, but the upper body was missing: only the bare spine was visible, everything else had probably been eaten away by some vermin²¹. A ghastly scene, in color. Susan Meiselas writes on this (1988):

I used to get in the car as early in the morning as I could and just drive, looking for things that seemed unusual. One day I was driving on the outskirts of Managua when I smelled something. It was a very steep hill, and as I got closer to the top the odor overwhelmed me. I looked out and saw a body and stopped to photograph it. I don't know how long it had been there, but long enough for the vultures to have eaten half of it. I shot two frames, I think, one in color and one in black and white, then got out.

The images I made of the body were powerful partly because of the contrast with the beauty of the landscape. For me [the photo] was the link to understanding why the people of Nicaragua were so outraged. [On the other hand] the American public could not relate their reality to this image. They simply could not account for what they saw.

While Susan Meiselas took two pictures of this corpse, Heinrich Jöst was able to press the shutter over fifty times in the face of the corpses he encountered as a “ghetto tourist” in Warsaw (among a total of 137 shots he took on that September 19, 1941, his birthday, a Friday).

In an interview (2006), Susan Meiselas commented on professional photography. She distinguished between *self-assigned* and *assigned* commissions, and thus between documentary photography and photojournalism. Indeed, that photography which we receive as art usually follows a self-assigned task, at least in recent times — whether or not this would be subsumed under a category of ‘documentary


²¹Legend: “Cuesta del Plomo, hillside outside Managua, a well known site of many assassinations carried out by the [Nicaraguan] National Guard” (1978-79), see: <https://www.susanmeiselas.com/nicaragua>.



/Users/marcelherbst/My_Drive/MyWritings/SichtWeisen/Photos/Wern

photography’. But the distinction should not be overestimated. The photographers of the *Farm Security Administration* followed a general mandate, but they were essentially free to shape that assignment; and something similar can be said of Werner Bischof when he worked for Arnold Kübler and the magazine *Du* (page 38).

Another distinction Meiselas pointed out is that of a *documentation* vis-à-vis a *re-enactment*, a staging. Meiselas is committed to documentation, i.e. a personal view of what is going on ‘outside’. The distinction between documentation and staging is often fluid (as already indicated). Diane Arbus may have worked in this gray area, or William Eggleston. Pictures by Helmar Lerski, Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall or Nobuyoshi Araki are generally staged. Staged photography follows its own laws, and it usually also involves a scenic effort that has gained validity in the studio and subsequently became widespread “in the field”.



/Users/marcelherbst/My_Drive/MyWritings/SichtWeisen/Photos/rosevillecott

While Lerski — shortly after 1930 — captured the sun on the rooftops of Tel-Aviv for his portrait series “Metamorphoses”, in a sense a counter-project to August Sander’s “People of the 20th century”, modeling the shadows on faces with cloths and mirrors, Araki meets his models with a staff of lighting technicians, makeup artists and assistants to reinterpret photographically the traditional Japanese art of erotic woodblock printing, *shunga*: mouth lips, rotated 90°, become pubic lips, vulvas; mushrooms, penes; orchids, vaginas; Edward Weston’s *peppers* Charis Wilson’s buttocks.

Outdoor shots at dusk, aided by a — battery-powered — flash, serve not the visibility of what is to be recorded (as with Jacob A. Riis), but the staging. Joel Meyerowitz’s photograph of “Roseville Cottages” (Truro, Massachusetts, 1976 — above) appears staged by capturing a scene, a landscape, that probably could not

have been seen for a minute in this illumination: the telephone booth on the beach (when such still existed) is depicted in all its colorfulness, the setting sun illuminating the cottages; but even earlier, during Ansel Adams' times, red filters were used to darken the skies, to dramatically bring out the clouds over the mountain landscape or the sea. Meyerowitz, with his view camera, wanted to show; he wanted to point out the unnoticed, things that were new and dear to himself; he wanted to color the colors.



Before the proliferation of digital photography and smartphones, Robert Adams [1994] published a collection of essays entitled *Why People Photograph*. I bought the book for the title, but the essays provided few clues to answer the question Adams posed; similar would probably be Adams' answers to the question of why people write:

[...] to affirm life without lying about it. And then to behave in accord with our vision.

[Photographers] may or may not make a living by photography, but they are alive by it.

[Photography is a] kind of intoxication.

[Photographers] discover tears in their eyes for the joy of seeing.

The photography Adams was referring to was analog, not yet dematerialized, virtual, digital, and ubiquitous imaging — as used in selfies and SMS messages — and it required the photographer to command a craft in handling chemicals, films, and silver papers that acted as a hurdle and implied that photography remained a hobby or profession. In this sense, (analog) photography worked like formerly academic painting or like instrumental music.



Photographers relate to photographers, were inspired, adopted modes of expression. Meyerowitz's early works were oriented on Henri Cartier-Bresson, on Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1958), and beyond Frank as a link towards a Central European photography represented by Gotthard Schuh or Werner Bischof, with which many non-Europeans were probably not at all familiar. In his later works, Meyerowitz combined his approach based on the 35mm camera, the Leica, with that of a plate camera²²:

An 8 × 10 [inch] camera isn't for horse races. You do what it tells you to do;
[w]ith an 8 × 10 camera your approach to things is much more meditative [...];
I felt I was bringing a street attitude to the 8 × 10;

and he transferred the quality of Kodachrome 35mm film, as FSA photographers had done before, to large format.

That which is to be represented, that which is shown, claims, exaggerates: "Everything is photogenic once it has been photographed", says Lewis Baltz (1993) in an interview. Photography is no different from words in this matter, only it seems easier and more acceptable to ignore words. Photography requires quality, like other modes of expressions, like other arts; and quality, as mentioned, depends on craft, know-how, content. The self-reflection of contemporary photography to which Baltz refers, which goes beyond a quotation (of a Jean-Luc Godard, a Richard Hamilton, a Memphis group), is very quickly a *cul-de-sac*, a fashionable onanism.

²²Interview on Joel Meyerowitz by Constance Sullivan, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.

2

HALLOW THE EVERYDAY

RELIGION, JEWISH RELIGION, said Leora Batnitzky [2011], is a modern concept that evolved in Western Europe against the backdrop of Protestant Reformation during the time of the HASKALAH (enlightenment) in the mid-eighteenth century. Before modernity Judaism was characterized by a certain, regionally defined, unity; and with the onset of modernity, Judaism diversified. In Western Europe, a reform movement took hold, spearheaded by Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), which was influenced to some extent by the Protestant Reformation; and in Eastern Europe, the diversification affected orthodox Judaism and gave rise to the Hasidic movement.

Today KHASIDISM evokes images of a vanished world, as presented by Roman Vishniac or told in the stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer, or it relates to its renaissance in the United States, in Israel, and elsewhere. Non-observant Jews and Gentiles may associate Hasidism most readily with Martin Buber's tales about the TSADDIKIM, the Hasidic spiritual leaders, tales which Buber and others collected, edited and rephrased before emigrating to Palestine. These tales, reissued by Bu-

Omanut_HR_pictures/Sniatyn_1_adobe.jpg

Figure 2.1: Cemetery in Sniatyn, UA (2018)

ber or Samuel Agnon, strike a chord in our understanding of, and modern yearning for, religion and spirituality. But it was not only the tales that moved us: the fathers of the movement of Hasidism struck a chord with Jewry of the eighteenth century, or at least with sizable portions thereof, because Hasidism flourished soon after its inception within larger parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

A new, extensive compendium traces the development of this movement up to modern times [Bale et al., 2018]. In close to 900 pages various aspects of Hasidism are covered: its historical origin, geographic spread, ethos and rituals, its institutions, the various dynasties, daily life, connections to state authorities and non-Jewish neighbors, antisemitic persecution and pogroms, et cetera; and there is even some discussion on the economics of the Hasidic שׂתתל. In other words, a volume as thematically broad as “Hasidism: A New History” offers various opportunities of reading, and I shall confine myself in the following to a subset of themes that lie within the social sciences. In particular, I shall not cover, except very briefly, modern Hasidism which is treated within the last third of the volume.

Hasidism, a pietistic movement within Judaism, evolved in the mid-eighteenth century in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its founder is said to have been BA’AL SHEM TOV (Israel ben Eli’ezer, c. 1700-1760), and it grew in influence throughout the nineteenth century (and beyond). Hasidism provided a different outlook on Judaism and placed its emphasis less on the HALAKHAH, the law, or on study, than on living religiosity, on prayer. Its emergence as a movement may have had two bases: economic-political and spiritual. Its spiritual base is central for many who study this movement, but without a corresponding economic-political core, it could not have emerged.

Leora Batnitzky characterizes premodern Judaism as a unity encompassing religion, culture and nationality. In the Diaspora, Jews lived next to, or among, other groups as part of multiethnic empires in semi-autonomous settings where

a distinction between nationality and religion was meaningless. This unity was as yet untouched by the concept of the modern nation-state that came into being only after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which helped to end the European wars of religion between the various Christian denominations. The Treaty eventually opened doors for several individualizations, affecting notions of belonging, communal allegiance, and sovereignty, which together seemed to have had, in Batnitzky's words, a "Protestantization" effect on Judaism in its emerging modern form. As the book points out, Hasidism was more than an intellectual (or anti-intellectual) movement:

It was also a set of bodily practices, including praying, storytelling, singing, dancing, and eating, all performed within the frame of the reciprocal relationship between rebbe and Hasid. The very *physicality* of Hasidism played an enormous role in transforming it from an elite to a popular movement [...], a movement of mass religiosity that would take its place side by side with more secular movements as part of the complex phenomenon of Jewish modernity [2].

Historically, Jewish communities were assigned semi-autonomous roles within feudally governed societies. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Jewish population within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had grown by roughly a factor of twenty-five, in spite of occasional pogroms; Jews were actively recruited by Gentile authorities to fill "middlemen" functions in trade, administration and various professions, and were allowed to reside in a Pale of Settlement outside the larger urban centers. In that decentralized context, the KAHAL (the community governing board) of the KEHILAH (the Jewish community) governed the community's internal affairs (of religious service, schooling, ritual slaughter, trade or professions [HAVUROT], burial, etc.), but it also had to collect communal taxes besides those for the regional authorities. This opened opportunities for competing Jewish congregations at the same or neighboring localities and led to interactions with Gentiles and encounters with the new currents of secularism, which together enabled the emergence of Hasidic communities.

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Figure 2.2: Cemetery in Józefów, PL (2005)

In a review of Batnitzky's book, "How Judaism Became a Religion" [Herbst, 2016], I characterized religion as a triad: as an attempt to explain the world; as an edifice of ethical doctrines; and as communal cultures. With the onset of modernity and the rise of modern science, the first of these three pillars of religion, the attempt to comprehend the world, lost its significance. On the other hand, modernity also brought to the fore new complexities which called for explanations. In that ambivalence, there was room for a reinterpretation of handed-down notions, and Hasidism assumed that role within Judaism. These time-honored notions allowed the natural impetus to wrest meaning from the unexplainable and to fight a view which Wittgenstein eventually had addressed (much later) in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" [translation by Charles Kay Ogden]¹. Indeed, Hasidism's outer-scientific focus on, and yearning for, comprehension provided continuing opportunities to create a culture to deal with life's mysteries and to attempt to resolve them in the form of stories and parables, or in practices, rituals, dance and music. Similarly, Hasidism's focus on physicality paralleled developments in medieval as well as contemporary alternative medicine.

Within practical philosophy, there is an old but ongoing discussion on the dialectic between ethos and praxis. Judaism appears to tend to focus on the first and to view the second as derivative: this seems to be the foundation of the divine origin of the law (HALAKHAH). Modern anthropology would indicate, however, that ethos and praxis coevolve, and that there is no Jewish ethos, and there are no MIZWOT (commandments), which are not grounded in praxis. This should apply also to the emergence of Hasidism, which evolved on the bases of jurisdictional and class conflicts. The first arose when the Gentile authorities started to collect taxes from the Jewish communities directly (and not through the KEHILAH any longer); and the class conflicts arose when an "affluent elite [within the KEHILAH]

¹*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*; or: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" [translation by David Pears and Brian McGuinness].

wielded political power” and when “those who were not affluent [enough] to have a vote, but did have a voice”, were looking for alternatives:

Hasidism offered an alternative, forging an ethos that afforded common people a feeling of empowerment and involvement [29].

Hence, the emergence of Hasidism appears not that dissimilar from the rise of a civil rights movement.

As a new socio-religious movement Hasidism had to offer not only communal access and equal rights but also an alternative culture; or, worded differently, without a new praxis of Judaism Hasidism would not have had a chance to establish itself as a mass movement next to, and apart from, conventional Judaism. It grew out of social strife and a decentralized folk orientation, and a magical-mystic, ascetic and older Kabbalistic culture gave it impetus. Hasidism established itself as a religious current largely through informally elected TSADDIKIM (religious leaders) and their respective constituencies.

As the movement spread, it reached new strata of the Jewish population, and moved from representing the underprivileged to the entire spectrum of Jewry, including the affluent. Hasidic courts, through their adherents and associated market impact, gained economic importance, and were solicited by authorities to locate in particular places through incentives of various kinds, such as tax privileges or the provisions of land and building plots:

[The] aristocrats understood that the presence of a Hasidic rebbe could do much for the town’s economy and they therefore invited them to live on the premises and awarded them land and buildings as a gift [406].

From today’s perspective, a number of features of past Hasidic culture appear noteworthy or familiar. A familiar feature of Hasidism (apropos the contemporary’s preoccupations with celebrity of various shades) is the regal court, the focus on the exclusive role of the rabbi and the associated exaltation of the TSADDIK. Another familiar trait is the focus on earthly joys (music, dancing, eating, socializing, praying), assisted even by alcohol or (sublimated) sexuality. In many ways,

Hasidism's non-orthodox understanding of the divine, as expounded in the famous tales, for instance, has a modern ring, appealing to secularists, environmentalists and conservationists in their struggle to come to grips with overconsumption, environmental degradation or global warming, and intellectual emptiness:

[H]allow the everyday [...] [T]he hassid reache[s] God by hallowing everyday actions
[...] [O]ne goes to see the rebbe not to hear his teachings but to watch him tie his shoes
[564].

This is the holiness embedded in tacit knowledge, in culture.

A noteworthy feature of Hasidism pertains to gender. In traditional Jewish culture, as in Hasidism, there is a clear gender hierarchy, in women's ancillary role to that of men or, as it is expressed, in the females' consent to allow men to study the Thora, to "learn", and to participate in services. This division of roles depends on sufficiency, on relative wealth, and many men of minor means did not enjoy that privileged position (and had to make a living); and if they were able to fill their assigned role, they did so frequently because of the required female backdrop, the economic acumen or sheer work of their spouses (and perhaps their children). The original gender hierarchy was often turned on its head, for without the active role of women many Jewish families would just have starved. Thus by "promot[ing] the health, welfare, and both material and religious success of husband and children" [33], the "women were often the primary breadwinners" [412] (as it was in my own extended family).

Another feature attributed to Hasidism is its understanding of wealth and charity. Wealth in today's world is commonly linked to ability, to the economic judgement of the wealthy, and not to lucky circumstances; and because of that it is said to "belong" to the wealthy. However, KHASIDIM and TSADDIKIM who had economic success were inclined to give greater weight to the role of luck and, as a consequence, embraced charity. But even charity was not seen as a simple redistribution measure from the wealthy to the poor, or a form of insurance, but rather as a means of empowerment, in the sense of modern development economics;

charity, as stated in the book, should “not [contain] the fish, but rather the fishing rod” [443].

As a branch of Judaism, Hasidism was a manifestation of the evolution of culture and the interplay between ethos and praxis. In this respect, its function has an exemplary character. It turned into a movement that at times attracted a good portion of the Jewish population, and it presented answers or stances with great appeal in today’s secular world. As the book amply shows, the movement flourished because it grew out of an interaction with its setting: this was its driving force, its implicit message. The separation of the holy from the profane, along with seeing religion as an a priori or cognitive system, as some modern exponents of Jewish orthodoxy have argued [Leibowitz, 1992; Soloveitchik, 1983, 1986], was not, and is not, the answer. If HASIDISM has anything to say to today’s generation, Jewish or Gentile, observant or secular, it is exactly that linking of ethos and praxis, this non-separation of the profane and the holy: Praxis should not guide ethos, mankind should not pursue everything that is technically feasible, prudence is better than greed or stupidity. But conversely, ethos should not guide praxis in unreflected ways, lest it becomes deceptive or illiberal.

Finally, a brief note on what separates the Hasid from the agnostic, or what sets apart a rigid orthodoxy (that rejects the notion that religion is anthropogenic) from the glowing Hasidic tales that appeal to non-observant Jews and Gentiles. It is not religion as such, or religiosity, or the search for meaning and depth, that are central to this separation: it is gnosis, particularly faith, and the implicit notion the Hasid has of the divine. With regard to the former, Hasidism has great general appeal; and regarding the latter, faith is seen as a disposition (or an inborn coping strategy) with respect to the unknown or the future, because “man by nature *has* faith” [773]. This notion of faith cannot be the stumbling block that separates the world of Hasidism from secular Jews. Rather, it is their belief that faith cannot be addressed intellectually (e.g. in terms of a coping strategy) and that it is tied to a given dogma (which, from an agnostic perspective, is arbitrary and has

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Figure 2.3: Synagogue in Rymanów, PL (2005)

only sociological significance). In this respect, Hasidism does not differ significantly from Jewish or Christian orthodoxy. This becomes evident, for instance, in the assessment of the Holocaust by handed-down theological perspectives that are still common. While Christian theology may tie the Holocaust to Jews' rejection of Jesus or view "suffering, in its most sacred sense, [as] part of Israel's mission" [Ragaz, 1947, 66], Hasidic theology similarly sees the "Holocaust as a necessary — if horrific — corrective to the sin of assimilation" or that the "sufferings of exile were the evidence that God continued to choose the Jews" [659]. Here we find the primary schism that separates religious agnosticism, which tries to embrace both ethos and praxis from a locked-in, faith based theological root.

Omanut_HR_pictures/Lodz_6_2.jpg

Figure 2.4: Cemetery in Łódź, PL (2016)

Omanut_HR_pictures/Lodz_5_2.jpg

Figure 2.5: Cemetery in Łódź, PL (2016)

3

MY POYLN

BORN JUST BEFORE WORLD WAR II, without papers, I grew up in Switzerland. My parents were stateless, and traveling was costly after the war, and I barely left my antagonistically assigned sheltered environment before I reached adulthood and secured a Swiss passport. Before I was sixteen, in the summer of 1954, HASHOMER HAZAIR, a Jewish-socialist youth organization to which I belonged, organized a trip to Israel to experience life in a Kibbutz, and I was able to participate. We travelled to Genoa by train, boarded a small vessel, and arrived a week later in Haifa. After three weeks in the holy land, we boarded another small vessel headed for Naples, and the train lead us back to Zurich.

I barely recall this trip, partially because I had fallen ill, suffering from fever and diarrhea and spending a great deal of time sleeping. During the ride back from Naples to Zurich I slept almost the entire stretch, only to wake up in Göschenen where the rain was splashing against the window panes of our compartment. Outside I saw the station that epitomized, in a strange way, an architecture I as-

sociated henceforth with railway or military installations and Swiss vernacular. Slowly I developed a bipolar view of objects or settings which seemed familiar or to my liking, and artifacts or cultures that appeared strange, foreign: both may emerge as attractive.

When I turned twenty, in the fall of 1958, I moved to Ulm in Germany to enroll at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* (hfg), a small and new experimental institution with a focus on design¹. For me the mental journey to Ulm was far longer than the five hours needed to reach the destination [Herbst, 2006]. One had to take the electric to Romanshorn, board a ferry to Friedrichshafen to cross the Lake of Constance, and continue the ride in a train drawn by a coal-fired steam engine. That German train looked different: its construction was olden and heavy, it had seats or compartments reserved for the invalids, and it smelled of cigarette butts and sweat drenched wool. Arriving in Ulm one was greeted by the stench of sausages: the passengers were spilled into a town of drab buildings that had lost their stucco during the shelling of World War II. The modern architecture of the new school (built in 1953), designed by Max Bill [Meister and Meister-Klaiber, 2018] and located outside the city proper, next to a former fort that had been used as a local Nazi concentration camp, just accentuated this bi-polar vision.

After stations in Ulm, Dortmund, Zurich and London, I resumed studies in the U.S. (1965). I was offered a teaching assistantship in architecture at the University of Oregon, and because of my interest in regional planning, I enrolled as a graduate student in sociology and mathematical economics. I was wondering why G-d had sent me there and I spent most of my first year in Eugene pondering that question — until I realized how wonderful a place it was. Americans in London had warned me of the U.S. and had given me a copy of Peter Blake’s “God’s Own Junkyard” [Blake, 1964], and next to Eugene, in Springfield, I was exposed to my first strip development along Route 126. From then on I knew the origin of pop art.

¹The hfg was founded in 1953, to be closed by a regressive government in 1968. For a history of the hfg, see René Spitz [2002].



During my early years, POYLN was not on my conscious horizon. I was a person whose parents had moved to Western Europe, and it was clear that I understood myself to be a Jew of Eastern origin. It was not an era when Jews were welcome in the place where I was born, the immigration police made that clear every time we had to extend the validity of our papers², and even Western Jews appeared to have their reservations. I learned early on that the radio broadcast around noon-time was sacred, sacrosanct, and I internalized the voices, the specific melodic inflections of the prominent Nazis during their speeches to the masses, that were blaring from the loudspeaker. But I was living in the present and I prepared myself for the future, and only gradually did I learn the important connexion that binds the past to the future.

The first pictorial encounter with the Holocaust I had relatively late, that is, when I saw Erwin Leiser's strong documentary *Mein Kampf* (1960) that was shown in a movie theater in Zürich³: people in the audience broke down at the local showing of this documentary; I myself had never before seen such footage, due to the fact, perhaps, that I had just started to watch movies (with their introductory news reels). While in Ulm, I bought the Strop report [Wirth, 1960] in a facsimile edition and Adler's *Theresienstadt* [Adler, 1955; Herbst, 1962], but my consciousness regarding the Holocaust grew only slowly⁴. I had loose contact with obvious

²My parents remained stateless, my father for a lifetime; and my mother, having immigrated to Switzerland with her parents around 1903, lost her Austrian papers when she had married my father (in the late 1920s), became stateless, and was 80 when she eventually secured her Swiss passport (on the instigation of her sons).

³*Studio 4*, today *Filmpodium*.

⁴In 1958, the *Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich* was showing Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man*, an exhibit I saw, with pictures taken also from the Strop report; see Herbst [2019b], and also Chapter 1, page 6.

Nazis⁵, I was assigned books to read that were authored by Nazis⁶, and only much later, when I delved deeper into epistemology and started to investigate higher education systems (that is, after 1988), did I really learn that the past is bound to foreshadow the future.



Around 1970, after my studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1966-70), and when I had joined the faculty of the University of Virginia, I discovered the photographs of the Farm Security Administration collection stored at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C (see pages 27 to 34). I do not recall any longer how I had found this pictorial record of American life and what had prompted my interest. But I do remember my days perusing this treasure, I own several silver prints that I had obtained then, and my library contains a fair number of volumes that pertain to Roy Stryker, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, and others. Although my interest in photography can be dated back to my Bar Mitzvah when I found a Brownie camera among my presents, my real interest in photography, I presume, dates from these days⁷.

Having left Charlottesville (since my mentor there had died from a heart attack and the new interim chairman of the department discontinued my contract),

⁵Particularly in Dortmund at the *Sozialforschungsstelle der Universität Münster*.

⁶A glaring example is Gottfried Feder [1939], the author of *Die Juden* and *Kampf gegen die Hochfinanz* [Feder, 1934, 1935]. In those days, the internet did not yet exist (to check things), research on the matter was in its infancy, our school library was poorly stocked, and teachers and students thought that they were progressive, convinced that they had left behind the abyss and confident enough to design a humane world. But there was also — still, we should note — a fair amount of ignorance, of naiveté, and a wrong faith in German scholarship and academia, even pride, that was underlying this stance; perhaps, there was even the belief that a scientific statement can be — or should be — separated from its author (a notion which can only be upheld, I presume, in the fields of mathematics and physics).

⁷I did receive a fine grounding into photography and darkroom practice during my studies at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* through Christian Staub and Wolfgang Siol.

Zolkiew_1.jpg

Figure 3.1: Synagogue in Żółkiew, UA (2018)

I joined an engineering firm as an economist and planner and was eventually assigned to accompany a large development project in the Shemankar region of Nigeria (in 1977). This was my first stay in Africa, the mission lasted three months, and my impressions were deep. I recall a trip from Shemankar to Lafia to visit the market there, and I pondered how I could transmit back home the impressions that were constantly bombarding my brain: the view from the back seat of our Land Rover, the pounding we had to suffer because of the state of the laterite pathway we travelled on, the heat, the noises, the smells, the people and animals on the road, the dust in the air. It was this foray that had fostered my renewed desire to document, to photograph with some consistency.

While writing and photographing over years, my skepticism regarding our possibilities to transmit experiences has grown, in spite of the many attempts to do just that. The movie and TV industries have made a business of this, and there are photographers who think they are capturing the truth. But in fact, we appear to be in a position to communicate only to those who already share our values or paradigms [Kuhn, 1962]. We dwell in our own circles where we know how to interpret concepts, language and cultural codes. We generally do not engage in a discursive culture, except when it pays off in a public showdown: it would be too time consuming and too costly emotionally. Once a stance solidifies, around the age of thirty perhaps (“Don’t trust anybody over 30”, as Jack Weinberg is said to have said), it is very difficult to recalibrate a political position, an aesthetic orientation, a scientific stance. Those who have apparently converted from an early leftist to a later rightist conviction — or, as former Nazis, from the right to the left — may not have done this at all: in all likelihood, they remained opportunists.

I have read about — and written on — photography, and my own photography is guided by an attempt to show and to share. I do not think I differ in this respect that much from other photographers — or from writers for that matter: that is not what distinguishes my photography from mainstream or fashion. Rather, it is the subject matter and the message behind it. I concentrate on the vernacular; I pay

attention to craft, to the choice of materials; I would want to show the overlooked, the marginalized, the ordinary, would like to convey details in order to magnify, to enhance the object. If I might name contemporary photographers whose work I regard to be guided by a similar spirit, I might name Robert Adams or Gabriele Basilico.



As I review my photography, I note a few recurrent themes. My early photography can be subsumed primarily under the term of documentary photography⁸, and my later photographic endeavor focused on landscapes, vernacular architecture, and Jewish sites⁹. I had photographed my first Jewish cemetery around the age of eighteen in Endingen (with a lent Rolleiflex); and I resumed this practice in the 1990s, starting with cemeteries in the Alsace region (where forbears of dear friends of ours were from) and continued to pursue that focus in Southern Germany, in Vienna, Budapest, Trieste, or Venice. As I grew older, and as I developed in my role as a father, my own position as a Jew solidified and, for some reason, I became enchanted by these material witnesses and remnants of Jewish culture.

Cemeteries have their own charm, impart their own stories, and it is interesting — and telling, revealing — how the living bury their dead. I think it was in Lagos, in the 1970s, where the desire grew to document this form of communication and afterlife (a desire that remained unconsumed). Jewish cemeteries, however, tell a different story, serene in many ways but frequently also troubling, sad, and lost. Having photographed Jewish cemeteries in Western Europe I continued to pursue this in POYLN¹⁰, first in Eastern and Central Poland, and subsequently

⁸Using Nikon and Widelux cameras.

⁹Using Sinar and Cambo Wide cameras.

¹⁰An area which loosely refers to the Second Polish Republic (1922-39) and covers large regions of today's Poland, as well as parts of Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine.

in Western Ukraine¹¹: a search for traces of a culture that has vanished, been destroyed, *à la recherche du temps perdu* [Proust, 1913]. I had grown up in a secular environment, I consider myself an agnostic, but I noticed that my Jewishness became stronger as time went by and my pursuit of this topic must be seen in the context of that mourning and longing.

My formal retirement from my former professional activities helped to develop new foci. My family (on both sides) has its roots in POYLN, and in 2005 I visited, together with our youngest daughter Rebecca, Poland. I and Rebecca have previously been to Poland (but not together), and this was now the first visit to concentrate on photography, to photograph Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, SHETLEKH and landscapes (in Warsaw, Białystok, Białowieża, Orla, Kotzk, Szczepieszyn, Zwierzyniec, Józefów, Lesko, Grybów, Nowy Sącz, Tarnów, Kraków, Milejczyce, Sandomierz). In 2014, Jacqueline (my wife) and I had planned to fly to Kiev (Київ), rent a car, drive to Lviv (Львів), and visit places of former Jewish life that we would find along the way. But then the Maidan uprising had taken place and we cancelled the trip. The following year (in 2015), Jacqueline and I visited Kraków, the hometown of my grandmother, and photographed Jewish cemeteries there — but also Auschwitz and Birkenau. The next year (2016), I served as a session chair at a conference in Łódź, and at that occasion I had the opportunity to photograph Litzmannstadt's¹² large Jewish cemetery.

In the fall of 2018, we undertook a renewed effort to visit the Western Ukraine. We spent some time in Lviv (in part to celebrate my 80th birthday), but organized a driver with a car for the subsequent round trip that took us to Yavoriv (Jaworów, Яворів), Nemiv (Немирів), Zhovkva (Żółkiew, Жовква), Busk (Буськ), Burstyn (Бурштін), Ivano-Frankivsk (Івано-Франківськ), Horodenka (Городенка), Sniatyn (Снятин), Chernivtsi (Czernowitz, Чернівці), Kutu (Кути), Kosiv (Косів), Deliatyn (Деятин), Rakhiv (Рахів), the Chornohora and Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh

¹¹In the fall of 2021, I visited (together with my wife) Slovakia on a photography tour.

¹²The old German name for Łódź.

Zabolotiv_1.jpg

Figure 3.2: Cemetery in Zabłotów, UA (2018)

forests, Solotvyno (Солотвино), Vilkhivtsi, Khust (Хуст), Mukachevo (Мукачево), Drohobych (Дрогобич) — and back to Lviv airport.



It was an emotionally demanding and strenuous trip. I had no idea what to expect. For some years now I had researched online archives that have become accessible, and occasionally we even visited places in Poland where we hoped to find information that could provide us with some insight regarding the fate of my family. But I couldn't find much.

Part of my family on my mother's side is well researched, because her father, Salomon Rubinstein, born in Żółkiew, was a descendent of rabbis whose line Geni can trace back to the sixth century (or beyond). Before we undertook our photography trip we visited the "Museum of Ethnography and Arts and Crafts" in Lviv that contains also a Jewish section, and we found a wonderful rendition of the famous synagogue of Żółkiew we planned to visit in a couple of days (see page 67), a hand-colored drawing evoking the grandeur of that structure (and the associated community), with the (Hebrew) inscription "The SHUL of the holy community of Zalkwa [Żółkiew], may G-d's will build [Jerusalem], amen — built in the year 5441 [1681], written and painted by NETHANIEL MENAKHEM LYKHTER, writer and MOHEL, in Lvov in the year 5651 [smudged date, i.e. possibly 1891]" (see also page 61)¹³.

But the remaining family on both sides is traceable only marginally; most individuals remain lost beyond the information that was handed down to me from my parents. In particular, this pertains to the family of my father Gerson. GERSHN, as my mother called him, was born in Jaworów at the end of 1894. When he was in his late teens, that is, around 1913, he had moved to Stuttgart, to be joined by his older brother WIGDOR (born in 1888) a year later. In Stuttgart the two were collecting and selling furniture, paintings, watches, mirrors, and dowry products.

¹³Translated from the Hebrew by Avihu Yona. Omer Bartov [2007, 188] lists 1692 as the year of the completion of the synagogue.

Zolkiew_syn.jpg

Figure 3.3: Synagogue of Żółkiew (circa 1891)

August 1914 the two were called to be conscripted (by the Austrian government), and to evade the draft my father ‘bought’, in the fashion of Jaroslav Hašek’s “Švejk (The Good Soldier Svejk)”, a hepatitis. After a renewed draft Gerson fled Germany, crossing the boarder to Switzerland without any baggage¹⁴. My father was not known to report much, to tell about his youth, his upbringing and his parents who had run a fur business. He claimed to have had no other schooling than the KHEDR, the Jewish primary school. WIGDOR must have returned to Jaworów where he eventually perished¹⁵: we have notes of his sent to us in 1940 and 1941.

These notes date from the period of the Soviet occupation. In the first of the two short notes, dated February 21, 1940, WIGDOR states that his family was fine and remarks that he had written before but had not received an answer. The second note is dated January 29, 1941; he apologizes for having been silent that long and mentions a “brother Shulim” who would — eventually — give us the reason for their silence; and again, he asks for a response from my parents. I do not recall that I knew these notes before the death of my parents and, hence, did not ask for their recollection regarding possible responses. My mother normally was a conscientious correspondent (e.g. with her brother in Palestine who had emigrated to Haifa in 1933), and it is possible that her letters did not reach Jaworów. The other possibility, that my parents did not respond, would be hard to swallow¹⁶.

My father was the eleventh — and last — child of his parents KIVA LEYB HERBST and JUDES SCHILLINGER. With the exception of my uncle WIGDOR, I did not know the names of my father’s siblings, but in recent years “Jewish Records Indexing of

¹⁴His departure from Stuttgart is dated July 1, 1916, but his official arrival in Zürich is recorded already on June 28, 1916.

¹⁵Regarding Wigdor’s departure from Stuttgart I have no information, but JRI-Poland records show that he was married 1919 to a Rebeka Minter [or Munter], and he was registered 1928 in Jaworów as a shop owner (according to the “Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine” in Lviv).

¹⁶Fear regarding their uncertain — legal — status in Switzerland could have played a role (a fear that I readily sensed as a child); or the fear to be asked for help in a situation where they themselves felt helpless.

Omanut_HR_pictures/Horodenka_1_adobe.jpg

Figure 3.4: Cemetery and Mass Grave in Horodenka, UA (2018)

Poland” published birth (and death) records. We knew that one brother of my father was sent to America because he supposedly started a relation with a SHIKSE, but I did not know his name (until 2005)¹⁷: it was JAKOB JOSEF (1880). According to passenger lists at Ellis Island he immigrated to the U.S. after arriving in New York, on board the *Großer Kurfürst* coming from Bremen on June 14, 1905 (his nationality was recorded as Austrian and Hebrew; his last place of residence was Jaworów; he was single and 25 years of age). Three siblings of my father must have died as children (SHIME (female, 1874-74), PSAKHJE (male, 1877-1878), and JAKOB MOZES (1875-79)); and the remaining six mentioned in “Jewish Records Indexing of Poland”, together with parents and nuclear families, have perished: MATL (female, 1871), HERSH MOSES (1884), ROZA (female, 1882), WIGDOR (1888), CHAJA (female, 1890), and PAJA (female, 1892). I could not find a record for a SHULIM (which would indicate, if such a person had existed, that my father would have been the twelfth child, not the eleventh). Brother SHULIM [peace] was a code name, a reference to future information once peace would reign again¹⁸. The last reported — indirect — contact we were supposed to have had with my uncle JAKOB JOSEF in the U.S. was in the late 1930s.

Under the name of AKIVA LEYB HERBST, born 1856, we find two birth records in Jaworów: one with a father’s name of Moses (house # 179), and the other with the name of Wolf (house # 41). Because the siblings of GERSHN listed above are all tied to house # 179, I assume that Moses Herbst is my great-grandfather (and I am named after him: MOYSHE). AKIVA LEYB himself had a sister in house # 179: LYA (female, 1853). But there were other Herbsts associated with house # 179, fathered by MANES: LEYB (1853), TEME (female, 1869), and FEYGA (female, 1870); and there were Herbsts associated with house # 179 who were fathered by Wolf:

¹⁷Our daughter Rebecca had researched the history of my family.

¹⁸Such coded notes were not that uncommon. A friend of ours reports of a doomed relative of his who had written from Sziget to his grandfather: “We have not seen cousin LEKHEM [bread] for some weeks”.

ISAAC (1852), KHAJA (female, 1864), SHMUEL MEYER (1871); there is even a GERSHON HERBST (1849) associated with house # 179 (and listed as homeowner); lastly, there are Herbsts whose house in Jaworów differs or is not mentioned. WOLF is likely the brother of MANES. What I gather from these listings is that AKIVA LEYB HERBST fathered his first child, MATL, at a very early age (around the age of fifteen or sixteen); I could not find a record of my grandmother, JUDES SCHILLINGER.

There were a range of families in Jaworów with whom the Herbsts were associated through marriage: Druk, Poll, Schillinger, Deutscher, Barsam, Fuks, Erlbaum, Altschuler, Bartel, Dam, Zigler.



1951 my father was given one of the first YIZKOR-books: “Swastika over Jaworów” (YUDENSTADT YAVOROV: DER UMKUM FUN DI YAVOROVER YIDN) by Samuel Druck [1950]¹⁹. Eventually I realized that my father was in the possession of this publication, and it must have moved — after my father’s death (1974) or after that of my mother (1988) — to my brother SHLOYME and eventually to me. I have tried a number of times to read it, but I was unable to absorb more than a few pages, and I never made real progress: too painful was what I would read. The book is bilingual: originally written in Yiddish and loosely translated into English, and my Yiddish is poor. But even the English narrative I could not read. In fear, I scanned the book for possible collaborators or helping hands, and could not find family among them. The fate of my people lingered on. I recall that I related the story of my relatives to dear friends of ours, perhaps three decades ago during a dinner conversation and in response to a normal question regarding family matters, and I suddenly broke out in tears. This I had never encountered before. It was perhaps the first time that I had related this story to non-Jewish friends, and I myself was

¹⁹YIZKOR (commemorative) books started to be issued after World War II. By now, there appear to be more than 1,000 such books written, some of them focussing on the same community. Over 700 such publications can be found in U.S. public libraries.

amazed to realize that I, not a young person any longer at that time and somehow familiar with these events since my youth, was that emotionally captivated.



September 1, 1939, a few days before my first birthday, the Nazi invasion of Poland had started. When we google now that date we are reminded of W.H. Auden's poem with that date as title:

September 1, 1939

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

...

We have to scroll down fourteen items before W.H. Auden gives way to the first historical reference: "World War II officially began on September 1, 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland". Ten days later, German patrols reached Jaworów followed by German troops the following morning. The mishandling of Jews was immediate. It didn't take one day, "Swastika over Jaworów" reports, before the synagogue stood ablaze, dynamited, books burned amidst the brawl of the Nazi bystanders and local non-Jews. When the Gestapo reached Jaworów two days later, jeering Germans played with Jews the way cats play with mice: Jews were mocked, heads and beards were shaved, people beaten to death, two Jews were buried alive. That first Nazi occupation lasted two weeks, because under the

Soviet-Nazi agreement (i.e. the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact)²⁰, Jaworów was to fall under Soviet rule.

During the years of the Soviet rule (1939-41), Jewish population of Jaworów had swelled to 3,000 souls, including refugees from Western Galicia. In the summer of 1941, Nazi Germany broke that Soviet-Nazi accord, and in the wee hours of June 25, 1941, German troops reoccupied Jaworów again, to be enthusiastically greeted by locals. Immediately, a Jewish council was to be formed, one of these devilish measures that the Nazis mastered²¹, and five days later a list of 150 Jews was issued that were to be liquidated. A culture of wild, untamed, criminality broke loose that was not guided by bureaucratic servility, following orders, as was claimed after the war, but by sadistic activities, “lewd sport”. After the formation of Jewish councils, that was the second critical feature the Nazis employed: the use of the mob.

The Nazis formed three labor camps (Jaktorów, Lacki-Wielki, and Płuhów) in the vicinity of Jaworów that served as good substitutes to concentration camps and to the death camp Bełżec, where those were sent who could not — or not any longer — be used as laborers. Nazi labor camps often had a dual purpose: to exploit the forced labor in sectors that were judged to be vital for the war economy; and to dispose of human beings (in the sense of extermination camps) as long as laborers were still available in sufficient numbers. In this way, labor camps acted as economic units along the path to destruction; and apart from the mundane justification of such camps, Jews served as game.

After the passover holidays of 1942, the Nazis ordered the destruction of Jaworów’s Jewish cemetery. People starved, the daily miseries were indescribable. In reading “Swastika over Jaworów” now for the first time, I wondered about the details, the reported names of victims and perpetrators, the information sources of the YIZKOR-Book, but some Jews were in a position to escape to the surround-

²⁰Signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939.

²¹The Nazis also formed councils of the local — non-Jewish — population.

Omanut_HR_pictures/Zwierzyniec_1_adobe.jpg

Figure 3.5: Zwierzyniec forrest, PL (2005)

Omanut_HR_pictures/Sandomierz_2_adobe.jpg

Figure 3.6: Plain near Sandomierz , PL (2005)

ing woods, were able to join groups of partisans, and after the Red Army had re-occupied Jaworów on July 20, 1944, were in a position to report to a commission that was set up to investigate the atrocities of the Germans²². Four hundred families from Jaworów perished, among them also my kin²³.



One YIZKOR-book is dedicated to Horodenka, a place we visited (see p. 69). Published a good dozen years later than the account on Jaworów, it documents community life and contains accounts of survivors: Mayer Sukher, Reuben Prifer, Chaim Karl Kaufman, Etyl Frieberg, Yehoshua Vermut, Yehoshua Nudelman, Moshe Blazenstein, Peretz Vizling, Moshe Schuchner, Yatke Kiehl-Piekarek, Zvi Reiss, Shaindel Yugerman Alfert, and others. Survival was due to a number of factors, both personal and social, but luck appeared to have played a dominant role. Survivors were ears and eyes of a Holocaust that took place not only in the dedicated — well-known — extermination camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Treblinka, Bełżec, Sobibór or Chełmno, but in the communities themselves²⁴.

²²Deposited in the archives of the Jaworów Jewish Historical Commission (JJHC), Krakow.

²³There are other YIZKOR books. The digital (online) collections of the New York Public Library lists 755 such references. Take, for instance, the book on Zabłotów (Zabolotiv) [Schechter, 2017 (1949)], a place we had visited (see p. 65). This YIZKOR book, “A City and the Dead”, does not only recall the destruction of Zabłotów and its Jewry but also portrays its (former) residents that counted (just before World War I) roughly 2,000 Jewish residents (the Jewish community was a bit smaller than that of Jaworów with roughly 2,400 members). “A City and the Dead” contains chapters (by Avraham Keish) covering various professions and lists more than 300 individual (short) biographies, providing a picture of Zabłotów on occupational patterns, income opportunities, education, and emigration (before World War II). With regard to destruction, it parallels the account of Jaworów. Another example of a YIZKOR-book is that on Stryj [Kudish, 1962 (2018)] (a town we had passed by). Roughly “fourteen thousand Stryj Jews perished, and a similar number from the surrounding province. In 1944, when the town was liberated, there were in town about twenty Jews, who had been hidden by Christians” [p. 496].

²⁴Roughly half of the six million Jews who had perished lost their lives in the vicinity of their

The slaughter was assisted by deceiving the desperate, simple greed guided the butchery, and bribing was offered as a means to expedite the transfer of wealth. An aura of quasi-legality was created to streamline and cover-up a criminality of monstrous dimensions: the Jewish council was even ordered to pay for the bullets the Gestapo needed to kill 2,400 of the Jewish community (sic)²⁵! The greed of Nazis and locals had the effect, as Peretz Vizling reports [pp. 383-384], that:

the first casualties were the poor-folk who didn't possess anything worth selling. Next were the Jews who were unfortunate enough to believe they [would] be saved, upon being hidden by their [Ukrainian] peasants and essentially signing over all of their possessions, which the peasants swore to hide for them. These trustees knew from the first how they would get rid of the Jews so that the few rags they possessed would become theirs. If the rescuers didn't slit the throats of the Jews, they had their neighbors do it; then they shared in the[ir] wealth.

And Peretz Vizling continues,

Surprisingly, most of the saviors were poor Polish and Ukrainian families who helped with no expectations at all. They did it just from the goodness of their hearts.

Locals joined in the frenzy to disown and kill their neighbors; in fact, they — with exceptions — became instrumental in the pursuit of the Holocaust. Chaim

homes. When we visited Horodenka, we talked to an eyewitness of a mass shooting at a site I photographed (see p. 69), a person a few years older than I, living next to this site: he was a child when that shooting, that *Aktion*, took place.

²⁵Report by Moshe Blazenstein [pp. 374-375]. Regarding his survival, Blazenstein writes: “A[n] Ukrainian named Hanet Osadtchuk took me to his house. In the day I hid in the cellar and by night I slept in the hut near the stove. This man had only one room and that was both kitchen and bedroom. He treated me like an angel — especially in light of the fact that I couldn't pay him [...]; a four year-old boy brought my food and it is worth noting that he was able to keep his secret” [pp. 376-377].

Omanut_HR_pictures/Milejczyce_1_adobe.jpg

Figure 3.7: Milejczyce, PL (2005)

Karl Kaufman, a — protected — dentist of Horodenka²⁶, reports on the first *Aktion* (taking place December 4-5, 1941) ordered — or at least condoned — by SS-commander Hans Hack [pp. 361-362]. That *Aktion* was not a local event but affected Eastern Galicia in its entirety. The course of events became infamous through the label *Blutsonntag* (bloody Sunday)²⁷, referring to the massacre in Stanislau (Stanisławów, now Ivano-Frankivsk), October 12, 1941, with more than ten-thousand victims²⁸.

As Chaim Karl Kaufmann notes [pp. 361-362]:

When the trucks arrived at the pits, [...] officers and Gestapo [...] with machine guns and submachine guns [...] were sitting in the shade by a table laid out with food and drink. There was an orchestra playing. The Gestapo then ordered the Jews out of the trucks [...]. They then had to get undressed, except for their underwear, [...] go into the pits [...] and were shot by the Gestapo. And so the bodies of thousands of dead and dying were piled up in the pits [...].

²⁶Because he was used to serve the Nazis. One of his patients was the (new) Gestapo commander Feddich (a replacement of commander Doppler): “Feddich came to me for treatment for a bridge for his teeth. I prolonged the end of the treatment because I knew that once he was done, Feddich would kill me [...]. I postponed the end of the dental work as long as I could while I arranged a safe hiding place for my family and me. At the end of November 1942, I escaped together with my family to a village and we hid in a bunker in the backyard of one of the peasants. After we escaped in Horodenka, only seven Jews remained in town; of them, only one survived [...]. We hid in that bunker from November 27, 1942 to March 27, 1944, the day the Red Army entered Horodenka.” [p. 363].

²⁷*Blutsonntag* (bloody Sunday) is a label which refers to a range of historical events, from British repression in Ireland (1887) to attacks on civilians in Lithuania (1991).

²⁸SS-commander Hans Hack must be Johann Hans Josef Hack, called Hans Hack, *Kreishauptmann* of Horodenka (August 1941 to April 1942). Dieter Pohl [1997, 153] alludes to the possibility that Hack was not in accord with the mass shooting and that another SS-commander with the name of Asbach, responsible for the district of Brzeżany, ordered that massacre. Against Asbach ran a charge (StA Kiel 2 Js 753/65) that was closed in 1976. In the case of Hack, the charge of the city of Darmstadt (ZStL 208 AR-Z 277/60) was closed March 26, 1969. However, Pohl reports [p. 81] there were indications that Hack had seized Jewish property. Hack, like Asbach, was never convicted and died 1978 in Klieve (Germany), fifteen years after *SEFER* Horodenka was published in Tel Aviv in 1963.

All through the massacre, officers and Gestapo were sitting by the tables, eating, drinking, laughing, and amusing themselves. The sounds of the orchestra mixed with the sounds of the machine guns and screams of the victims. The following day, ten[s] of peasants from the area were recruited to cover the pits with dirt. They reported that even a day after covering the pits with dirt, one could still see some motion.

The picture evoked by Chaim Kaufman reminds me of the photographs found in the family album of Karl-Friedrich Höcker, a deputy of Richard Baer (the commander of Auschwitz), with their focus on normality and frivolity — next to the abyss (see page 9f).



There is a revisionist — Judeo-Bolshevik (Żydo-Komuna) — narrative which claims that the anti-Jewish sentiments among locals after the second German occupation was due to the Jewish cooperation with Soviet forces (1939-41) [Pohl, 1997]²⁹. This narrative has a history [Yonas, 2004], going back to World War I and the Russian Revolution [Hanebrink, 2018]. It is true that one can observe an affinity between Jewish longing and leftist ideas [Bloch, 1959; Mendelsohn, 1997; Polonsky, 2017; Jacobs, 2017], but the implicit claim that socialism (and the Soviet system) and Judaism go hand-in-hand, or that Jews were the primary carrier of violence against locals during Soviet rule, is ill-directed (and presumably anti-semitic)³⁰. The fact that violence against Jews in general (after 1941) is adjudged by the violence of some (during 1939-41, namely of Jews as Jews, and not as communists); or that violence of Jews against Nazis (homicide, after the liberation

²⁹See in this regard also the critical assessment of Mariana Hausleitner [2016].

³⁰The proportion of Jews who held leftist ideas in (ninety-seven) Polish towns (1936) amounted to roughly ten percent [Polonsky, 1997; Mendelsohn, 1997, 184], and were, presumably, not that different from the corresponding proportion of the population at large; and the number of Jews who participated in violence must have been small. Eliyahu Yonas [2004, 84] reports a strong underrepresentation of Jews in the municipal Soviet of Lvov (during Soviet rule).

of the concentration camps) is equated with deliberate murder of Jews by Nazis, points to the anti-semitic narrative.

Kai Struve [2015] states that this “Judeo-Bolshevik” narrative had played a central role not only in the post-World-War-II revisionist reception of the Holocaust but also during the events (of 1941) themselves. If Jews were not seen to be directly involved in the Soviet system, they were at least viewed as having profited from the regime change (1939-41) in that they had lost, under Soviet rule, their historical role as a dominated ethnic group. In this way, they now “competed” with the nationalistic aspirations of local non-Jews and, in particular, with representatives of the “Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists” (OUN), and actions against Jews were also seen in the context to reestablish the old — submissive — order, or to fight a presumed “biological base” [p. 675] of the Soviet system (a fight which was founded on centuries’ old anti-Judaism and subsequent anti-Semitism and racism).

Kai Struve describes the “homicidal euphoria” [p. 676] or the “spectacle of horror” [p. 674] (my translations) that accompanied various *Aktionen*, but he also seems to be strangely conservative (if not revisionist) when it comes to counting numbers of victims: he mentions roughly 11,000 victims (at most) [pp. 668-670] for the summer of 1941³¹. Timothy Snyder [2015] posits somewhat a different view:

Age old antisemitism cannot explain why pogroms began precisely in summer 1941 [...]. [P]ogroms were most numerous where Germans drove out Soviet power, and the obvious material fact that the instigation of pogroms in such places was explicit German policy [...] In the occupied USSR, the killing of Jews began immediately upon contact with German forces [...] In the occupied Soviet Union, the killing of Jews took place in the open air, in front of the population, with the help of young male Soviet citizens [...] This unprecedented mass murder would have been impossible without a special kind of politics [p. 150],

³¹The trouble with many historians is that they have a narrow vision of what constitutes a “fact”. Indeed, their narrow vision of facts serves as a quality notion defining their science), and they are probably insufficiently schooled in statistics, probability theory, or sampling: this scientific “bias” (quite apart from a possible anti-Semitic bias) appears to be responsible for a latent tendency to underestimate numbers. See in this respect also note 34 below.

Dolny_Omanut_1copy.jpg

Figure 3.8: Cemetery in Dolny Kubin, SK (2021)

that is, without a basic — Nazi — intention. And:

In 1941, in the doubly occupied lands, Germans directed the experience of Soviet occupation against Jewish neighbors [p. 151]. [In formerly Soviet occupied territories] people had escaped death or deportation by collaborating with the Soviets, and were thus [...] eager to purge their own past by collaborating again [p. 152]. [...] [I]nsofar as locals sided, or pretended to side, with Nazi policies towards Jews, they were cleansing themselves of their own past. German ignorance of the politics of Soviet rule and occupation created a certain opportunity for locals to exploit Germans. As a result, the murderous politics that emerged was a joint creation of Germans and locals [...] The politics of the greater evil was a common creation at a time of chaos [p. 153].

This narrative, that is, the focus on a prominent role of locals in the Holocaust and the abuse of an invented Judeo-Bolshevism, is a phenomenon that has only recently been swept into the foreground [Hanebrink, 2018], replacing or complementing earlier narratives with their foci on a Nazi elite, on anti-communism as such (without the Judeo-Bolshevistic connex), or on character aberrations or eliminationist anti-Semitism of ordinary Germans.



As a social scientist and higher education researcher, and as a Jew, I am actually astounded to observe discussions that are way overdue, taking place some seventy years after the end of World War II. I wonder about this situation and ponder about my stance in the search for a lost world, or how to bereave this loss in the context of current atrocities. I am not alone in this sorrow. The topic of the Holocaust engulfed me in my post-professional life; and it may resonate now because of my conviction that the forces, the human and societal predilections that lead to the Holocaust, are still traceable. I am not a member of the humanities who had

Nitra_1.jpg

Figure 3.9: Cemetery in Nitra, SK (2021)

chosen such a topic naturally, as a professional speciality. Rather, I have focused on my family history, and once I delved deeper into that topic, I found it increasingly strange to see how the Holocaust was recalled by media, scholars and governments; I am startled — and angered — by the way some well-known authors and major magazines deal with the issue; and I am bewildered by the seeming confinement of current historical research.

Rita Horwàth [2011] discusses memorial monuments and YIZKOR-books as two ways to pay attention, to commemorate, to remember the Holocaust. Memorial monuments in the common sense are not my domain — and not my primary focus — to recall and to grieve, for I fear the bad taste, the *Kitsch*. Monuments of physical form, and restaurations for that matter, ought to be handled with great care, and my experience would indicate that, in most cases, commemoration is easily misguided, stripping the site in question — the synagogues, the cemeteries, the grave sites — of their dignity. YIZKOR-books, on the other hand, may have been written to commemorate, but they were also authored to document, calling on the subsequent generations, as Horwàth states, “to rise to the challenge of developing the hermeneutic tools necessary to enable them to receive the transmitted information” [p. 478]. I use photography to commemorate.

YIZKOR-books were authored in the aftermath of the Holocaust, mostly in the first dozen years after World War II³², and their impetus was a natural one, driven by a desire by many to recall, to provide evidence, to document — and not primarily to commemorate; memorial monuments commemorating the Holocaust, on the other hand, are a much more recent phenomenon. YIZKOR-books are not another form of a statue or a monument; they are oral history, recollections, or history told by laypersons; and they should be seen, to follow Horwàth’s call above, as a rich source for historical research³³. This, however, they appear to fail to do:

³²Horwàth [2011] lists examples of YIZKOR-books issued after World-War I and 1943.

³³Modern information scientists and linguists have created fields such as “topic modelling” or “natural language processing” as means to analyze vast corpora of data. These techniques are cur-

they do not serve as major sources in a historiography of the Holocaust; they remain underused, even shunned, and that the corpus of that vast material has not been systematically researched, is hard to understand and ought to be critically analyzed³⁴.

The current research focuses on the notion that the Holocaust is more than Auschwitz and that local perpetrators played a major role, a notion I agree with. However, the chain of overlapping events — from anti-Judaism, to anti-Semitism and racism, to discrimination and disfranchisement, to expropriation, looting and killing, to industrial extermination — is not yet properly understood. In particular, the recoding of law which had taken place in an exceedingly short time after the Nazi takeover in 1933, the part which moral codes, opportunism and law obedience performed and perform in the conduct of citizens, and the roles institutions play in human conduct, need to be better understood: the trail leading from reasonably well-balanced societies to their complete derailment.



When my wife and I visited Jaworów in the fall of 2018, we could not find a trace of Jewish life; had we stayed longer, and had I researched the matter better, we might have found fragments of the past. But we found remains of a lost world elsewhere during our trip, and the questions that posed themselves referred to the role this heritage plays in today's times: this was my notion during the photographic explorations in Poland³⁵, and it remained my stance during the Ukraine trip. I recall the invitation to a European conference held in Vilnius, Lithua-

rently also used in the field of biology (and they could be used by historians).

³⁴C.P. Snow [1959] published an influential observation on the “Two Cultures” (natural sciences versus humanities), pointing to a schism within the sciences. This schism appears to be quite alive, in spite of fashionable talks about inter- or trans-disciplinary approaches within the various sciences. In the case of research on the Holocaust, it clearly is dysfunctional.

³⁵This notion I pursue for some time now, e.g. in book reviews or in an (as yet unpublished) essay on *Gelebter Holocaust* (a reflection on the reception of the Holocaust after World War II in Germany).

nia, a few years ago, and when I had read the references to the various touristic sights that the (international) organizers had listed, the cathedrals, the shrines and monasteries, and no hints regarding a Jewish past, in the sense of an active ignorance, of looking the other way, I decided not to participate. It is this negation of Jewish culture and life, that disregard for one's own deeds during World War II, this secondary SHOAH (so to speak), this nationalistic form of neglect, that guides my anger³⁶.

During our Ukraine trip, I could not distance myself from the impression that the past was seen as a burden, to be forgotten, not a part of the present to be cherished³⁷, a kind of cultural amnesia³⁸. Perhaps it was even a dream come true, as Leon Botstein [1991, 13] had termed it, namely, to get rid of an ethnic group which was seen, in my words, “dispensable, not needed” [Herbst, 2016]³⁹. Clearly, people have other things on their mind than to muse about how history unfolds; and much of the past they are happy to leave behind⁴⁰. This affects people's tomor-

³⁶An anger which is shared by Omer Bartov [2007], for instance. In Germany and Austria one can observe a culture initiated early 1990 to set *Stolpersteine* (“stumbling blocks”, cobble stones) in order to recall the former Jewish members of a neighborhood. There are many ways to fight disregard that have become fashionable after the *Historikerstreit* (1986-87) and Martin Walser's infamous *Paulskirchen*-lecture in Frankfurt (October 11, 1989).

³⁷At the time of our trip the 9th International Poetry Festival “Meridian Czernowitz” had taken place (September 7-9, 2018); the fact that, among intellectuals and artists, the past may live on does not contradict my impression.

³⁸The term may have referred once to a “severance of past language, customs and human relationships, [as] a necessary prerequisite to [an] oppressed state” as experienced by Blacks and Jews [Fabio, 1966], but I use it here to denote the severance between ethnic groups which once had lived a neighborly — perhaps even symbiotic — side-by-side. There is, however and luckily, some form of learning from history; see in this respect e.g. <http://www.lvivcenter.org>.

³⁹The times when cities like Lviv, Warsaw, Chernivtsi, Budapest and Prague were intellectual centers have long passed, and the thought of a possible complicity in their demise is outside the mental framework of most.

⁴⁰There is, of course, another focus, not addressed here, namely the presentation of Germans as victims (and not as perpetrators): the sinking of a military transport ship “Wilhelm Gustloff” by

Omanut_HR_pictures/Vrutky_1_new.jpg

Figure 3.10: Vicinity of Vrútky Synagogue (used as a cultural center), SK (2021)

row, the time interval, over which they take information into account to guide their actions: the present — and the self — loom strong⁴¹. The general tendency is to disregard both future and past. The poor and the addicted neither look back nor ahead because survival counts, and the successful are in the same position because their being is satisfying enough. Our cultures appear to wallow in the now, unable to reflect nor to guide. But if a future is not consciously built, the past may lose its meaning, and the tomorrow may eventually not redeem our existence.



The mourning regarding the disappearance of a culture lingers on⁴²: the loss of HEYMISHKEYT, of all the things one associates with belonging — the warmth, the wit, the language, the customs, the SEYKHL — , and the anger *vis-à-vis* that rejection. The realignment of boundaries, the associated homogenization of nations and the concomitant separation of cultures within the European continent

the Soviets 1945 (with 9,400 casualties); the bombardment of the city of Dresden by the Allies early 1945 (with 25,000 casualties or more); the displacement of millions of ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe after World War II; et cetera. This offsetting of deeds is not what I am after: I mourn not the dead as such or primarily; I grieve about the disappearance of a world, of multi-ethnic civilizations that were replaced by self-righteous nations and cultures that appear not to suffer from the Final Solution.

⁴¹On Monday, April 15, 2019, a fire broke out in the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral that badly damaged the church. The consternation in the media was immense, and in no time millions of Dollars were donated to reconstruct the cherished monument. The contrast to other fires — and to the neglected memorials I pay attention to — could not have been greater.

⁴²Vital (pre-World War I) records of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire are a manifestation of the existence of a multi-ethnic world. These records distinguish between nationality (e.g. Jewish) and citizenship (e.g. Austrian). This multi-cultural (multi-ethnic) composition of Eastern Europe is characteristic for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire (and beyond), and it was destroyed through World War II and the subsequent focus on nation-states (and nationalism), endangering democracies (and perverting majority rules).

(and beyond) that have emerged from the aftermath of World War II⁴³, the focus on nation-states and *Leitkulturen* (i.e. guiding or lead cultures)⁴⁴, and the reemergence of anti-semitism, nationalism and right-wing parties corrupt democracies and the functional role of majorities⁴⁵. This cataclysm does not only affect the Jewish world: it affects all; it changed moral codes and civilizations; it fostered ethnic cleansing, forced migration, and wars after World War II; it promulgates one's own view and interests, not the discourse, the interchange; it moved crudeness to the core instead of embracing the periphery by the center; it leads to an intellectual deprivation in many fields; and it serves nationalism and self-righteousness⁴⁶.



MY POYLN has moved. It is not found any longer in the STETLEKH Yiddish writers talk — or KLEZMORIM sing — about; not in the courts of Warsaw, not in Belz, not in Chelm, nor in the coffee houses of Lemberg. The Yiddish BLETLEKH with their wonderful typographies, stories, poems or drawings, do not exist any longer — but the small Brazilian printing presses, the so-called “cordel chapbooks”, with their exquisite woodcuts, are vanishing as well, not because their authors or publishers were strangled, starved, executed, gassed or shot, but because the world has changed.

⁴³Soviet practice, which had belittled, negated or fought ethnic, religious or nationalistic cultures, also plays a role [Polonsky, 2017].

⁴⁴The German term once referred to agriculture. The use of the term in the field of humanities came later on, first in the context of a discourse on religion, and subsequently with regard to a discussion on Islam and immigration.

⁴⁵The new populism, both in Europe and the U.S., is one sign of this development.

⁴⁶The new flows of immigrants (everywhere) clearly undermine the desire for homogeneity, and these call for a reflection on global social policies.

Omanut_HR_pictures/Solotwyno_1_adobe.jpg

Figure 3.11: Solotwyno Cemetery and Mass Grave, UA (2018)

Drohobycz or Czernowitz, Vilna or Odessa, Kiev or Skvira, Uman or Zhitomir, Shepetovka or Ushomir, Rovno or Kremenes, Belaia Tserkov or Proskurov, they may enter our consciousness when we recall the birthplace of some author or TZADIK, when we hear of a Klezmer or poetry festival. Those akin to the scholars and artists of POYLN we bewail, they may not exist any longer, and if they do, not in the same places, it seems⁴⁷. Fortunately, locations have sprung up to replace the old settlements: Kansas City, New York or New Jersey, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv.



In such a context, the questions that have to be answered regarding a photo essay on Jewish sites relate to conveying not primarily images of the referent, the various cemeteries, landscapes, mass graves or synagogues, but to transport a stance as well. Contrary to common notions, photographs do not speak for themselves: they require narration, interpretation, in particular when there is a mismatch between photographer and viewer⁴⁸. Photography is not a substitute for text (and vice versa), but a complement, a different mode of expression. With text it is far easier to express a stance that the reader may — or may not — accept. With photography (and art in general), the relation between author and viewer is much more ambiguous and, hence, complex. Art needs to be appreciated in order to be embraced, internalized, and this appreciation is perhaps a form of intuition with a base in acculturation.

⁴⁷Some Jewish artists or scientists have survived in the former Soviet union, of course, and there exist new generations who have not emigrated (permanently).

⁴⁸Roland Barthes [1980] interprets photography in his *La chambre claire* on the basis of a triangle of relations pitting photographer versus viewer, photographer versus object/subject, and object/subject versus viewer; interpretations become necessary when these relations are not synchronous. For instance, the Nazi photographers of the Stroop report of the Warsaw ghetto [Wirth, 1960], the photographs of which were contained in the catalogue of the famous “The Family of Man” exhibit curated by Edward Steichen [1955], did see their subjects — and their own photographs — differently than most people do today [Herbst, 2019b]. See here also Chapter 1 — and page 34f.

A photo essay alone, pretty much without text, should be seen as an opportunity to indulge, to explore, to match the photographs with one's own internal images [Boulding, 1961], and to reject the pictures if necessary. For the author of a photo essay, decisions regarding the subject matter, the means and technique of photography will have to be taken. For many authors⁴⁹ the choices of technique and subject matters go hand in hand, and thus it was in my case: my photographic approach and the selection of topics coevolved over decades. I focused on sites that portray Jewish culture, a culture of the past whose disappearance we might follow with anguish and, hence, only occasionally did I photograph mass graves or killing sites: I stuck with the German dictum, *Schuster, bleib bei deinem Leisten*⁵⁰. Ever since I consciously saw old Jewish cemeteries, I was captivated by their serenity and beauty, and the more I had the opportunity to document such places, the more I was taken in by a common stylistic syntax that appeared to guide the burial sites in various locations, from Rosenwiller and Hohenems to Prague, Kraków, Łódź and Nemyriv. I loved the frugal appearance of the grave sites, the wonderfully crafted stones, the symbolic scenery of a past, perhaps because these appealed to my own spartan aesthetic orientation.

I rarely photographed in color, and I was — and am — doubtful whether color photography is suitable in the present context. The photos that I found on the internet before we undertook the trip do not convey the reality, or my view thereof, as it presented itself to me. Color photos have their place, as many fine photographers using this medium have shown [Herbst, 2019b]. The Ukraine in particular is an Eldorado for photographers, for color photographers in search of the faded, the opaque, the dilapidated, the historical, hunting for signs or typographies, for architectures, vernacular or those of the Soviet era, but my grief regarding POYLN cannot be evoked by this medium: it is too tacky or garish, or simply too alluring,

⁴⁹But not necessarily for contemporary photographic professionals.

⁵⁰A cobbler should stick to his last.

pretty. Hence, I used my old approach, black & white — analog — photography⁵¹.

But even black & white analog photos offer a broader spectrum of choices, in particular regarding the negative format: small-format versus large-format photography⁵². Small-format — i.e. low definition — negatives may gloss over the details, but most documentary photography since World War II used that kind of photography, including the most cherished artists of that genre (Robert Capa, Werner Bischof, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank), because it is fast and impressionistic. Some photos we would not want to see being taken in a high definition mode, for instance those of the piles of dead corpses at Nazi concentration camps taken after their liberation. In other cases, however, we may depend on more visual information to evoke the past — or the presence dealing with that legacy. Hence, in my photo essay on POYLN I use large format, high definition photography that requires time and contemplation on my part, and provides detail for the viewer: it comes closest to conveying a reality that represents my inner views⁵³.

⁵¹There are many confusions regarding the appropriateness of styles or techniques. Eisenstein's masterpiece, the silent film "Battleship Potemkin", was subsequently synchronized with recorded recitations, and this completely destroyed Eisenstein's dramatic art of film cutting. Recently, the Auschwitz Museum (<https://facesofauschwitz.com/>) has started to colorize their photographs (taken by Wilhelm Brasse) in a false attempt, a travesty in fact, to "humanize" the inmates, in "bringing a more haunting, lifelike quality to the images". Does one need color photography to humanize (sic) the inmates of Auschwitz? Is this the world we live in? One argument in favor of colorization claimed that had the Nazis had access to color film, they would have photographed the inmates of Auschwitz in color (Kodachrome was introduced in 1935, and Agfacolor in 1932; see in this respect also Loewy and Schoenberner [1990]).

⁵²35 mm films or 6×6 cm negative format versus 4×5 inch negatives or larger.

⁵³Up to a few years ago, I used Polaroid 55 PN 4×5 inch negatives. After the demise of Polaroid, I switched to Ilford FP4 Plus 120 roll film, using a Horseman camera back (6×12 cm, six negatives per film roll) in a vertical position (and mounted on a Cambo Wide with a Schneider Super Angulon 65mm lens). In this way I would photograph panoramas, shifting each (vertical) picture by 20 degrees: pictures 1, 3 and 5 would form one triptych, and pictures 2, 4 and 6 a second. During the Ukrainian excursion described herein, roughly 200 such triptychs were exposed.

Omanut_HR_pictures/MizpeRamon_Omanut_2.jpg

Figure 3.12: Mizpe Ramon, IL (2006)

To conclude MY POYLN, my lamentation, I include a poem by Itzik Manger [Gal-Ed, 2016, 252]⁵⁴:

TSU MAYN BRUDER

DER OVNT IN DER FREMD TROGT A KOYTIK HEMD,
UN A VUND IN HARTS, VOS KEYN DOKTOR KEN NISHT HEYLN,
VOS ZOL IKH ZOGN, ZINGEN UN DERTSEYLN,
VEN ALTS IN MIR IZ TSERTRETN UN FARSHEMT?

VU BISTU VU BISTU ITST, MEYN BRUDER,
DI VOS HOST MIT MIR GELITN UN GESHTREBT,
IN EYNEM MIT MIR KHALOYMES OYSGEVEBT,
VOS BIN IKH ON DIR? A SHIPL ON A RUDER!

DER OVNT IN DER FREMD FARKLINYET ZIKH MIT TREERN,
UN GROYS UN TROYERIK ZENEN ALE SHTERN,
DI BSURA-BRENGER FUN MEYN VUND UN VE.

OYF DI VERBES FUN MAYN HEYM-LAND SITSN TRIBE SOVES,
ZEY HITN DI KVORES FUN MAYNE OVES,
MAYN YIDISHN TROYER IBERN SLAVISHN SHNE ...

To my Brother

The eve far away wears a dirty shirt,
& a wound in the heart which no doctor can heal.
What shall I say, sing & recount,
when all within me is trampled & mortified?

Where are you, are you now, my brother,
you who has suffered & striven with me,
dreams woven together,
what am I alone? A barge without an oar.

⁵⁴Itzik Manger was born in Czernowitz (1901). This poem TSU MAYN BRUDER (To my Brother) was written 1942 in London. The Yiddish transcription (from the Hebrew into the Latin alphabet, following YIVO standards), and the English translation from the Yiddish, are my own.

The eve far away is chocked in tears,
& large & sad are the stars:
They tell of my wound & woe.

On the wallows of my homeland roost bleary owls,
they tend our fathers' graves,
my Jewish grief covering the Slavic snow ...

Negev_2006/Negev_2022-1b_flip-2.jpg

Figure 3.13: Mizpe Ramon, IL (2006)

Negev_2006/Negev_2022-1b_flip-3.jpg

Figure 3.14: En Gedi, IL (2006)

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