SPECTRAL EVIDENCE

The Photography of Trauma

Ulrich Baer

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The Photography of Trauma

Ulrich Baer

The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England

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This book was set in Janson Text and Rotis Sans Serif by Graphic Composition, Inc., Athens, Georgia.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baer, Ulrich.
Spectral evidence : the photography of trauma / Ulrich Baer.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographic references and index.
ISBN 0-262-02515-9 (hc. : alk. paper)
1. Photographic criticism. 2. Psychic trauma—Pictorial works. I. Title

TR187 .B34 2002
770'.1—dc21

2001059611

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Acknowledgments

An early version of chapter 1 appeared in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 7 (1994), and different versions of parts of chapter 2 appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 96 (Fall 1997), and in *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000). I am grateful to Yale University, Duke University Press, and the Regents of the University of California for their permission to reprint these materials.

Kind permission to reproduce the photographs from D.-M. Bourneville and Paul Régnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière: Service de M. Charcot* (Paris, 1876–1880) and the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* (1889) has been granted by the Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library at Yale Medical School. I am grateful to Mikael Levin, Dirk Reinartz and Scalo Publishers, Klaus Malorney, the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt (Germany), and the National Museum of Photography, Film, and Television (United Kingdom) for permission to reproduce images.

I have gratefully received material support from the Remarque Institute at New York University, the DAAD–German Academic Exchange Service, which allowed me to conduct research in German, Polish, French, and American archives. A year-long fellowship from the J. Paul Getty Trust made it possible for me to complete this book.

I am grateful to Esther DaCosta Meyer, Martin Morris, and Thomas Lacqueur for taking an interest in my work. For comments on earlier versions of the manuscript I thank Susanne Baer, Cathy Caruth, Karen Davis, Lance Duerfahrd, and Jared Stark. Michael Lobel and Eyal Peretz encouraged me to rethink key issues and over a number of years enthusiastically discussed all aspects of the argument with me. Avital Ronell and Peter T. Connor offered editorial and conceptual suggestions in the New York

seminar on issues in critical thinking. Bernd Hüppauf shared various insights into photography with me. Chinnie Ding proofread the manuscript.

Roberta Clark's unfailingly constructive and altogether splendid editorial suggestions clarified much, and improved the entire book.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Niobe Way, for her unwavering help, conceptual insights, and support of this work. Her capacity to see others' experiences in the most incisive yet respectful way is a daily inspiration.

Introduction: Toward a Democritean Gaze

> To ask whether a photograph is analogical or coded is not a good means of analysis. The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time.
> —Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*

> The gesture of photography is the search for a standpoint, for a world view: it is an ideological gesture.
> —Vilém Flusser, *Standpunkte*

This book is about photographs that force viewers to consider experiences that resist integration into larger contexts. It asks whether we can paste photography into the album of historicist understanding, as several critical approaches do. To stress the inadequacy of treating photographs as random snapshots from an imaginary continuous loop of time and life, I focus on images revealing experiences that have not been, and possibly cannot be, assimilated into such a continuous narrative. Through analyses of these photographs of events and individuals that, for various reasons, have been cast out of the forward-sweeping movement of history, I underline the urgent need for a conceptual reorientation. Only if we abandon or substantially revise the notion of history and time as inherently flowing and sequential will we recognize what we see or fail to see in these photographs.

To be sure, these images hold no revolutionary or eschatological promise to halt time. Rather, they expose as a construction the idea that history is ever-flowing and preprogrammed to produce an on-going narrative. As roadblocks to an ideology that conceives of history as an unstoppable movement forward, the photographs compel viewers to think of lived experience, time, and history from a standpoint that is truly a stand*point:* a place to think about occurrences that may fail, violently, to be fully experienced, and so integrated into larger patterns. These images, taken by scientists, artists, and amateur photographers for quite different purposes and uses,

arrest the gaze and captivate the imagination because they guarantee no way out of the photographed instant. In specific cases, this passive refusal of the image conflicts directly with the photographer's intention to cast the lived experience of time as an uninterrupted process of unfolding. I focus my analyses on this tension in order to develop ways of seeing that might be considered testimonial. All of the photographs examined in this book bring into view a striking gap between what we can see and what we know. The testimonial stance assumed here requires the strategic—though by necessity incomplete—renunciation of viewers' virtually automatic predisposition to link particular sights to familiar historical contexts and narratives. By reminding viewers that the model of history-as-narrative is a construction, the photographs in this book can visually stage experiences that would otherwise remain forgotten because they were never fully lived.

From photography's beginning in the nineteenth century to the present, critics have engaged various scanning mechanisms and theoretically anchored reading protocols to identify "historically constructed ways of seeing" in an attempt to prevent the photograph from enmeshing the viewer in the medium's illusion of a "frozen moment."[1] In the photograph, time itself seems to have been carved up and ferried, unscathed, into the viewer's present; critics don conceptual and explanatory frames like tinted lenses to master this uncanny impression, maintaining a proper emotional and cognitive distance from the subject in order to map the picture onto an epistemological grid that structures the field between viewer and photograph. The viewer is supposed to be safely grounded in the present over here, while the photograph is assumed to refer to a prior moment that can be kept safely apart over there. But photographs are unsettling. Some images bypass painstaking attempts at contextualization and deliver, straight up and apparently across the gulf of time between viewer and photographically mummified past, a potent illusion of the real. The illusion of a slice of time, as anyone who has become lost in a photograph can verify, seems to surpass what is commonly thought of as reality itself. Before we can confront the images themselves, we need to grasp theoretically how it is that photographs can seem more real than reality itself.

Certain critics have explained the photograph's impression of reality as a mere mechanical trick, an artificial and deliberately staged "effect of the real." By creating the illusion of immediacy, they argue, photographs hide the fact that the medium itself has fundamentally shaped the habits of look-

ing we employ to establish an event's veracity. In spite of this important critical debunking of photography's claim to be the most accurate, and hence most truthful, mode of representation—two separate claims that collapse into one on photography's flat surface—we continue to perceive photographs as records of what is. We might know that Trotsky was meticulously airbrushed out of a famous image of the Soviet Politburo after a Stalinist purge, that a photo of a beautiful beach has been digitally enhanced with the technical equivalent of MSG, and that a landscape shown in an advertisement was created not by nature but by binary code. Nonetheless, we relate to the depicted sights as if they were real. "Aha," we think "Stalin was actually fairly short," or "That sandy beach just swarms with blueish crabs at midday." And when we see those crabs we don't think—even though we know it—"What a clever manipulation of chemicals (or pixels)!" In spite of our knowledge, the things we see in photographs seem real to us.

> Just as the river where I step is not the same, and is, so I am as I am not.
> —Heraclitus

When we think of the reality caught in a photograph as a "slice of time" or a "frozen moment," we paste the image into a particular type of historical understanding. When viewed as frozen moments, photographs become flat, shiny squares lifted from an incessant current that surges ever forward beyond their borders. According to this understanding, photographs only artificially halt the flux of time that, in reality, carries us forward from event to event in an unstoppable stream. This is the conception of time and history as narrative, as an unfolding sequence of events, the *longue durée* of twentieth-century French historian Fernand Braudel. However, this historiographical concept dates back to a much earlier era, to the ancient Heraclitean notion of time-as-river. Heraclitus's famous metaphor occurs in a fragment I cite here in the deliberately strange translation Brooks Haxton uses to "clear away distractingly familiar language from a startling thought."

> The river where you set your foot just now is gone—those waters giving way to this, now this.[2]

Heraclitus's notion of history as a flowing river, a radical and still perplexing notion, was restricted in the nineteenth century, when major historians thought to grasp the past by channeling its events into stories of coherent, continual, consecutive epics. In keeping with this quasi-Heraclitean

model of historical time, photography can be understood as a device that mechanically freeze-frames virtual chunks of a time that is, in reality, always moving on.

> A swirl of forms of all kinds was separated off from the totality.
> —Democritus

However, because the Heraclitean conception of the world and history holds time to be always continuous, the development of automatic picture-taking in the nineteenth century—that is, the camera's ability to "stop time"—prompted considerable anxiety. The medium of photography seemed to furnish evidence—by means of magnifications, shutter speed, and lighting—that the world of appearances is not continuous, not at all flowing, not a river. Instead, it seems to reveal a world in which time is splintered, fractured, blown apart. As if to respond to the challenge produced by the invention of photography, another conception of time and history was regaining prominence. The idea of historical time as continuous was countered with a notion of history that imagines time, in a striking image, as an invisible *event*, a decisive moment that requires a new conceptual framework. Ulrich Raulff has shown that these two "incommensurate and mutually exclusive . . . notions of the nature of temporality" are really two *images*, two imagined scenarios of the way historical time happens. "Thus the conception of a 'long duration,' or a historical time that passes very slowly, must apparently be thought of in opposition to an extremely brief or explosively passing time: the *longue durée* depends on the countermodel of a fleeting moment or a suddenly erupting event."[3] The emergence of this countermodel of the "sudden event" can be traced to a particular moment in modernity that roughly coincides with the invention of photography. Walter Benjamin, in his examination of this turning point in a conceptualization of history that occurred simultaneously with the invention of photography, diagnosed it as "the end of the art of storytelling" and the overall decline of narratable history in response to modern experiences of shock.[4]

This notion of—and story about—the end of storytelling is well known. Less familiar, and highly relevant for an understanding of photography, is the fact that the countermodel of the explosive event can also be traced back to ancient Greece, to Democritus. In his *Fragments* he describes the world as a vast rainfall, with events occurring when individual drops accidentally touch one another. According to Democritus, every event is

random, contingent, and remains potentially separate from any other. All our perceptions of the world, Democritus taught—long before modern physics confirmed this view—are nothing but projections of our minds; out there, he writes, is nothing but a swirl of atoms in a void.

As the counterpart to the model of time-as-river and history-as-narrative, the Democritean conception of the world as occurring in bursts and explosions, as the rainfall of reality, privileges the moment rather than the story, the event rather than the unfolding, particularity rather than generality. The following fragment from Democritus has an extraordinary relevance for our understanding of photography—a relevance already recognized by Benjamin in the late 1930s as the medium that endows the fluctuation of light waves and the movement of particles with the appearance of stable objects and events.[5]

> By convention sweet and by convention bitter,
> by convention hot, by convention cold,
> by convention colour;
> but in reality atoms and void.
> —Democritus[6]

Strangely enough, the Democritean model of the world has yet to be fully applied to the medium of photography, where it finds its most striking expression. Indeed, much photography criticism remains invested in the model of time-as-river and assumes that it is the shutter that fragments the world. This perspective on photography, however, fails to account for the fact that no photograph allows for any certainty about its "before" or "after." In order to stress that photographs cannot be adequately addressed through the Heraclitean gaze, I implement a more Democritean approach. I do not assume that the camera is literally capable of fracturing the world but suggest that it is possible to view each image as potentially disclosing the world—the setting for human experience—as nothing but atoms moving in a void.

To be sure, the Heraclitean and Democritean notions of the world concern the lived experience of time; they are conceptual approaches and not descriptions of actual, ontic states. The important and insufficiently acknowledged theorist of photography, Vilém Flusser, stresses that these two conceptions of the world are not mutually exclusive. "The two world views [of Heraclitus and Democritus] do not contradict one another since rain is

a thin river, and a river is dense rain."[7] Nonetheless, Flusser can identify for each of these semimythical conceptions of history a distinct "mood": "the Heraclitean is dramatic (everything is irreversible, each missed opportunity definitely lost), and the Democritean one is absurd (anything possible could happen)."[8] Flusser then relies on these two paradigmatic conceptions of the world to show how photography compels viewers to think about time. In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, he proposes that photography inaugurates a Democritean perspective, a perspective that recognizes photographs not as frozen moments but as "states of things [that photography] translates into scenes."[9] The task of photography criticism is therefore the decoding of photographs as *symbols* of the world resulting from the interplay of conventions, photographers' intentions, and the camera's technical programs—not as symptoms or intentionless, realistic signs that coincide with their own significance.[10] Although Flusser did not discuss it explicitly, his theory of photography is undoubtedly influenced by his experiences as a Jew who fled his native Czechoslovakia when the Nazis invaded it and who subsequently divided his life between Brazil and France, teaching and publishing in German, French, Portuguese, and English. My effort to reorient photography criticism away from a narrative model of experienced time is also an attempt to acknowledge that for uncounted numbers of individuals, significant parts of life are not experienced in sequence but as explosive bursts of isolated events. This book explores photography's tremendous potential to capture such experiences without integrating them into a mitigating context and thus denying their force.

In my analyses I attempt to read photographs from *within* the illusion of an isolated moment rather than simply regard them as interruptions in the evolution of time. The proper "mood" in which to read photography is not dramatic, to rely on Flusser's distinction, but the absurd—in the sense proposed by the surrealist visionary Antonin Artaud, who saw a chance to disrupt European culture with theatrical works produced by individuals "like those tortured at the stake, signaling through the flames."[11] Differently put, I read the photograph not as the parceling-out and preservation of time but as an access to another kind of experience that is explosive, instantaneous, distinct—a chance to see in a photograph not narrative, not history, but possibly trauma.

To be sure, photographs beckon viewers to interpret them, trigger narrative impulses, invite us to make sense by treating each shot as a building-

block in a longer story. But this connotative dimension of the photograph does not entirely drown out the purely deictic statement that each photograph makes. Photographs can capture the shrapnel of traumatic time. They confront us with the possibility that time consists of singular bursts and explosions and that the continuity of time-as-river is another myth. Undoubtedly, as Michael Bernstein points out, the Democritean, "strictly atomistic view of history presupposes a relationship to time as distorted as the deterministic one that is its mirror image." Yet to wrest photography from the deterministic grip of history and time in which most critics have embedded it, we need to include in our interpretation of any single moment "the realization that the present contains the seeds of diverse and mutually exclusive possible futures."[12] Because every photograph is radically exposed to a future unknown to its subjects, I make use of a perspective that avoids the arrogance of hindsight and the certitude of predetermined outcomes—a point of view, or *Standpunkt*, oriented toward Democritus rather than Heraclitus.

There remains one simple fact the viewer always knows about a photograph, regardless of her or his training: "Here it is."[13] The single, indisputable truth about any photograph is not its meaning or veracity but its testimony about time. "This once was," each photograph says, "and you are viewing it from a time in which the photographed object or person may no longer exist." The suddenness of the punctuating flashbulb is always coupled with an equally strong emphasis on that instant's pastness. However, photography does *not* dam up what happens next, before, or after the photograph—everything that is conjectured and surmised in implicit accordance with the Heraclitean model of time-as-river and its modern adaptation as the *longue durée*. Instead, it exposes it to the viewer as only one of several possible ways of seeing the world. In my explorations of those other ways, I combine the Flusserian reorientation of photography criticism toward a more Democritean gaze with recent theoretical work in the area of trauma studies to show how photography can provide special access to experiences that have remained unremembered yet cannot be forgotten.

The task of photography critics who base their work on the Heraclitean understanding of lived reality as continuous and narratable consists in reconstituting the sequence, or the invisible before and after of which the photographic image is thought to be an excerpted glimpse. There is a vast body of such contextualist and inherently melancholic criticism, and it often offers valuable information. Yet this approach is based on a problematic

assumption: that photography, with the camera as totemic object of all that is disastrous in modernity, not only reveals the world's inherently fractured constitution but, in fact, *causes* the world to shatter. Yet the camera only records what occurs, and only in bursts and explosions, whereas behind every photograph is the suggestion that the depicted scene was, not merely an occurrence, but an experience that someone lived through. The startling effect (and affect) of many photographs, then, results not only from their adherence to conventions of realism and codes of authenticity or to their place in the mental-image repertory largely stocked by the media. It comes as well from photography's ability to confront the viewer with a moment that had the potential to be experienced but perhaps was not. In viewing such photographs we are witnessing a mechanically recorded instant that was not necessarily registered by the subject's own consciousness.

This possibility that photographs capture unexperienced events creates a striking parallel between the workings of the camera and the structure of traumatic memory. The first modern, and still influential, theories of trauma were developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They describe trauma as the puzzlingly accurate imprinting on the mind of an overwhelming reality, an event that results in a deformation of memory yet cannot be attributed solely to the content of an occurrence or to the subject's predisposition to such mnemonic derailment. Traumatic events, in this theoretical model, exert their troubling grip on memory and on the imagination because they were not consciously experienced at the time of their occurrence. Just as the photograph "mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially," as Roland Barthes writes, trauma results from experiences that are registered as "reality imprints" or, as psychiatrists have phrased it, recorded "photographically, without integration into a semantic memory."[14]

The enigma of trauma cannot be explained exclusively by the particular character of the event that triggers it; it also results from its structure. Cathy Caruth explains that trauma is characterized, not "by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* . . . but consists . . . in *the structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it."[15]

Trauma is a disorder of memory and time. This is why in his early writings Freud used the metaphor of the camera to explain the unconscious as the place where bits of memory are stored until they are developed, like prints from black-and-white negatives, into consciously accessible recollections. In his later work, Freud qualified his use of the camera metaphor, a move several critics have discussed.[16] Instead of extending that discussion of Freud's dissatisfaction with his own image, I trace the origin of the metaphor back to the photographic practice in use at Freud's training hospital, the Salpêtrière in Paris, where he first grappled with the kind of memory disorder from which psychoanalysis was born. In chapter 1 of this book, I offer an implicit critique of the pre-Freudian model of trauma as a silencing of the subject but do not necessarily assume that later theories allow the subject to speak any more successfully. I argue that Freud's disavowal of the metaphor of the camera for the unconscious remains a gesture to be read in the context of his unease with the insights offered by his teachers at the Salpêtrière—and perhaps with the very notion of the visual. Something beyond Freud's notorious caution in his use of images seemed to prompt his initial repeated use of, and then dissatisfaction with, the camera metaphor. This something, I would suggest, concerns a fundamental relationship between photography and trauma that critics who have discussed Freud's metaphor of the camera have largely overlooked. His modification of his early metaphor of the mind-as-camera begs the question of the link between photography and trauma, rather than settles it. Because trauma blocks routine mental processes from converting an experience into memory or forgetting, it parallels the defining structure of photography, which also traps an event during its occurrence while blocking its transformation into memory.

The photographs I analyze in this book isolate experiences that remained apart from lived reality at the time of their occurrence. Normally, an event becomes an experience once it is integrated into consciousness. Some events, however, register in the psyche—like negatives captured on film for later development—without being integrated into the larger contexts provided by consciousness, memory, or the act of forgetting. Caruth explains that enigmatic occurrence this way:

> Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimensions of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent

> event may occur as an absolute inability to know it, that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness. The repetitions of the traumatic event . . . [suggest] a larger relation to the event which extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing.[17]

The phenomenon of trauma, Caruth suggests, challenges conventional understandings of how reference works, according to which "seeing" is assumed to translate immediately into "knowing." Yet this challenge should not lead us to an irrational dismissal of reality, or a thoughtless celebration of its heightened return in trauma. Trauma does not constitute a dimension of reality that is "more real" than experiences that readily become part of consciousness and memory. The phenomenon of trauma presents us with a fundamental enigma, a crisis of representational models that conceive of reference in terms of a direct, unambiguous link between event and comprehension. This crisis furnishes no proof that *all* experiences of reality are inherently constructed and that trauma shatters these constructions to reveal the truth "behind" them. Trauma imposes itself outside the grasp of our cognition. The encounter with reality, understood as encompassing the possibility of trauma, thus emerges as something that can bypass experience and yet register, with great force, on an individual's mind and body. The fact that traumatic experiences recur and that they attain meaning only at and through this belated repetition—like negatives that harbor an image until they are printed and emerge from the developing vats—does not invalidate their realness but should compel us to reconsider the relations between memory and reality.

Even though trauma often results from the intrusion of overwhelming occurrences of violence into the individual's psyche, exhaustive knowledge of that reality does not provide a sufficient explanation of the individual's trauma. Indeed, trauma seems to result from the mind's inability to edit and place an event within a coherent mental, textual, or historical context in ways that would allow it to become part of lived experience and subsequent memory. It is thus only of limited value to account for trauma by referring such experiences to their context, for this approach has recourse to precisely the framework whose breakdown or absence originally resulted in trauma. For trauma to be understood, its "immediacy" must be

studied as it unfolds according to its own dynamic, at once *outside of* and yet *inside of* the same moment, as a kind of index of a historical reality—a historical reality "to whose truth there is no simple access."[18]

I do not propose to decide here how to gain such access. Instead, I explore the model of trauma as a "reality imprint" because it signals the presence of unresolved questions about the nature of experience. Interestingly, critiques of the literal-imprint model of trauma are mirrored by critiques of photography's presumed "reality effect." In fact, the polemical tone that characterizes the critical debunking of photography's illusion of reality as a naïve assumption is matched, if not pitched even higher, by those who attack the model of trauma as a reality imprint. Instead of revisiting the stalemates reached by these debates, I propose to think through the model of trauma as "reality imprint" by juxtaposing it with photography's "illusion of reality" while acknowledging that these are theoretical models and visual effects (i.e., phenomenal entities) and not ontic states. Allowing these two models to mutually inform one another lets us focus on photography's role in the vexing issue of what constitutes experience under the impact of trauma.[19]

If we analyze photographs exclusively through establishing the context of their production, we may overlook the constitutive breakdown of context that, in a structural analogy to trauma, is staged by every photograph. In some photographs, the impression of timelessness coincides with a strange temporality and contradictory sense of the present surrounding the experiences depicted. To analyze images that focus on such interruptions and loss of context, therefore, it is not sufficient to refer to the extrapictorial "social and psychic formations of the [photograph's] author/reader."[20] Rather, we must consider such photographs in the light of what Eduardo Cadava has identified as the peculiar structure that lies between "the photographic image and any particular referent," which is, in fact, "the absence of relation."[21] This absence of relation may come into focus when reading photography through trauma theory—and vice versa, when reading trauma theory through the startling effect of reality created by photography. Photographs present their referents as peculiarly severed from the time in which they were shot, thus precluding simple recourse to the contexts established by individual and collective forms of historical consciousness.

My concerns with photographs of trauma explode the strictures of both historicist and formalist analysis: I am interested in how photographs go beyond extrapictorial determinations, and how the excess we find within

the image points to something that, though not properly outside it, nonetheless unsettles the relations between picture and context. My readings part company with the historicist approaches to photography currently dominating both academic discourse and museum practice; they recognize that photographs can do more than tritely confirm the modernist cliché that perceptions of reality are shaped by the viewer's historical and social position. The images I consider in this book remain outside what Benjamin, in his definition of the modern experience as an experience of shock, calls the lost "context of experience" or, in the German word that practically performs coherence itself, *Erfahrungszusammenhang* (literally, "hanging-together of experience").[22] In these photographs, the shutter's click allows certain moments to be integrated *for the first time* into a context (of experience, of memory, of meaning). Such images stage not a return of the real but its first appearance: an appearance of a meaning that, as the ongoing debates about the causes and manifestations of trauma indicate, continues to defy comprehension and that, although it concerns the past, did not exist there.

Postmodern critics moving confidently from "image to frame, from . . . form and style (the rhetoric of art) to . . . function and use (the practice of politics)"[23] frequently displace attention from the image to the context whose structuring *absence* defines the experiences in the images I discuss. While antiaesthetic critics have usefully dismantled the mannered argumentative patterns of earlier psychologistic, contemplative, and reverential forms of image analysis, in their iconoclastic fervor they have often failed to own up to the curious fascination with photographic images that presumably prompted their own looking. The potentially rewarding, but often cheerless, emphasis on context and *studium*, or prior knowledge, might be read as a phobic repression of photographs' unsettling effects—and affect. Clearly, we need to study the act of looking to locate its blind spots; yet we must also remain aware that an uncompromising reliance on extrapictorial information can lead us to overlook experiences that become traceable and assume their meaning only after their occurrence. Trauma theory becomes important at this impasse. It helps us grasp how a particular photographic image can show a scene that becomes meaningful only in and as its representation. Yet even the discourse of trauma theory, finally, can only testify to, without rendering fully intelligible, what assails the self from within without constituting a proper experience—even though it might be captured on film.

In addition to the inadequacy of contextualist approaches, I was motivated to write this book by a further conceptual difficulty. The photographs discussed in it preempt viewers' attempts to identify with, and imaginarily project themselves into, the image as a way of gaining access. Here is another parallel, on the phenomenological level, between photography and traumatic experience, which unambiguously concerns one individual without allowing that person to identify with the experience as her or his "own" past. Nor can listeners or viewers identify with ownerless experiences that—although they are neither invented nor imaginary—can so easily appear to have been fabricated by a disturbed psyche. A response to them requires that we analyze photographs in light of their claims to represent moments that are at once radically ahistorical yet undeniably part of the past. These moments put critics in the position of facing realities to which there is nothing to add or to explain; in order to go beyond them, to verify their occurrence, or to understand them they must open their gaze toward events that promise neither manifestation nor revelation, but merely facticity.

The photograph's deferral of an experience from the occasion of its registration may affect not only the viewer but also the photographed individual, who is preserved undergoing an event to which he or she can only later attach a meaning. When viewers face the traces of experiences that bypass memory and cognition, the ordinarily reassuring mechanisms of identificatory looking reach their limit. As I show in chapter 3, empathic identification can easily lead us to miss the inscription of trauma because the original subjects themselves did not register the experience in the fullness of its meaning. The apparently inexhaustible fascination of photography partly originates with this difficulty of relating to images of experiences that have irreparably dislodged the self-image of those depicted—pictures that are constituted *by and as this split.* The viewer must respond to the fact that these experiences passed through their subjects as something real without coalescing into memories to be stored or forgotten. Such experiences, and such images, cannot simply be seen and understood; they require a different response: they must be *witnessed.*

The photographs I discuss result from the conflict and cooperation between the photographer's intentions, the photographed person's lived experience, the viewer's perspective, and the technical effects of the camera. They show experiences that, although *immemorial,* outside of memory, directly shape memory, because they are not owned by the people undergoing

them. We respond strongly to such photographs because they can make us, as viewers, responsible *for the first time* for a past moment that has been blasted out of time.

I begin, therefore, with the first full pictorial explosion of trauma in the medical photographs of the nineteenth-century French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Charcot's contemporary fame, rivaling that of opera singers and vaudeville acts, resulted from his on-the-spot, publicly performed diagnoses of mostly female patients. At Salpêtrière, his sprawling, garrisonlike hospital in Paris, the master-physician reigned over thousands of hysterical women and men obsessively and desperately attached to his promise to cure the enigmatic sufferings that painfully affected their bodies but originated, it seemed, in their minds. Charcot listened, classified, and, spectacularly, cured. But above all, the doctor *looked.* "Il était un visuel," Freud wrote in a eulogy, using the ambiguous French word to characterize Charcot as both precise observer and visionary.[24] Charcot, dissatisfied with the way he had been taught to see, recognized that he nonetheless saw more than anyone, including his patients, could know. As a way to demonstrate this split between seeing and knowing, Charcot systematically employed the medium of photography. He hoped to capture the experience of hysteria in photographs and thus to demystify it—for science, for fame, and for the "hysterics" themselves.

A theory of trauma was thus born from the will to see. In Charcot's work, the first theorization of trauma coincides with the first use of photographs as something more than palm-sized proofs in the form of visiting cards, a sort of individual defense against the anonymization of mass society. Photography emerges as the medium of authenticity in a culture that, as Nietzsche noted at about the same time, had begun to celebrate its own decline. Charcot was among the first to recognize what that means: that photographs show more than either photographer or photographic subject may have intended. Charcot looked for what remained invisible to his patients and, unlike many of the theoreticians and clinicians who followed him, he had the courage to look at this spectral residue. Sometimes, however, even while in the grip of apparently agentless suffering, the photographed hysterics return Charcot's clinical gaze.

Others are looking, too. Anxious about the influence of Charcot's powerful teachings, Freud banishes visual images, and eventually most cor-

responding metaphors from "psychoanalysis," the brand name of his newly minted practice of the "talking cure." He accentuates this policy by deliberately positioning patients in a way that prevents them from seeing the analyst during therapy. He then issues the imperative to both analyst and patient to read and reread the patient's verbalizations of lived experience without dismissing even the slightest detail as insignificant.[25] Charcot's case records, on the other hand, provide an abundance of visual evidence relegated, not only by Freud, to a remote episode of "prehistory." The ownership of this haunting pictorial record is still hotly contested. Important feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter fall in line with orthodox Freudians and avoid looking at Charcot's images when they, in otherwise salutary readings, produce text-driven analyses of hysteria in an attempt to rescue Charcot's female patients from the doctor's darkroom misogyny.[26] Yet the depicted experiences cannot be simply wrested from Charcot's proprietorial gaze and returned to the women as the rightful owners. Many of these experiences were never grasped in the fullness of their potential significance; they bypassed memory and cognition but remain visible, phenomenologically, in the photographs. Because Charcot's patients suffered from experiences they themselves did not fully own, a corrective, and posthumous, reading that restores these experiences to them "on their behalf" risks not recognizing, and indeed glossing over, the source of their suffering. It presupposes that these women can simply be reunited with their experience as long as it is analyzed from the right perspective; this rescue mission paradoxically ignores the tremendous force of trauma that shackled these women to experiences against their will and rendered them all but immune to outside address.

To extend studies that keep Charcot's images at bay by focusing on the institutional and discursive forces of production and reception, I look for the kernels of experience that allow these images to outlast their origins. The splinter of experience that survives beyond, and often in spite of, Charcot's intentions—the appeal from within the photographs—is linked to the photographic flash. The flash is a paradigm of the type of experience potentially captured in every photograph: a remnant of experience that those pictured may never have fully owned at the time. "The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance," writes Roland Barthes. In his book on photography, he asserts, in one of his characteristically epiphanic seizures—though without explicit reference to hysteria—that "the effect is certain but

unlocatable, it does not find its sign, its name; it is sharp and yet lands in a vague zone of myself: it is acute yet muffled, it cries out in silence. Odd contradiction: a floating flash."[27] Charcot's photographs of hysterical women illustrate the machinations of nineteenth-century medicine and culture. Yet, like Barthes's nameless distress, they also allow a precise reading of this enigma of the "floating flash," the unsettling experience of trauma that latently confronts the viewer in every photographic image.

The fear that photographs usurp and displace memory—the flip side of Kodak's promise that authenticity can be canned—stems from a sense that the medium can record experiences that then enter memory only long after they actually occurred. Charcot, however, ordered his henchmen to wield a camera because he believed photography capable of capturing experiences that had never entered memory in the first place. Yet he recorded more than he bargained for: the photographs of his patients capture something elusive that goes beyond what his theories explain, something extra. Today, from deep within the archives, these photographs compel us to bear witness to a record of experiences that bypassed not only the women who experienced them but also the filtering systems of Charcot and his followers, including his recent feminist critics. In these photographs, something beyond the iconography of suffering endures, something that these critics can only confirm. Beyond Charcot's medicalizing gaze, beyond Freud's prohibition of images, beyond the self-appointed rescue squads of historicist critics, and—finally—even beyond the Benjaminian-Barthesian theorists of photography who see the referent's death lurking in every image, the women captured by a flash at the Salpêtrière continue to look back.

Like phosphorescent specimens pinned in velvet boxes, Charcot's women float in the soft darkness of early photography. These women are not simply detached from the space around them. They are radically separate from their own experience and life-world, and their suffering results from the impossibility of turning the space in which they are embedded—any space—into a habitable setting. When Charcot is faulted today, rightly, for incarcerating the victims of trauma in his medical wards and arresting their likenesses on photographic plates, a tiny spark of redemption in his admittedly harsh program is overlooked. By placing hysterics into his photographs and amphitheater, Charcot intended to control and frame their experiences in ways these women could not do for themselves. With the camera he fashioned a mechanical framing of reality in an attempt to gen-

erate a sense of place for those who were violently unmoored from their own experience. Through his aggressive, and invasive, photographic practice, Charcot inadvertently placed individuals who had lost their bearings back in relation to the very reality that had usurped their sense of a world. Although for his patients this practice did not constitute a "cure," today it makes it possible for us to read hysteria as genuine suffering.

Since Charcot used the camera to capture photographically and arrest the hysterical subject, other photographers have preserved for later decoding experiences that were not apprehended as reality at the time of the click. Their photography cut holes out of reality, holes in which we can sometimes refocus the relations between presence and absence to help the viewer resituate those archived experiences in relation to the world. In chapter 2 I analyze one such image, an art photograph by Dirk Reinartz that emblematically performs this process. The picture, which appears in his 1995 collection, *Deathly Still: Pictures of Former Concentration Camps*, locates the viewer in reference to a place that was the setting for radically dispossessing experiences. Those experiences, recognized today as part of the historical rupture of the Holocaust, were not at the time of their occurrence necessarily and easily experienced as a historically significant event or as "the Holocaust." For those subjected to them, in fact, they were suffered as brutally separate from any such larger explanation or sense of being in the world. Reinartz's photography explicitly and intentionally eschews the production of shock, the museumized iconography of mutilated and maimed corpses seen in other photographs of the Holocaust. It eerily illustrates what it means not to be in the world and yet to have an experience. In Reinartz's print the viewer is placed in relation to a site that stubbornly refuses to become a "place."

His image, I argue, is not a picture of death, but, paradoxically, of an unexperienced experience of a death that was taken, along with all the material objects they owned, from those who suffered it. The photographer shows viewers the setting of the experience without permitting them to posthumously appropriate it through empathic identification or voyeurism. By strategically isolating a single image from a book containing several hundred full-page prints, I attempt to underline the traumatic sense of radical singularity that is inherent to the Holocaust experience and that dictates Reinartz's photographic practice.

In this chapter I also discuss photographs that represent historical trauma in terms of the Romantic conventions of landscape art. I argue that

by relying on those conventions the photographers can give viewers access to an event that they, like those whose destruction was its aim, might otherwise find impossible to fully apprehend.

Charcot, too, employed the conventions of late-Romantic painting to portray his hysterical patients as hieroglyphs to be deciphered in the search for the truth of an enigmatic memory disorder. A successful diagnosis entailed visually pinning the figure, with the help of the flash, against the background of her surroundings. This technically achieved differentiation of figure and ground, without which no vision is possible, aimed at the heart of a disease resulting from the traumatized patient's inability to distinguish properly between her self and the world. In the wake of the Holocaust, Reinartz's very different photography directs the viewer's gaze to places designed to efface the individuals deported there and remove all traces that could betray this purpose. We can understand these places as settings designed to obliterate the contrast between human beings and their surroundings and thus to level the symbolic distinction between figure and ground that is equally necessary for vision, experience, and knowledge. The Nazi camps were intentionally designed to preclude the possibility that their victims would see or experience anything that would give rise to understanding. This realization allows us to perceive Reinartz's quiet photographs as the true legacy of Charcot's project: they identify historical trauma as the collapsed relationship between individual and surrounding space that cannot be represented according to a traditional schema of figure and ground. Instead, the artist must depict space as the framing of an absence that engulfs and absorbs viewers without creating illusions of belonging or destination. They are not rewarded by seeing but lured into a void, while the nonfigured background serves as the empty destination of their gaze. In these highly stylized images, the conventions of perspective are employed to present to view a nontranscendent emptiness.

This is only one of several possible narratives that lead from Charcot's seminal theorization of trauma as an aberration of memory that leaves a body without context to Reinartz's high-modernist images showing the absences of the Holocaust as the result of the collapse between the symbolic and the literal, figure and ground. Another possible trajectory also bypasses the voyeuristic, the deceptively sublime or up-lifting, and the commercially viable aestheticization of shock. This second access code to trauma created by Charcot has been largely neglected, perhaps because of the neu-

rologist's penchant for exploitative showmanship. It begins with Charcot's presumably imperturbable and disaffected gaze and leads toward the ways a belated witness came to see experiences that were not fully accessible even to those who lived through them.

This second analysis of the relations between trauma in photography turns on the work of Mikael Levin, a contemporary American photographer whose 1995 book, *War Story*, faces one of the twentieth century's defining traumas at a double remove. His father, the American writer and war correspondent Meyer Levin, was among the first to enter the death camps at the end of the war. Meyer Levin struggled in his prolific postwar writings to come to terms with what he had seen. Yet he never mistook his firsthand encounter with the sites of Nazi atrocities and their survivors as an experience he could claim as his own. Mikael inherited his father's story, with its explicit warnings against overidentifying with survivors, and set out to mark his father's work explicitly as an act of *testimony* to a significant historical event. From the beginning, and long before the recent theoretical interest in testimony, Meyer Levin perceived the unbridgeable distance that lies between the witness and the experiences he records. In his photography, Mikael Levin highlights this rift in his father's testimony, identifying it as a fundamental effect of being the witness to great suffering. His photographs are not illustrations of the Holocaust; they afford no knowledge that could not be gleaned from other sources. Their significance lies in the younger Levin's brilliant focus on transforming the act of bearing witness—which initially consists in the mere registration of an event without understanding it—into an act of testimony that recognizes the Holocaust as a crisis of witnessing itself.[28] His photographs illustrate how the knowledge of trauma may be constituted in its transmission from one person to another: the knowledge of the Holocaust in Mikael Levin's work emerges in the relations among his complex photographs, their viewers, and his father's text.

Mikael Levin's pictures obey the logic of a kind of "double-haunting" in which the son returns to places that were not properly laid to rest in his father's memories of the end of the war. The photographs illustrate that a fundamental distance from the experience of trauma is shared, strangely enough, by witnesses and survivors; they also make it clear to the viewer that the difficulty of overcoming that distance is inherent in any confrontation with trauma. In a brief essay on Charcot's photographs, Jean-François Lyotard attributes this distance to the issue of whether a traumatized individual

can be "the addressee of a question bearing on [her] ability to be the addressee of a question."[29] Traumatic experiences not only distance and estrange the onlooker but are inherently marked by a rift between the victim and his or her experience; the shattering force of trauma results from precisely that brutal expropriation of the victim's self. Thus, because trauma is dispossession and radical self-estrangement, it defines the traumatized individual through something that he or she does not own.

In another discussion of representations of the Holocaust, Lyotard suggests that every such representation must bear witness to the unending search for an adequate means of representation.[30] Levin's probing images carry out this obligation. Instead of identifying an original experience in his father's testimonial writings and attempting to represent it in a photograph, he creates images that bear witness to the difficulty of gaining access to a loss that itself corrupts the means of representing it.

Although Reinartz and Levin both focus on a twentieth-century historical catastrophe—Levin through his father's personal encounters—their representational concerns originate with Charcot's pursuit of the causes of individual trauma. And, in spite of some differences between them, both photographers conclude their exploration at the contradictory endpoint of high-modernist pictorial expression where ground seems to become figure, and figure ground, and where abstraction hovers on the brink of arbitrariness. They successfully invoke and, simultaneously undermine, the problematic claim for transcendence and purity that lurks within abstract representation. Although their images are abstract, they borrow from documentary photography and from various artistic traditions. Not at all accidentally, Reinartz and Levin shoot in black and white. Together with their high-modernist insistence on the photograph's self-sufficiency and their repudiation of extrapictorial references, their avoidance of color gestures toward what Primo Levi, speaking of the destruction of conventional morality in the camps, called a moral "gray zone."[31] Their images arrive at a symbolic and conceptual "gray zone" where looking is not easily distinguished from blank staring, where radically expropriated experiences cannot help constitute a solid identity for individuals or groups, and where absence surfaces not as spiritually charged "Nothingness" but as a useless, ashen voiding of reference. At this endpoint of modernism, where photography focuses its radically voided gaze to record the world abstractly—without assigning it significance or meaning—the viewer is made to bear belated

witness to experiences that expropriated and deconstituted those who suffered them.

Yet a third response to the phenomenon of trauma in photography could also be traced back to Charcot's hospital. (At this point, it should be clear that the designation of the Salpêtrière as the birthplace of trauma theory identifies no stable origin but names a scene that is inherently split).[32] Instead of following Charcot's efforts to situate and ground traumatic experience visually through representational conventions, as Reinartz and Levin implicitly do, this third response traces trauma's uncanny hold on the body as the site of experiences that are not fully experienced. Although it differs from Reinartz's and Levin's work by refocusing attention on the human body, this approach—like their efforts to bear witness to the traumas of modernity—refuses to confuse images of dead bodies with representations of trauma. It recognizes that in the wake of a vast trauma like the Holocaust, the destruction is so absolute that it often appears as if nothing at all has been touched, that the state of things within the catastrophic environment—the catastrophic reality of trauma—constitutes the traumatized subject's only understanding of the world. Maurice Blanchot has described this paradox of absolute devastation that destroys any means of assessing it from an "outside:" "The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact."[33]

In the book's last chapter, therefore, I discuss strategies for re-seeing historical images to break through the effects of traumatic events that usurp the individual's sense of the world. I focus on a little-known collection of startling slides taken between 1942 and 1944 by a Nazi accountant in the Łódź ghetto. They are startling not only because of their disturbing content but also because they were shot entirely in color. The effect of color, in a context in which we are accustomed to seeing black and white as the code for authenticity, is to bar these images from serving as evidence of what we already know. In view of the Jews' experience of being trapped in sites built by the Germans exclusively for the purpose of their exploitation and eventual annihilation, it seems disingenuous to consider the concept of a "world" when speaking of the traumatic history of ghetto existence. Yet one of the terrible effects of trauma is precisely the replacement of the normal life-world with a suffocatingly hermetic violent universe—a constricting web of forces that ensnares everything with senselessness, contingency, fear. In cases of prolonged trauma, victims appear unable to envision a different

universe or question their violent surroundings. In the historical event of the Holocaust, this web originates and seems to coincide with the position and authority of the perpetrators, who do not constitute an "outside" because they largely remain for the victims beyond the possibility of genuine address. Historians frequently assume that photographs of the Holocaust taken by the Nazis originate from such a place of absolute power and portray the viewfinder as the unreachable center of the victims' apparently exitless universe.

Nonetheless, we may be able to dismantle this sense of the tightly sealed universe within the perpetrators' photographs. Each photograph, as I show in chapter 4, results from what Flusser terms the "co-operation and conflict between camera and photographer."[34] In the context of the Nazi photographs, the camera's conflicts with the photographer's intentions allow us to retrieve a dimension of the Jews' experience that the Nazis almost totally hid from view. In his documentary film *Fotoamator* (*Photographer*), the Polish filmmaker Dariuzs Jablonski discovers details overlooked by commentators who dismiss the color slides of the Łódź ghetto as seamless illustrations of Nazi ideology and fail to notice that occasionally the camera itself redirects the photographer's intentions. The film's technique draws on a philosophical understanding of photography that regards images not as events but as recodings of theoretical concepts, or points of view, about the state of things.

My reconsideration of the Nazi slides corresponds to Fatimah Rony's analysis of a potentially redemptive reappropriation of images photographically "stolen" from minority ethnic communities by ethnographic filmmakers.[35] I draw on this fascinating study of the political and aesthetic reappropriation of stolen images and on Rony's powerful suggestion that we may be able to re-see images of victimhood from positions that break with the photographer's perspective of mastery. My readings extend her work by showing that modernist film techniques and formal juxtapositions—in addition to the postmodern methods of ironic subversion that have allowed other filmmakers to reappropriate racist images—can reclaim a visual history stolen from the victims of historical violence. Through close examination of historical photographs in search of a history still unknown—because it was experienced as traumatic—we can wrench the fragile pictorial testimonies of historical violence from their entombment in the ideologies and ways of seeing where they originated.

Daring to look closely at scenes in which historians and historicist critics, replacing visual analysis with moral righteousness, have seen only the Nazi gaze, Jablonski succeeds in reframing the Łódź photographs. In his hands, they become as if organized around and by the Jewish faces the Nazis wanted to efface and to which they wanted to deny the formal position of the looking subject. He discovers in these images heretofore invisible patterns that enable us to respond to the Jews' long-overlooked return of the photographer's gaze. On the level of photographic content, focusing on elements the Nazis, too, overlooked, he dismantles the sense of a traumatically constituted universe where nothing points beyond the barbed-wire "world" instituted by the perpetrators. I link this practice of re-seeing to a claim that is implicit in every photograph: that the image carries its referent into the uncharted future. When this Barthesian, melancholic understanding of the photograph's future confronts the historical reality of the Łódź ghetto, it becomes possible, and urgently necessary, to move beyond its limitations. Jablonski's film reminds us of just how radically photography retains its referent to *any* future—a future that might include us, as viewers, in the present. The split time dwelling in every photograph—between an immobile past moment and its possibilities for redemption—are not governed by the photographer's intentions. The figures in the Nazi's photographs may be looking into his lens, but they are also seeing past this apocalyptic end, beyond that blinding site, into a future from which they solicit a response. Dismissing this possibility now in the name of our historical knowledge of the ghetto amounts to surrendering the people still alive in those images, again, to the ideological perspective that would end their lives.

The figures in the Nazi photographs examined by Jablonski cannot be equated with the figures in Charcot's images. Yet their radical incomparability does not result exclusively from our knowledge of the historical events in which the individuals lived. Rather, it stems from the fact that the individuals in both sets of images are cut off from any larger system of signification that would allow us to make such comparisons. The photograph creates the illusion, not only of arresting time, but also of authenticating each moment's existence; the photographic print, as one critic puts it, seems to distill "the eternal present in time's every moment."[36] In films, however, a different regime holds sway: there the retina abandons each shot to take in the next image. Film spectators are irreverent and unfaithful, for pious adherence to a single image would ruin the greatly pleasurable illusion of

continuous movement. Yet films fail to fascinate in the same way as photographs do, because they invite the viewer to speculate on the future—even when irresistibly tempted to do so—only on the level of plot or formal arrangement. Photographs compel the imagination because they remain radically open-ended.

In my analysis of the color slides, I develop this openness by following a suggestive comment by Benjamin, that, as proposed by Eduardo Cadava, might define photography as a medium that "embeds" the subject's "afterlife."[37] I explore this definition of photography as a medium of a *salvaging*, *preservation*, and *rescue* of reality—an approach generally absent from the narrowly melancholic contemporary readings of Benjamin. The photographs from the Łódź ghetto testify to a refusal to give up on the possibility of a future. Recognizing this potential requires us to depart from dominant readings of Benjamin that stress the melancholic over the open-ended. Those readings effectively force his theory to give up on the future, as Benjamin himself tragically did, just before reaching safety in his flight from the Gestapo.

It is true that photographs contain the possibility that there will be no linkage, that an image will remain a dead-end where neither revelation nor resolution will ever occur. One can follow Benjamin, Bazin, and Barthes and emphasize, like Cadava, that "the survival of the photographed is . . . never *only* the survival of its life, but also of its death."[38] But we must also focus on this "mere survival of its life" in the photograph as an occurrence from which we cannot easily avert our eyes. This responsibility extends to the task of not readily assuming—even if negatively—the photographer's perspective. Precisely because photographs do appear immutable, we carry the burden of imagining what could occur beyond the boundaries of the print.

1 Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash

Arresting the Symptom

Inside the Dark Room

"Burning with Desire"

The Time of the Flash

Flash, Again

Photography: Flash/Trauma: Psychoanalysis

Photophobia

> Odd that no one has thought of the *disturbance* (to civilization) which this new action [i.e., photography] causes.
> —Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*

> The strongest compulsive influence arises from impressions . . . at a time when [the child's] psychical apparatus [is] not yet completely receptive. [This] fact cannot be doubted; but it is so puzzling that we may make it more comprehensible by comparing it with a photographic exposure which can be developed after any interval of time and transformed into a picture.
> —Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*

In the nineteenth century, both science and medicine were already wedded to the technical possibilities of photography. Walter Benjamin suggests the existence of that shared gaze in his "Short History of Photography"; declaring that photography was an invention for which the time had come, he adds: "It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical-unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue, things with which technology

and medicine are normally concerned—all this is ultimately more closely related to the camera than the moody landscape or the soulful portrait."[1] Benjamin tries to account for the "disturbance (to civilization)" frequently ascribed to photography by pioneering a psychoanalytic reading of the technical media. He deliberately leaves undecided, however, the issue of whether photography merely registers this disturbance or also causes it.

A series of medical photographs taken in the early 1880s at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris seems to mark uncannily a particular kind of social "disturbance." The images were published in three volumes as *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* by Jean-Martin Charcot—Freud's mentor and the leading neurologist of the time.[2] All of Charcot's photographs depict women and concentrate on an affliction then labeled hysteria; they portray somatic "disturbances" of a remarkably wide range. These pictures uniquely qualify as inadvertent previews for the "disturbance to civilization" that Barthes considered intrinsic to all photography, but not because of their content (the representation of somatic crises). Instead of constituting visual evidence of a malady, several of the photographs in Charcot's collection make readable—in the effects of the flash—the link between the camera's mechanism and scientific faith in the possibility of incontestable knowledge. They also reveal a structural similarity between hysteria and photography, for it is the flash that links pathology and technology and teaches us something about the origins of photography.

Geoffrey Batchen has explained that the pioneers of photography were "burning with desire" to see and has shown how this desire to photograph complicates notions of photography's origin as a historically datable event.[3] Charcot, too, was "burning with desire" to see and felt, in Freud's phrase, that "the greatest satisfaction man can experience is to see something new."[4] The invention of the flash promised to capture such new sights. Instead, however, of viewing Charcot's images as yet another turning point in the history of photography, in this chapter I examine how these flash photographs shatter the myth of the photograph as a "frozen moment," as arrested time. I explore how the flash illuminates the convergence of a bodily symptom and the technical medium and how this convergence constitutes a kind of Benjaminian *Schwellenereignis* (an "event on the threshold") in the history of the referent.[5]

It is possible to render Charcot's photographs readable by putting into question the status of the referent as purely visual and by demonstrating that

the reliance on vision may offer only a tenuous link to cognition. The images force viewers to shift their conception of the lived experience of time, which postulates a linear succession of events occasionally interrupted by traumatic breaks or exceptional events, to a notion in which isolated, nonintegrated moments—snapshots rather than a narrative—are not the exception but the rule. Charcot's images complicate our understanding of four notions that are commonly taken for granted in current photography criticism: temporality (the relations between past and present); referentiality (the relations between an event and its remembrance or recording); the implication of the photographic apparatus in its "subject;" and the way a photographic image might constitute a kind of allegory of photography itself.

Many of the clinical practices at the Salpêtrière were standard procedure in the netherworld of nineteenth-century psychiatry. It is primarily the photographic collection that distinguishes Charcot's self-titled "museum of living pathology" from other clinics.[6] Most of the Salpêtrière's female patients, and a good number of the male patients, were diagnosed with hysteria. We might define this condition as one arising from cultural conditions that prevent subjects from articulating, or even having memories of, past bodily experiences (often of abuse and trauma) and that at the same time define them exclusively in terms of a body whose sensations, and very existence, they are thus forced to deny. Hysteria had always been associated with masking, histrionics, deception, and imitation.[7] Though some critics consider photography a medium of nonintervention, Charcot employed it actively, to arrest hysterics' antics.[8] Catching the hysteric in the act, the camera produced a "motionless image" he hoped would stall the patient's efforts to manipulate those around her.[9] In his 1893 obituary, Sigmund Freud praises his former teacher and mentor for "restoring dignity to the [study of hysteria]. . . . Gradually the sneering attitude, which the hysteric could reckon on meeting when she told her story, was given up; she was no longer a malingerer, since Charcot had thrown the whole weight of his authority on the side of the reality and objectivity of hysterical phenomena."[10] Charcot's reputation and credentials largely stripped the "disease of hysteria" of its seedy reputation of immoral, excessive, or deviant sexuality. Angry dismissals by feminist historians and the shortcomings of his theoretical work notwithstanding, the Salpêtrière's peerless physician-Svengali actually approaches a protofeminist position: he was, after all, among the first to recognize as real the suffering of, especially, poor women, which others dismissed as

imagined or feigned.[11] To be sure, the medical gaze on which Charcot's scientific project depended adhered to a blatantly misogynist code, even as Charcot claimed to have eliminated all overt references to sexuality from the processes of clinical observation. My examination of Charcot's images, however, suggests that we must revise the twinned misconceptions that photography is a technique of nonintervention and that the photographed subject is helplessly trapped by the photographer's gaze.

Most recent scholars have interpreted Charcot's project as inherently misogynist but have not considered the effects of his photography. In contrast, I show that a thorough criticism of Charcot's injurious practices must be grounded in an epistemological critique based on a reading of his photographs. To this end, I base my analysis of Charcot's pictures on a study of the abusive institutionalization of women who failed to live up to the sexist standards of their community. Our only chance of properly grasping Charcot's practices, I argue, rests with these images. Moreover, the photographs are somewhat less susceptible to the ideological and moralistic distortion that taints Charcot's countless pages of case studies, the testimonies of the Salpêtrière's doctors and patients, and many historical or biographical studies.

At the same time, we cannot share Charcot's naive faith in the photograph as unmediated evidence. Hysteria, after all, is a disease that violently splits the meaning of an event from its occurrence. Some, otherwise discerning, critics have overlooked the fact that it was Charcot himself who left for posterity precisely those images of hysterics on whose behalf—and thus on whose imagined status as innocent victims—such critics condemn the master.[12] If we want to unfetter the hysterics from the master's darkroom, we must risk aligning our own gaze with Charcot's. For even when deliberately abstract or defensively antipsychoanalytic, all significant photography criticism is, finally, motivated by the utterly irrational, yet forceful, impulse to encounter the people in a photograph on their own terms—by critically undoing the camera's staging, framing, freezing, and preservation of them against their will and beyond their death.

Those who label Charcot as misogynist habitually overlook the fact that photography itself introduced a way of objectifying women that differs profoundly from previous modes of representation. I here follow important feminist analyses of photographic representation that emphasize the need for a new "aesthetics" appropriate to photography. Thus Abigail Solomon-

Godeau asserts that "all discussion [of photography] must proceed from the recognition that photography produces a wholly different visual paradigm from that of the older graphic arts, and it is precisely the differences in this paradigm that we need to acknowledge."[13] Unless we heed this advice, we will be treating Charcot's gallery as merely illustrative of the systematic institutional abuse of women in the late nineteenth century, hampering our criticisms by allegiance to models of perception grounded in prephotographic means of representation. Many studies reiterate Charcot's own approach to his images, instead of critically examining the photographs themselves.[14] Therefore, to render justice to the women caught by the new technological process of objectification, I consider photographs that, allegorically, make readable the photographic process itself, and that illuminate the poetics rather than the thematics of photography.[15] If we do not focus on the medium itself, our critique can do little but substitute one historically determined perspective for another. Not until we understand better how Charcot could see what he saw—and possibly see how he did *not* see—can we critique his practice without merely reproducing his way of seeing and so replace his reliance on visual perception with a sharper reading.[16]

Arresting the Symptom

Charcot's fame rested partly on his unprecedented diagnoses of male trauma victims, who made up nearly 25 percent of his patients, as hysterics.[17] Although the originality of such diagnoses added to his reputation, and many pictures of these men were taken during his tenure at the Salpêtrière, not a single photograph of a man appears in Charcot's three-tome chef d'oeuvre. To put it simply, Charcot the man lagged behind the radical insights of Charcot the clinician.

> Male hysteria is not at all rare, and, *just among us, gentlemen*, if I can judge from what I see each day, these cases are often unrecognized even by very distinguished doctors. One will concede that a *young and effeminate* man might develop hysterical findings after experiencing significant stress, sorrow, or deep emotions. But that a *vigorous and strong* worker whose nerves have not been whittled down by culture [*non énervé par la culture*], for instance a railway engineer, *fully integrated into the society and never prone to emotional instability* before, should become a hysteric—*just as a woman* might—this seems to be

> *beyond the imagination.* And yet, it is a fact—one which we must *get used to* (emphasis added).[18]

Charcot's remarks show that male hysteria was not only caused by physical shocks (as in a train collision) but also that its sheer existence provoked shocks of a cognitive order for the attending physician (shocks that "we," who today grapple with his findings, must still "get used to").

Charcot's exclusive photographic focus on female patients, however, is not fully explained by the libidinal forces at work in the medical establishment. Hysteria, whether in women or men, posed a fundamental challenge and threat to the institution of medical knowledge, because it "*behave[d]*," as Freud reported with both fascination and abhorrence, "*in its paralyses and other manifestations as if anatomy were non-existent, or as if it had no knowledge of it.*"[19] To diagnose a disease that introduced what Jean-François Lyotard has called a *differend* between female patient and male doctor (as two parties who lacked a common idiom), Charcot used photography to visually represent a disease that defied anatomy and, thus, physical examination.[20] The pictures were meant to arrest the confounding dialectics of symptoms that oscillated between "bulimia and abstinence, anesthesia and increased sensitivity, depression of intellectual activities and exaltation, constipation and diarrhea, insomnia and sleeping attacks" (*IPS*, 3: preface). Charcot's assistants snapped their shutters to arrest this oscillation and resolve this differend. The resulting images promised to render hysteria graspable to the doctor. In his dark chamber, Charcot also hoped to master the hysteric's astounding propensity to simulate symptoms: "Malingering is found in every phase of hysteria and one is surprised at times to admire the ruse, the sagacity, and unyielding tenacity that especially the women . . . display in order to deceive . . . particularly when the victim of the deceit happens to be a physician."[21] The photograph was meant to exteriorize, make visible, and arrest the hysterical symptom in order to sever this symptom from the patient's intentions. This belief in the power of photography sets Charcot's image-driven analyses apart from Freud's understanding of desire and intention as inextricably, if negatively, linked with the patient's symptoms. To be sure, Freud's approach goes beyond his mentor's uncritical faith in the force of the image, and I will show how a psychoanalytically informed understanding of hysteria possibly detects what Charcot failed to see in his photographs. At the same time, Freud's screening out of the visual in his early writings and the ways in which

the image reenters his later work, flashback style, reveal that some of psychoanalysis's insights regarding temporality and cognition may originate not with Freud's favorite texts but with Charcot's photographs, which Freud overlooked so consistently that we want to look at them again. The *Iconographie* is composed of selected snapshots of the preverbal origins of the Freudian oeuvre and compels us to read them.

The hysterics' histrionics threatened to undermine the doctor's authority and reputation. To counter charges that he was diagnosing hysterical symptoms his assistants had coached patients to perform, Charcot began to focus on symptoms that could not be rehearsed. His reputation as a scientist was closely bound up with the discovery and authentication of these symptoms. Occasionally, a new symptom was inadvertently discovered and then reproduced in the hospital's photo studio to make it visible to the doctor's gaze. Charcot used the *tableau vivant* of the photograph (in which time is apparently immobilized, "engorged") to create a *tableau clinique*, a clinical picture that would apply "everywhere and at all times."[22]

While photography promised to rein in the hysterics' histrionics, their affinity for masks and make-up marked them as prime candidates for the photographic collection. Ultimately, Charcot's gallery reveals that he sought to exorcise some of his own demons by pointing the camera at those twisting, panting, and hallucinating wild-haired female bodies. Did they really suffer, or were they putting him on? Indeed, is it not the doctor who suffers the hysterics' charades—suffers them as a threat to his authority, his mastery, his grasp of the truth? In a description of Augustine's portrait photograph (figure 1.1), taken at the time of the patient's first admission to the hospital in her street clothes, Charcot writes:

> Everything about her, finally, announces the hysteric. The care applied to her make-up [*sa toilette*]; the arranging of her hair, the ribbons which she loves to put on. This need to adorn herself is so strong that during a [hysterical] attack, if there is a momentary respite, she utilizes this moment to attach a ribbon to her gown; this amuses her [*ceci la distrait*], and gives her pleasure . . . It follows that she enjoys looking at men, and that she loves to show herself and desires that one spend time with her [*s'occupe d'elle*] (*IPS*, 2: 167–168).

Charcot's interpretation betrays the doctor's own scopic drive and his desire. Although he wants to assign pleasure only to the patient and diagnose the woman's enjoyment in looking at men as a symptom of her disease, rather

1.1 "Augustine." Hysterical Epilepsy. Normal State. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

than as the mirroring of his own gaze, it is Charcot who later elevates Augustine above her fellow patients as the Salpêtrière's undisputed supermodel. He uses the camera and the photograph's caption to establish, fix, and invade the woman's identity on every level; the admission photograph, Charcot claims, proves her to be a hysteric even before she has been properly diagnosed. The fact that a photograph was taken was considered evidence of her condition: "This patient had been photographed for the first time in 1872." Augustine's failure to remember this initial, years-earlier photographic session proves that she suffers from a loss of memory and is thus a hysteric (*IPS*, 2: 25). The camera as diagnostic tool produces the photograph as proof. Charcot refers to Augustine as a "very regular, very classical example" of hysteria.[23] The "regularity" of her attacks and her womanly charms are all the more interesting to the medical establishment because Augustine is prepubescent—although her menses are not yet "*réglé*," she is successfully "regulated" by Charcot.[24]

Charcot used his Tuesday lectures before an audience of the socially prominent to diagnose previously unexamined patients and establish hysteria as an authentic illness. He did so to counter other doctors' views that hysterics were "*farceuses*" who mocked the world (*IPS*, 2: 104). His use of photography was the culmination of his theoretical drive to categorize, label, and make readable what Freud called a "chaos . . . presented by the constant repetition of the same symptoms."[25] Still photography promised to introduce order into an illness that "seems always outside of any rule," defying definitions because of the "instability, the mobility of its symptoms."[26] When the camera's *objective* (its lens) is positioned between doctor and patient, the photographic set-up offers the illusion of objectivity—the empirical existence of an objective distance between observer and observed that the medical establishment had long sought.

The three volumes of the *Iconographie* thus do not originate solely in the scientist's desire to exploit fully all available technologies.[27] In addition to the motives already mentioned, Charcot's interest in and use of photography was born of his understanding of his own methodology: "But in truth, I am absolutely nothing but a photographer; I inscribe what I see."[28] Through this metaphorical self-definition (Charcot himself never took a picture but employed professional photographers), the head doctor sought to establish the positivist and objective quality of his theoretical work by linking it to the "guarantees of inherent veracity" he found in photographic

images (*IPS*, 2: preface). This "denial of theory,—doubled by a mitigation of 'script,'" as Georges Didi-Huberman puts it, might strike us as stunningly naïve. Yet it is grounded in the fantasy of an "immediacy of recording [*en-registrement*]" of the perceived object[29] and, finally, in the substitution of its representation or technological double for that object that still haunts all technological media. Alfred Londe, Charcot's photographer, put it this way:

> This [the photographic project] is in fact about keeping the lasting trace of all pathological manifestations, whatever they would be, that could modify the exterior form of the patient and imprint on her a particular character, an attitude, a special facies. These impartial and quickly gathered documents add a considerable value to the medical observations in the sense that they place under everyone's eyes the faithful image of the studied subject.[30]

Londe's belief in the power of photography is echoed in Charcot's phantasmatic belief in the pure correspondence between inscription (of the image on the mind) and description (of the impression in theory).[31] By creating a photographic record, Charcot also hoped to dam and escape from the hysteric's "delirious" verbal flow; a reliance on the silent image, he felt, would save him from the hysteric's "incessant babbling."[32]

The flash takes you by surprise, no matter how long in advance you have been warned. It cuts into a scene with the violence of the lightning bolt and yet instantly displaces attention from itself to the darkness of its surroundings. Presumably you recover, only momentarily blinded by an excess of artificial light, and try to regain your composure. The flash creates a physical disorientation that corresponds on an experiential level to the philosophical "disturbance to civilization" produced by looking at the photograph, which signals the "advent of yourself as other."[33] An excess of light that promises total (as we will see, illusory) visibility, and that goes out at the same moment that it goes on, the flash cannot be integrated into sensory experience but only registered, belatedly, incompletely, possibly as shock; too much light produces a loss of sight.[34] The flash promises instant revelation of the truth. It occurs as an accident, unexpected and impossible to anticipate or parry, even by someone trained to resist it. The resurfacing of cognition that follows, however, may achieve only partial recovery: the flash disorients you, and the subsequent cognitive effort may not fully integrate the moment of disorientation into memory.

Inside the Dark Room

As part of his strategy to diagnose symptoms that could not be rehearsed, Charcot put the surprise factor of the flash to work. His images show that the flash does not merely make visible but also modifies the photographed object. Augustine is led into a pitch-black room set up in the middle of the photographic studio. When she is inside this dark isolation chamber, a sudden burst of light fills it *d'un grand éclat*, freezing her body into a motionless image (figure 1.2). Charcot's photographers are standing by: the shutter clicks. At first glance, the resulting image does not stand out from the rest of Charcot's collection. Its codes are readily decipherable: the maid's or nurse's uniform indicate the female patient's social standing, her servitude, and her ignorance of medicine.[35] Framing and perspective are borrowed from classical painting and acting, and the pliable, awkwardly positioned female body is a stock figure of nineteenth-century pseudomedical pornography. The picture is not even sexually suggestive, unlike the later notorious Lolita-like images of Augustine. Beyond all these representational codes and clichés, however, this photograph illuminates brilliantly the referential status of the feminized body in the age of mechanical reproduction.

Charcot reproduced this image of a woman in the dark room several times, both mechanically and by substituting other women. The first photograph of Augustine in the dark chamber, complete with nurse's uniform, recurs in the *Iconographie* with a different patient, as the image of B . . . (figure 1.3); this image is then reproduced, in the third volume, as the picture of S . . . (figure 1.4).[36] It is the only symptom, and the only experimental set-up in the entire collection of which there are three photographs. Charcot compulsively returned to the symptom that the camera promised to immobilize. The substitutability of the photographed person is as critical to Charcot's project as the promise of mechanical reproducibility; the medium of photography—with its illusion of a faithful and unmediated reproduction of reality—is intended to support his central argument that hysterical symptoms follow predictable patterns. Yet even before B . . . and S . . . were substituted for Augustine, and before Augustine's name was replaced by "X . . .," "L . . .," and "A . . ." (used interchangeably in the *Iconographie*), the image had existed, not only as a second and a third print but also, experientially, as its own reproduction.[37] For at the moment when the light flooded the

1.2 "Augustine." Catalepsy. Provoked by a Strong Light. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

1.3 "B . . ." Catalepsy. Provoked by a Strong Light. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Planche XXXVII.

CATALEPSIE

PROVOQUÉE PAR UNE LUMIÈRE VIVE

1.4 "S . . ." Catalepsy. Provoked by a Strong Light. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

dungeonlike darkness of the "*cabinet noir*" (*IPS*, 3: 194; 205), A . . . fell into a state of catalepsy, her body actually freezing in complete immobility in the position in which she had been flashed. In the brevity of the flash, the technical medium promises the desired mastery over the unpredictable disease of hysteria by provoking hysterical symptoms at the doctor's command. The "*lumière oxydrique très brillante*" that drenched the dark chamber with blinding light "without warning" came from a lamp positioned in the chamber (*IPS*, 3: 176, 194). As long as the light remained on, the shocked female body would remain cataleptic, completely unable to move but subject to the doctor's gaze and hands. ("It is easy to arrange in any way that one may wish the members as well as the body itself" [*IPS*, 2: 204].) As shown in the next image (figure 1.5), "the body can be placed in an arch . . . rigid, it remains in this position for quite some time" until the bright lamp was—again without warning—extinguished.[38] Once the resulting darkness was swapped for sudden light, the body would slump into lethargy and collapse onto the ground or into the hands of an attending *expérimentateur* (*IPS*, 3: 195). "This procedure [of turning the body cataleptic or lethargic by means of light] could be repeated infinitely," just as photography promises an infinite number of reproductions of an original sight (*IPS*, 3: 176). The explosion of light triggered experientially a double petrification, mechanically causing in the body the same thing that happens on the film: the body is petrified in an image of "*intense immobility*."[39] Flash photographs cannot offer proof but are only testimony: "before, this—after, that."[40]

Charcot understood the hysterical symptom of catalepsy in these photographs as the state "in which the bodily members retain [*les membres conservent*] the attitude that one has imposed on them" (*IPS*, 3: 193). This medical understanding of a physical symptom corresponds to Charcot's understanding of the technological medium, as expressed by photographer Londe: "[Photography offers] a faithful memory that retains [*conserve*] unchanged all the impressions that it has received."[41] Catalepsy retains by way of the body what photography appears to retain with the camera: it freeze-frames and retains the body in an isolated position that can be viewed and theorized about outside a temporal continuum. In Charcot's terms, we might provisionally understand the photograph as symptom and see the "dark chamber" where the bodies of A . . ., B . . ., and S . . . are frozen into immobile statues as an allegory of the photographic process itself.

1.5 Catalepsy. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Surprisingly, however, Charcot's staff never remarked on the way the technical process of photography mirrored the symptom of a human body frozen by a flash in a *cabinet noir*, which translates, as if coincidentally, into the *chambre obscure* of photography—the *camera obscura* (*IPS*, 2: ii).

"Burning with Desire"

There is a widely disseminated myth about the early days of photography when long exposure times were still necessary that subjects wore garters and knee braces and that head-holders clamped the body in painful statuesque immobility for the duration of the shot.[42] Very soon, however, the myth continues, better equipment was developed and the braces could be abandoned.[43] The myth endures because it feeds on our assumptions: that time is continuous, history is a process that unfolds, technological progress occurs in linear fashion, and life is experienced as a consecutive story. Once improved technology shortened the exposure time required for the camera to perform its magic, the myth then concludes, a flash could capture an unblurred image of the same stiff body that formerly needed a long exposure. By the time Charcot was shooting, cameras were already fairly advanced; nonetheless, the photographs of Augustine assume special significance in relation to this myth, for all movement was eliminated—not only on the technical but also on the bodily level. Because Augustine's body enacts in reality what photographic technology was assumed to make possible for the first time, the myth that the camera enabled investigators to suddenly discover sights that (because of their brevity) had earlier eluded human vision is deprived of its complementary assumption: namely, that unphotographed reality is both experienced as continuous and is accessible to consciousness.

When we superimpose this myth of photography's origins on the snapshots of Augustine, they illustrate perfectly that transitional moment when the flash renders unnecessary the body's physical rigidity and produces, instead, temporal immobility. As a visual *Schwellenereignis*, however, these photographs cannot thus be reduced to one moment in a history of photography. Instead, they show that the history of photography is not a phylogenetic developmental story that recurs ontogenetically with each click of the shutter, transforming reality in the baptismal acid baths of developmental vats into the immobile print. The pictures of Augustine freeze in time what the physical symptom retains in space. The flash does not

immobilize, then, the woman in motion; instead, it creates and captures simultaneously an instance that hovers *between* movement and immobility, memory and trauma, narrative and shock. Flash-induced catalepsy means precisely that cause and effect, lived reality and staged representation, *appear to coincide:* the occurrence collapses in a single instance the distinction between before and after. The chapter in the history of photography "from immobilized body in braces to frozen time in print," as imagined by Benjamin and others, does not conclude with the flash. Charcot's camera freezes neither the body in motion nor a moment in time. Instead, it captures an instance in which there is no distinction between bodily symptom and temporal condition, rest and motion, instance and continuum. These images are "disturbing" because they capture experiences that are not mythic, narrative, or consecutive, but occur as sudden blasts of the past into the present—as if they were already, prior to the shutter's click, isolated in a virtual photograph.

Whereas at the Salpêtrière photography initially served the Cartesian Charcot as a means to arrest and break into smaller units the confounding symptoms of *la grande hystérie*, it was soon promoted in status from a visual aid to a diagnostic tool. The photographic session then openly became a set-up to induce the "hysteric" body to betray symptoms that normally escaped both human sight and pretechnological forms of medical examination: A . . ., B . . ., and S . . . were thus "framed" by Charcot. The photographs, he maintained, proved that the women were genuinely ill and not simply *farceuses:* as they did not know what awaited them in the dark chamber where the flash would be ignited, their responses—now recorded on photographic plates—were considered authentic. In addition to making certain "hysterical" symptoms suddenly readable, however, flash photography supplemented an already-extensive symptomatology by *creating* entirely new symptoms.

The field of medicine thus registered what criminology (among the first fields to employ photography systematically) had recognized all along: photography's affinity with investigative thought.[44] As Barthes writes, "the subject's identity had always been a legal or even penal matter."[45] Through photography Charcot sought to reconnect experience and cognition, or event and memory, in order to reestablish the hysteric as a unified being. Photography, he hoped, would arrest this disturbing vacillation between present and past.

The Time of the Flash

In his dark room, Charcot paid tribute to his preferred form of entertainment, the circus; with the camera, he sought to outperform the hysteric's theatricality and beat her at her game.[46] Consequently, the hysteric was most often photographed and showcased in two distinct modes: as a corpse and as a machine. Frozen stiff, stretched over two chairs as if over the abyss of time (figure 1.6)—"this experiment was never carried out for longer than 4 or 5 minutes" (*IPS*, iii, 192)—in theatrical contortions, or caught in endless repetitions of experiential sequences acted out at the doctor's command, the women in Charcot's images supplement the masculinist canon of imagined "womanhood" that includes Greek myths, Shakespeare's drowned Ophelia, Hoffmann's robotic, dead-eyed Olympia, and the pixelated Lara Croft. Yet, notwithstanding their adherence to this tradition, Charcot's photographed hysterics are real.

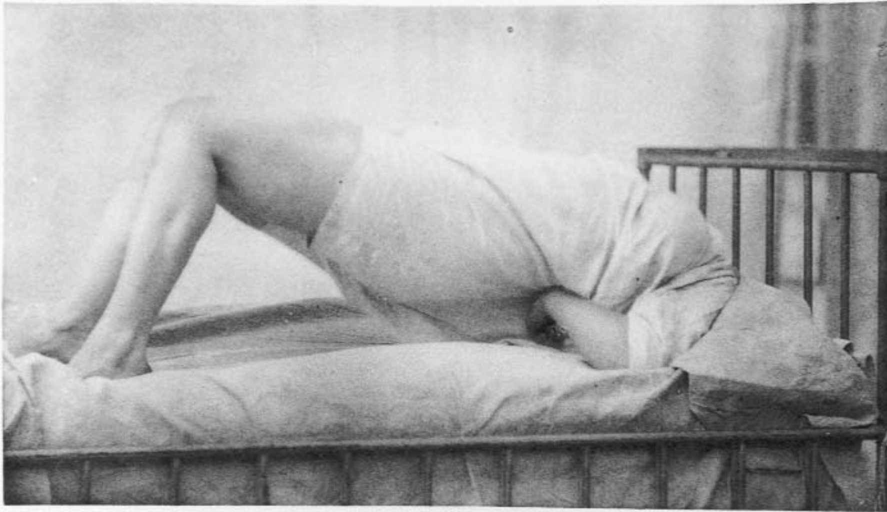
Their ineffaceable reality produces in the viewer a vertiginous feeling similar to the disconcerting effect of searching for signs of madness in the faces appearing in medical textbooks. There is no need here to resolve whether this reality effect results from a photographic technique or buried conventions, and so constitutes a kind of "bourgeois folklore," or whether photography truly establishes a "direct and causal linkage to its referent."[47] It has no bearing on the fact that Charcot's photographs capture a condition that is itself a crisis of reference. The sufferings of hysteria—this much even the greatest skeptics admit—cannot be simply dismissed, leaving patients to their potentially delusional pains, just because the cause of that pain does not seem real. The medium does not master but matches the disease. Hysteria originates in events that fail to slide smoothly into consciousness or memory. The illusion of reality created by photography, however, is matched by the crisis of reference caused by hysteria: What, in the picture, is real and what imagined? What, in hysteria, is truth and what deceit? The uncanny impression of photography that a slice of the past has been shuttled into the present is analogous to the phenomenon of traumatic hysteria, in which past experiences seem to bypass processes of mental screening and attain their full meaning only later. Photography and hysteria are linked not only on a thematic level, not merely on the level of the referent whose epistemological status is changed in its encounter with the camera. Their link is already established by the technical dimension of photography itself.

1.6 Lethargy. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Through his demonstrations and the photographs of the hysterics' contorted bodies, Charcot sought to mend a rift between self and body. The doctor triggered something that reproduced the presumed cause of the hysterical condition (an event in the patient's past), and the corresponding symptom was then isolated and diagnosed as a specific form of the disease. The hysterical body constituted for Charcot a medium that yielded readable signs. He used the camera to capture these signs before they were verbalized, or turned into signifying motion. To fault Charcot's images for mimicking nineteenth-century theatrical conventions and creating, merely, an illusion of reality is to deny the ambiguous origin of whatever—contrary to a simple logic of causality—prompts the women's hysterical suffering and to brand that suffering as imaginary. To be sure, Charcot never fully shed his misogynist blinders, or reflected adequately on the medium's effects on the photographed subjects. Yet we have only these images, and these women are looking to us to respond to a reality that exceeded both their grasp and the doctor's control.

Much of Charcot's work, including the contortionist culmination of grand hysteria in the *arc-de-cercle* (figure 1.7), was intended to capture the split between mind and body encountered in hysteria. The metaphysical opposition between subject and object that supports such an understanding of hysteria hardly needs pointing out. At the same time as the female body is diagnostically reinscribed into a logic of cause-and-effect that hysteria had apparently defied, flash-triggered catalepsy seems to provide another example of a mechanistic model of the body based on the subject-object opposition.[48] Some sociohistorical readings of Charcot's work have described this rift by viewing the hysterical body as the haunting memory of a mythic, prehistoric time when body and self were still one.[49] The notion that the hysterical body hauntingly returns the memory of an "abandoned body" that modern science and "bloodless" medicine aims to leave behind, however, implies that what returns is a body in its pure, innocent, pretechnologized state.[50] Such a body never existed; yet in the West this romantic notion has long served as repressive ideal to control all kinds of transgressive subjects, women first among them. The images from Charcot's collection show that the body was not separated from a self but emerged in the split between the mind and the strange timeless present captured in the photograph.

Charcot contributed to a project concerned with the female body primarily for its technological use; whether as model or machine, it has always



1.7 Hysterical-Epileptical Attack. Circled Arch. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

been hooked up to the doctor's mobilizing mechanisms (see figure 1.8, "the body hooked up to a tuning fork"). What is reproduced by hysteria never existed in a form untouched by technology: the body's sanctity had already been violated by preceding regimes of representation and by the notion of *techné*, which only became visible in Charcot's photographs.[51] Other interpretations regard hysteria as the return of repressed femininity, a liberation of those feminine energies that find no expression in a hostile culture. Such readings overlook the fact that the body is always already marked by the possibility of its technological mediation, which precludes any notion of the physical or expressive purity that such celebrations of hysteria hope to liberate.

Flash, Again

The photographs of the three cataleptic women demand that we look closely at the flash, because it heightens photography's illusion that there, indeed, time was interrupted. At the same time, these photographs do not transcend their medium but serve as allegories of photography, because the cataleptic body returned to a nonhysterical (if "lethargic") state once the bright light was extinguished (figure 1.9). A photographed body normally recovers from the flash after a delay of about a sixteenth of a second.[52]

As an allegory, Augustine's photograph prolongs and makes readable the otherwise blinding event of the flash without changing the technical quality of the image. It allows us to read the "evidence of its own mediation" that is "normally efface[d]" in representational photography.[53] Without revealing the object of intrusion (the camera), the image reveals its mediation in ways that are normally found only in images produced by hand, or in abstract photographs.[54] However, if we rethink the allegory of photography through the performative moment of Augustine's catalepsy, we may no longer understand it as purely phenomenal; reading the photograph allegorically does not result in the reification of the photographic process. By showing the body mimicking its own representation, Charcot's photographs suggest that the literality of traumatic memory is, in fact, a distortion of memory and not its original, pure state. As allegory, the photograph of Augustine shows that something in photography resists the certainty of sense perception and cannot be accessed like a phenomenal

1.8 Catalepsy. Provoked by the Sound of a Tuning Fork. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

1.9 Lethargy. Resulting from the Sudden Extinction of Light. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

occurrence. Through the allegory of Augustine's photograph, we "see" what we can't see.

The metaphor of space pervades Charcot's theories, for the neurologist hoped to prove that hysterical catalepsy was a bodily symptom that occurred in a "state of absence from [the] self."[55] Not until Freud returned to Vienna was the dissociation of self and body that Charcot first diagnosed in hysteria understood in temporal terms.[56] Because they foreground temporal dissociation, Freud's insights are pertinent to an understanding of the relations between hysteria and photography. These theories let us understand certain hysterical symptoms as reproductions and reenactments of inassimilable experiences, frequently of a traumatic nature. In a footnote to his German translation of Charcot's lectures, Freud adds his own "new findings":

> The core of a hysterical attack, in whatever form it may appear, is a memory, the hallucinatory reliving of a scene which is significant for the onset of the illness. . . . The content of the memory is as a rule either a psychical trauma which is qualified *by its intensity* to provoke the outbreak of hysteria in the patient or is an event which, *owing to its occurrence at a particular moment*, has become a trauma (emphasis added).[57]

Insofar as the hysterical body is the site of this "hallucinatory reliving" that occurs without conscious control, Charcot could think of his patient as an *homme-machine* [*sic*]—a mechanical contraption devoid of any cognitive dimension.[58] As a psychoanalytic approach to trauma helps us understand, however, a hysterical symptom such as catalepsy occurs as the paradoxical *reproduction of a first time*—a flashback of an event from the patient's past that was never integrated into memory and thus escaped the ordering of events into continuous memory. A . . .'s, B . . .'s, and S . . .'s catalepsy might therefore be understood as the enigmatic event of traumatic flashback that is correlated with the photographic flash, which in itself—a sixteenth of a second ahead of human perception—escapes cognition.

Hysterical catalepsy—like the body frozen by the flash in Charcot's experiment—combines two different temporalities or frames of reference: the moment of a past unassimilated event, which returns in a present state of dissociation. The dissociation is not spatial, it is not an out-of-body experience, but it produces a simulacrum of memory, the haunting reminder of an unassimilated past event that imposes itself in and on the present. The flashback

(usually in the form of an image, unmediated by constative speech) usurps the place of memory, invading the body with a symptom that is neither integrated into consciousness nor describable as an "experience."[59] "Elle [A . . .] est *incertaine*, ne sait rien de ce qui s'est passé; R . . . lui a parlé, elle n'en a pas souvenance" (*IPS*, 3: 205; emphasis added). The photographic flash produces an image and thereby, in a way similar to the flashback, splits language itself. Charcot can no longer use the French *expérience* to refer simultaneously to *experience* and *experiment;* for the cataleptic patient, the experience of the flash operates within a radically different existential grammar than that of the experiment. The enigma that is constituted by the flashback's accurate reproduction of an earlier event in the absence of memory—an enigma that still awaits full epistemological and scientific explication—is reproduced in and by the black box of the camera.

Photography: Flash/Trauma: Psychoanalysis

The apparent collision of two temporalities, the incomplete past of the trauma and the presence of the symptom in catalepsy, establishes the link between hysteria and photography. Earlier I showed how Charcot used photography to find symptoms hidden from nontechnical diagnostic methods. Yet photography not only made visible, as Charcot thought, but also produced the symptom of flash-induced catalepsy. The camera at once caused and helped discover a symptom of hysterical neurosis that would itself be understood, after a temporal delay, by Charcot's colleague Pierre Janet and his student Freud in Vienna. The photographic discovery of this symptom formerly unrecognizable to the human eye seems to have brought to light what Benjamin calls an "optical-unconscious" that suggests an affinity between photography and psychoanalysis: "It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical-unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis."[60] This affinity between photography and psychoanalysis takes place on a structural and not a thematic level—it is a technical effect of which A . . .'s, B . . .'s, and S . . .'s photographs may be allegories but which these images do not prove by their content. Underlying this technical effect is both photography's and psychoanalysis's interest in the detail, in the "fragment or smallest signifier," a pursuit shared by Charcot.[61] The other link between photography and

psychoanalysis is found in the technology's affinity with investigative thought mentioned earlier. As Freud points out, psychoanalytic methods rely principally on investigation rather than on symbolic interpretation.[62]

As for the role of technology, the photograph "is never," writes Barthes, "in essence, a memory but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes counter-memory."[63] This understanding of the photograph as "counter-memory" helps us interpret Charcot's photographs: the images of A . . ., B . . ., and S . . . allegorize the photographic process (by rendering an abstract process visible); but, like psychoanalysis, which understands hysterical catalepsy to refer to an event outside of memory, the photograph refers to a moment that never entered consciousness. Differently put, "the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially."[64] This technical effect of photography is produced in every picture. The images of the three patients' flash-triggered catalepsy allegorize it. The hysterical body's temporary passage, its *transfert* into a corpselike state during catalepsy, corresponds to the passage from conscious to unconscious; the photograph captures an experience that for A . . ., B . . ., and S . . . was absent. Photography does not make this absence present but registers it as passage; it brings to light (for the spectator, but also for the photographed person) a reality that was not experienced. The experience of catalepsy also fails to reach cognition: this is why it allegorizes the photographic image, which now constructs a meaning that never existed before as such.

However, the aspect of photography that most distinguishes it from other media, thus constituting an entirely new "visual paradigm," is not its singular refusal to be reduced to memory.[65] Instead, as Benjamin writes (and André Bazin and Barthes later concur), photography's singular change results from the certainty of a future that is yet to come:

> In photography, one encounters something strange and new: . . . something remains that does not testify merely to the art of the photographer . . . something that is not to be silenced, something demanding defiantly the name of the person who had lived then, who even now is still real and will never entirely perish into *art*. She [the woman in the photograph discussed by Benjamin] is seen beside him here, he holds her; her glance, however, goes past him, directed into an unhealthy distance.[66]

The English translation medicalizes Benjamin's text: the original speaks not of an "unhealthy" but rather of a "disastrous" (*unheilvolle*) distance. The

translation nonetheless points to Benjamin's central concern with health and sickness, and indeed with life and death: the photographed person "is still real" even though she was already dead when he wrote, or would be sometime in the future. Photography's disastrous knowledge rests in this fact. We recall Charcot's photographer's belief that photography is able "to preserve a lasting trace" of hysteria and that his images arrest the elusive symptoms of the disease before they disappear into time. Like Freud, theorists of photography emphasize the melancholic retention—the desire to embalm time and ensure the unending presence of the photographed object—that underwrites all photographic practice, not only Charcot's. Barthes develops this realization that the photograph preserves the photographed person while announcing her impending death: "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe"[67]—a catastrophe bound to occur in the future that is captured alongside the photographic present. In Benjamin's analysis of photography, these two temporalities of presence and aorist future cohabit that "tiny spark of accident [*Fünkchen Zufall*] . . . [of] the indiscernible place in the condition [*Sosein*] of that long-past minute where the future is nesting, even today."[68] Two temporalities, the aorist future and the present tense, are flashed in the same photograph, trapped within that nearly infinitely small moment of the click—just as the traumatic flashback brings back a past event with all the force of the present. The photograph of the cataleptic woman allegorizes this futurity of sight and embodies the truth of photography—a truth endowed with the power of the moment that continues, inexhaustibly, to announce a future.

We recall the same coincidence of two distinct temporalities in hysteria; yet in its psychoanalytic interpretation, the hysterical symptom pointed not to an impending future but a past that is yet to be remembered. Just as a traumatic event is only rarely reintegrated into memory, the photographic presentation of an event never achieves the status of full presence. In presenting the subject's disastrous future (her finitude), photography presents a trace of the referent in its disappearance; the referent—in A . . .'s, B . . .'s, and S . . .'s cases the hysterical body—is present in the picture's "condition of that long-past minute," but it will disappear in the same picture's "future yet to come."[69] Earlier, Charcot's understanding of hysterical catalepsy and photography led us, provisionally, to an understanding of the photograph as symptom. We can now recognize that the condition of hysteria functions as

the inverse or negative of the photographic picture. A traumatic flashback is the symptom of an event in the present that endlessly harks back to its temporal frame in the past, while a photograph endlessly announces a future—of its own preservation and viewing yet to come. Both the psychoanalytic reconstruction of traumatic memory and the photographic development of a negative produce a meaning that never existed before as such. This observation about the complex layering of distinct temporalities clarifies the links between hysteria and photography that earlier seemed limited to the thematic level. Neither photography nor the traumatic flashback ever arrest or locate the convergence of these distinct temporalities; as a consequence, hysteria is considered theatrical, never true to itself, and, as Barthes puts it, the photograph may be regarded as a "temporal hallucination . . . a mad image."[70]

To be sure, the effects of the flash (not widely used until the 1880s, after publication of the *Iconographie*) had existed long before the invention of the camera.[71] The possibility of an "event" that "only took place once while dividing itself already in two . . . before the [camera's] objective" is not suddenly created through an invention.[72] Yet Charcot's photography makes this strangely timeless event visible, and thus captures—in the image of the flashed cataleptic—the disturbance to existing models of memory and forgetting produced by the flash. Charcot's belief in photography as the "objective representation" of reality is only a single entry in the history of the referent that has traditionally privileged and idealized the visual.[73] This epistemological tradition insists on the primacy of vision as giving rise to cognition. The allegory of photography in Augustine's picture makes readable—in and as the flash—the gap that remains between perception and cognition. These pictures insist that perception does not necessarily lead to cognition but, instead, that sight may be severed from knowledge by the very technology that promises illumination, clarity, and insight. In Augustine's case, this chasm between perception and cognition is existentially "presented" by her loss of contact with the environment.

And yet, the flashed bodies of A . . ., B . . ., and S . . . (each photograph promises the body's reproducibility) allowed Charcot to classify them further, to inscribe their images into a theory aimed at representing hysteria as the bodily reproduction of mental symptoms. For Charcot, the symptoms of A . . .'s, B . . .'s, and S . . .'s catalepsy were readily integrated into his theory and could be reproduced endlessly: "Catalepsy can be caused through

various procedures" (*IPS*, 3: 193). The desire to classify, of course, is at the root of understanding; in this sense, Charcot's methodology only establishes the conditions for a theory. Yet, we may recall, historically classification is expected to be surpassed by understanding.[74] When Charcot fails to read the hysterical symptom as an imitation of the photographic process, when he arrests the image in its literal meaning and fails to read its figural dimension, he ensures that his classificatory attempts will never be surpassed by understanding.

Photophobia

One of Charcot's hysterical patients exhibited a symptom that does not allegorize the process of photography but, rather, imitates the photographic apparatus itself. Instead of disclosing, like a human hieroglyph, the shared temporal structure of trauma and photography, her afflicted body mimics the camera's operation. Hortense J., a sixteen-year-old seamstress, was sent to Charcot by another doctor as part of the era's trafficking in "medically interesting" female patients.[75] Hortense suffered from photophobia in one eye, a rare hypersensitivity to light accompanied by paralysis of the corresponding eyelid muscles. Her photophobia produced symptoms similar to those of flash-induced catalepsy: pliability of otherwise stiff body parts, paralysis, and eventual lethargy. Because she had never been hospitalized before and allegedly had never seen anyone with a similar symptom (*blépharospasme malade*), Charcot considered the symptom to be an "original"; he discussed it at length as a fascinating addition to the burgeoning symptomatology of hysteria. Hortense underwent extensive hypnotic treatment as well as the standard Salpêtrière regimen of hydrotherapy, electroshock, drug treatment, physical therapy, and the *cuirasse*—a frightful leather harness strapped to the patient with numerous buckles.[76] The early hypnotic treatment revealed Hortense's great "potential":

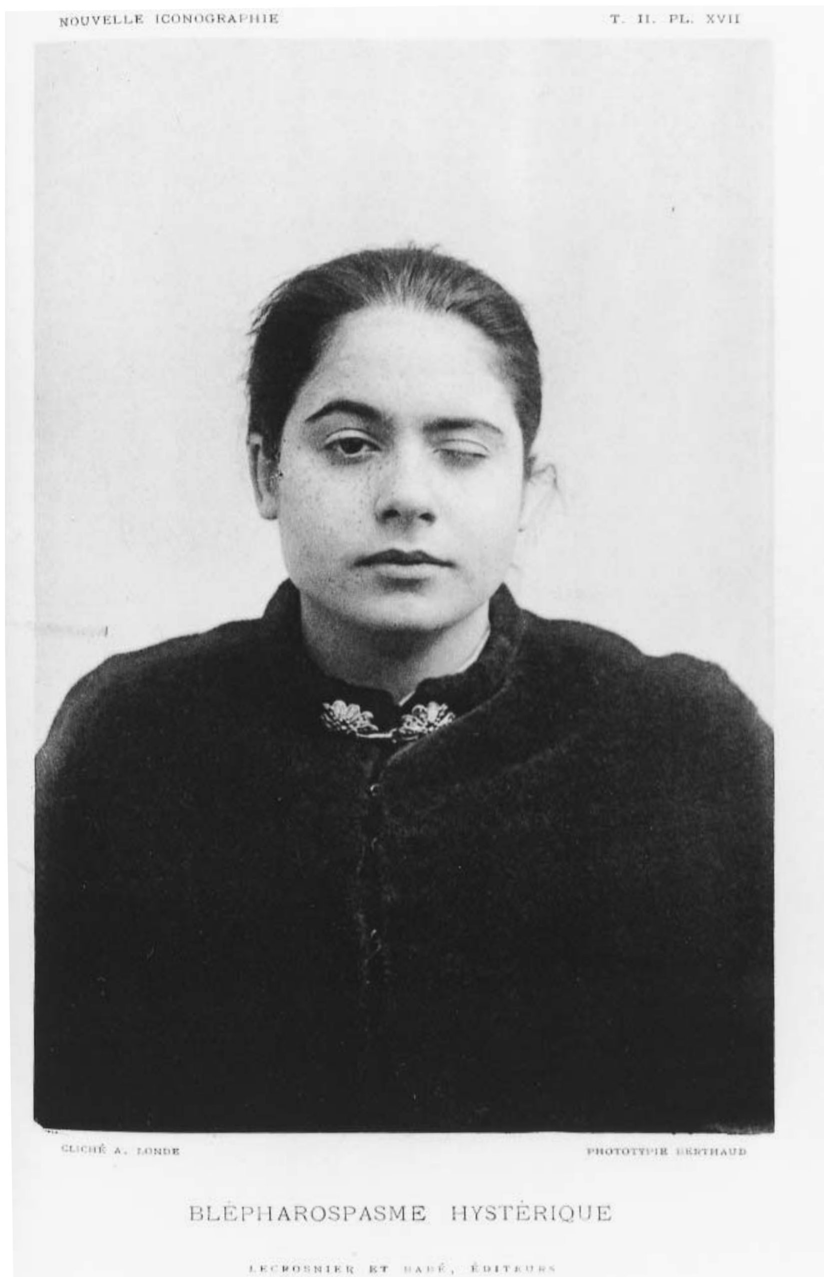
> We remark that the patient's hypnotism is, so to speak, perfected: she presents already for some time now the lethargic and sleepwalking phases of great hypnosis. On December 13, she commenced to have some of the characteristics of the cataleptic phase. When, while she is in the lethargic state, her eyelids are held open, her bodily members will remain in the position in which one arranges them [cataleptic state]; but once one ceases to hold her eyelids open, they close by themselves and the patient returns to the lethargic state.[77]

Soon, however, Charcot can report complete "success": "Some days later, the patient presents a very distinct cataleptic phase [*la phase cataleptique bien nette*]: when her eyelids are opened, they do not close again by themselves and the patient remains in all those positions in which she is arranged."[78]

The case proves germane not only for Charcot but also for my analysis, for Hortense's symptoms imitate the photographic apparatus: with her light sensitivity, squinted eye, and catalepsy, her face mimicked the camera and the cameraman (figure 1.10). Augustine, too, once developed similar mimetic symptoms, suffering from tunnel vision and a periodic loss of color differentiation that limited her visual perception to black and white (*IPS*, 2: 129). Such hysterical symptoms go beyond the allegorical images of flash-induced catalepsy; they suggest a more direct possibility of imitation than the complex simulation of photographic memory in cataleptic hysteria. Yet in spite of his anxious efforts to distinguish genuine suffering from malingering (*la simulation*), Charcot failed to recognize that the symptoms of catalepsy, photophobia, tunnel vision, and black-and-white perception corresponded to the characteristics of his photographic diagnostic apparatus.

Photophobia, like some of the symptoms that afflicted A . . ., B . . ., and S . . ., is confounding because it so symmetrically splits the body. It is as if an imaginary axis runs through the living organism, halving the body into hysteria and health, blindness and sight, corpse and machine, imagined and real, "attacked" and "normal." Freud, as mentioned earlier, was appalled, and finally intrigued, by the way these bodies seemingly canceled the laws of anatomy. I, however, depart from Freud in this instance and see the hysteric's flouting of anatomy and neurology as a refusal of what women had been taught about their bodies in favor of what they experienced. I therefore suggest that we view Hortense as simply imitating what she saw—namely, the lens of a camera—and recognize that her symptoms reflect her understanding of the body as a machine. As Benjamin teaches us, "the way in which human sense perception is organized—the medium in which it takes place—is not only conditioned naturally but also historically."[79] The symptom of trauma-induced hysteria, which seems to be based on a "common, popular" perception of the body in its relation to the camera, may well express a historically accurate experience of the body in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The young female patients' decidedly nonscientific but technical mode of perception produced symptoms that replicated the camera's oper-



1.10 Hysterical Blepharospasm. *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*, 1889. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

ations in ways that remained hidden from Charcot's hawkish gaze. As these symptoms clearly escaped conscious recall, one might suppose that the idea of the camera was unconsciously internalized—if such an understanding did not return us to the problematic spatial explanation of traumatic dissociation (and an equally problematic spatial model of the psyche) that I critiqued earlier. It may be more useful to suppose that the hysteric anticipated the camera *as an event*—that hysteria predates photography's technical structures as well as those structures' parallels to a psychoanalytic understanding of the psyche (i.e., its ability to capture two temporalities at once). If we thus conceive of hysteria as forecasting photography's effects on the way we see ourselves, its inherent temporal disjunction might explain Charcot's failure to read A . . .'s, S . . .'s, and B . . .'s images as allegories: he could not read what had yet to take place in the camera's click, and which awaited its development by such memory-theorists as Freud, Benjamin, and Barthes.

Charcot's failure to recognize the hysteric's mimicking of photography has, then, little to do with his medical acumen but stems from the difficulty of recognizing something that, for those involved, may never have taken place at the level of conscious experience. In this sense, the hysterical patient anticipated through allegory and made readable *avant la lettre* not only psychoanalytic insights into the temporal structure of trauma but also psychoanalysis's secret links to the technical media. Subsequently, these media were largely excluded from post-Charcotian psychoanalytic scenes in favor of the intrapsychic channeling of transference. Charcot's photographs thus illuminate the human body's propensity for technology and its ability to prefigure a technology before that technology's invention. They present the picture of a body that was always susceptible to technological mediation.

In his effort to overcome Charcot as teacher, as master, as event, Freud argued that it would be easy for the "wholly unprejudiced observer" to diagnose hysteria as traumatic in origin.[80] Although I use different frames than those employed in Charcot's photographic studio, I am far from the completely unbiased position that Freud envisioned. Possibly the violence inherent in all procedures of framing merely shifted to a different locale, from Paris to Vienna; it is conceivable that one perspective was simply substituted for another, Freudian for Charcotian. Nonetheless, the psychoanalytically based theory of traumatic hysteria allows us to read the photograph—and indeed photography itself—as the intersection of different temporalities that always

1.11 Lethargy. Contraction of Zygomatique. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, 1876–1880. (See note 54). Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

leaves and produces a blind spot, as an event that remains, as Cathy Caruth has argued, "largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control."[81]

The flash captures the futurity of sight as it is allegorized in Charcot's photography. His collection of images marks an important event in the history of the referent. But Charcot's photographs do not illustrate one moment in the history of photography. Rather, they show that such a notion of that history presupposes continuity, progression, and narrative where, in fact, disruption rules. We can now recognize Charcot's images as a *Schwellenereignis* because they reveal by means of technological reproduction that the body is here reproduced *for a first time*. The *Iconographie* illustrates that both hysteria and photography develop out of events that recur as absent originals. His photographs, like all photographs, present the body in its "absolute Particularity, [its] sovereign Contingency"; and yet, as the referent of history, this body is shown to enclose in its very "particularity the tension of history, its division."[82] Although he is not referring to Charcot's images, Barthes hints at the intersection of photography and hysteria in the history of the referent when he writes that "history is hysterical," suggesting that the body, as the referent of history, is always subject to the kind of technical mediation that could provoke a hysterical symptom.[83] I have attempted to mobilize this tension of history and unfreeze the photograph's immobility by way of allegory to expose photography's structural affinity with trauma.[84] Charcot's photographs, although intended to secure recognition of the phenomena of hysteria and ground the body as referent, in fact undermine Charcot's objective: to demonstrate that "*l'hystérie est une et indivisible*."[85] The gap, or hiatus, in cognition that exists in both flash photography and hysterical catalepsy, which my reading tries to locate, may yet afford the female patient a sanctuary, albeit an unstable one, within an inhospitable theory. In the *Iconographie*, the photographs at once expose and offer refuge. They allegorize, and thus make readable, photography's specific link with traumatic memory. They also offer a singular insight into the intersection of epistemology and technological invention: that the effects of the flash—in a striking parallel to the enigma of trauma—consist in the irreconcilable encounter of two distinct temporalities.

This may come as a shock.

2 To Give Memory a Place: Contemporary Holocaust Photography and the Landscape Tradition

The Experience of Place

Picturing Nothing

The Photograph's Reference

The Limits of Allegory

Landscape and Trauma

The Limits of Documentary Photographs

The Viewer as Witness

> When the morning light comes up
> Who knows what suffering midnight was?
> Proof is what I do not need.
> —Brendan Kennelly, "Proof"

The photograph shows a clearing hemmed in by short pines, more of an overgrown woodland than a forest (figure 2.1). The picture's elongated format invites us to scan the image horizontally to see whether the sky will open up as we advance hesitantly into the clearing. Because the space within the photograph is so powerfully centered by sharply focused tiers of grass and shrubs and trees, this stretched-out print offers us but a single-point perspective, while the sky, cropped off by the picture's unusually low framing, lends the image a palpable sense of heaviness. In the photographer's effort to capture each pine needle and stalk of grass with technical precision, he has overexposed the sky; only faint traces of clouds remain. The exactitude devoted to portraying this place betrays the photographer's interest and a familiarity that contrasts with the site's lack of conventional visual appeal and

2.1 "Sobibór." From Dirk Reinartz, *Deathly Still: Pictures of Former Concentration Camps.* New York: Scalo, 1995.

absence of identifiable markers. By using the large panorama format normally reserved for sweeping vistas to capture a rather confined space, Dirk Reinartz deepens our impression that at some time in the past this opening in the woods was cleared for a particular purpose.

But why does nothing grow in the sandy patches at the front? At first, we mistakenly assume that these bare spots lie at the picture's center, but they are in fact a good two-thirds of the way down from the upper margin of the print. If the perspective achieved in this image pulls us in, these patches keep us from fully entering the photograph. The pines on the margins of the visual field, which had first blended with the rather uniform and decidedly secondary background, now emerge as sentinels of a darker forest located just beyond the confines of the image. Trees at the left and right, which initially seemed to recede into space, are recognized upon prolonged inspection as uncomfortably close; the bristly pines nearly brush our eyes. These dwarfed trees signal to us that we have already been brought into the middle of the clearing while we were looking at it as if from the outside. The

way their branches spill out beyond the print's sharply posited frame suggests that what we at first saw as a tightly organized visual field is really a setting that has not been fully mastered and contained. Held back, as if by a premonition or a spell, we do not wish to project ourselves into the middle of the blotchy clump of trees. While we contemplate our own position in relation to the black-and-white print, a sense of trespass hovers near the bald patches in the grass. Although the picture positions us in the only possible point of reference, this sense that we don't belong here—that we are excluded, that we have arrived *après coup*, too late and perhaps in vain—feels undeniable. As if enlivened by a breeze, the silent print is animated by an aura or "spirit of place:" we sense that the grounds are haunted.

In Mikael Levin's image of Nordlager Ohrdruf (figure 2.2), we are faced with another study of space; but, unlike the first image, his print emphasizes the vastness of a site that today is not merely inaccessible but also virtually forgotten. The photograph shows a marshy meadow dotted with rushes and thistles and bordered by trees. A patch of stagnant water at the bottom of the print is cradled by the slightly rising meadow on both sides. The photograph draws this puddle toward us instead of allowing our gaze

2.2 Untitled. From Mikael Levin, *War Story.* Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997.

to center on it. Because the ground slants slightly downward a few inches to the left of the picture's lower right corner, only a clump of spiky grass seems to keep the water from spilling out of the image onto our feet. The bright spots in the foreground counterbalance the darkness of the trees in the background so that our gaze settles on the nondescript area lying in between. This photograph is even more brutally exposed than Reinartz's image: the water puddles barely reflect a sky utterly devoid of the consoling symbolic orders of cloud patterns or astral constellations. Only the shiny stalks of grass seem to spell out a cryptic message against the darker ground. The nearly black band of bushes separating this meadow from the entirely white sky at once prompts and limits the impression of spatial depth and perspective produced by the varied grays in the picture's bottom half; an actual survey of the area, it seems, would meet with an impenetrable limit at this line of shrubbery. What little sense of depth is present in these bushes vanishes into the flat white of the sky, and the groups of shrubs melt into abstract designs. Due to the photograph's overexposure or to darkroom work, it looks as if some of the leaves have come detached from the trees and are melting into the void above.

Levin places the viewer before a landscape whose spatial dimension is on the verge of collapsing into a flat abstraction. Solid trees dissolve into thin air; the stalks of grass beneath our eyes melt into the soggy ground. If this picture harbors a story, it is a story about the transformation of the depth of the *landscape* seen at the bottom of the print into the uninhabitable *terrain* and abstract whiteness near the top. Our eyes, trained by habit, infer the space and perspective of the image—and thus our own position in relation to the site—by translating the print's shades of gray into suggestions of proximity and distance. The landscape's imagined depth—where experience, imagination, and memory may be projected and contained—vanishes into abstracted and inhospitable terrain.[1] We are forced to enter a site that failed to accommodate human experience in the past and that will not allow itself, as a photographic sight, to be completely filled in by the present viewer's imagination.

The deliberately created tension between the print's landscape character as a setting for experience and memory and the abstracted depiction of inhospitable terrain puts the viewer into a peculiar position. We are allowed to enter a site that will not fully accommodate our view of it. The illusion of space in this picture does not engender, at all points, a sense of

place; we are led into a site that, in the end, excludes us. Levin's way of structuring this image resembles Reinartz's organization of space into a landscape. Our nearly reflexive impulse to assume the intended point of view and share the photographer's line of sight is blocked, for the picture resists being fully conquered by means of visual projection. In both of these images, the invitation to relate to and to enter the site is fused with an equally strong message of exclusion.

The first image, of the former Nazi extermination camp at Sobibór in Poland, was published by the German photographer Dirk Reinartz in his book, *Deathly Still: Pictures of Former Concentration Camps* (1995).[2] All the images in his book are similarly aestheticized; but unlike this single photograph of Sobibór, the others show physical evidence—decaying buildings, rubble, or memorials—of the crimes committed there. The second image, of the former concentration camp of Ohrdruf in Germany, was taken in 1995 and published in *War Story* (1997) by the American photographer Mikael Levin. Although unaware of each other's work and pursuing different objectives—and quite dissimilar in background, national identity, and aesthetic beliefs—the photographers rely in these two images on the same artistic conventions of landscape art to find a place for absent memory.[3]

The two photographs are unlike most other postwar images of Holocaust sites.[4] They contain no evidence of the sites' historical uses, and they rely explicitly on the aesthetic tradition of landscape art and, as I will explain, on the auratic "experience of place" to commemorate the destruction of experience and memory.[5] In most other images of former camps or killing fields, we are confronted with the oversaturated referents of ruin: crumbled buildings once built to kill and now maintained and "museumized" for purposes of commemoration; the scraps of barbed wire; the memorial stones.[6] Instead of showing such markers, Reinartz's and Levin's images refer to the Holocaust only through their titles and the accompanying texts that announce: "These are Holocaust sites."

Because they do not contain evidence of their importance, these photographs ask to be regarded on strictly modernist terms—as if their significance and merit derived not from our knowledge of context but from intrinsic formal criteria alone. By representing the Holocaust in such stringently formal terms, Reinartz and Levin force us to see that there is *nothing* to see there; and they show us that there is something in a catastrophe as vast

as the Holocaust that remains inassimilable to historicist or contextual readings. Just when they posit the event as radically singular, and thus when they risk investing absence with spiritual meaning, Reinartz and Levin retract the promise that we can transcend the photographed void to reach some comprehensive, and thus consoling, meaning.

While rendering historicist analyses inadequate, these images also deconstruct the pictorial conventions that might be analyzed and disclosed in a formalist analysis. It is precisely by exposing as equally insufficient both the historicist and the formal approaches that these photographs require a new way of looking at the presumed photographic past. This new way of looking, as I will show in some detail, comes closer to a mode of witnessing than to visual analysis. It no longer regards the image as a depository or a mechanically archived slice of the past that is encrypted according to the codes of "realism." Rather, it recognizes how the image calls into question such processes of visual analysis, which aim at resurrecting the mechanically captured past. These photographs, I here argue, silently question the reliance on historical context as an explanatory framework. They situate us specifically in relation to something that remains off the map of historicist readings.

What is the dimension of the Holocaust that Reinartz and Levin seek to expose, and that cannot be fully accounted for by drawing on material or documentary evidence? The deliberate exclusion of historical markers in these pictures is not an irresponsible, vain, or ahistoricist gesture. Rather, Reinartz and Levin employ a classic aesthetic means of drawing attention to the difficulties of linking, on the one hand, philosophical efforts to understand and historicist attempts to explain with, on the other hand, the actual event of the exterminations. These photographs cannot *show* the abyss opened by the Nazis' crimes, which Hannah Arendt identified as "the crime against humanity—in the sense of a crime 'against the human status' . . . an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the 'human status' without which the very words 'mankind' or 'humanity' would be devoid of meaning."[7] But these photographs, like Arendt's work, do "not explain [the abyss], because that is not what one does with an abyss; instead, cutting through the restraint we have come to expect from serious writers on the Holocaust," these photographs place us in relation to it.[8] They also ask: How do we remember the Holocaust without inevitably forgetting that this event challenged both the individual and the collective capacity for

memory and questioned the notion of survival in ways we are still struggling to comprehend?[9] Where is the proper position from which to face this stark truth, and how is this notion of a position related to the experience of place? Prior to all efforts at commemoration, explanation, or understanding, I would suggest, we—and this "we" is constituted precisely by the deconstitution of stable individual or group identities when facing the abyss of utter destruction—must find a place and position from which to gain access to the event. By casting the enormity of the Holocaust within the traditional genre of landscape photography, Reinartz and Levin emphasize that this question of the viewers' position, as belated witnesses to those originally on the scene of the crime, touches upon all efforts to explain the past, to judge, to mourn, to remember, to learn, to understand.

By drawing on the conventions of Romantic landscape art, these images create in us the feeling of being addressed and responsive to the depicted site and, crucially, of seeing the site not for its own sake but as a pointer back to our own position. The impulse they invoke—to locate ourselves within a space organized as landscape—is a response only recently acquired. With European Romanticism, the environment that had once been ground to build on, plow, defend, or conquer came to be seen as an aesthetic entity to be contemplated by an enraptured subject in a process of introspection and increasing self-awareness.[10] Looking at landscapes as we do today manifests a specifically modern sense of self-understanding, which may be described as the individual's ability to view the self within a larger, and thus potentially historical, context. Although this relation to the surroundings somewhat predates the Romantic era, it is the Romantic subject, who emerged roughly two hundred years ago as the prototype of the modern subject, who looks at a beautiful vista to see not the landscape but "an earlier instantiation of the self."[11] According to the Romantic sensibility that still organizes both our vision and these photographs, looking at a landscape means, as Joseph Koerner has argued, turning "the landscape back on the viewer, to locate *us* in our subjectivity as landscape [art's] true point of reference."[12] The two photographs I discuss here, however, rely on this aesthetic to place us in reference to experiences that resist integration into memory, historical narratives, or other mitigating contexts. While these images frame the sites in ways that force us to assume a viewing position, they also block these sights from being subsumed as "pleasing" vistas into our process of increasing self-awareness through identification or projection.[13]

By pulling the viewer into a setting that seems inhospitable and strangely placeless, these photographs point to a link between the "experience of place" and the enigmatic structure of traumatic memories. They also remind us that most extant Holocaust photographs—scenes of death and destruction but not necessarily of trauma—block access to the event instead of facilitating a self-aware, rather than rote, commemoration and witnessing. These highly deliberate images expose the limits of containing the catastrophe in historicist readings or documentary conventions while they challenge us to assess our own position in relation to it.

Positioning the viewer in reference to an event that resists full absorption into narrative memory changes a crucial methodological question about the status of all photographs of trauma. A constitutive question of both traditional and more recent art-historical inquiries concerns the extent to which the reading of an image may be inflected by (prior) knowledge of its historical context. I suggest reformulating this question by asking how to frame an image with references to a historical event that consisted in the lasting destruction of most, and possibly all, explanatory referential frames and contexts for understanding. This question about the limitations of contextual or historicist approaches to an entire genre of photography relates to a subtle but important shift in recent debates about representing the Holocaust. For several decades after the end of World War II these debates invoked tropes of the "unspeakable," the "ineffable," and the "limits of representation" of the Holocaust.[14] Currently, some of these problematically "ontotheological" concerns are being supplanted by the urgent question of whether the obligation to confront the Holocaust will diminish and finally disappear with the passing of the last survivors and witnesses. How can younger generations be taught that the Holocaust poses a problem for representation except by representing it? How can its senselessness be conveyed except by turning it into a (negative) lesson? And how can its shattering effects on all categories of thought and known modes of transmission be conveyed except by turning it into a circumscribed, and thus finally graspable, object of inquiry?[15] What, finally, compels individuals increasingly removed in time to continue facing the Holocaust as a watershed event of history?

Paradoxically, the scholarly, artistic, and media attention to the Holocaust occasionally obscures, and even blocks, understanding of its impact on all forms of cultural practice. Saturated by references to the catastrophe,

many are no longer aware of any difficulty in imagining and mentally picturing an event that has been so effectively packaged and depicted in Hollywood creations, national and local museums, and on television. A further flood of Holocaust kitsch in popular literature and film—including works by critically acclaimed artists—heightens the impression that there is little difficulty in remembering, representing, and communicating the Holocaust and that, far from defeating the imagination, the Holocaust provides a useful screen for self-exploration.[16] The decades-long debates over the Holocaust's resistance to representation and understanding are no longer recognized as intrinsic to the catastrophe but are, increasingly and incorrectly, viewed as mere academic concerns.

The very word *Holocaust* triggers a surge of derivative and familiar mental images, most of which originate with a number of news photographs taken by the Western Allies in 1945 after liberation of camps in Austria and Germany. Even when part of laudable efforts to document and commemorate, these once-shocking and now ubiquitous images may lead today to the "disappearance of memory in the act of commemoration."[17] They represent the past as fully retrievable (as simply a matter of searching the archive), instead of situating us vis-à-vis the intangible presence of an absence, which Jacques Derrida has called the "hell in our memory."[18] When they have not become mute clichés, on the other hand, these graphic images of death are likely to disable the viewer's capacity to remember or to respond, either critically or with empathy. In their irreversible finality, such pictures represent history as locked in the past. The two photographs discussed here forestall such reflexive responses or cognitive numbing without diminishing the magnitude of the disaster. But they provide no easy answers. Instead, these photographs raise urgent questions about the task of showing the *nothing* that nonetheless triggers a response: about the difficulties of representing trauma and about the poetics of witnessing.

The Experience of Place

Reinartz's and Levin's pictures reopen questions about the status and reliability of the image that date back to the first landscape photographs of the 1840s. In these early photographs, an aestheticizing vision of the surroundings is paired with the truth claims inherent in the medium of photography to draw the viewer's eyes and mind into unknown regions. Critics of such

images have indicted the landscape tradition for "naturalizing," by means of the aesthetic, the nefarious approaches and appropriations of territory by particular groups; such landscapes, they argue, are the symbolic underpinnings of brutal campaigns of colonial expansion. Whatever bucolic innocence there might have been in such depictions certainly vanished with the Nazis' explicit appropriation of the landscape genre (along with the myths of "blood and soil" and *Lebensraum*) into an ideology that led to the murder of millions of people. Reinartz and Levin rely on the landscape tradition, not to point to the historical event or the genre's corruption but to position us in relation to the fact that that event consisted in the radical destruction and unavailability of explanatory contexts. It is the unavailability of referential markers, and not information that could be embedded in historical contexts, that is captured in these images as the truth of history.

I maintain that the modernist, arguably Eurocentric, and wholly "aesthetic" approach to the landscape photograph as autonomous image is particularly well-suited to addressing the Holocaust as the historical event that calls into question that entire tradition.[19] Our task today cannot be met by simply logging more data—precisely because a truly ungovernable mass of "hard facts" (often invoked in polemics against aesthetically oriented readings) blocks access to an event that, as Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, due to "continual scrutiny . . . has [become] less and less comprehensible."[20] By historicizing or contextualizing the image, we avoid the task of finding our bearings in relation to the event that destroyed the possibility of having recourse to historical contexts. However, while historicist readings of landscape art consider the aesthetic to be little more than the veneer over imperialist or fascist ideology, exclusively formal readings of these images also miss their import.[21] These two landscape photographs continually shuttle the viewer between the historicist, contextual frames of viewing and a visual tracing of their formal composition. Yet neither approach exhausts them.

Reinartz's photograph of Sobibór shows that a favored directive of academics—"*Always historicize*!"—represses the fact that an event's historicity might consist in the destruction of any explanatory context. In the case of the Holocaust, the immeasurable loss comprised in many cases also the capacity to experience and, subsequently, to properly remember. Even when we are armed with archival knowledge, numbers, and facts, Reinartz's photograph of Sobibór confronts us head-on by ungrounding our desire to know. When such images are contextualized by drawing on historical

explanations, or on the imagination's power to project oneself into an image, these explanations deny that in Sobibór's shockingly small area the possibilities of knowledge, of comprehension, and of viewing oneself in relation to the surroundings and to history were all but destroyed. In order to be recognized at all, however, this encounter with irremediable loss needs a frame within which the viewer is visually implicated in the nondistinct, empty, and easily overlooked setting. In the pictures analyzed here, the compositional conventions of landscape art provide this frame, which situates the viewer in reference to the place where historical knowledge has burned out.

Reinartz's photograph restores a sense of place to the historical event that appears both geographically and conceptually placeless to us. "The Holocaust seems to have no landscape—or at best one emptied of features and color, shrouded in night and fog,"[22] writes historian Simon Schama; and the eerie elusiveness of the geographic sites where ultimately nothing is found haunts most contemporary visitors to the former camps. This geographic placelessness in "the mythical territory 'farther to the East' where the documents of the Nazi administration situated the ultimate deportation of the Jews" has its conceptual equivalent, and what psychoanalyst Nadine Fresco terms its "definitive [symbolic] beyond," in a realm where even immense accumulations of knowledge do not attain closure.[23] Although they seek to establish the conceptual grounding on which to raise a context for these images, most historians facing the Holocaust's "no-man's-land of understanding" feel "despair and doubt and [possibly] recognition . . . but assuredly no understanding."[24] Even when immersed in footnotes to archival documents and counterdocuments, memoirs, testimonies, facts, and figures, we are aware of something confounding and inexplicable about the existence of a place like Sobibór. The accounts in history books fail to offer closure, to make sense; in the case of survivor testimonies, little allows individuals to appropriate experiences that are *all too much* their own.[25] Each detail adds to the overall impression of despair; a place like Sobibór fails to become "whole." Survivor accounts often recount the deportations as the destruction of a symbolic notion of a place that could hold experience together.[26] A visit to a former camp undermines our hope that the quest for knowledge is an inherently liberating process. Fundamentally, Reinartz's photograph is a single shot and captures a view without context. By artificially isolating it from its context of captions, texts, and titles, I merely register this fact.

The psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche considers trauma to be the failed translation of an unremembered experience. Yet trauma is more than a simple failure of translation; it is also the result of the perplexing condition of a missing original. Reinartz's photograph seeks to return us to this missing original, and to translate it into sight, without pretending that it could be either fully recovered or forgotten or that there exists a stable, originary place and experience that he can show us. His image dispels the mythic status of the Holocaust's unavailable location, at once inaccessible and yet profusely documented, by depicting the site as landscape.[27] The photograph does not leave the site "unstoried," to rely on an older, American term that distinguishes *place*, which refers to the "landscapes that display us as culture," from *space*, as "the environment [that] sustains us as creatures."[28] But the story offered in this image is not found in history books. It is the story of the loss of the experience of place—a story told silently through artistic conventions that situate us in reference to the actual and metaphoric destruction of experience, place, context, and belonging.

Reinartz's quasi-anamorphic image leaves little room for the viewer's eyes to roam. The picture points back to one viewing position and, in an invisible grid pattern, places all viewers in the same line of sight. Before this photograph, all share one perspective and one point of view: this is why I insist on using the collective *we* when discussing the site of an event that all but completely shattered the most basic human bonds.[29] Because the photograph's perspective is so strictly organized, it turns our attention not to the site's natural beauty or to the marks of culture on the land but to *our position in reference to the site*. The forest clearing appears to deserve our attention, not for its own sake but because of our position.[30] The task of finding our position as viewers consists in discovering our bearings in reference to a place that is absorbing yet unstable.

Picturing Nothing

> *Il faut donner à voir.*
> They must be made to see.
> —Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*

Mikael Levin's photograph dates from 1995 and depicts the former concentration camp at Ohrdruf in Germany. The camp was discovered on April 9, 1945, by American soldiers—soon joined by war correspondents such as

Mikael Levin's father, Meyer Levin—one day after the SS had abandoned it. (And thus before Allied forces reached Belsen or Buchenwald, and before the surrender of Nazi Germany).[31] The younger Levin's task consists not only in recapturing his father's original sense of shock at arriving at a place that exposed Americans for the first time to visual evidence of the German atrocities but also in conveying the distance that separates us from that sense of shock.

Yet Levin's photograph cannot be decoded according to a logic of deferred meaning, or *Nachträglichkeit*, as belatedly bestowing meaning to a sight too overwhelming to be grasped at first glance. Rather, his image creates a viewing position from which to address the knowledge that still proves excessive, destabilizing, and indeed blinding fifty years later. The younger Levin seeks to show that the original sense of destabilization and excess has not been overcome or diminished.[32]

In his war diary (which I discuss in detail in the next chapter), his father, Meyer Levin, describes a nerve-racking search for evidence of German crimes he and a fellow war correspondent conducted during the last days of the war. At Ohrdruf they were led to a "half-dug pit as large as a swimming pool, filled with ooze" from which a Polish survivor, serving as guide, pulled a partly decomposed human body (129). When discovery of their crimes by the Allies was imminent the SS had exhumed the bodies of thousands of their victims and tried unsuccessfully to burn them. But just one day after the SS had abandoned the camp, Levin was faced with the fact that at first nothing could be seen there.

> On top of the hill there was a rut that gave out, *and then nothing*. . . . We were going to turn back when the Pole suddenly got his bearings and motioned to a clump of trees. *We saw nothing.* We drove there and got out and still *we saw nothing special.* (129, emphasis added)

Although these lines immediately precede the description of finding the slimy pit, they already register the overwhelming experience of encountering *nothing* in the inhospitable terrain. This experience could not be undone by the evidence uncovered. In this testimonial tale the narrative moves from a first *nothing* of impatience and fear (of mines or "bitter-end SS who could pot us off") to the sight of nothing centered by the pit. Yet the fact that up to this point they had seen nothing creates not just narrative suspense. *Nothing* is already a reference to what the witnesses are about to see beyond the "nothing special": a pit "with a section of narrow-gauge track . . . beside it, *reaching from nowhere to nowhere*" (129, emphasis added). Although the pit

is the end point of their search and would presumably dispel the sense of nothingness, it contains an absence without proper frame or closure, a sinkhole that cannot be called a grave, an opening in the ground that will not offer rest to thousands of prisoners whose names and stories passed unrecorded and of whose physical remains there remains no trace. At the very moment of its discovery, the site is literally sinking into oblivion and symbolically drifting toward the periphery of a public memory that is yet to be created and that will monumentalize other Holocaust sites but leave Ohrdruf unstoried.

Meyer Levin's account of the visit ends: "Now we knew. Nothing afterward told us more. Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, Dachau[:] we became specialists" (130). The camp at Ohrdruf remains unsurpassed in horror because it is not bordered by a "beyond"; and in 1945 Levin already realized that the encounter with a radically voided site, with the shockingly vacant "nothing" witnessed there, would be outdone by nothing else. Even today—when the Russian army that in the postwar period used the place for war games is long gone—the former camp of Ohrdruf remains a military zone—a nonplace closed to visitors and to memory.

Mikael Levin's photograph of the site marks a place from which we are made to see an unfathomable void that will not be dispelled. In what we recognize as a paradox—once we have grasped that "landscapes" are never found in nature but only in our culturally specific ways of seeing—Levin's print captures the site as *a landscape without us in it.*[33] As it happens, even Meyer Levin's testimony tells us that the site's significance consists in its disclosure of *nothing*.

Historical accounts break down in the effort to document what unrealized stories vanished in the Holocaust. Through the photographs, we enter into sites out of which only death was supposed to lead; we are confronted with spaces designed to destroy all memory of those who were brought there. The deliberate destruction of evidence that would reveal these sites' significance constitutes the event's historical truth and limits the possibility of its telling. For the *nothing* to be "translated" into sight, it must be shown as *nothing*, rather than as the absence of something we could know.

The Photograph's Reference

Reinartz and Levin lead available historical narratives of the Holocaust—the conventionalized accounts that attempt to make sense of what remains senseless—into the deathly stillness of a photograph. But they also instantly

curtail the landscape genre's power of absorption, its lure for viewers to project themselves into an imaginary pictorial depth, by marshaling the melancholic dimension of photography, which excludes the viewer from the depicted site. In every photographic image, the viewers' *here and now*—their ability to draw on different explanatory contexts—is read against the photographed moment's *then and there.* Regardless of subject matter, photographs show a moment of the past as inalterable, as something that has been brought back against time's passage. Even in our postphotographic era, when sensory perception is being reformatted according to new technological paradigms, we continue to view photographs as snippets of an unreachable and yet real past.[34] This sight is here, immovably preserved and printed, but you are elsewhere. Before yielding information, all photographs (and not only Holocaust images) signal that we have arrived after the picture has been taken, and thus too late. In our responses to the medium we are still—although we know better—hard-wired to perceive what we see in photographs as real.

Although Reinartz's and Levin's images, like all landscape depictions, absorb the viewer, they also maintain, like all photographs, this "irretrievable otherness for the viewer in the present."[35] These photographs present us with images that we know belong to the past, and this knowledge excludes us from the sites as powerfully as the conventions of landscape art pull us in. The sense of nonbelonging in these images, then, originates not only from the particularity of the photographed scene or the pictures' framing but also from the apparently melancholic, yet actually affectless, retention of the referent found in all photographs. Because something of this retained past has not been allowed to depart but is still there, where the present should have swallowed it up, we who view the picture in the present feel excluded. Because we are aware of the site's historical significance, it draws our gaze. This auratic sense of place that I locate in these pictures, against dominant readings of the history of photography, is here paired with the medium's uncanny power to make us feel excluded from a place because it looks as if it has not yielded to the passage of time. This pairing results in pictures in which absence becomes the referent.[36]

These darkly auratic pictures by Reinartz and Levin—hovering on the brink of our resilient faith in the evidentiary status of the photograph—are all but useless as documents.[37] Although they are bereft of documentary information, however, these images nonetheless tell the truth. They chal-

lenge our notion of what constitutes knowledge by calling on our deep-seated trust in photography's reality effect and, thus, showing us that really nothing is pictured there or, put differently, that nothing in this picture is real. Since this nothing of information is cast according to the aesthetic conventions of photographic landscape art (with its apparently unshakeable truth claims), we do not find spiritual, ontological, or existential Nothingness or "nothing" but the *sense*—the premonition or uncanny aura—that something has disappeared, that the place has not been changed and yet is somehow less than it was before. Photography's potent illusion of the real—the sense that "nothing in the image can be refused or transformed"[38]—is combined in these prints with a convention that absorbs us in the landscape. These images turn a radical voiding, an obliteration of memory itself, into the referent for an event that involved the effort to destroy all traces of its occurrence. While other, referentially more stable documentary photographs might shelter us from this devastating truth, these photographs vacate our understanding of reference itself.

The Limits of Allegory

Reinartz's and Levin's images could be faulted for unduly aestheticizing the sites of atrocities.[39] Yet both photographs avoid the derivative pathos of books often sold at memorial sites, which render us doubly helpless because, though clearly sincere, they trivialize the event by evoking clichés of prefabricated sentimentality. Reinartz and Levin resist a similar temptation to infuse the lightly wooded area with the markers of the terribly spectacular, or the mass-produced sublime.

Besides risking a lapse into triviality or kitsch, the two photographers' reliance on the landscape genre also raises the specter of the Nazis' appropriation of the trope of the landscape in their genocidal redefinitions of nation, home, and *Heimat* as categories to be administered by decree.[40] When Reinartz and Levin photograph former camps as forest clearings, they subvert the Nazis' ideological uses of the German soil and forest as anchors of a people's "destiny." Even so, the trees in these images cannot serve as symbols of the victims of Sobibór and Ohrdruf, for the artistic vision cannot fully transcend the Nazis' use of natural settings in the killing campaigns. In 1943 and 1944, the Nazis planted real trees at Sobibór, Treblinka, and Belzec for the express purpose of concealing all traces of their staggering

crimes. Reinartz and Levin took their pictures more than five decades later, after nature had almost completely covered the sites. It has thus become Reinartz's and Levin's task to unmask the sylvan tranquility without denying the sites' "misleading air of normalcy" and without dramatizing the places where every sense of the tragic was surpassed.[41] Their photographs capture the trees as part of the Nazis' design and record this deceptive normalcy, without succumbing to it, to mark the scope of the destruction. On a symbolic level, the trees stand in for the vanished masses murdered here. But the trees are both more, and less, than symbols. In their literal, nonsymbolic presence the trees are evidence not of death and destruction but of the denial and concealment of its occurrence. By keeping in focus both the trees' literal status as part of the Nazi deceptions and their symbolic significance as silent witnesses and anthropomorphic placeholders for Europe's murdered Jews, these pictures reveal the inadequacy of relying solely on either an allegorical or a literal interpretation of the forest scene.[42]

Landscape and Trauma

In these two images the forest clearing is centered and rendered particular by means of compositional laws that viewers have so thoroughly internalized that the scenes appear inevitable, and therefore natural, or self-evidently *factual.* The pictures' field of vision seems to originate from a point of view we would have chosen on our own; and something somewhere in the picture seems to return our gaze and to suggest that our placement at the picture's only point of reference may not be accidental. By casting an unknown place in the haunting light of déjà-vu, landscape photographs produce the mild shock of recovering what seems to be an unremembered—rather than a forgotten—experience.

The appeal of these two photographs derives largely from their refusal to disclose to us the specific place from which they address us. We are left with the impression that these scenes should concern us precisely because we never knew them. The sense of belonging produced by the images' perspective contrasts with the equally powerful sense of nonbelonging and trespass produced by the sense of pastness captured in them. This tension—between the landscape's simultaneous invitation to project ourselves into them and to the inalterable pastness of photography—finds a parallel in the difficulties of representing historical trauma.

Historical trauma also needs to be cast in ways that involve the observer without glossing over the event's essential inaccessibility. In the Romantic tradition of landscape art, artists often sought to create a disturbing impression that the viewer was being watched from an unidentifiable spot in the picture. This illusion of the returned gaze, established by organizing the painting according to a one-point perspective, might be compared to the uncanny feeling that results from traumatic memories, which seem to "possess" and haunt an individual, even though they are not properly remembered. Maurice Blanchot writes that such experiences "cannot be forgotten because [they have] always already fallen outside memory."[43] If we rely on the metaphor of the mind as spatially organized, the "inner landscape" of a traumatized individual might be said to harbor what Cathy Caruth has called "unclaimed experiences" that register as painfully real but are inaccessible to consciousness.[44] Strikingly, when such fragments of traumatic memory intrude upon common memory, they often emerge as memories of a particular *site*. Trauma survivors may recall a particular place or area in great detail without being able to associate it with the actual event.[45]

The tradition of landscape art likewise seems to situate viewers against their will, by imbuing a scene with auratic significance but without necessarily linking this sense of familiarity to any remembered past. In this tradition, then, a site's apparent meaningfulness only appears to emanate from the setting; in fact, that impression really results from the viewing subject's position in front of the painting—thus not from the setting but from the viewing self. A structural analogy exists, then, between depictions of landscapes that refer the viewer not to a specific spot but to a heightened sense of self and the puzzlingly exact encoding of spatial markers that signals the presence of traumatic memories outside of, and yet within, an individual's mind. The aura of the photographed landscape—the impression of proximity, familiarity, and relevance in a possibly quite-distant scene—seems to tap into a memory we did not know existed, a counterpart in ourselves we may have felt but did not know. Conceptually and visually, we are subjected to something we recognize as crucially important, though in the end it eludes us.

To be sure, Reinartz's and Levin's landscape photographs place us in reference to sites made significant by history, even if their meaning is exposed to us by means of conventions like perspectival centering. The pictures neither confirm nor add to our knowledge of history; we cannot deduce from them what distinguishes these sites from countless others. And yet,

regardless of—and even in spite of—our knowledge of their historical import, these images pull us in. They try to "speak from within erasure," as Claude Lanzmann's decidedly topographical film *Shoah* also attempts to do; they seek to give to loss a topography by showing us that nothing—not knowledge, empathy, commemoration, indignation, rage, mourning, or shame—can fill these silent spaces.[46] Through this powerful attraction to a void, we are thus *exposed to* (in the sense of being involuntarily subjected to) the site of a destruction so extreme that it seems to swallow up the possibility of ascribing meaning to it, even though it is indisputably significant. The point is no longer to establish a context for the picture but to note that the photograph posits as its meaning the suspension of such a stabilizing context.

The difficulty of traumatic memory, however, is not limited to its unavailability and resistance to representation. Very much like a photograph, traumatic memory can be characterized by the excessive retention of details that cannot be integrated into a nontraumatic memory or comprehension of the past.[47] The recovery of traumatic memory—and the process of healing—consists often in making the event seem less unreal by draining it of its vividness, its persistence, its haunting details, its color. Reinartz's and Levin's photographs share with traumatic memories the exact and unforgiving insistence on the reality of places whose significance derives neither from anything shown nor from their context. The sites are brought into focus without being reduced to irrelevance or mere facticity. By means of the landscape convention, Reinartz and Levin at once shelter us from, and expose us to, the trauma that for decades silenced many of the survivors and witnesses, who nonetheless had no choice but to feel addressed.

The Limits of Documentary Photographs

In representations of the Holocaust, the mode of abstraction—an indispensable ingredient for understanding and remembrance—risks repeating the original injustice by denying victims yet again the singularity of which they were systematically deprived, even in death. In order to dispel the anonymity inherent in cold statistics, many books, memorials, and museums use photograpic portraits of Holocaust victims.[48] Like the staggering heaps of personal belongings found in museums, such photographs are commonly shown without any captions or explanations: the often poster-sized prints are supposed to speak for themselves.

Every photograph, however, is as much an aide-mémoire as a testament to loss. Each one makes the implicit and melancholic claim that the depicted sight is preserved in spite of, and as if to underline, the disappearance of the actual referent. If these forest settings give a place from which to witness the voiding of context effected by the Holocaust, then the photographs frame a less readily discernible moral concern about the use of documentary materials. Since all photographs present the past as absolutely unalterable, every photographic image promises momentary relief from the obligation to comprehend and to remember. Here is the photograph, every image asserts: this is the truth. In the case of the Holocaust, the sense produced by a photograph—that we have reached a momentary end point to our inquiry—conflicts with our awareness that the wish for complete understanding of the event either cannot be fulfilled or is morally suspect.[49] The forest pictures resist this implicit claim of photography to end reflection.

Reinartz's and Levin's pictures were evidently taken after prolonged visits to these places, as if the scene might retract and vanish upon sudden contact with a viewer. Reinartz's image does not match the evidentiary force of pictures used in museums and textbooks; and Levin's work cannot rival the informational content of his father's war diaries, nor the photographs by Erich Schwab that originally accompanied that text (which I discuss in the next chapter). And yet their works challenge our understanding of the nature of proof by presenting a staged and self-conscious refusal of information—a framed emptiness—as evidence of the crime's enormity.[50] At a moment when the Holocaust is rapidly fading from lived memory and passing into recorded history, the landscape prints of Sobibór or Ohrdruf do not format the past according to the specifications of existing archives. In casting the finality of the photographic image within the experience of place, these images extend the sense that the viewer is being addressed or called upon in ways that may no longer seem self-evident.

The Viewer as Witness

The matter-of-factness of the photographs, their ostensible literalness or "reality effect," captures what historical narrativization and conceptualization cannot.[51] These images uncannily stage—without resolving—the tension between the senses of being drawn into the sites (of viewing them as places) and of being excluded from them (of regarding them as space). As we

oscillate between fascination with the images and bewilderment as to the source of their attraction, we become conscious of our relationship to sights that appear significant but do not provide any conclusive knowledge of their meaning. Compelled by their strong perspective, we examine these prints to find the hidden source of their pull. But this visual inspection is continually frustrated, for the pictures' almost hypnotic appeal originates not in any visible evidence they might offer but in the illusion of distance and depth in the flat prints. Our thwarted effort to locate the pictures' hidden source of significance, then, leads to the realization that the absence of understanding is linked to our own position *as viewers.*

It has been suggested that a person's engagement with the historical event of the Holocaust will be fundamentally shaped by his or her "subject-position." The Holocaust, argues Dominick LaCapra, "presents the historian with *transference in the most traumatic form conceivable*—but with a transference that will vary with the difference in subject-position."[52] LaCapra therefore urges those who engage with any aspect of the Holocaust to become aware of how their own identities shape their responses. However, as virtually every survivor testimony attests, the comforts of an easily claimable subject-position—and the inherent sense of identity—are by no means available to everyone. Awareness of one's psychological reactions to the Holocaust (whether categorized problematically as "most traumatic" or, presumably, "merely" difficult) is undoubtedly important. I would suggest, however, that even *prior* to reflecting on his or her subject-position in relation to the Holocaust, an individual needs to recall that all conceptions of cultural transmission, identity, and subject-position are inflected by an event that exposed not only the dialectical nature of Enlightenment culture but also the corruptibility and deadly instrumentalization of a politically distorted understanding of identity.[53] My argument about the two photographs is that those who find themselves in these pictures' line of sight are put in the position of (or are being interpellated as) outsiders, regardless of personal background or assumed or imposed identity. At any given moment, the contaminating force of the disaster may diminish for some, while for others it may increase. As anyone can attest who has attempted to teach—rather than simply convey information about—the Holocaust, encountering the catastrophe does not facilitate, but often fractures or derails, identification with any given subject-position.

By creating an experience of place for areas designed to destroy the very possibility of experience, Reinartz and Levin show that Holocaust commemoration is not site-specific and that acts of secondary witnessing depend less on geographic or cultural positions than on becoming aware of our position as observers of experiences no one ever wanted to know about.[54] These pictures show us that the Holocaust's empty sites are radically inhospitable and that attempts to inhabit them ex post facto, through empathic identification and imaginary projection via transferential bonds, is illusory at best. With the passage of time, the investigation of its history, once fueled by a sense of trauma, will have to be prompted by other motives for representing the event. Some former killing fields—sites such as Ohrdruf where thousands were murdered—were never marked on the itineraries of disaster tourism, are rarely mentioned in historical studies, and are likely to sink into complete oblivion once the last survivors have passed away.[55] When such sites are framed in terms of landscape art, we recognize the disappearance of the event as part of the intention of their Nazi creators, a recognition that might motivate us to halt the disappearance. The images of Reinartz and Levin compel *all* viewers to reflect on how they are called upon to respond in unforeseen ways to a catastrophe such as the Holocaust. These photographs give the largely "figurative experience" of Holocaust memory a more literal form and create a new place of memory for those who consider themselves geographically, historically, or culturally removed from the camps.[56]

Several writers have described as shocking the experience of matching the real contours of the camps with the devastating sense of emptiness in their minds.[57] Landscape photographs of the Holocaust do not mitigate that experience, and the forest clearings at Sobibór and Ohrdruf lose nothing of their bleak nondescriptiveness when immobilized in print. Yet they do link the need to fit placeless memories into an imagined or imaginary place with the search for moral bearings and a point of view. The photographs train our gaze on this linkage of visual and moral perspectives and help us realize that *what* we see is always a question of *how*, and *from where*, we see it.

The landscape genre, which is so closely linked to the Enlightenment ideal of the subject's dialectical process of increasing self-awareness, is in Reinartz's and Levin's photographs used to prevent a moment of self-positioning from yielding intellectual gain. They position us as secondary

witnesses who are as much spectators as seekers of knowledge. The aesthetic imperative offered in these images remains contemplative: it does not serve as a measure of our actions, and it compels us to respond without teaching us what to do. It merely prolongs the sense of inevitability that had been felt by those growing up in the Holocaust's more direct shadows. The images are visually arresting dead ends, well-composed but frustrating enticements to know. In their black-and-white neutrality, they apparently refuse to judge a situation in which a neutral stance appears immoral. But unlike original photographs from the camps, which are often displayed to silently accuse, they force us to face something we may never know. The rush of moral indignation that often accompanies the encounter with other graphic pictures of atrocities may be narcissistically satisfying, but it may also free us from the responsibility of placing our own experiences in relation to something that remains, finally, incomprehensible.[58] These photographs show us that the devastation of this massive trauma consists not merely in the ensuing difficulties of commemoration and forgetting but also in the fact that the erasure was so complete that it never fully entered either memory or forgetting.

I do not dispute that we do and should view images of the past in the hope that such encounters will improve our chances of shaping the present and the future. Yet the expressive silence of Reinartz's and Levin's tightly framed shots preempts closure and instead beckons us—without hinting at redemption or restitution—toward thought and language with which to reach from within the Holocaust's imploded sites to a place beyond it. From other images we may avert our gaze (thus serving forgetting and denial); or we may endow the event they record with a sanctity unmerited by a human campaign of destruction. In my analysis of Reinartz's and Levin's images in terms of landscape art, I try to articulate what remains to be said in response to an absence that cannot be undone. They do not allow us the option of turning away or evading this radical vacatedness by leaving our position and point of view; we cannot alter or escape from the picture's perspective.

Reinartz highlights the catastrophe's reality by shooting in the documentary idiom. Levin conveys to us that the second generation inherits from their predecessors not something that has been learned but something that remains a loss. Both enlist photography's claim of realism—the illusion that the shutter stamps an experience with inalterable finality—to show that this absence is immune to belated rescue missions in the form of restitutive

or redemptive thought. Their works emphasize that part of the reality of the Holocaust consists in the fact that it has not receded into the past. Their pictures show that self-awareness, or the effort to situate oneself spatially and temporally within a greater whole, does not inevitably lead to understanding. Their work asks how we can situate future generations in relation to an event that calls into question many of our beliefs in the promises inherent in pedagogy and knowledge and forces us to reexamine our understanding of identity and of culture at large.

Finally, these two photos show that *proof*, as Brendan Kennelly's painfully ambiguous phrase suggests, "is what we do not need."

Postscript

Dirk Reinartz's photograph of Sobibór does not exist as a tangible object. The image I have analyzed to expose Reinartz's deployment of pictorial conventions that situate the viewer in relation to a site of historical trauma was created out of two separate photographs of Sobibór combined on a computer. For the reproduction in this book, a photolaboratory digitally erased the faint line in the center of the image that was hidden in the fold where his book, *Deathly Still*, was stitched together. There is no total and complete way of representing the Holocaust. The impression of containment, the sense of place, the feeling that this place is inhabited by ghosts, as I have argued throughout, are technical effects. These impressions result from the interplay of pictorial conventions, the photographer's intentions, and, finally, the camera's program. Once a scene such as Reinartz's Sobibór is created by fingers on a keyboard moving pixels on a screen, the "senseless mush of possibilities that rests beneath [the programmer's] fingers is invested with sense."[59] The sense here is of being called to respond, to reflect on the voiding of the sense of place that resists its own framing and emplacement.

With the digital image-engineer's fingers on the keyboard, however, we also enter "the situation of the new imagination, the Democritean mood."[60] Reinartz's photograph, which is addressed to a historical event that breaks with known practices of historicization, owes its existence to this new imagination, this Democritean mood. For this reason, it would be incorrect to stress and lament the artificiality of the image—as if a natural, untouched representation of such a spectral scene were possible. It is precisely the *construction* and encoding of a meaning *that had never existed*, which takes place in every photograph, that links photography, at least on a phenomenological level, to trauma. Under the Democritean gaze, we recognize Reinartz's photograph as one that lets us view a trauma that exceeds the historical imagination. The computer-generated illusion of Sobibór as a place where the notion of place was destroyed is no reason for despair, no cause to mourn the disappearance of immediately visible reality. Rather, it signals the promise of our present moment: a standpoint from which "we can see everything (including ourselves) photographically, as a grainy field of possibilities."[61]

3 Meyer Levin's *In Search*/Mikael Levin's *War Story:* Secondary Witnessing and the Holocaust

Two Crises of Reference: Photography and History

Meyer Levin: Witness to the Holocaust

Meyer Levin's Memoirs

An Experience That Remains a "First"

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Judengasse

Buchenwald

Levin's Darkness and the Tradition

The medium of photography *always* raises the question of the relationship between seeing and knowing. What we see in a photographic image might be something we don't know or recognize, for the camera can capture the play of light and appearance of things that escape our perception. We may even consider a particular photograph "untrue" if everything shown in it is located outside the realm of our experience. For Walter Benjamin, this photographic effect constitutes something like an "optical unconscious," a reference to the photograph's capacity to make the viewer aware of a dimension of reality that

is at once indisputably "there" yet cannot be perceived. Benjamin's psychoanalytic vocabulary hints at a fundamental concern of this book: the fact that photographs produce a crisis of reference, and not of truth.

Two Crises of Reference: Photography and History

This crisis, I will suggest in the following analyses of several images by Mikael Levin, can be brought into focus, and possibly illuminated, by reading it in relation to and through another crisis that also results from a fundamental gap or uncoupling of seeing and knowing. This second crisis can be termed the emergence in our time of a new relation to the past. Contemporary contentious debates about what Nietzsche once called "the use and abuse of history for life" signal deep doubts about the possibility and limitations of mastering past events by integrating them into an account of an individual's or a collective's path toward their present position.

Frequently, the most urgent search for a new relation to the past occurs in response to those charged histories that, paradoxically, seem excessively present and unforgettable but are screened from remembrance or unavailable for complete recall. In the wake of twentieth-century catastrophes that have undermined belief in the unlimited progress of humanist societies, important insights into the urgent problem of how to relate to the past have emerged in theoretical investigations of the modes of witnessing and testimony. We recognize that the last century was marked, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have observed, by events that produced a "crisis within history which precisely cannot be articulated, witnessed in the given categories of history itself."[1] In this context the Holocaust assumes particular significance as the historical event designed by the Germans to eliminate its own witnesses.

Viewing photography in relation to the crisis of history that is so inextricably bound up with the crisis of witnessing may help us come to a new understanding of the medium. It is not simply a matter of viewing specific photographs as illustrations of historical trauma, but of seeing how certain photographs, such as those taken by Mikael Levin, can deepen our understanding of the precise nature of witnessing—much as a theoretical understanding of testimony as a form of representation issuing not from knowledge or experience but from a fundamental crisis of knowing can enhance our understanding of photography.[2] In this chapter, therefore, I con-

sider the paradigmatic crisis of reference staged in and as photography against and through the crisis of reference constituted by recent traumatic history.

Meyer Levin: Witness to the Holocaust

The question of historical reference is inseparable from that of the intergenerational transmission of the past. The relationship between Meyer Levin and his son Mikael, which we glimpsed in the previous chapter, is an allegory of this process. In the case of the Levins, personal memory and collective history intersect precisely at the point where the possibility of witnessing breaks down. In Meyer Levin's works in a daunting multitude of genres—which can be seen in their colorful and contentious complexity as a striking parable of the cultural development known as the "Americanization of the Holocaust"—there is a central lacuna, or traumatic gap.[3] This gap in the work of an "outsider witness" to the Holocaust (as distinguished from the victims who are its original witnesses) pulsates like an invisible heart in Meyer Levin's writings; although unspoken, it can be felt. For war correspondent Levin, encounters with camp survivors resulted in an obsessive quest to convey the catastrophe's magnitude to outsiders without usurping the place of the original witnesses. Levin's respect for those witnesses, however, came from his perception that their trauma negatively affected their ability to fully grasp their own experience. In response to the immense suffering he encountered, Levin quickly realized the futility of identifying with victims who were radically alienated from parts of their own experiences. Instead of identifying with them or sacralizing them as psychic untouchables, he considered it his ethical obligation to conscientiously convey their stories.

Meyer Levin's Memoirs

Meyer Levin's war memoirs first appeared under the title *In Search* in 1950, at the historical moment when memories of World War II were already giving way to preoccupation with the ideological battles of the Cold War. At this point, "the act of bearing witness" was, as Barbie Zelizer has shown, beginning "to lose meaning."[4] Roughly a decade before the Holocaust entered the consciousness of most Americans, and long before academics began

discussing the limits of representing "the final solution," Levin focused his gaze clearly and steadily on the victims, notwithstanding—as Thomas Mann put it in a promotional blurb—"the shocking turmoil [going on] around him."[5] Levin's reports of atrocities, which appeared in the spring and summer of 1945, contributed to the collective shock suffered by American readers when they realized the enormity of the German crimes. His dispatches from the front lines were printed in large and small U.S. papers and widely read.[6] In the ensuing years, Levin's novels sold well, and he was a regular contributor to national news magazines and other public forums. *In Search*, however, appeared at a time when Americans no longer felt compelled to pay close attention to war stories, and it never reached the large audience for which he had written it. Although his wartime reports had engendered compassion for the victims, the "popular need to see and hear of Nazi atrocities waned, as attending to atrocity started to lose significance as an act of public consensus."[7] Meyer Levin devoted his postwar life to combating what Sidra Ezrahi has called the "curiously functional 'amnesia' toward the events themselves" in the United States and the "Jewish ambivalence toward [being the] messenger of the reality of evil in a society still largely animated by faith in the moral order."[8]

An Experience That Remains a "First"

Levin was among the first postwar writers to identify the destruction of the Jews as a particularly significant event, if not the defining one, of the war. In his newspaper reports of 1945, the term *Holocaust* (or *Final Solution*, or *Churbn*, or *Shoah*) does not appear; and for American tongues *Auschwitz* was still only the Germanized name of the all-but-unpronounceable Polish city, Oswiecim. Levin sought to grasp the fact that although the American forces had arrived "first" at several camps, this "being first" had nonetheless occurred "too late." His writings imply that each attempt to come to terms with the Holocaust seems to miss the event all over again; yet another effort is always needed to comprehend what was experienced only in bursts, isolated scenes, and breaks with everyday consciousness—even with Allied soldiers' expectations of "the worst."

When Levin's dispatches were first cabled to the United States, the public was still anxiously unsure about the duration and ultimate outcome of the war in Europe. The notion of "crimes against humanity" was not yet

generally recognized. Few others suspected that the events Levin was describing would prompt a moral and cognitive crisis that continues to influence our understanding of political and moral life in the twenty-first century. Yet Levin already recognizes a central aspect of this crisis when he asks in his memoirs what it means to be first: "There is not often a meaning in being first, in getting somewhere first so as to rush out a moment ahead of the others with the 'news'; but today I somehow knew that I had had to find and experience this without anyone having told me what it would be like."[9]

Meyer Levin here identifies a fundamental aspect of the Holocaust. From the beginning, he sought to convey the shocking impact of the events while offering a more comprehensive view. Even before he had any idea of what he would see, Levin realized that he was to experience something whose significance had not yet been recognized. This intuition cannot be reduced to the reporter's professional hunger for the latest scoop. The "today" when Meyer Levin "knew that [he] had had to find and experience this without anyone having told [him] what it would be like," splits tense from sense. "Today I know," one might have expected Levin to have written in flashback tense, but each effort to forge a conclusive understanding of his experience instantly recedes behind subsequent and equally futile efforts. Levin's "today" is thus also the "today" of contemporary readers who read his text as testimony to an experience whose meaning has not been subsumed into its telling.

Some of what is known of and as the Holocaust today remains a series of "firsts" that is never fully developed. The sense of being suddenly cast into a situation that lacks precedent or explanatory context resounds as a theme in Holocaust testimonies, memoirs, historical accounts, even fictional accounts and feature films. The first realization that a desperate situation had become hopeless, the first encounter with Nazi brutality, the first sight of the ramp, the first hint that the terrifying events, which hitherto had appeared like incongruous relapses into darker times or extensions of age-old anti-Semitism—victims could grasp none of these by drawing on earlier knowledge or experiences. These experiences remain "firsts," even after their occurrence; they are experiences of seeing without understanding. Even when such first impressions are placed within explanatory narratives based on hindsight, the resulting accounts remain scarred by the first blow that violently split seeing from understanding, experience from

knowledge. The field of historiography, to be sure, tries to dissolve the numbing experience of "being first" by reconnecting this "first" to what comes before and after. When trying to make sense of the Holocaust, however, we find that the impact of an irreducible "first" often remains as unassimilable as it is in Meyer Levin's syntactically strained prose.

The sense of an unmitigated first characterizes Meyer Levin's stunned disbelief when he arrived at the camps in 1945: it was "what had been done to those who nominally survived," as Levin put it with remarkable perspicacity. "From Paris to Łódź the stories were the same: *the first* horror came here, *the first* division in hatred" (19, emphasis added). Levin considered the German crimes a historical first because from the beginning the victims were assaulted physically and compromised psychologically: "They came and told the Jews to organize themselves, to register every soul in their community" (19). Ten years after the war's end, Levin writes, "we have catalogued the horrors, the tortures, the sadistic inventiveness of commander and guards. But we have not found any explanation for this vast ghastly rift in the pattern of organized human behavior."[10] The medium uniquely equipped to capture this paradoxical experience of a "first time" that will not fade into memory or forgetting but will always remain absolutely singular, with no guarantee of before or after, is photography.

In a letter to Meyer Levin that includes material for the book's blurb, Albert Einstein recognized Levin's "striving for truth [in which] he has spared neither himself nor others, despite the consideration that such frankness and objectivity would cause the greatest hindrance to the writer and his success."[11] From his assignment as a war reporter for U.S. news agencies and throughout his long and controversial career as novelist, playwright, filmmaker, journalist, and public intellectual, Meyer Levin struggled to halt the erosion of significance in the act of witnessing.[12] He did not spare himself from intense scrutiny, a fact Einstein noted with admiration. Indeed *In Search* acknowledges not only the responsibilities but also the limitations of the secondary witness: "From the beginning I realized I would never be able to write the story of the Jews of Europe. This tragic epic cannot be written by a stranger to the experience, for the survivors have an augmented view which we cannot attain; they lived so long so close with death that on a moral plane they are like people who have acquired the hearing of a whole range of tones outside normal human hearing" (15).

Levin stressed the inaccessibility of Holocaust suffering, but he did not invest the event with quasi-religious significance. He refused to sentimentalize the survivors, even though they possessed otherwise unavailable knowledge; he recognized that if there is knowledge in traumatic survival, it is a knowledge that the traumatized individual never wanted to possess.

"They all have death inside": Against Identification

Even before such concepts gained a hold on the culture, Levin dismantled the maudlin notions that Holocaust survival bestows a mark of distinction or that survivors' testimonies could be eagerly received as uplifting tales. When confronted with enormous numbers of survivors, Meyer Levin shielded himself from their overwhelming trauma and despair by focusing on pragmatic help. In his account of compiling lists for the Joint Distribution Committee to help reunite surviving family members, Levin confesses to an unshakeable sense of alienation—rather than an intuitive bond—that resulted from listening intently to the survivors of massive trauma.

> No one wants to hear their stories any more, and I am sick of telling their stories, for there is no issue from their dreary tales even though we say happy ending in Israel; and yet some things must be said or said again, for they have not been enough understood. One can enumerate the survivors [. . .] one may approximate their mental ills. But they all have death inside. It isn't a fourth of Bulgarian Jews and a fifth of the Polish Jews and a third of the French who survive; they all have death inside. (19)

To readers accustomed to sentimental accounts of trauma and sacralizing images of victims, Levin's exasperation might seem callous. To be sure, in his irritation at the survivors' stories he spares no one—not himself, not the victims, not his readers. A deep tension runs between his urgent desire to bear witness, his equally honest recognition of the radically alienating effects of trauma on anyone who comes in contact with it, and his awareness that identifying with victims cannot heal their suffering. Ultimately, Meyer Levin's recognition of his need for a defensive distance between himself and the survivors—as well as his insight into the inaccessibility of their experience—sets his text apart from other accounts by lending it a distinctive complexity and moral force.

By revisiting Levin's work, we can reinvest the act of witnessing with moral significance without relying on the problematic, and potentially exploitative, modes of psychological projection and identification. His book does not resolve the dilemma of how to gauge the proper distance between the survivor and the witness, between the event and its representation. His comprehension of what he saw, he writes, was "like an electrical instrument whose needle has only a limited range, while the charge goes far beyond" (16). *In Search* marks the split between the testimony and the archive, between the shocking encounter with suffering and fact-based knowledge of the event. Meyer Levin was among the first to grasp that the impossibility of healing or transcending this split is the crisis of witnessing brought about by the Holocaust.

Not to Believe One's Knowledge

With remarkable acuity, and long before philosophers, historians, and psychologists addressed this phenomenon, Levin implied that the survivors' ordeal did not end with the war but continued in their struggle *to become witnesses to their own experience.* "And the survivors themselves," he wrote in *The Nation* in 1945, "after living these years within the massacre, don't believe their own knowledge of its completeness."[13] In his conversations with survivors of the camps, he encountered a fundamental split between their experiences and their knowledge of them. After the war, they found themselves with the equivalent of mental images that could not be properly "developed" without perilously undermining their sense of self; they knew what had happened but could not believe the extent of the catastrophe.

Meyer Levin's work leaves us with the question of how we should respond to this event that will not recede into either forgetting or traditional forms of commemoration, that introduces a fissure into available categories of experience and history and seems to preclude both psychological and formal closure. Should we observe Meyer Levin's strictures, respect his recognition of his own limitations, and leave his testimony as an unassimilable, singular event? The photographs of Mikael Levin are emphatic refusals of such pious reverence. Instead of enshrining his father's work, they chart a path for later generations by steering clear of both reverence and disrespect. Mikael seeks a position from which to bear witness to the Holocaust as an

event that at the time was registered visually but is still not grasped in its full magnitude.

Mikael Levin: *War Story*

Among the most treasured mementos of Meyer Levin's European tour was a camera: "We . . . ended the war [and returned home] . . . with a camera apiece" (235). Second only to a gun, a German camera was the war trophy "with the highest fetish value" for American soldiers. By looting a "No. 3 Contax, a No. 2 Contax, a Leica, a Rolleiflex, Rolleicord," Levin confesses, GIs released some of their anger at Germans who had started a war without lacking in material things. Levin's Contax was stolen sometime after his return to the United States; much later, his son Mikael inherited the camera used by his father's jeep-mate and fellow reporter, the press photographer Erich Schwab. It is thus no accident that Mikael became a photographer who developed a passion for *exposing* the world. With every click of his own camera today, the younger Levin memorializes the places where Schwab and his father were besieged to the point of being overwhelmed by survivors.

Returning to the sites of warfare fifty years after his father's assignment, Mikael Levin isolates with his camera the sense of belatedness that was a central component of his father's work. By centering his vision on the fundamental gaps that characterize Meyer's witness to the Holocaust—a gap between the survivors and Levin, and a gap within the survivors' experiences—Mikael carves out space for his own photographic project. Instead of searching with his camera for evidence of past events described by his father, he shows that these events have still not arrived fully in the present, that they have not yet been developed and completely understood. However, in his photographs, which also split into conflicting readings, Mikael testifies to more than the split in his father's work. His photographs also provoke difficult questions about the contemporary fascination with the legacy of the war, and about the Romantic notion of remembrance as a form of redemption. By deliberately eschewing techniques employed by other Holocaust photographers—atmospheric weather and lighting, visual disorientation, or absence of a point of view—Mikael Levin shows us the past not as precursor to the present but as something we have yet to learn to see. As an

allegory of the process of historical transmission, his images underscore the urgent contemporary question of how to relate to a past that we know is over but that continues to influence contemporary culture and thought with all the force of the present. This question becomes inseparable from the two crises: the crisis of reference constituted by photography through its illusion of a permanent present and the crisis of witnessing constituted by the historical trauma of the Holocaust.

War Story explores the position of the secondary witness—the frequently involuntary inheritor of stories and images whose significance derives from their resistance to being fully grasped at the time by the person who experienced them. When Meyer Levin first encountered the survivors in 1945, he had to clear around himself an imaginary and actual space amidst a sea of despair. Mikael Levin reveals this almost severe creation of an actual and psychological barrier as the distance necessary to turn passive seeing into an act of witness. The son therefore asserts himself not in relation to his father but to the distance that allowed Meyer Levin to assess more acutely, and earlier than others, the significance of the event. The father had warded off the overwhelming psychic misery of the survivors like a moral contagion: "I could take their names, for to collect their names was an immediate and concrete task[.] I couldn't feed these people nor find them shelter nor listen to all their stories. Sometimes as they crowded around me I screamed at them almost hatefully, leave me alone! Just try and write down your names!" (165). His professional duties served as a shield, like the raised camera of a photographer who concentrates on the technical aspects of picture-taking to screen out the suffering in front of the lens.

Mikael Levin returned to the sites of his father's encounters to grasp what still confounds us, and to demagnetize the events that seem to grow larger the further they recede in time. It is therefore too simple, as critics have done, to classify his book as a tribute, an act of homage and monument to "filial piety."[14] *War Story* tells us about several personal battles as well as those of World War II: the father's struggle to forge a Jewish identity amidst the prejudices of mid–twentieth century American society, his war against the U.S. Army's policies of racial segregation, the son's war against his father's psychological demons, his oedipal struggle with the achievements of an exceptionally prolific father, and the conflicts between different, and possibly incompatible, versions of the historical past. Mikael Levin's work merits our scrutiny because it recognizes that these battles require more

than the kind of interpretation that might emanate from other recent Holocaust-related projects as a call for remembrance and mourning. Levin's images have to be viewed against the background of his father's failed effort to bring the Holocaust into public consciousness long before the recent memory boom; at the same time, they work against the kitsch productions of that boom. As intensely private memorials to a father's struggle for an adequate response to trauma, the photographs are allegories of the conflicting needs to lessen the burden of traumatic memory while accepting the task of commemoration.

The War as Memorial Site

If Mikael Levin had followed in his father's footsteps and simply illustrated the latter's story, he would have obscured Meyer Levin's insight that a fundamental aspect of the war experience remains inaccessible to such processes of empathic identification. Mikael Levin's work bears witness to the witness precisely by refusing to identify with his father's position and by stepping into other roles. He even risks aligning his perspective with that of the former enemy. This deliberate departure from his father's viewpoint results in photographs that express the traumatic knowledge of the witness.

In a complex representation of his refusal to simply identify with his father, Mikael stages a scene of ambiguous visual analysis (figure 3.1). The photograph was taken from behind a looming male back identifiable as that of a farmer in a dirt-specked plaid shirt; he is squinting at a small photo he holds up against the landscape. Because the smaller print must be older than Mikael's image, it clearly signifies "the past" in general. It depicts a tank and two GIs wearing World War II American helmets. The wooden fences and severely pruned trees marking the landscape as European and the blossoms denoting the season as spring identify the small print as a photograph taken during the Allies' advance into Europe near the end of the war. As an allegorical representation of Mikael Levin's intention, the photograph shows the present-day landscape as a scene of reading for memory, thus exemplifying the larger project of *War Story* of which it is a part.

The eerie suspension of hostility between the two images—a cease-fire across a span of time—pivots on the burly farmer's hold on the miniaturized GIs in his fist. The men in the small picture do not seem wholly relaxed, as if still ready for combat, uncertain of whether this might be their

3.1 Untitled. From Mikael Levin, *War Story.*
Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997.

last portrait. The farmer, frozen by Levin's camera behind him, is, in turn, in the hands of the American photographer. He is a symbol of the former enemy forced, at camera-point, to give directions to invading U.S. troops. Because the smaller photograph shows a gently sloping hillside marked by a solid perspective, it centers the viewer's gaze, underscoring the impression of being hemmed in created by bold cropping. The composition draws its strength from the formal tension between the openness and unambiguous perspective of the small image and the sense of a limited view in the larger print. By deliberately truncating important visual pointers and guidelines in the larger image (the mountain, the farmer's head, the railing to the left, a tree) and focussing on the small print, Levin locates the flatness of the photograph of the GIs as the only element of depth in the contemporary European site.

The farmer's squinted eyes turn this scene into a moment emblematic of the splitting of sight and memory. He is trying to remember exactly where the soldiers once squatted. He holds the small image carefully suspended in space, a site of memory that is at once part of himself and yet separate. Because the photographer—and, by implication, the viewer's point of view—is higher than the farmer, the photograph both assumes his perspective and, thanks to the photographer's position behind him, breaks with this identificatory alignment of perspectives to focus on the farmer's act of looking as a distinct, and distanced, scene. The resulting doubled perspective of what the farmer sees, and seeing the farmer in the act of looking, is further enhanced by his dual roles as a stand-in for Meyer Levin, who as a war reporter described the point of view of GIs, and for Mikael Levin, who is looking at his father's story. The son gazes upon his father's story as a parable of the way we may fail to connect what we see with what we know.

The small photograph, which was taken originally by Meyer Levin's fellow reporter Eric Schwab in 1945, functions like a foreign body, an insufficiently integrated memory in this picture of landscape-as-means-of-introspection. The farmer, a virtual descendant of the Romantic trope of the back-figure contemplating nature, is not facing a landscape but a man-made history.[15] His relationship to the surroundings is entirely determined by how these surroundings have been used, or more specifically, visually represented in the past. Here the contemplating individual—the farmer on his reconnaissance mission into the past—no longer symbolizes the viewer's ability to transcend his or her empirical position.

Ultimately, Mikael Levin's photograph represents a memory that remains, paradoxically and precisely because it is located in the picture's center, unseen. Because the lines in the two images function as indexes for spatial recession, the triangle in the small picture (comprised of the two soldiers, and the tank) seems to correspond exactly to the triangle that structures the larger photograph beyond its frames (comprised of the unseen but implied photographer, the farmer, and the photograph in his hand). Yet in the larger image the triangle's apex, which in the small photograph is occupied by the tank, is blocked from view by the smaller print. The *mise-en-abîme* structure is not reassuring. The tank is positioned at the impenetrable dead center of the composition; its erstwhile location, however, is visually unattainable and remains as impenetrable as the armored vehicle itself, for the smaller photograph blocks it from sight. The tank's position is shown, in the larger photograph, without showing it. The photograph from the past at once motivates and precludes a reading of this photograph in terms of spatial recession, from the larger print to the smaller picture. The picture invites us to return to a scene and to a sight that is fully visible and yet remains, because of its centrality, unattainable.

Levin thus exposes in and as his father's story a central blind spot that results from the struggle to link sight and knowledge. In a second strategy aimed at amplifying this effect, Levin juxtaposes the two radically different ways of looking for pleasure and seeing with a purpose. While the farmer searchingly scans the smaller image, the picture is suspended between the two kinds of looking. Mikael Levin does not decide between them; he is neither looking for pleasure like a tourist nor observing for tactical purposes like a war scout. Instead of resolving these incompatible ways of seeing, he strategically deploys them to exhibit the photograph as both catalyst for and barrier to memory. As a stand-in for the medium of photography, Eric Schwab's photograph blocks the view. Levin shows a photographic representation of the past not as static and subordinate to the present, but as a sight to be accessed, assessed, and critically examined on its own terms. Instead of visually staging a return of the repressed, this photograph presents the past as still coming into view.

The farmer—who serves as stand-in for the mutually exclusive positions of the former enemy, Meyer Levin, photographer Schwab, and the viewer—is caught in the process of *reading* the smaller shot. The past remains a scene to be interpreted and turns the present into yet another scene

of reading. Levin demonstrates that wartime photography simultaneously triggers memory and prevents us from precisely locating it; thus he reveals photography as capable of introducing memories that remain foreign objects in the psyche. His photograph is marked by an absence and a gap: the gleaming white strip at the bottom of the smaller print signals a missing caption and suggests that his father's text, in spite of impassioned rhetoric and penetrating analyses, has left something unsaid.

A Window to the Past

If Mikael Levin's images unsentimentally depart from his father's testimony, where do they take us? Where do we go from Meyer Levin's searing insight that the liberation of the camps unearthed a story from which there would be "no issue"? Although they at first seem forbidding, I want to show how two remarkably subtle photographs by Mikael Levin open up, expose to view, and thus offer viewers access to a past that remains unresolved. This process can be read in two images printed on facing pages of *War Story* and separated only by the book's gutter running like a faint scar down the center; the father's narrative, which is printed elsewhere on facing pages, has been completely displaced. In each of the photographs, Mikael Levin visually deconstructs the common notion of the present as a window on the past and the cliché of the photograph as flattened-out reality. They hint at the extent to which we may gain access to—and possibly reach beyond—what his father could not leave behind.

In the photograph taken in Frankfurt in 1995, viewers do not get anywhere at all (figure 3.2). They are confronted with an imposing wall, as if they had been washed up in the path of a suddenly looming tanker cutting through the high seas. There is no possibility of visual access or bodily projection. At ground level, where one would ordinarily seek entry, is a lean-to with no windows or doors; it lies in deep shade. The seedy parking area in front of it triggers the urban dweller's nearly instinctive feeling of a lurking threat. The photograph pivots on the sharp edge of the building's corner; drain pipes, power cables, and a fire ladder run vertically down it from the corner of the roof, where the image is cropped to divide the sky nearly into two triangles. By slightly tilting the perspective back and up, Levin forces the viewer into a pose of raised head and strained neck that is the embodiment of vulnerability.

3.2 Untitled. From Mikael Levin, *War Story.* Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997.

In spite of this forbidding perspective, Levin's print pulls in the viewer's gaze. This highly formal study invites us to explore the subtle relations between surface and depth, light and dark, flatness and receding space. The bulging graffiti tag becomes a mark of the building's new use as a canvas for an American artist and invites viewers to explore the wall as one would a work of art, in search of evident and hidden meaning. The sense of secret knowledge harbored here is heightened by the walled-up window openings, which look like empty frames waiting to be filled with images and meaning. Indeed, the entire wall might be seen as a screen for various memories. These include half of a memorial banner hanging limply from the wall like a band-aid that has come unstuck, a white mesh trellis clinging to the building like a bit of scaffolding or medical gauze, and the graffiti "TO Ma funky LADIES!," indicating how American forms of self-expression persist in Europe even after the withdrawal of most American troops.

As the dejected-looking memorial banner has been cut off in mid-sentence by wind and weather to read *Laßt uns die nicht geweinten . . .* ["Let us the unwept . . ."], whatever full slogan once served a political or artistic purpose has turned into an open-ended call for the shedding of unwept tears, for the release of belated and nonspecific mourning. And indeed the photograph does show a place of traumatic loss, for there is another series of ghostly signs attached to the wall right at the center, though partly obscured by the sun and shadow. It is a one-dimensional reproduction of a window in what was Frankfurt's largest Jewish synagogue, which stood on this site until the Nazis destroyed it. The nine commemorative panels of the unfinished mural are attached to the wall like the pieces of a puzzle left incomplete. Compositionally, they carry no more weight than the gauzelike trellis, the black silhouette of a small tree in front, the pulsating graffiti tag, or the dangling banner. Amidst the billowing shadows on the wall with its subtle pattern of squares, the skeletal outlines of a Star of David resemble an architectural blueprint or a lathe used to gird up the wall. The belated mourning in this photograph is for the loss of Europe's Jews.

With the implicit invitation to the viewer to complete the circle and star patterns of the missing synagogue windows, Mikael Levin intensifies a fundamental attraction of all photography. The image does more than silently announce, like every photograph, the future moment just after the click of the shutter. Its depiction of light and shadow also emphasizes our inability to know or predict that future moment when the synagogue panels will disappear into the glare of overexposure in the presence of full sunlight

or vanish into the obscurity of full shade. If what can be seen depends on the movement of the sun and clouds in this photograph, the photograph's radical openness to such mutually exclusive possibilities becomes an allegory of what will be remembered or forgotten. The small patch of the destroyed temple is a fake window plastered on a wall with bricked-up openings, a two-dimensional sign that holds the promise of depth and insight without delivering it, much as a photograph holds the promise of reality but delivers only a reminder of its loss.

Of prewar Frankfurt's approximately forty thousand Jews, Meyer Levin reported in 1945, only 106 survived. After demolishing their temple the Nazis built an air-raid shelter on the site; the few Jews who remained in the city were barred from using such shelters. Levin's photograph stages this destruction followed by a deadly refusal of entry by offering the viewer neither access nor refuge. The air-raid shelter, meant to protect and ensure survival, serves not as symbolic tombstone for Frankfurt's murdered Jews but as a sign of the refusal to allow Jews to enter, even after their house of worship had been destroyed.

Yet any attempt to comprehend Levin's image by drawing on this "deeper" knowledge of the site's history and by dredging information from Meyer Levin's text risks overlooking the site's significance as a place of absolute exclusion and refusal of entry. To illustrate this refusal, Mikael Levin creates for the viewer the experience of trying in vain to gain access. With this shot of walled-up window openings, Levin locates in his father's text a fundamentally impenetrable center, which says, at one and the same time, that "they all have death inside" and "from this story there is no issue."

Indeed, Meyer Levin refused to conclude his own account on a hopeful note, even though he assisted the rebuilding of another destroyed German-Jewish community. Immediately after the war, a survivor in Cologne gave Levin a Torah scroll for safekeeping until he could find the necessary ten adult Jewish males to reconsecrate it. After crisscrossing war-torn Europe for several months with the scroll in his jeep, Levin returned it to the survivor.

> I could write a hopeful story, a symbolic story of the return of the Torah to the most ancient of Jewish communities, of the indestructibility of the Jewish community, of how it would rise here again. But the truth was only desolation. . . . No, I had to write of the Jews of Cologne, of the Jews of Europe as they were: broken, finished. It was not for me to bear false witness. (256)

To bear *true* witness, according to this passage, means to account for catastrophic events without turning them into a continuous story. Bearing witness means seeing the destruction of Cologne's or Frankfurt's prewar Jewish community as wounds that will not heal. Any restorative narrative of good overcoming evil, of the triumph of the human spirit, and of the ultimate survival of Europe's Jews despite staggering losses—in short, the culture industry's redemptive version of the Holocaust—would amount to bearing "false witness." A story of rebirth and renewal, Meyer Levin maintains, amounts to a story of forgetting.

In Mikael Levin's photograph of the wall the refusal to turn desolation into hope is expressed by rendering the site as a precariously lit scene that could be as easily engulfed in darkness as in blinding light. Remembrance of the trauma of the Holocaust, moreover, is not shown as a solid or automatic development for which the white wall could serve as a memorial marker. It is, rather, a contested screen where conflicting interests, open-ended messages, and different symbolic registers intersect and threaten to usurp one another. The trace of former Jewish life must be brought out of the shadows, and thus out of its symbolic latency, with the camera's click.

By photographing the window panels in half-shade, Levin exploits the camera's potential to open the photographed moment into an indeterminate future. Regardless of whether the wall's memorial section is swathed in darkness or in light after the shutter clicks, the destroyed past will be neither redeemed nor completely forgotten. Instead of promising that the past has been transcended—whether utterly destroyed, properly mourned, or somehow restored—the photograph shows that it remains an open wound. Levin thus demonstrates how the unresolved past produces spectral sights and sites that must be actively interpreted rather than accepted as self-evident, or inherently meaningful. History, Levin's photographs show, is not a given but something we must recognize in and for the present. If we view the synagogue windows as simply self-evident memorials, we cannot be sure what we are commemorating: a prewar Jewish community, its destruction during the war, or the way that destruction left wounds that will not heal.

Judengasse

The photograph that faces the image of the white wall in *War Story* examines different levels of flatness; it is another self-consciously modernist image that explores the utility of surfaces for inscription (figure 3.3). The

3.3 Untitled. From Mikael Levin, *War Story.* Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997.

multitude of posters and signs place the image in the tradition of urban photography in which the camera uncovers formal structures beneath a bewildering proliferation of surface signs. Again, our view is blocked by a large wall on which is hung a number of rectangular shapes—a torn poster, a large museum sign, and an exhibition advertisement. The patterned flatness of the brick wall contrasts sharply with the near-absolute flatness of the sky, although the photographer has created the faint illusion of depth by contrasting different shades of gray. On the left, two residential buildings easily recognizable as belonging, respectively, to prewar-and postwar architecture stand behind a disorienting clutter of trolley tracks, wires, streetlights, and cars. Instead of conveying freedom and unboundedness, the space beyond the wall looks like just another image pasted, like the posters and street signs on the front of the wall, within the frame of the photograph. Here Levin demonstrates that even the deepest vista can be turned into mere surface, and that mere surface can create an illusion of perspectival and historical depth.

Levin has photographed the scene at a moment when the single blank window in the upper right reflects a few dark trees. This shadow links the image directly to the photograph of the synagogue site on the facing page; formally, the rectangular signs on the brick wall continue the patterns on the white wall. The past is again shown to be an unfinished rather than a stable referent in the service of the present. A particular history is shown here as a disparate series of traumatic gaps rather than a narrative, for the street corner Levin has photographed is marked by a large sign reading Judengasse (Jew's Alley). This street in Frankfurt (which shares its name with a branch of Frankfurt's Jewish Museum) resonates today with the force of historical violence. In his memoir, Meyer Levin describes how the Allies unwittingly perpetuated an aspect of the devastating German campaigns of exclusion and confinement for Frankfurt's Jews.

> I went into Frankfort and found the remaining Jews in a few ghetto houses. There were a hundred and six people out of a former population of forty thousand. . . . According to military regulations, these Jews were German civilians, and fraternization with them was forbidden. So the GI's left packages of matzoh [it was Passover] for them on the doorsteps of the ghetto houses. The Jewish [American] soldiers watched from across the street as the last Jews of Frankfort slipped out, still fearful, and picked up the Passover food. (116)

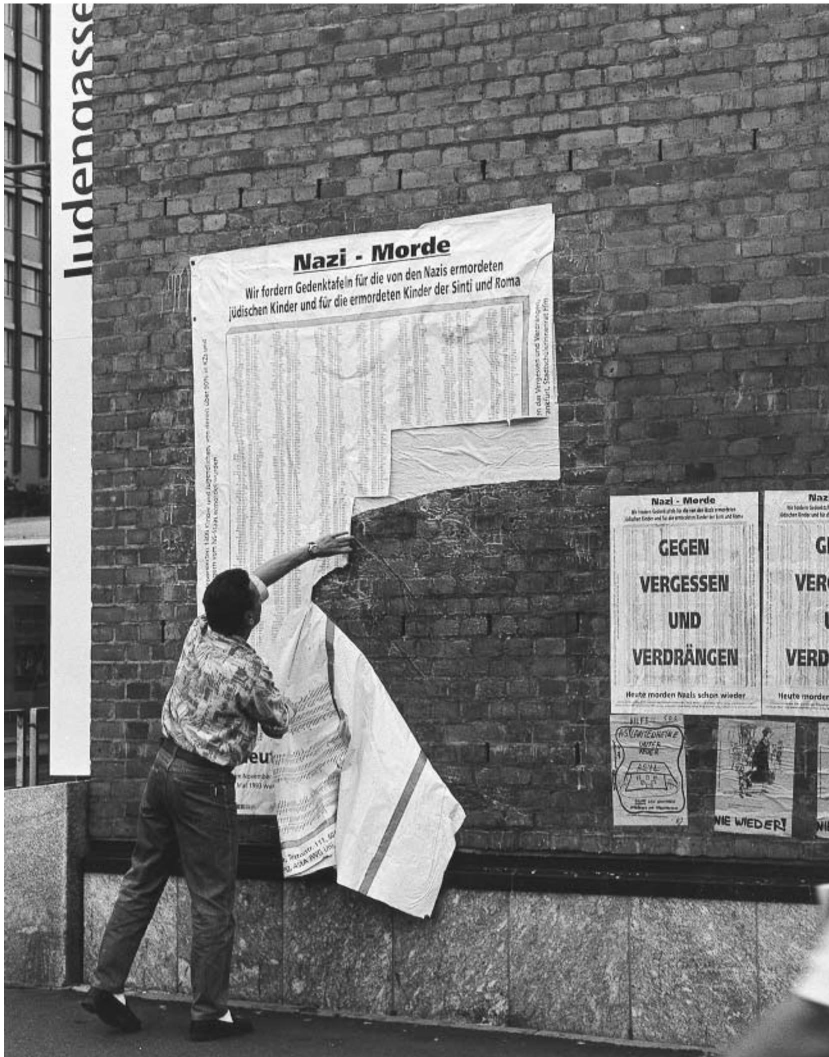
Even after the U.S. Army's arrival in Frankfurt, the surviving Jews remained isolated, outsiders to every group. Half a century later, like a military scout, Mikael Levin assumes the position of the curious GIs who watched the Jews fearfully emerge from years of house arrest. Although he is shooting in 1995, Levin represents this site of past discrimination and exclusion as no more accessible or inviting than it was in 1945. In fact, the spot has become a zone where merely viewing it from a safe position is no longer possible, where the impulse to assist, to penetrate, to understand—in short, the impulse that brought both Levins to this spot—might be hindered, not by army regulations but by the act of looking itself. With Meyer Levin's narrative as its context, this photograph of a doorless brick wall functions as the inverse of the image on the preceding page. It shows a brick building of deadly confinement akin to the "ghetto houses" described by Levin, while the gleaming façade in the photograph opposite belongs to the former air-raid shelter—a site of fatal exclusion. If the image of the air-raid shelter built on the site of the destroyed synagogue complicates the viewer's desire for symbolic entry into the image as a way to understand it, the photograph of the "ghetto houses" in the Judengasse implicitly critiques the opposite tendency: the attempt to understand history by finding an outside, properly objective, distanced point of view. Two central means of image-analysis—imaginary entry and visual or psychological projection into the picture and formal analysis from a distance—require the viewer to take up a position inside or outside and thus fail to recognize these photographs' commentary on specific situations of "inside" and "outside" as discriminatory confinement and exclusion.

Next to the official sign, Judengasse, which was installed to memorialize Frankfurt's vanished Jewish community, is a political poster "Demanding Memorial Plaques for the Jewish Children and the Children of Sinti and Roma [Gypsies] Murdered by the Nazis." By printing a list of Jewish and Gypsy children murdered by Nazis, this poster demands a remembrance of the past in the service of the present. "*Heute morden Nazis schon wieder*" [today Nazis are committing murders again] the poster proclaims. The memorial to the murdered children, it argues, has been necessitated by current-day acts of racist violence. Yet the equation of Nazi state-sponsored, officially administered genocide with right-wing violence in contemporary Germany, though well-intentioned, is politically flawed, because such events require specific, rather than generalizing, analyses and responses that

take the political context into consideration. The poster was officially attached to the wall in the presence of leaders of the German Jewish, Sinti, and Roma communities after a city official had torn down the original poster for violating a city ordinance forbidding defacement of public walls.[16] Two snapshots of the poster being torn down and subsequently remounted (figures 3.4. and 3.5) illustrate this minihistory of an emergence of memory, repeated denial, and the ultimate triumph of the embattled minority leaders. Depending on the sequence in which the two images are displayed, however, a different history emerges each time. Is it a story of initial official resistance that was overcome by the leaders of the Gypsy and Jewish communities of Germany, supported by a new generation of Germans and united by their courageous teacher? Or is it the chronicle of the undoing of those efforts by the city that employs the teacher, maintains the museum around the corner, and sanctions official ceremonies of public remembrance? These two questions show that when taken by itself no one photograph tells a story, although it can interrupt existing narratives and break new ground for further readings that are all the more necessary because they are potentially conflicting.

In Mikael Levin's photograph of the street the poster is shown as torn up. There has been no transformation of the memory of an enormous crime and moral transgression into a present-day political plea. By juxtaposing several conflicting signs of the traumatic past, Levin points out that no single representation of memory can encompass all of that past's effects. Instead of tendentiously criticizing the well-worn German practice of rendering Holocaust memory so ubiquitous and vague as to make it meaningless, Levin reveals that all memories of the war are subject to ongoing transformation. By aiming his camera at the sharp edge drawn by the label Judengasse (an edge softened and obscured in the two amateur snapshots) he gives the memorial plaque the appearance of a pillar—like the lone column of a ruined temple—that supports a wall on which conflicting modes of remembering are arrayed.

The gash in the poster, perhaps the result of opposition to using the past for present-day political purposes, tears out the names of the victims. Levin's photograph does not lament this act of vandalism but, rather, turns the gash into a memorial itself. It may be seen as a visual analogue of the gash in his father's texts, the gap to which Meyer Levin could not respond and to which his son's photographs now draw attention. Thus the tear—no longer an easily recognizable, unambiguous instance of mindless destruction,



3.4 Frankfurt city official removing memorial poster, summer 1993. Photograph by Klaus Malorny.

3.5 Memorial poster ceremony, with representatives of Germany's Jewish and Gypsy communities. Photograph by Klaus Malorny.

interruption, and effacement of a written memorial—is converted into a wound that demands to be read. It becomes the daring allegory of Mikael Levin's project: to cut open his father's text to reveal its central lacunae and, by inserting his own images, save that text from becoming a mute memorial. It is the gash—and not the well-intentioned political usage of the past for present ends—that lends this photograph its force, the means by which Levin hints at the wound linking his project to his father's written words.

If Mikael Levin's project becomes allegorically visible through the torn political poster, the allegory is extended further by the large poster announcing a local museum exhibit, "100 Years of Photography 1895–1995." The depicted photographer shoots back, and the viewer is no longer an impassive observer but is implicated in the shot. The image is a well-known photograph by Andreas Feininger showing a face whose eyes are obscured by the viewfinder and flash bulb of a camera held sideways. Feininger, the son of the American-born expressionist painter Lyonel Feininger, grew up in Berlin. The painter, whose German ancestors had emigrated to New York in 1848, had returned to Germany as an adult. When the Nazis rose to power in 1933, young Feininger, who had studied at the Bauhaus and become a self-taught photographer, left Berlin for Sweden; he eventually reached the United States, where he had never lived, though he was a citizen. His striking image of the cyborg-like face is part of a series of photographs of faces partly or fully obscured by technical headgear that enhance vision (masks, spectacles, cameras, helmets). Each of Feininger's uncannily mesmerizing mechanized faces presents us with a sight of no return. These images, emblematic of Feininger's famous motto that he "needed to teach [himself] *to see like a camera*," are at the same time subtly ironic (self-) portraits by the photographer who proclaimed that "the camera itself is a tool which for me has no more fascination than a typewriter for a novelist."[17] In Levin's photograph, Feininger's image confronts the viewer with a human countenance that might see more, or more accurately, than the naked eye but that takes in "our likeness" mechanically, as Benjamin wrote, "without returning our gaze."[18] By including Feininger's photograph, a skull-like countenance of cold appraisal, Levin inscribes a complex German-American gaze into the picture. He also exploits photography's tendency for ironic self-representation and self-allegorization to transform the viewer from passive observer into witness. We are being watched by the scene as we are watching it.

By focusing his shot of Frankfurt's Judengasse on an iconic image that blocks identificatory and empathic looking, Mikael Levin inscribes into his picture the photographic equivalent of his father's recognition that "the story of the Jews of Europe cannot be written by a stranger to the experience" (15). By including Feininger's ambiguous photograph, however, Levin also interrupts the reading of his image as an explication of his father's statement, because the photograph seems to look at, or perhaps more accurately, shoot back at the viewer. The viewer is being evaluated, judged, his or her interest is being recorded; whoever looks at the image is exposed as an involuntary participant and no longer as a viewer who passes unnoticed. Significantly, this transformation of viewer into participant in the picture's field of references—of bystander into potential witness, and of detached observer into someone struggling to grasp the site's significance—does not depend on the imagined return of gaze that characterizes human relations. The viewer is turned into a witness precisely by the absence of a gaze with which he or she could identify. This is the crux of Mikael Levin's photographic investigation into the nature of witnessing: although one might choose to testify at a later date, one becomes a witness involuntarily.

Mikael Levin's full-page photographs interrupt, usurp, and displace the text of his father's story, which was originally published without illustrations. The relations between original and copy, reality and reproduction, experience and memory, the event and its representation—all become allegorically subsumed into the son's struggle for artistic originality. Mikael seeks a new angle and yet acknowledges that the testimony he received was, from the beginning, itself a secondary tale—not an eyewitness account but a report to the world made too late to be effective. Like his father, Levin understands that for seeing to become an act of testimony, it must break the frames of mere description. The documentary idiom must yield to a performative mode of expression; instead of merely recording the traces of events, it must acknowledge their impact on the mode of recording. The act of bearing witness must further break through the blinding fascination with horror and trauma that often results in an aesthetic of shock. It must at once see and turn away from atrocity toward those who would receive the truth. By reissuing the father's book under his own name, Mikael Levin lends his signature to a past only now coming fully into focus or, in the shared terminology of psychoanalysis and photography, to a past that has remained *latent*, waiting to be brought to consciousness. The son effectively becomes

the progenitor to his father's tale. If Mikael Levin's project can be called the labor of a witness via the imagination, the original witness—Meyer Levin—is a witness who testified to the fact that what he saw he could not know.[19] In order to become the secondary witness, Mikael Levin empties his images of unambiguous referents and draws on compositional conventions that showcase not the event but a crisis of looking.

The viewer as witness is a viewer who looks at something to which simple access is denied but by which he or she is nonetheless directly addressed. The sight in question begins, in turn, to "read"—that is, to position and to situate, historically, psychologically, visually—the viewer. Instead of blocking access to a site of contested memories and conflicting memorializing practices, Mikael Levin includes in this photograph of Judengasse the viewer's experience of being denied entry through identification.

What are we to make of the figure of the woman who strides away from us at the picture's lower left? One possible reading of Levin's photograph is as a melancholic commentary on his father's sobering admission that in spite of his privileged perspective on the fate of the European Jews—what in contemporary jargon would be called his particular "subject-position"—he could produce no narrative that would transcend the catastrophic loss. In such a reading, the woman would be a sybil of forgetting that indicates (German) indifference to the past so visibly remembered in her neighborhood. The figure apparently subverts Levin's ambition to represent a past that remains inadequately remembered and understood. She is caught by the camera in mid-motion, with her back turned and her left foot already vanishing into a blur. She is, literally and visually, on her way out of the picture, caught on an errand, presumably unaware of being photographed. Her unawareness, however, marks her as a figure of unshakeable innocence: in the Democritean instance of the photograph, each photographed individual remains forever ignorant of the future moment when her photograph will be viewed. This photographically achieved extrication of the scene from any before or after complicates the interpretation of the figure as a symbol of indifference, denial, and repression of the past. In the camera-created appearance of indifference to both past and future, the woman indicates nothing of Germany's attitude about past crimes, nothing but the moment in which she hovers in the photograph's radically isolated timelessness between Levin's camera and the desolate architecture of postwar Frankfurt. The Democritean click of the camera permanently and instantly detaches the figure from any explanatory narrative, whether sym-

bolic, literal, or otherwise. At this instant of timelessness, the isolated and slightly blurred photographed figure is as much a cipher of shock and catastrophe as of denial, repression, or the fact that life moves on in pedestrian banality, while the viewer is neither a participant in that life nor fully a part of the act of commemoration she is ignoring.[20]

A photograph, it is frequently asserted, isolates a sight from its context. In this image of a Frankfurt street corner, the context not only comprises the depicted signs, the narrative and captions in *War Story*, and the sequence of movement interrupted by the shutter's click. This interrupted context also includes the past attributed to the scene and the future bestowed upon its figures through the viewer's imagination—the mental constructs of a before and an after between which the photographed "sliver of time" is assumed to hover suspended. Levin captures the female figure on her way out of the picture, a passer-by disconnected from any past or future. Although the image is literally and figuratively arresting, it does not promise that the call to remember will be heeded, that a lesson will be learned, that the brick wall will yield to a vaster perspective. Instead it reveals the capacity of photography to show space without tying it together into one meaningful surface; thus it can show the nonhierarchical coexistence of conflicting inscriptions that the mind reflexively assigns to different levels of importance.

Feininger's camera-face captures the viewer's gaze without returning it; the commemorative list of Holocaust victims is torn open; the sign Judengasse has been robbed of the Jewish community as its referent; the sky is without color or cloud; and the street-scene to the left seems to absorb rather than shelter the pedestrian. Like the tank photograph in figure 3.1, each of these smaller frames centers Levin's photograph as a whole without promising the viewer entry, or offering reassurance. The German street scene becomes readable as a site that simultaneously elicits and suppresses memories. It becomes the viewers' responsibility not merely to view the evidence offered in this image but to read, to interpret, to tear open what they think they know, and to respond.

Buchenwald

In the sober photograph with which I conclude the discussion of Mikael Levin's work, a door opens into the obscurity at the heart of his father's narrative (figure 3.6). The dark chamber is centered only by a narrow slit of a window squinting out of the dark, much like the lens opening of a square,

3.6 Untitled. From Mikael Levin, *War Story.* Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997.

old-fashioned camera into which the photographer peers from behind. The black box mimics a camera's interior, replete with a small aperture and a dark angular space where information is captured to be developed later. The picture tilts slightly to the right, nearly cutting off both the top of the doorframe and the slightly elevated threshold leading up to the opening. Levin does not let the darkness bleed all the way to the print's margins and into the beyond. Instead, by deliberately misaligning the rectangular opening with the format of the print, he carefully contains the darkness. He isolates a series of double lines: the black metal handrail jutting from the wall to the right of the opening is mirrored by a white railing on the left; the picture's top and bottom edges are compositionally matched by a knee-high horizontal line in the wall's plaster; and the sharper edge on the right of the portal, which separates light and dark at the opening's right side, is mirrored by the lighter-colored wood frame on the other side. But none of these lines lead anywhere.

The carefully framed correspondences between the lines, as well as the various shades of gray, define the picture as self-consciously modernist: the elements highlighted are the materiality of cement, stone, and iron and the severe lines of a resolutely functional building. The subservience of form to function here put into focus gestures toward a modernist architectural principle—originally intended to liberate the individual from dismal dwellings—that determines the physical outlines of the Nazi building. If Levin exploits the Romantic tradition of landscape painting in photographing Ohrdruf, in this image he relies on modernist artistic conventions to depict one of that era's darkest sites. He does not, however, rely on modernist practices to create a conventional documentary shot fostering the illusion of unquestioned authority and the significance of "reality itself." Whereas documentary photographs seek to establish that something has occurred, Levin's image seems to assert little but the existence of this concrete-bound darkness.

The image reveals that representations of trauma cannot constitute evidence; it documents precisely the abolition of referential systems on which the notion of evidence depends. By turning the idiom of high modernism on and against its deadly utilization in the camps, this picture registers the lack of evidence that can spring up in the wake of great disaster. "The disaster ruins everything," Maurice Blanchot writes in an effort to grasp the apparent quiet in the wake of trauma. And he adds immediately, "all the while leaving everything intact."[21]

If the photograph's figural content concerns the absence of evidence, what does it state on the literal level? By including, as if unintentionally, a darkly evocative stain of paint left on the step leading into the shed, Levin's photograph refers to the news photograph of a Buchenwald storage shed taken in April 1945 by Eric Schwab. In that photograph (reprinted as a small sidebar in *War Story*), the viewer is also confronted with an opening into a dark room. In Schwab's press image, however, the dark space of the concrete shed is filled with emaciated corpses carelessly piled up like cordwood. Schwab's image fastidiously captures minute stains, dirt, rusty spots, and markings in the concrete, as if those surface details could keep the viewer's gaze from settling on the dead bodies in the center. He focuses his camera on otherwise mundane and irrelevant surface details to emphasize the ubiquity of such sights—famously captured later by Margaret Bourke-White and Lee Miller for *Life* magazine—in the recently liberated camps.

Schwab's photograph holds no promise of change or transformation. Mikael Levin's image amplifies this sense of stasis. By training his eye on the site's materiality, he shows that although the corpses have been removed, the sites have been cleaned up, and the camps are now painstakingly maintained as memorials, what has been destroyed has not been replaced. What is missing will not be filled in. The emptiness inside the image—the emptiness of a degrading death—remains immune to change.

Hannah Arendt describes in a later essay her first reactions upon learning about the camps.

> Before that we said: Well, one has enemies. That is entirely natural. Why shouldn't a people have enemies? But this was different. It was really as if an abyss had opened. This ought not to have happened. And I don't just mean the number of victims. I mean the method, the fabrication of corpses and so on—I don't need to go into that. This should not have happened. Something happened there to which we cannot reconcile ourselves. None of us ever can.[22]

It is this "abyss" in his father's prose—in Arendt's words, the still-unexplained "vast ghastly rift in the pattern of organized human behavior"[23]—that Mikael Levin attempts to document. As Roland Barthes has suggested, photography is a particularly apt medium for such dead ends of reflection.

> When [the photograph] is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning. And if dialectic is that thought which masters the corruptible and

> converts the negation of death into the power to work, then the photograph is undialectical: it is a denatured theater where death cannot "be contemplated," reflected and interiorized.[24]

In Mikael Levin's image of Buchenwald, the "undialectical nature" of photography is brought to bear on a historical situation in which death could never be "interiorized." It is not only that Levin's image, like all photographs, melancholically announces the death of the photographed subject. The dark opening in Mikael Levin's image also points to a lasting deadness that has remained undeveloped and that we still have not understood. What happened to death in the Holocaust?

Theodor Adorno, realizing that conventional philosophical thought was impotent in the face of the Holocaust, wrote that "in the camps death has a novel horror: since Auschwitz, fearing death means fearing worse than death."[25] By taking Schwab's documentary shot of stacked corpses as its implicit referent, Levin revives the unresolved question of death in the Holocaust. The photographic surface becomes the screen between the experience "inside" the Buchenwald chamber—an experience that shatters the possibility of experiencing by depriving individuals of their individuality in death—and the viewer who remains outside. In this deconstruction of inside and outside perspectives, Levin's photograph might thus be understood as an act of testimony in the sense defined by Shoshana Felman in her analysis of Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*.

> It is not really possible to *tell the truth*, to testify, from the outside. Neither is it possible, as we have seen [in survivor testimonies], to testify from the inside. . . . The testimonial effort of [Lanzmann's film] is to be, paradoxically, neither simply inside nor simply outside, but paradoxically, *both inside and outside:* to create a *connection* that did not exist during the war and does not exist today *between the inside and the outside*—to set them both in motion and in dialogue with one another.[26]

By placing inside the image a darkness that remains radically other, "undialectical" to the viewer, Levin frames death in Buchenwald as an event to which viewers always remain outsiders in a way that is different from the distance they might feel in relation to other deaths. Precisely because the Germans who administered the camps created a kind of death intended to permanently depersonalize even the dead, Levin has to show the absence

there as radically different and a matter of deep concern, for the Holocaust brought the very meaning of death into question. By reframing the disturbing sight recorded in Schwab's photograph, Mikael Levin also cites and encloses his father's story as the dark center inside his own photographs. Within this black space he commemorates his father's self-denying refusal to write an uplifting epitaph that could mend the rift between the facts recounted in his news dispatches and the unredeemed truth to which his memoir bears witness. In the swath of darkness, Mikael Levin has created an outside position from which to bear witness to the inside that cannot be seen, even from within. Instead of citing Schwab's image as a proof that needs to be verified by additional documentary shots, he enlarges the darkness to show that something was already missing from Schwab's original shot of the shed at Buchenwald.

Levin's photograph reveals a darkness that after the war became manifest, but was not explained, in his father's ultimately self-destructive obsession with Holocaust-related issues. But the son uses this allegorical image of the camera as the black box of post-Holocaust memory to chart his own way through such memories and keep them from haunting the imagination. If Mikael Levin's work bears witness to the witness, it also defuses his father's obsession with the Holocaust by enclosing it within a new framework.

Mikael Levin's work serves as reminder that the only available position for the viewer is that of a witness who cannot cross the threshold into the realm of destruction by means of projection. We cannot imagine the corpses in Schwab's image as reciprocating our stunned gaze and thus facilitating identification. In his report from Buchenwald, Meyer Levin had stressed that returning that gaze—which could significantly structure a viewer's relation to a photograph—was necessary for the reciprocal assurance of survivors and those who bore witness to their stories. The elder Levin gained an understanding of the difficulty of returning their gazes after listening to the stories of survivors of Buchenwald in 1945: "Through every image [he] could see the brown, earnest, undeniable eyes of a survivor telling [him] the story, and . . . each image was stamped with the ever-recurring line, 'I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes'" (144).

In the son's photograph, we are afforded no such "undeniable" connection. Instead of promising the bond facilitated by the real or imagined return of a human gaze, the narrow slit of a window squints coldly in the

dark. Inside that image, the viewer's glance would be met by untold scores of victims murdered by a method of extermination. "I don't need to go into that," Arendt writes—and we might pause to reflect on why that notoriously intrepid philosopher would refuse to enter this space, even in her imagination. The narrow, eyelike slit of a window in Levin's picture is not "earnest and undeniable" but functional and cold.

Every viewer of Levin's photographs relates to the Holocaust as an event that constitutes a rift in the belief that what is seen is what is known. In Meyer Levin's text, the witness's need to maintain a sense of self threatens to sever the fragile bond between the survivors who "saw it with their own eyes" and their liberators. For every "earnest, undeniable" eye in Levin's account, there is also the brutally honest and self-incriminating confession that he is "sick of telling their stories, for there is no issue from their dreary tales" (19). When starving inmates fought Levin and each other for a chocolate bar he had "unthinkingly" brought into a recently liberated barracks, he recognized this harrowing scene as an "accusation [that] nobody wants to read about [. . .], nobody wants to know what it was" (144). For Levin, these encounters brought no understanding, and they disabled his judgment. Instead of condemning a German civilian living near Dachau who asked Levin how she could have known about the mass crimes committed in her immediate vicinity, Levin saw her evasion of responsibility as not only an indictment of Germany but also as "the whole world answering, before and since: . . . [that] one couldn't face it and live" (144). Although he did not exonerate anyone, Levin recognized the woman's rhetorical question, taken literally, to be more than self-serving: How can anyone "face this and live"? If he had imagined earlier the "brown, earnest, undeniable eyes" in every survivor's account, he later notes that survivors did not return his gaze: "Their violent eyes . . . would have devoured me" (144). For Levin, facing the suffering of the Holocaust could lead only to denial or death; for identifying with the victims meant denying that dimension of their experience they could not claim themselves, and viewing each of them abstractly as one of six million victims was abandoning them once more to oblivion. By triangulating Schwab's disturbing image, his father's despairing text, and his own photograph, Mikael Levin manages to skirt these cognitive and emotional stumbling blocks and break with the blinding fascination of the Holocaust that has turned documentary photos into inexpressive icons of inhumanity.

Levin's Darkness and the Tradition

Schwab's 1945 photographs of the dead at Buchenwald were among the first documentary images of the extermination of Europe's Jews to reach a world that, as Meyer Levin noted, had only "vaguely heard" about the camps (127). But the notion of a "first exposure" in the context of representing an event that exceeds existing frames of reference is complicated by more than the world's willful ignorance and indifference toward Jewish suffering, for Schwab's photograph of the Buchenwald shed already alludes to a second "first time" from the history of photography.

The unexpected referent is one of the very first camera-produced images: William Henry Fox Talbot's April 1844 calotype of a stable door, which entered the history of photography under the title *The Open Door* (figure 3.7). Talbot's famous calotype is in fact one of several iterations of this theme, one of which became a plate in his *The Pencil of Nature* (1844).[27] This calotype is considered a pivotal image in the history of Western representation because it applies the new technique of photographic reproduction to older aesthetic conventions in order to integrate a number of symbolically charged elements into a formally coherent structure. The image established a dominant narrative that considers photography as rooted in the tradition of representational painting. As a different allegory of photography, however, this earlier image reveals the medium's original affinity with darkness and obscurity.

Talbot's picture shows an open stable door whose dark interior is blocked from view by a broom leaning diagonally across the threshold. The image's considerable appeal results from the tension between the viewer's knowledge (prompted by the medium) that the camera has captured this carefully composed scene for eternity, and the equally strong sense (prompted by the message) that the scene will be momentarily transformed, that someone will pick up the broom and break the spell. Like Levin's photograph for which Talbot's print is a precursor, the actual threshold becomes a symbolic divide between what the viewer sees and what he knows.

Some historians of photography habitually insist on the photograph's capacity "to take a subject *out* of history."[28] Instead of heeding their own insight, however, the same critics tend to analyze Talbot's image not as a break with history but as constituting a decisive moment within the history of Western representational practices. When placed in the tradition of paint-

3.7 From William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Open Door,* April 1844. Science and Society Picture Library, London.

ing, the meaning of Talbot's image is established by referring to the unseen inhabitants' life-world. In such a reading, the dark space transcends its blankness because it is empty: it harbors various narratives of belonging, absence, and potential return. When read as harboring meaningful concealment and spatial depth rather than nothingness, the darkness inside Talbot's calotype is regarded as a further instance of similar depictions in the tradition of painting rather than as a departure "*out* of history."

Yet virtually anything can be projected into the blackness of Talbot's stable: the absence of its owners, the fullness of their being-in-the-world, the lack of light, the technical limitations of early cameras, the allegory of Plato's cave, a move toward abstraction, an allegory of the death of painting, or Talbot's reflections on the relations between flatness and depth. The darkness in his image might be read back into the history of painting and its world-defining powers, or it might reveal photography's capacity to depict a darkness that remains "outside of history."

Because it is one of the first images produced in a new medium, it is possible that Talbot's calotype can no longer be read; that is, that every new interpretation is in turn effaced by the radical abstraction—not an intentional refusal of signification but an absence due to technical effects—of absolute blackness. This potential unreadability must be entertained in order to recognize the significance of the image in the historical transition from a Heraclitean to a Democritean context—from the prephotographic conception of history-as-flux to the Democritean notion of the discrete event ushered in by photography.[29] According to the powerful illusion produced by photography that it takes the "subject out of history," every photograph presents an image without guaranteeing its link to a before or after. This insistence on absolute singularity, however, means that photography lacks the power of revelation, which depends on seeing an event as part of a larger structure or implied totality. Levin's subtle allusion to Talbot's aestheticized, painterly image is not a tribute to a titan of the tradition. He invokes Talbot's image as an allegory of photography's capacity to take a "subject out of history" in order to show, without showing, a darkness from which "there is no issue," a historical event that constitutes a rupture of, rather than a rupture within, history.

Talbot's improvement on photographic techniques used to capture a latent image that could be developed at a later point caused a shift in the history of perception. The marked temporal discrepancy was no longer a sign of uncertainty but evidence of an event's realness. With the invention of

photography, latency became an intrinsic rather than a distorting dimension of perception, even a guarantee of truth. It is this rift between cognition and perception, validated by the photograph, that Levin invokes in his photographs of trauma.

In 1843 Talbot wrote, in reference to *The Open Door*, that "a painter's eye will often be arrested where ordinary people see nothing remarkable."[30] Mikael Levin links this creative principle to another notion: while his image "arrests" the viewer's gaze due to its compositional coherence, the actual site shown in the image once held those arrested by the Nazis. When he trains his camera on a site where human beings were brutally and systematically isolated from most frames of reference, he harnesses photography's illusion of "arresting" a moment of time to represent an experience that is similarly taking place "out of time." Yet in Levin's image Talbot's explicitly aesthetic staging of an "arrested moment" has been modified, displaced, and contained: the doorway is no longer aligned with the print's margins, and the darkness has been proportionally increased. Talbot's photograph remains captivating because the viewers' gaze, trained according to the conventions of painting, regards his picture as a quasi-organic unity rather than a composite of disparate elements. Levin's image turns these Talbotian aesthetic conventions against themselves. His photograph solicits a "reading"—an interpretation that dispels the darkness in whose impenetrability the viewer is meant, in Talbot's print, to take pleasure—only to remind her that no narrative will fill the black hole in memory. If we seek the referent of Levin's picture, it is a pile of corpses that remained after ineffable suffering and an undignified death, beyond story, beyond words. "I don't need to go into that"—writes Arendt, and I second her silence, again.

There is no dearth of evidence. Today there is only the difficulty of how to look appropriately, how to resist filling in voyeuristically by imagining the horrific details of destruction while refusing to lose interest and avert our gaze. The site at Buchenwald looks like countless others, an innocuous and perfectly bleak storage building such as we might pass in our daily lives. When Levin's camera is focused on neutrality in this way, the lack of significance it records can serve as the marker of horrendous crimes. And yet, his image differs from other images of uninhabited sites.[31] In its self-conscious staging of nonsignificance, Levin's picture heightens the dilemma encountered by everyone faced by images lacking specific referents at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Because we are afraid of overlooking yet again the

deceptively neutral signs of atrocity, of ignoring once more events that should prompt our intervention, Levin's carefully staged emptiness issues a call to respond. Whereas pools of painted darkness once permitted viewers—among them Heidegger reading a painting by Van Gogh—to find evidence of the world, today photographed darkness gives us the uneasy feeling that what we are looking at may signal the irremediable destruction of a world. In the wake of catastrophes in which millions of people were murdered and all traces of their destruction were destroyed, the search for the slightest clue in otherwise unremarkable scenes carries significant moral weight. The poetics of absence, which rely on compositional laws to show a missing presence, originate in a historical crisis whose magnitude was not sufficiently recognized at the time.

By combining several representational idioms and traditions to forge his own expressive syntax, Levin offers us an image of Buchenwald that swallows our gaze without returning it. Instead of insisting on the ineffability of the Holocaust, Mikael Levin demonstrates that there is a danger of venerating such obscurity, which often contains the viewer's own highly problematic projections—arising out of either imagined horror or the fear of intellectual defeat.[32] Levin's photography counters both the defeat of looking first that was addressed by his father as a sense of shock that cannot be overcome and the currently popular substitution of psychological projection and identification for the act of witnessing. Levin also avoids the sensational practice of an aesthetic of shock, which is occasionally misunderstood as a representation of trauma. His images move beyond repetition and illustration of his father's story to the creative act of looking at that history anew.

All of Mikael Levin's photographs contain deliberate visual dead ends into which the viewer's gaze and imagination are lured but not rewarded with knowledge, information, or comprehensive meaning. These carefully constructed blind spots render visible all that remains as lacunae in his father's written words. Instead of filling these gaps with signs, he demonstrates the exemplary status of his father's work as texts that testify both to the specific historical events of World War II and to a profound and unresolved crisis of witnessing. In Mikael Levin's work, photography is not a mode of revelation, but a medium that points to the historical unconscious as the dimension of a testimonial text that remains fundamentally unresolved, unarticulated, and yet central to that text.

4 Revision, Animation, Rescue: Color Photographs from the Łódź Ghetto and Dariusz Jablonski's *Fotoamator*

Benjamin's Mandate

The Nazi Photographs

Two Types of Incredulity

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Two Kinds of Future

The Łódź Ghetto: A Desperate Gamble for Time

The Photographic Future

The Future in the Ghetto Photographs

The Uses of a Photograph

The Democritean Gaze

Jablonski's Fotoamator

Historical Reality and Truth

Animation

A Face in the Ghetto

A Look Beyond the Fence

The Need for Film

"The Crumbled Elements of Past Reality"

To See Memory Screened

The Fate of Aura

"Rescuing Time from its Proper Corruption"

Photography's Legacy

> Some say that one must live and arrange one's life as if the ghetto would be a permanent affair. The others say: one must not recognize the present condition as permanent. Otherwise one loses strength, courage, and the sense to live. . . . These two theses next to one another.
>
> —Oskar Rosenfeld, *Łódź Ghetto, March 1943*

> Photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption.
>
> —Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?*

Walter Benjamin wrote his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in 1940, only months before he committed suicide as the Gestapo closed in on him near the French-Spanish border. The theses are a plea for a history written from the perspective of the defeated. From the triumphalist perspective of the winners, Benjamin argues, those condemned to be destroyed and forgotten can never be recalled. Because the conquerors' legacy and ways of seeing the world shape our understanding of history so powerfully, destruction of the vanquished also means their obliteration from the future. "*Even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins," Benjamin wrote as the Nazis drew near. "And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."[1]

Benjamin's Mandate

Scholars writing about Benjamin frequently invoke his exhortation to rescue the dead from the clutches of the victorious, but they carry it out far less frequently. The call to create a historiographic afterlife for the victims of injustice seems particularly urgent because the envisioned perspective would dramatically reshape our memory of those who shared Benjamin's fate. Yet merely to cite Benjamin is not to read history as Benjamin did, for he also insists that for such admonitions to come to life they must be critically rethought and, occasionally, turned against their source.

In the context of Holocaust historiography, Benjamin's mandate assumes a particular relevance. It requires us to question the Nazi perspective recorded in all documents, trial proceedings, and photographs, carefully searching for lacunae, deceptive information, and cynical euphemisms. In some instances, the perpetrators' documents contain otherwise unavailable information about what happened to victims. Yet we must always remain aware that the Nazis' unprecedented campaigns of brutal conquest and ex-

termination were so thorough that, besides destroying millions of human beings, they partly succeeded in dictating the terms in which their victims would be remembered, and forgotten. To write the history of Nazi oppression, therefore, we must find a way to write history "against the grain" in Benjamin's sense, posthumously thwarting the Nazis' unequivocal intention to equate European Jewish existence with death and nonexistence.

To write from a perspective that breaks with that of the perpetrators of a large-scale crime means to be mindful of a double difficulty. On the one hand, we must not minimize, gloss over, or forget the destruction in a blithe affirmation of survival or invoke precarious tropes about the triumph of the human spirit. Such reflexive responses deny how appallingly the principles of humanist thought were damaged by what occurred. Any triumphant interpretation of history risks colluding in the Nazis' murder of memory and consigning the annihilation to a forgotten past. At the same time, knowledge of the vastness of the destruction cannot serve as our sole guide to interpretation. If we recall only the killings—rather than the victims' lives *and* deaths—our acts of remembrance will inadvertently align us with the Nazis' way of viewing "non-Aryan" life as extraneous to their master plan, thus casting all European Jews in the role of icons of death. Nor will Benjamin's mandate to write from the perspective of the vanquished be fulfilled by a simple reversal of perspectives that results in a "history from below." The historical record must be critically examined, lest the undetonated past remain hidden within the comforts of factual knowledge or nostalgic memory. A Benjaminian reading can excavate a "deep memory" that, as Lawrence Langer puts it in his analysis of survivor testimonies, "corrodes the comforts of common memory."[2]

Certain photographs dating back to the Holocaust, including some taken by Nazi photographers, might afford us privileged access to a countermemory. In the following consideration of a rare, and for several reasons unique, series of images, I implement Benjamin's mandate to write history against the grain by linking it to his equally powerful and provocative suggestion that the technical media harbor revolutionary potential. To highlight this aspect of his work, I avoid the thanatographic and principally melancholic perspective adopted by many theorists. Instead, my analysis stresses what Edgar Morin has described as all photographs' capacity to serve as "the rearguard of memory [that] struggle[s] against time, [to] defend their shreds of living presence against oblivion, against death."[3]

The Nazi Photographs

In 1987 a large collection of slides showing what initially appeared to be a Nazi labor camp for Jews was offered for sale by a pawnshop in Vienna. Agents for several research institutes jointly bid for the collection, agreeing to the anonymous seller's stipulation that the slides' original owner not be identified.[4] After the sale was finalized, however, three historians working for the same institute disregarded the stipulation and established the photographer as a recently deceased Austrian, Walter Genewein. Of all the top Nazi officials known to have administered the Łódź ghetto, only Genewein was never named in the slides' captions; his identity, the historians concluded, was the only one the photographer was sure to remember. Genewein, who was chief accountant of the Łódź ghetto until it was liquidated, had taken the slides between 1941 and 1944 with a Movex 12 camera confiscated from a Jewish photographer. Following the war he had told Allied authorities in Austria about his role in the ghetto after neighbors, who envied his relatively more affluent lifestyle, had informed on him. He was never sentenced. When Genewein's widow and family sold the slide collection in 1987, they hoped to profit once again from his stay in the Łódź ghetto without revealing the instrumental role he had played in the crimes committed there. The very availability of Genewein's images today constitutes an act of defiance and revenge on the profiteering Nazi and his family.

Genewein's photographs are a rare instance of Holocaust documentation. Because they are in color—a fact I discuss below—they constitute a reemergence of the past in a form that we seldom remember. The meticulous sequential numbering and indexing system betray Genewein's fastidiousness and imply that he showed the pictures frequently, or at least intended to show them; even though they remained hidden for more than four decades after the war, their owner bestowed great care on them. Their careful labeling is a product of the mind of a senior bureaucrat: avid, but never so interested in his subject as to view it as anything but subordinate to the interests of the regime he represents. The labels can also be read as a sign of Genewein's own distrust in his capacity to recollect the events that his camera recorded.

Genewein's position afforded him the incontestable right to enter any area of the Łódź ghetto and to photograph anything and anyone he chose. Except for his own family members and his German colleagues, everything

and everyone Genewein photographed in the ghetto was not only governed and imprisoned by, but also literally owned by and absolutely controlled by his employer, the Nazi state. It is this apparently total correspondence between photographer's perspective and incontestable authority that we must investigate, resist, and tear apart.

Genewein's collection comprises several hundred framed and hand-labeled slides of daytime life in the Łódź ghetto. There are workshop scenes, with dozens of men and women bending over their labors or looking up for a moment to face the photographer; outdoor areas where workers are producing straw boots for German soldiers fighting in the Russian winter; weaving shops; metal shops; welding shops; nail factories; furniture shops; garment factories; tanneries; munitions factories; and even meticulously lighted exhibit rooms showcasing the goods manufactured in the ghetto. Next to samples of merchandise displayed to attract German purchasers of the slave-produced articles are neatly lettered signs announcing the production of 1,357,368 pieces of women's clothing, 267,896 military insignia for the Wehrmacht, 5,150,313 pieces of knitted clothing, 6,913,355 tailored pieces for army uniforms, plus an additional 782,108 pieces of cloth for civilian use. These figures cover only one year's worth of production in the ghetto of Łódź, the city renowned in the early twentieth century as the "Polish Manchester."

Other photographs show streets crowded with pedestrians, many buildings, infrastructures, the ghetto's internal police force and fire brigades, and market scenes. In one picture *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) president Chaim Rumkowski waits, with bowed head, amidst a group of Gestapo officials standing near Heinrich Himmler, who is inspecting the ghetto from the seat of a shiny black BMW with the license plate "SS–1." Many images show Jews marked as victims of tyranny by the yellow star, while pictures of bearded men are posed according to the conventions of ethnographic photography and rehearse the anti-Semitic stereotypes of Nazi propaganda. Others depict crews watering the cobblestone streets to keep down the dust on a summer day or people at an outdoor market, tending small garden plots, selling all kinds of personal belongings, or sorting truckloads of cabbage. It is obvious that Genewein wanted to represent the ghetto as an autonomous and highly efficient factory town. Consequently, there are only partial glimpses of its abysmal living quarters; photographs of the Jewish-run burial grounds, hospitals, fire engines, and police units deflect

attention from the inhumanly crowded conditions in which residents subsisted.

The Nazis' sense of having struck proverbial gold in the Łódź ghetto—where the Nazi state and individual administrators profited immensely—finds expression in a photo of the meticulously groomed and attired Genewein seated at his desk counting heaps of coins and currency (figure 4.1, plate 1). This slide's sobering counterpart shows Jewish workers sorting through towering heaps of clothing and personal belongings that contemporary viewers recognize—from the exhibits at Holocaust museums around the world—as proof of the enormity of the Nazis' murders. Other photographs show immense piles of shoes and groups of workers surrounded by stacks of clothing and cooking utensils. These work brigades are removing yellow stars from jackets and coats and examining seams and pockets for hidden valuables and warnings left by their former owners; the brigades are preparing the clothes for shipment to Germany, where they will be distributed to civilians (figure 4.2, plate 2). Some pictures show suitcases full of jewelry displayed like loot. Genewein labeled one of these photos, which shows small treasures secreted in the hollowed-out heels of shoes, "Pabianice hidden valuables" (figure 4.3, plate 3). (Pabianice was a labor camp near Łódź.)

In several snapshots, large numbers of individuals, mostly Jews from Western Europe, are descending from overcrowded trains carrying bundles, pillowcases full of belongings, and luggage, as if prepared to move to new quarters after being expelled from their home countries. These Jews, we know today, were told by the Nazis that they would be "resettled" in the East. Genewein also took a few pictures from a distance greater than he generally adopted in these slides; they show large groups of individually unidentifiable people boarding trains rather than leaving them. He neatly labeled these photographs in fastidious blue ink: "Litzmannstadt-Ghetto Evacuation of Jews April 1942." (The Nazis renamed Łódź *Litzmannstadt* after a German World War I general.) In 1942 and 1943 these trains did not run to other labor or resettlement camps, as the Nazis assured the travelers, but to nearby Chełmno, where tens of thousands of Jews were gassed in modified vans before the death camps became fully operational.[5]

Slide number 393, the final image of the collection, shows a large shower area in which several dozen undressed men are guarded by a uniformed Nazi with his back to the camera. The photograph was taken from an elevated position—probably without the awareness of the naked men. It

4.1 “Getto L’Stadt Finanzleiter” (Ghetto Łódź, Head Accountant), color slide no. 33. Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

4.2 "Pabianice Untersuchung" (Pabianice Examination), color slide no. 381. Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

4.3 "Pabianice Versteckte Werte" (Pabianice Hidden Valuables), color slide no. 383. Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

is virtually impossible to view this image without suspecting that its placement at the end of the collection exhibits Genewein's cynical awareness of the symbolism of showers.

Two Types of Incredulity

The Historians' Verdict

In 1990 a museum catalogue containing some of Genewein's prints was published by a consortium of eminent research institutes in Germany. In a thoughtful essay, the historians who had first established Genewein's identity characterize "the cold gaze of the camera" as emblematic of all Nazi-created images. Yet in spite of their honorable intentions, the historians' interpretation of Genewein's photographs is theoretically reductive, and decidedly one-sided: "This collection of slides," they write, "offers us an account of the ruination of the culture of European Jewry. At the same time, however, it is a document of the mental and existential attitude [*Geistes- und Lebenshaltung*] of those who administered the mass murder of European Jews from a cool distance."[6]

According to the historians, then, the slides record nothing but the "ruination" and death of the Jews captured in them, while they reveal a complex "mental" stance and even the overall "existential attitude" of the German behind the camera. This interpretation neatly divides suffering and guilt according to who was in front of and who remained behind the camera. The desire for such absolute and unambiguous distinctions is understandable; yet the approach inadvertently prevents the photographs from representing anything or anyone not completely governed by the Nazi gaze. Effectively, the Jews in the slides are robbed of any interior life and self-directed means of expression, while the Nazi photographer is endowed by the historians with motives, feelings, and a rationale for his actions. In their indictment of the "racist Nazi's . . . ethnographic gaze," and the pronouncement on Genewein's slides as the "expression of what Hannah Arendt called the *banality of evil* frozen into images," the historians have simplified or entirely lost sight of the Jews represented in them. This simplification leads the historians to the moralistic and reductive assertion that Genewein's images fail to depict the "lived reality" of the Jews in the ghetto.[7]

In terms of factual history, they are accurate in describing the Łódź ghetto as nothing but a way station to death. Yet their claim that the photo-

graphs do not depict the lived reality of the Jews begs the question of what an image *can* show. No photograph, regardless of content, can portray another's lived reality. Photographs show moments that were not necessarily "lived" but that merely occurred; lived reality emerges in and as the connections among such events. As I will discuss shortly, however, all of Jewish existence in the Łódź ghetto was linked to a moment in the future, a moment *after* that in which the pictures were taken. For the Jews, all of ghetto existence was urgently staked on imagining life after the Nazi tyranny. This "gamble for time," as one victim put it in a diary, resulted in desperate calculations about their behavior under Nazi rule—behavior, it must be pointed out in light of contentious postwar debates, that was brutally shaped by Nazi terror. In the case of images from the Łódź ghetto, the Jews' lived reality might have involved a strategic or defensive bracketing of full awareness of the end awaiting them, combined with the fight for survival and an equally strategic focus on the future beyond Nazi rule. The historians who view the slides as representations of "ruination and death" for the Jews place the images exclusively in the context of the Nazis' ultimate destruction of the ghetto and the horrible failure of the ghetto inmates' "gamble for time." These historians engage in what Michael Bernstein has described as "the cruelty of backshadowing," which is "a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the outcome of a series of events by narrator and listener [the Nazis' eventual deportation of all ghetto inmates to Auschwitz] is used to judge the participants in those events *as though they too should have known what was to come*."[8] By insisting that the photographs show nothing but the destruction of European Jewry, the historians screen the viewer from the terrible truth of the ghetto reality. And in doing so they adopt a view similar to that of Nazism, which "denied Jews any right to choose their identity or degree of communal affiliation, reducing all Jews to a single, undifferentiated category with one common destiny."[9] In viewing the photographs simply as a confirmation of the Nazis' plan of extermination, the historians fail to recognize, as discussed in detail below, that these photographs of trauma continue to bear witness to the future.

Other commentators similarly dismiss Genewein's photographs. Media historian Gertrud Koch states that the slides are suffused with an "excess" of fascist imagination.[10] For Koch, the photographer's field of vision cannot be cracked open, even today. She sees the Nazi gaze as not only all-powerful during the Nazis' reign but also as retaining its power over half a

century after their defeat. “Regrettably,” Koch writes, “the assumption that something might exist in such images which would form a kind of sacred resistance against its abuse is untrue in the case of Nazi images.”[11] Whereas the historians find evidence of nothing but ruin for the Jews in the slides but see a complex “mental attitude” for the Nazis, Koch exposes the complex network of a fascist and Nazi aesthetic that structures the slides. Like the historians, she finds in them no trace of Jewish expression. Claude Lanzmann, in a general discussion of Nazi-created images, suggests that they were meant to promote and confirm stereotyped ways of seeing and lacked imagination.[12] For Lanzmann, such pictures cannot serve the task of commemoration because they leave nothing to the imagination.[13] Although all these perspectives raise different questions, they share an inadvertent failure to properly account for Genewein’s images. Because they regard these slides as incontestable evidence of the destruction of Europe’s Jews, the historians and critics find in them a “bitterness of inevitability . . . [that] endows an event with a meaning . . . by enfolding it within a larger pattern of signification.”[14] Whether in categorically dismissing Genewein’s slides because their meaning is wholly determined by a particular aesthetic, as Koch does, or in claiming, as Lanzmann does, that Nazi-created images deprive viewers of the possibility of seeing anything the Nazis did not want them to see, these important critics fail to analyze these slides in the light of Benjamin’s appeal to historicize “against the grain.”

It is easy to see why Genewein’s slides have been categorized as unambiguous manifestations of a brutal and incontestable power differential between Nazis and Jews. The interpretation of the photographs as “staged” representations, however, simplifies, and potentially falsifies, the Jews’ agonizingly complex situation in the ghetto. Such contextual interpretations overlook the fact that in these photographs, as in all photographs, the referents “adhere”: that is, while announcing a death that has already occurred, these pictures continue to show—as a technical effect that solicits a response—people who are alive.

The historians’ interpretation of the slide images rests on a simplistic understanding of the photograph as originating with an all-knowing, morally vacated, and near-demonic subject behind the viewfinder, someone who wields absolute powers of execution and cognition over what is seen. Photography, however, breaks with the pretechnological modes of representation in which such complete authorial control might have existed. Had

Genewein painted scenes from the ghetto, he might indeed have succeeded in subordinating everything on the canvas to the Nazi gaze. His photographs, however, register details that are contingent and extraneous to such a perspective, and those details let us see beyond the Nazis' construction of a hermetically sealed Holocaust universe. In the contexts of images from the Łódź ghetto, these contingent elements point to a traumatic reality that eludes the Nazi photographer, historians of photography, and later critics. Most surprising of all, this dimension of Genewein's slides may even elude the survivors.

The Witnesses and the Photographs

For, astonishingly, what is represented in Genewein's slides does not seem to match the survivors' experience. Yet the photographs do appear to offer us a spectral, haunted kind of evidence of the past that we cannot gain by other means. They paradigmatically illustrate the complexity of photographs of trauma by showing aspects of experience that we believe to be true even though no one seems to remember them. As testimony of a past that remains alien even to those who cannot forget it, these slides bear witness to the gravity of an event that defies simplistic notions of remembrance and forgetting.

Jurek Becker, a novelist and child survivor of Łódź, describes his responses to viewing the color slides this way:

> Now the floor of my room is strewn with these photos. If I had memories, they would be at home there, in those streets, behind those walls, among those people.
>
> . . .
>
> I conjure up theories about the photographer's purposes, I see through his intentions, this guy cannot pull the wool over my eyes. But suddenly something happens that I don't like at all: single images absorb my glances, I fall into them, far from my intention of writing a text.
>
> . . .
>
> I abhor sentimentality, this clouding-up of reason, I would like to stop up all holes from which [such clouding-up] could emerge . . . Suddenly . . . the images move me greatly, me of all people. . . . I stare at the images and get sore

> eyes searching for that piece of my life which decided everything. But only the extinguishing lives of the others can be recognized, why should I speak of outrage and pity, I want to climb down to them and cannot find the way.[15]

Becker, who recalls elsewhere that he left the room each time his father was overcome by emotion when remembering the Holocaust, admits that he could not avoid sentimentality. Unlike another survivor, who states that "not a single image in this collection moves me,"[16] Becker, though he plans to examine these images critically, to resist their power, and to indict the photographer, fails to do so. Instead, his viewing of the photographs becomes a passive experience: like all images, these photographs "appear animated by a more intense or more profound life than reality."[17] In the same instant that he is pulled into the images against his will and overcome with empathy, Becker realizes that neither sentimentality nor identification provide access to the people pictured in them. This survivor's postwar surrender to the force of these Nazi images, however, is no symptom of the problematic category of "survivor guilt" or a morbid wish to have perished alongside those who died. Becker leaves us a bequest, an appeal "to find a way" for him and others to see and to grasp the lived reality of the people in them—a task that requires us to understand how our own responses to these pictures are shaped by what we cannot see. Becker, who wrote several fictional accounts of the Holocaust in hopes of unearthing childhood memories that elude him (e.g., *Jacob the Liar* [1969]), testifies that Genewein's images are unsuitable as safe conduits to unambiguous memory. Like Becker, today's viewers cannot relegate these slides to the category of "disconcerting" evidence, thus effectively abandoning the Jews to their confinement in the Nazi album.[18] Arnold Mostowicz, another survivor of the Łódź ghetto, insists that the reality-effect of photography cannot be simply dismissed or explained away: "It was a shock. It was a shock that they [the slides] existed. . . . I cannot even place myself in this reality, the time and the place pictured, the time and the place pictured here." The photographs confront Mostowicz with evidence, not of their detail but of their time: what appears counterfactual in these photographs is that the people in them are alive. For the survivor, the gap between reality and truth, seeing and knowing, remains. In fact, this gap is widened by these images: "Though they were real," Mostowicz adds, "they did not show the truth." Mostowicz's testimony is moving and powerful, and it offers us no consola-

tion. Strangely, his memories are threatened by the color photographs' existence; those memories are at risk of being drowned out, rather than confirmed, by the images' illusion of reality.

Unlike historians and critics who reject Genewein's slides as ideologically overdetermined, the survivor abandons the defensive, critical stance because the slides show the Jews of Łódź in proverbial living color: "I want to climb down to them and cannot find the way." In spite of their considerable differences, I would suggest that we can attribute these reactions to an uncanny and startling structural affinity between photography and the specific circumstances of existence in the Łódź ghetto.

Two Kinds of Future

The paradigmatic difficulty of viewing certain Holocaust images—and here, as everywhere in this book, I am referring to photographs of trauma, and not of death—results from the tension between two temporal orders marked in every photograph. In Genewein's slides, the photograph's permanence, which Barthes calls its "funereal immobility," coincides with our knowledge of the inescapability of Holocaust destruction.[19] For an analysis of photographs of the traumatic history of the Łódź ghetto—where the notion of a future drastically impinged upon the victims' lives—this potential for a "defense . . . against forgetting and death" assumes particular significance.

The Łódź Ghetto: A Desperate Gamble for Time

The Łódź ghetto has been the subject of several historical studies, compilations of testimonies, anthologies, and meticulously prepared exhibits.[20] The ghetto was established by the Germans on February 8, 1940, less than six months after they invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. This miserably inadequate prison camp was initially intended to house 160,000 Polish Jews; eventually over 220,000 Jews from all over Europe were confined there in the poorest neighborhood of Łódź. It was the first ghetto to be established by the Nazis within the Reich Protectorate (as opposed to the Generalgouvernement and the newly conquered territories). And, under its German name, Litzmannstadt-Getto, it was the last to be liquidated. In August 1944, all its remaining Jews were forced onto trains headed for Auschwitz-Birkenau. Unlike other Polish ghettoes, from which messengers escaped to give testimony of Nazi atrocities to a largely unresponsive outside world,

the Łódź ghetto was a virtually hermetically sealed prison within the Reich. At the same time, it served as a transfer point where tens of thousands of Jews were interned before being deported to the gas vans at nearby Chełmno. Ultimately, death by asphyxiation was the inescapable fate of most of the Jews of the Łódź ghetto, who had slaved there for more than three years under inhuman conditions. It is estimated that no more than 10 to 15 percent of those confined in the Łódź ghetto survived.

The character of Łódź as a manufacturing town and the early uncertainties of Nazi Jewish policy helped the Jews' efforts to make their productivity indispensable to the German war machine and fostered hopes of outlasting Hitler's rule. "The primary occupation of the ghetto inmate," Raul Hilberg has written, was "prolongation of life," and this goal made it imperative to maximize labor output.[21] Jewish leaders of the Łódź ghetto also preserved a semblance of community life by staging under the deadly Nazi occupation what Mostowicz called "every imaginable illusion of normality."[22] Today, survivors and scholars still debate the role that Jewish leaders under Nazi command played in their communities' ultimate destruction.[23] Instead of usurping a right to participate in such debates ourselves, however, we can perhaps trace the irreconcilability of different viewpoints to the fact that in Łódź the distinctions between hope and despair, ignorance and knowledge, normality and illusion, and the present and the future were essentially undermined.

In particular, the once-hallowed notion of *the future* was contaminated because it was integral to both the Nazis' scheme of destruction and the Jews' struggle to survive beyond Nazi rule. Moreover, the Nazis deployed deceptive tactics to nurture precisely that illusion of survival. Yet when historians dismiss the ghetto photographs as nothing more than instances of a Nazi-created "illusion of normalcy," they overlook the fact that the illusion was also an essential strategy for Jewish survival. In his memoirs, Mostowicz offers this analysis:

> We are speaking here of a time [for the Łódź ghetto inhabitants in September 1942] when almost all the people in the Warsaw ghetto had been murdered, when the crematoria were burning and the gas chambers were functioning in all of the extermination camps in Poland now known to us. We are also speaking of a time when there was no serious initiative on the part of the so-called civilized world to stop the Nazis' criminal doings. . . . What other option did

> Rumkowski and we have but to hope for the miracle [of liberation by the Soviet Army]? And this miracle could only take place if the Germans would have an interest in maintaining the Jewish ghetto.[24]

For the people of the Łódź ghetto, all illusions began to fade when the elderly, the infirm, and children were selected for transports headed to Chełmno. Although forced to mail falsely reassuring postcards back to their families in the ghetto, deported Jews managed to hide warning notes in the clothes being returned on empty trains. Even so, survivors like Martin L. have insisted, ghetto residents had great difficulty believing those messages: "People had an idea that something happened but they didn't know what. . . . [There were] letters in the clothes but they didn't believe it."[25]

In addressing the dilemma of the Jews' "incredulity," Hadassah R. relies on a biblical image. In the Łódź ghetto, she recalls, "people they had ears and didn't hear, had eyes and didn't see, that the people . . . that everyday is last. . . . People dying from starvation and people are deported to gas chambers."[26] The simultaneity of "having eyes" and "not seeing"—invoked here by a survivor who took it upon herself to report the mass murders taking place in Chełmno to Jewish leaders in Łódź—cannot be grasped without either indicting the Jews for failing to comprehend the threat or declaring it "incomprehensible"; for the fact is that her story prompted no change in policy. If we seek to do justice to rather than pass judgment on the people caught in Genewein's photographs, we must acknowledge this paradox: the splintering of a coherent point of view under the impact of inassimilable yet undeniable information.

The difficulty lies in many historians' tendency to explain the Jews' belief in a future as an illusion, and memoirs from other victims seem to support this approach: "I am no longer interested in the future," writes the Romanian Emil Dorian in his diary in 1940; "The future lies dark over the earth," reads Willy Cohn's diary from Breslau; "We do not know whether we have any future at all," states Renata Laqueur in her diary from Bergen-Belsen.[27] A different note, however, is struck in an English-language entry of July 19, 1944, in a Łódź diary; it was kept in Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English by a young author of whom we know almost nothing: "The only care is about our future; the nearest future; because everyone is convinced that the war is decidedly approaching its end."[28] The diary was discovered in the ghetto after the war by a Łódź survivor who delivered it to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust archive in Israel.[29] These conflicting perspectives from

different diarists on the "nearest future" as without interest or nonexistent or as endowed with a ray of hope in a desperate situation seem absolutely incompatible. If we wish to heed Benjamin's mandate, however, we cannot settle this incompatibility by discarding as illusory the unknown Łódź diarist's defiant concern for a future beyond Nazi rule.

The Photographic Future

In Genewein's slides, too, the notion of a "future" is inseparable from what Morin suggestively identifies as photography's capacity to defend the depicted object "against oblivion, against death." In his reflections on photography, Barthes emphasizes the viewer's desire to discern something beyond the image, something that seems to live on. In certain contexts, I would add, this desire becomes a responsibility. "When we define the Photograph as a motionless image," Barthes writes, "this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave:* they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. Yet once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined) . . . the *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see."[30]

When we look at photographs taken by those who are overwhelmingly dominant over those they picture, the Barthesian wish to see "beyond what it [the image] permits us to see" assumes an ethical dimension. When confronted with photographs meant to deny the humanity of their subjects, we need to acknowledge that something resides "beyond" the photographic gaze. Such recognition of photography's capacity to launch the viewer's desire to see a Barthesian beyond in the image might, in fact, permit us to achieve a Benjaminian break with the triumphalist perspective of the oppressors.

In discussions of the visual record of the Holocaust, Barthes's insight into photography's promise of a future beyond the historical moment has been dismissed. "When both the site of the photograph and the ability to contain a natural death are but cruel shadows of an irretrievable past life," Andrea Liss suggests in an otherwise nuanced study, photographic images retain exclusively the unsurpassable imprint of death.[31] With this dismissal, Liss implies the existence of a unique iconography of Holocaust photography that denies to such images the general attributes of the medium. She deemphasizes Barthes's insistence on photography's "anterior future,"

which underscores the terrible irony that marks every photograph: the subject's unawareness of what will happen next.[32]

Thus, in spite of its arguable sentimentalism, Barthes's work proves relevant to the analysis of photographs taken in sites of systematic traumatization and destruction. Every photograph, Barthes maintains, causes the viewer to "*shudder over a catastrophe which has already occurred.*"[33] When looking at images of the ghetto, this near-psychotic shudder is immeasurably deepened. In the Łódź ghetto where, as an official chronicler wrote, "death has lost its other-worldly beauty, its wonderful, holy feeling of something secret," Barthes's insistence that a future death cannot be "interiorized" in a photograph of a living person assumes unexpected resonance.[34] Because the viewer knows about the catastrophe that was to engulf the Jews of Łódź, the Barthesian shudder threatens to turn into a paroxysm of helplessness. To prevent this paroxysm from slipping into indifference, we must examine ghetto photographs in the light of the beyond registered there.

The Future in the Ghetto Photographs

For four years, and thus significantly longer than in any other ghetto, Jewish existence in Łódź was sustained by the desperate hope of Nazi defeat. For most of the ghetto's Jews that defeat arrived too late. The continuing presence of the Jews in Genewein's photographs is a technical effect of photography, one that undermines the Nazis' efforts to extend their control to the ways in which the Jews of Łódź are remembered. We may identify a range of emotions, including anger, disdain, supplication, and contempt, in several of the people portrayed in the images. Yet even when such counter-intentions and states of mind cannot be imputed to the subjects with any certainty, photographs can deflect the photographer's schemes. No matter what state of mind we might attribute to a particular facial expression, each returned gaze implicitly demands, against the axioms of Nazi racism, that we respond to *this* face, that *this* individual is absolutely singular and demands to be seen.[35]

Genewein's photographs show what André Bazin identifies for all photographs as "the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration, freed from their destiny; not however, by the prestige of art but by the power of an impassive mechanical process."[36] The knowledge of what happened to most of the Jews in these images, however—"our" knowledge of Holocaust history—does not completely obscure what British

novelist Ian McEwan (in a work centered on some photographic images) has called the "illusion of innocence" that structures every photograph.[37] The hermeneutic question of how to regard a face looking out from a photograph—whether as eclipsed by the violence we know is about to engulf its owner or in recognition of the future that the face announces—becomes in this context a question of ethical responsibility.

Some individuals experienced their confinement in the ghetto as the sudden, shocking severance of their lives from larger historical and political developments and as the psychologically unbearable sense that the word *world* had lost its meaning.[38] Two different perceptions of realities were in constant conflict: on the one hand, a myopically present-oriented mode of existence that was staked on survival and on psychological defenses against the inassimilable news of one's own impending destruction in the extermination camps; on the other, an equally inadequate hope for a future beyond Nazi rule. This is not a complementary double vision in which the same event is seen from two points of view but a radically incompatible splintering of perspective. The Łódź slides are also internally split: as a Nazi's vision of Jewish existence during the war, as color images of a history whose authenticity has been canonized in black and white, as faces trapped in a past staked entirely on the hope for a future. Any account of the catastrophic history of the ghetto—whether historiographical, literary, commemorative, or testimonial—must account for this psychological split between the world and the lived experience of ghetto inmates. "In their eyes—their death sentence," runs a line in a poem written in Yiddish in the ghetto by Simcha Shayevitsh.[39] But the knowledge that would turn this line into a fact threatens to blot out the eyes of the individuals who returned the photographer's gaze and looked beyond his lens into a future that remains, in these images, uncharted.

A Gestapo memo of August 15, 1942 notes that "it is increasingly clear on the faces of the ghetto residents that the Jews of Europe will not survive this war."[40] At roughly the same time, Chaim Kaplan accounts for their expressions when he writes in the Warsaw ghetto that Jews could be recognized "by the sorrow implanted on their faces."[41] In another memoir, Tuvia Borzykowski also describes how the future, or its lack, was inscribed on the faces of the Jews when she asserts that Jews trying to "pass" as non-Jews could be spotted by "the lifeless eyes, which reflected their inner collapse."[42] But the Nazis see doom in the Jewish faces because they know their own

plans, while the Jewish chroniclers are desperately trying to discern what lies behind their fellow Jews' eyes. The traumatic splitting of seeing and knowing was part of the historical event and not its obfuscation. In order to see the Jews as something other than ciphers of death, and thus to avoid assuming the superior stance of a viewer who knows everything about the fate of the depicted individuals, we must explore the terrible confluence of several forms of blindness.

The Uses of a Photograph

Thousands upon thousands of black-and-white "official" photographic images of the Łódź ghetto were taken by two Jewish photographers, Mendel Grossman and Hendryk Ross, with cameras the *Judenrat* purchased from the Nazis.[43] Several of their photographs of the same subjects seem to have been taken from positions right next to Genewein. Alan Adelson, editor of an indispensable anthology of Łódź ghetto writings, discerns in the photographers' differing intentions a qualitative difference between these near-identical sets of images: "The Nazi propagandist relished the way ghetto life dehumanized the Jews," Adelson writes, "while Grossman and Ross conveyed the enormity of both the Nazis' crime and humanity's loss by recording for posterity the very humanity and singularity of the ghetto dwellers as they lived their final days."[44] Yet the intentions Adelson ascribes to the two sets of images are not as reliably inscribed within the photographs themselves. The impossibility of securely distinguishing images according to the photographer's intentions becomes palpable when we consider the book jacket of Adelson's edition of a ghetto diary by Dawid Sierakowiak, who did not survive; it displays not an image by Grossman and Ross in which "the very humanity . . . of ghetto dwellers" is recorded "for posterity" but Genewein's color photograph of Jewish boys waiting for food at a soup kitchen (figure 4.4, plate 4).[45] All the other photographs in the English edition of the diary are by Grossman and Ross. On the book's cover, therefore, we are clearly meant to see Genewein's color picture, without its German-labeled slide frame, as a challenge to Genewein's intention to show the Jews as dehumanized: the picture of the boys waiting in line is now meant to illustrate Sierakowiak's testimony "against forgetting."

The photograph needs no caption. The boys' broken-down shoes and their ragged clothes adorned with hastily stitched-on yellow stars, the pallid faces under large cloth caps, the chipped and empty enamelware cups

4.4 "Getto Schulausspeisung" (Ghetto School Lunch), color slide no. 170. Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

grasped by small hands, do not require any *studium* (or contextual knowledge) to signal despair. By using this color image as the cover illustration for the diary of a remarkably eloquent and clearly gifted teenage writer, Adelson effectively salvages it from the Nazi annals of destruction. The Nazi photographer's slide is subordinated to the memorial text for a community whose memory is constantly at risk of being distorted by attempts to turn it into a false symbol of hope, to bury it in history, or to reduce it to a case study in despair.

Yet Sierakowiak's diary might not provide a sufficiently stable context, a book-length corrective "caption" to Genewein's image. The moving diary might in fact be overwhelmed by this image of a line of Jewish boys waiting for soup but slated for death. Since Genewein had positioned himself and his camera so that the sun was directly behind him, the thirty-two little boys—or are there thirty-three?—are squinting at the Nazi whose regime fancied itself the manifestation of a superhuman source of blinding light. However, even though they are squinting, a few boys are returning the photographer's gaze, thus potentially fending off his self-staging as the ghetto's fearsome sun-god. This deflection may justify the use of Genewein's picture on the cover of a teenager's ghetto diary. On the other hand, we could interpret the image of the squinting boys as failing to shatter the omnipotence of the Nazi gaze, or the omniscience of historical hindsight. In that case, Sierakowiak's testimony—a message in a bottle drifting with the currents of time and salvaged long after its author's death from starvation—could not be said to have reached its destined addressee living beyond Nazi control: the present-day reader.

Ultimately, Adelson's decision to use the image, as this chapter demonstrates, is justified. Yet displaying Genewein's color photograph on the cover of Sierakowiak's diary also dramatically undercuts its editor's faith in his own ability to distinguish photographers' intentions from the images they produce. And it suggests that the camera can record sights that are not within the control of the photographer.

The Democritean Gaze

How, then, do we access the future shown in Genewein's photographs—a future that the Nazi vision seeks to destroy? We do it, I would suggest, by exposing as *technical effects* the claims of authenticity, of permanence, and of

timelessness made by these slides, thus exploding the photographer's effort to immortalize *his* vision and *his* memory of another's traumatic experience. We can put his still images in motion, juxtaposing their color with current-day footage in black-and-white, and re-viewing them from within their Democritean instant—where the image disintegrates into disparate elements, where no future is prescripted, and where the image opens out into a radical beyond not limited by the "strange one-dimensionality" that often characterizes the interpretation of images in the search for anything "revealing or incriminating."[46] In short, we can see through these slides by viewing them critically instead of responding to them ritualistically with fear, outrage, or pity.

Jablonski's Fotoamator

The medium of film can sometimes suggest that a figure trapped in a still photograph is temporarily brought back to life and into the present. Dariusz Jablonski's documentary film *Fotoamator* (*Photographer*, 1998) creates the illusion that the Jews caught in Genewein's viselike Nazi gaze have been, for a moment, released.[47] The movement of film, it seems, pries photographed subjects loose from the apparently unchanging situation in which they are pictured. It stages a break with what historians and critics have called the "actual conditions of domination" that once gave the photographer incontestable control. By turning a collection of Nazi-created slides of the Łódź ghetto into a moving picture, Jablonski can search them for evidence of something other than ruination, victimhood, objectification, and death. He deploys film's illusion of lifelike movement to present the possibility that the photographs' nontranscendental but spectral "beyond" lies outside the Nazis' near-complete efforts to obliterate it.

Fotoamator's soundtrack combines Arnold Mostowicz's oral testimony, delivered in his native Polish; German-language voice-overs of texts excerpted from Gestapo documents and from Genewein's postwar written denials of responsibility and wrongdoing; and readings in Yiddish of Jewish commentaries, including some well-known speeches by Chaim Rumkowski. The film's radicalness, however, does not lie in the information it imparts. Anyone with access to libraries, television, or the internet and the motivation to study the history of the Łódź ghetto will learn relatively few new facts in *Fotoamator*. To be sure, the film takes the opportunity presented by the end of the Cold War and access to Eastern European archives in Łódź

and Warsaw to ask trenchant questions about the parallels between capitalist labor strategies and Nazi policies—questions that would earlier have been suspected of being "ideologically motivated."[48] Ultimately, however, the film's uniqueness stems from its examination of the discrepancies and congruencies between historical events, individual and archival memory thereof, and photographic images. The film is not about history but about a conception of photography that deconstructs the magnetic hold photographs exercise over viewers' imaginations, regardless of the photographer's, or viewers', intentions, counternarratives, or memories.[49] *Fotoamator* highlights the medium's illusion of reality in order to depict the ghetto as a site and time that resists individual, ritualistic, and conventional forms of memorialization and forgetting. Jablonski desacralizes canonized history to rescue it from its entombment in the archives. His film is a decidedly self-reflexive vehicle produced by and for a generation that searches for active forms of reception and response that go beyond the further accumulation of documents and testimonies. In spite of its self-referentiality, the film steers clear of cynicism, indifference, or glib arbitrariness by making the viewer responsible for what he or she sees.

As indicated by its title (literally translated: *photo amateur*), the film's true raison-d'être consists in the fact that a Nazi hobby photographer shot several hundred slides of the Łódź ghetto. He shot them not in black-and-white but in uncannily realistic color. To see with your own eyes that the infamous cloth stars stitched to ghetto residents' clothing truly were sunflower-yellow, that the small Gestapo guard huts flanking the barbed-wire entrance to the Łódź ghetto were painted in a vivid zigzag pattern of red, white, and black, that the Jewish police wore white and yellow striped armbands and red-ribboned, dark-blue hats like those of the French police, while mail carriers in the ghetto sported a powder-blue band—none of this is of much historical significance. Seeing that the banged-up pots held by Jewish children waiting to receive their ration of watery soup are pale pink or sky blue will not help us understand. Yet these perceptions are themselves as shocking as the realization, prompted by the Nazi photographer's fair-weather habits, that the sky above Łódź was frequently neither bleak nor gray but incongruously, beautifully blue.

Black-and-white photographs, Vilém Flusser has argued, carry the claim of authenticity because they create the illusion that the world, when broken into black and white, and thus perfectly opposable, elements,

"would be accessible to logical analysis."[50] In the context of Holocaust historiography, this promise of total explicability assumes particular importance. The abstractions *true* and *false* and *good* and *evil*, which predate the invention of photography, seem to find their representational correlates in black-and-white photographs. Of course, as Flusser explains, the hues in a color photograph are no less theoretical than black and white, because these colors also originate in theoretical concepts (e.g., chemical concepts and corresponding definitions of what mixture of pigment or wavelength on a color spectrum constitutes a particular color). But if Genewein's amateur slides had been in black and white—if he had not treated the ghetto as what a Jewish diarist in Łódź sarcastically described as the Nazis' "Nietzschean experiment"—*Fotoamator* would not exist. It makes us uneasy to realize that the film, which aims to break the Nazi's gaze, shares his fascination with color images. In reaction against the predominance of black-and-white photography in today's cultures of Holocaust memory, Jablonski exploits Genewein's attraction to color to estrange the viewer from the referents and prompt a momentary reflection on what counts as historically real. *Fotoamator* dares to admit that the appeal of color that motivated Genewein still exists and that many of the photographs and films presently used for commemorative and educational purposes employ the same reality effects the Nazis used to hide Jewish life from view. The viewer's keen awareness of the color in these images demonstrates how much memories of the Holocaust are shaped by the channels of transmission and the particular technical aspects of the media through which they have come to us.[51]

Jablonski's film opens with a sepia-tinted sequence of the survivor in the archive as Mostowicz searches for Genewein's slides. It ends the following morning when Mostowicz clicks past the last slide to project a bright square of light on his living room wall. Between the opening sequence in the windowless, dimly lit archives and this final image of an empty frame of blinding white, *Fotoamator* presents the slides as colorific, nightmarish visions. But the viewer's point of view is not simply aligned with the survivor's perspective as the unquestionable authority and counterwitness to the Nazi's point of view. Rather, Mostowicz testifies to his own struggle to link what he sees in the slides to what he knows. His testimony undermines rather than affirms our faith in the survivor's memory because reliance on that memory would prevent viewers from seeing for themselves. In the film, Mostowicz shows the ghetto as a sight to be encountered today, through

these slides, for the first time. Through him, the images become recognizable as something not to be simply accepted or believed but as a reality the sight and mere knowledge of which is yet to be linked to understanding.

The film does not merely investigate the discrepancy between a survivor's memories and a Nazi's representation of the ghetto. It also deploys Genewein's photographs to reveal something outside his field of vision. It highlights a tension between perceived and photographed reality, between factual and experienced truth that forces viewers to reflect on their role as active participants in, and secondary witnesses to, the emergence of this unhealed past. Jablonski deprograms our visceral response to black and white as the accepted code of historical authenticity. In the opening sequence, a color shot of Mostowicz in the archives fades to a panning shot of a current-day Łódź street scene shot in black and white. Because Łódź has changed so little since the war's end, the colorless slow take has a decidedly historical air. The scene only becomes recognizable as "the present" when three boys on skateboards (a postwar invention) navigate through the archaizing grays. Jablonski renders the present unfamiliar to keep viewers from mistaking mere technical effects for epistemological distinctions between then and now, past and present, death and life. Do not trust your familiarity with the cinema's conventional syntax and codes, he instructs viewers. Do not reflexively accept black and white as the code for "history." Read these images rather than accepting them as reality because they seem to belong to a genre you have encountered before. By means of fade-outs, color-drains, and sharp editing cuts, Jablonski undermines the viewer's faith in the medium before the first of Genewein's slides comes into view. The documentary's opening sequence retrains the viewer to look in order to see, rather than to click through the past as if it were a slide show that can be turned into a seamless sequence.

The film resorts to technical effects—rather than to survivors' truth claims—in order to subvert the stubborn reality effect of the color slides. Mostowicz's astonishment at what was recorded in these images establishes disbelief as the film's central assertion. But there are several other layers of disbelief: disbelief that the images survived, that they are in color, that they show the ghetto as relatively orderly, and that something like the ghetto ever existed at all. Finally, there is disbelief that the people in these pictures are alive. To heighten this sense of disbelief, Jablonski's present-day shots of Łódź are accompanied by a delicate musical score, while the soundtrack for

Genewein's color photographs from the ghetto is filled with the noisy bustle of life: footsteps for the street scenes, the clank of machinery for workshops and factories, children's voices for scenes of child labor, train noises for the railroad platform, birdsong and the clattering of trams for panoramic views of the ghetto, and, finally, the hum of flies for images of mountains of clothing heaped in an open square. The whirring and clicking of a slide projector mark each cut from a still color image to black-and-white motion footage; the machinery of the media intrudes. Far from being an empty postmodern gesture, the film's self-consciousness signals that the convergencies of recording technologies, media, and historical memory themselves must be carefully scrutinized.

At one point during the war Genewein mailed one of his slides back to the Agfa film company to complain about an "unattractive reddish-brown hue" that marred some of the images he considered otherwise flawless. Jablonski mounts these complaints about the technology of color photography as a voice-over for images of the ghetto cemetery. Color, which usually signals life, realism, and the present, here becomes the proverbial blood on the Nazi photographer's hands and slides. The artifice and technical effects employed by Genewein to stage the ghetto's vitality and efficiency emerge as incriminating evidence against a murderous regime's executive on desk duty.

In *Fotoamator*, the Nazi's photographs are looked at again in order to lift the traumatic experiences of the ghetto out of the paralyzing stasis in which such memories seem stuck. The task of the responsible viewer, it becomes clear, differs from that of the historian who regards the past, as Benjamin pointed out, from the perspective of the victorious. But the photographs from Łódź are more than incriminating evidence. They bear witness to a future that is beyond the Nazi photographer's control—and thus issue an obligation and an appeal.

Historical Reality and Truth

"I am not interested in Genewein's pictures for what they show," filmmaker Jablonski has stated in an interview, "but rather for what they try to conceal."[52] However, this simple opposition, meant to explain his vision as investigative and corrective, understates the challenge presented by the slides and minimizes Jablonski's achievement. To be sure, the counterdocuments and testimonies strategically used in *Fotoamator* invalidate Genewein's ver-

sion of the ghetto as an exemplary labor site. Through them, the viewer glimpses the Nazis' ruthlessness, remorselessness, and greed.

If Jablonski's certainty in the movie camera's life-giving powers to re-vision and figurally revive the subjects in the Nazi photographs seems overly confident, and even if his own understanding of his project rests on simplistic assumptions, his intentions are nonetheless laudable. He refrains from "correcting" Genewein's images by turning the Jews in the slides into icons of death. In refusing to do so, Jablonski comes close to creating a kind of inspirational tale of the genocide, representing the victims as emblems of humanity untouched by hatred. Other such well-intentioned representations have been criticized most cogently by Lawrence Langer as obfuscations of the hopelessness of the Holocaust experience.[53] This critique of optimistic Holocaust narratives corresponds to Allan Sekula's assessment of photographic interpretations that reflexively champion the humanity of subjects. Although he is not discussing Holocaust photographs, Sekula's points are relevant in the present context because he exposes as politically dangerous the "celebration of abstract humanity [which] becomes . . . the celebration of the dignity of the passive victim."[54] Yet both Sekula's appraisal and Langer's demythification of insipidly inspirational Holocaust narratives constitute another challenge. If interpreters must not mitigate the horror in a wrongheaded attempt to inspire viewers or readers—thus ultimately betraying the truth of the experience—they are under an equally strong imperative not to compromise the humanity of the victims by lapsing into a defeatist nihilism. Chroniclers of the Holocaust are thus caught in a double bind: while aiming to represent both the victims' lives and their deaths, they must take account of such ambiguous and insoluble phenomena as the disturbance in their subjects' cognitive ability to grasp fully a traumatic situation of unprecedented threat and horror.[55] Because photography continues to function, trenchant critical work notwithstanding, as the iconography of the real, the insistent obligation to acknowledge both the unprecedented terror and the contradictory emotions of its complex victims assumes particular urgency. The technical preservation of the past as immutable and the simultaneous suggestion of an uncharted future gives photographs of the Holocaust an appeal that reaches into our time. In the images discussed below, the unredeemable horror of the Łódź ghetto coincides, in the same shots, with the depicted individual's gaze into a realm beyond the viewfinder, and beyond Nazi rule.

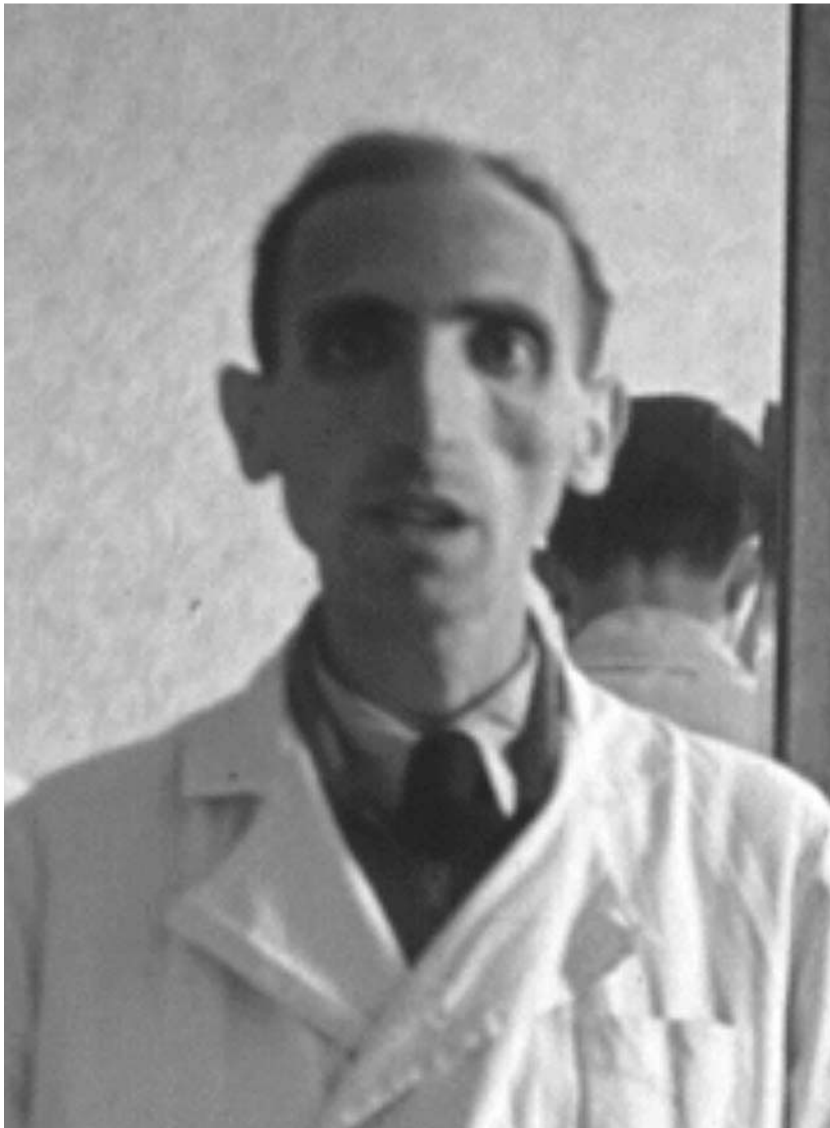
Animation

Halfway through *Fotoamator* is a zoom-shot closing in on a photograph of several Jewish men in a barbershop (figure 4.5, plate 5). One of the men stands facing the camera, while others are standing or sitting, presumably waiting to give or receive a shave or haircut. Jablonski's moving camera scans the photograph sideways, moving here and there as if he wants to be sure not to overlook anything. Seeming to follow an invisible grid pattern that structures the image from within, the film pulls the viewer's gaze along without any indication of what is to come. Finally, the camera settles on a gaunt face in the center of the image—the pale face of a man wearing a barber's smock. In a profoundly gentle move, Jablonski's camera slowly pulls this face into a close-up (figure 4.6). Conventionally the use of a close-ups is a signal to the viewer that the film is entering into and beyond the surface reality, implying that it is about to cut away from the magnified detail, scene, or face. At the moment when the man's face nearly fills the screen, however, Jablonski breaks, not with a cut but into a dissolve. For the brief instant that the man's face—which occupies only a small part of the original slide—almost fills the screen, we are eye-to-eye with his gaze. What follows is a blurry dissolve into obscurity: the slide vanishes into static, snow, the gray of ash.

Through Jablonski's camera work, the barber's gaze is visually lifted from Genewein's slide to face the viewer directly, across a chasm immeasurably wider than half a century. For a fleeting moment, his face has been retrieved from within the Nazi gaze, and the incontestable power differential between Nazi and Jew has been erased. Yet the film does not invite viewers to identify with the Jew in the picture or to merge with him in imagination. Instead, they are made to feel addressed, and the right to appeal, to look back, to accuse, or to denounce is restored to the Jew who was captured, framed, and labeled by the Nazi photographer.

The zoom-shot of the barber's face has a double and paradoxical effect. At the provisional end of this dramatic close-up, the man's deep-set eyes arrest the viewers' gaze—as if to implore or accuse them. The earlier restless scanning of the camera is halted; the search has for a few brief seconds reached an end. But viewers do not discern or learn anything: the half-open mouth does not speak or scream, the wide-open eyes do not blink. No insight is offered into the emaciated man's state of mind, no illusion implying that these eyes open as windows to the soul. A wall of mirrors in the

4.5 "L'Stadt—Getto Friseur" (Ghetto Łódź Barber), color slide no. 183 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.



4.6 "L'Stadt—Getto Friseur" (Ghetto Łódź Barber), color slide no. 183 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

background reveals that while the barber is facing the unseen photographer, he is clasping a customer's neck or wielding a razor close to a face partially visible in the reflection. Because his other hand is buried in his pocket instead of steadying the client's head, it is clear that the photograph is staged. The mirrors augment the sense that the key to the picture's meaning lies not in the central figure's hidden state of mind but in the deliberately hidden position from which it was taken. By turning the barber into an absolute, looming presence on the screen, by pulling his face out of the staged and deceptively self-enclosed setting, by letting him look back and out of the illusion of the all-seeing Nazi gaze that is itself unseen, Jablonski shows the man in this photograph as someone who is still part of the world.

For the duration of this slow-moving sequence, the motionlessness of the photographed Jews becomes recognizable as no more than a technical effect, a contingent dimension of the medium. Indeed, their disconcerting stillness becomes readable as nothing more than the coincidence of the medium and its user's ideology and intentions. The immobilized Jew in the close-up shows us something other than the expression of helpless terror the photographing Nazi intended to lay bare when he wielded a camera as the symbolic weapon of his all-pervasive, manipulative, and deadly racist gaze. For a moment, the slide cannot be read psychologically, for doing so depends on being able to imagine a totalizing and exclusive viewpoint behind the photographer's lens. Instead, the frozen past addresses the viewer directly, in a way denied to the Łódź ghetto Jews photographed by the Nazi amateur.

"The authority of the SS comes out of a we from which the deportee is excepted once and for all," writes Jean-François Lyotard in a study of the impossibility of address for victims of the Holocaust.[56] With his moving camerawork, Jablonski allows the frozen photograph to issue precisely the appeal from which the Jews had been "excepted," the kind of address that could no longer take place when the Nazis declared them the source of a death sentence absent from any notion of law—and thus of appeal or contestation. In Jablonski's hands the photograph does more than confirm the viewer's certainty about the Jews' annihilation. In it, the barber is no longer a passive element in the Nazi's vigilantly staged scene of total subjection; the illusion of movement created by film makes the barber look as if he were moving of his own volition. Yet his face is not turned into a screen for the viewer's empathic projection and identification. The gaunt head with its

closely cropped hair is rescued from serving as simply the visual evidence of Nazi brutality, an ultimately inconsequential, or merely "anecdotal," sign; it is no icon of genocide. The barber's looming face is deliberately estranged, and thus briefly restored to the status of an irreducible alterity: the picture cannot be simply taken in, absorbed, and mentally filed away in accordance with what is already known. Through their encounter with a face that cannot be turned into a symbol of something else, viewers are led to a "beyond" where they become responsible for reflecting on what they do not know about this face.[57]

The animation of the photographed barber can be read allegorically, as a sign of Jablonski's utopian wish to facilitate the Jews' posthumous escape. Yet the filmmaker does not pretend to transcend his medium by enlarging and setting in motion the faces of Jews who were arrested in the Nazi images; but by employing another technical effect he does unlock the impression of inalterable stasis that is intrinsic to both the photographic image and the traumatic past. Unlike the death-bringing gaze of the Nazi photographer, Jablonski's searching camera is positioned, at least momentarily, on the side of life. It gingerly examines these images for a spot from which to pry them out of the Nazi's orderly collection and release them to our sight.

A Face in the Ghetto

In another important sequence of *Fotoamator*, Jablonski scans one of Genewein's numerous slides of a "market scene" in the Łódź ghetto. At first glance, this image illustrates how the Nazis' absolute appropriation of all ghetto reality coincided with the photographer's perspective. Just as all belongings once owned by Jews were available to the Nazis as the spoils of mass murder, every sight in the ghetto, this slide suggests, is wide open to the photographer's appropriating gaze (figure 4.7, plate 6). A German official (identified in a caption as Hans Biebow, the ghetto's civilian commandant) is shown choosing a tie from a colorful selection displayed over a chain-link fence. Genewein's caption reads "Getto L'stadt der 'Handel'" (Ghetto Łódź "Commerce"), indicating with quotation marks both the ludicrous notion of "commerce" under such radically inequitable and exploitative conditions and the staged nature of this photo. For a few worthless "Rumkowskis" (the ghetto currency exchanged for all other currencies and valuables confiscated by the Nazi administrators), the Nazi official will be able to purchase a splendid silk tie in the latest fashion of Berlin, Budapest, or Vienna.

4.7 “Getto L’Stadt der ‘Handel’” (Ghetto Łódź “Commerce”), color slide no. 172. Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

In return, the Jewish man selling the ties might be able to buy a serving of watery soup or secure some ineffective medical treatment from a ghetto doctor powerless to combat the effects of severe malnutrition.

We cannot today establish the exact provenance of these ties. We can see, however, that they are all ownerless, sparkling clean yet used. They not only point metonymically to their absent owners, strangely suggesting a missing row of human heads; they are also symbols of the situation of the ghetto, around which the noose of destruction tightens further every day. A Jewish man sporting, like the German official, a bright tie but, unlike him, wearing a worn suit with a ragged yellow star over his emaciated frame, observes the commandant's selection. The German is looking down, posing for the photographer's benefit to simulate a scene of open-air shopping. Accidentally, the camera also records in the same shot a different scene; in it, the Nazi's brightly checkered tie appears to be, simultaneously, on the neck of one of at least two partially obscured Jewish policemen in red-banded hats who are standing behind the fence. It thus appears as if the German is wearing a policeman's tie at this very moment and that even a fence is an ineffective screen against the Nazis' greed for everything belonging to the Jews, whether alive or dead. The sun-drenched picture yields a complex, disturbing, and ultimately catastrophic narrative about the Nazis' murderous exploitation of the ghetto population.

It is likely, in fact, that the ties shown in this slide belonged to Jews deported to Łódź in the winter of 1941/42. In a museum catalogue for an exhibition about the ghetto, the photograph's caption is a quotation from Oskar Rosenfeld's ghetto chronicle.

> Those who have immigrated here—we [Rosenfeld himself was Viennese] are also called 'the evacuated' or 'newly settled'—have long since spent the 40 marks they were handed upon arrival in the ghetto as a means of support. One needs soap, toilet paper, a few deka-grams of bread or even fat. . . . Beginning in February 1942, one can see them hastening through the streets, with shirts, pants, dresses, shoes, ties over an arm . . . they have to sell their wardrobe in order to obtain some food or soap or lotion against lice or even a clothes brush.[58]

The picture can thus be read, like much of the ghetto's history, as a representation of the cold conflict between two of the Nazis' objectives. One objective concerns the maximization of profits and the robbery of victims even before their deaths (represented by the Nazi "shopping" for the

murdered Jews' ties), while a conflicting mandate is inherent in the Nazis' plan to exterminate all Jews, even though their labor yields a profit. The photograph in effect stages a dispute verified by memos between high-ranking Nazi official Heinrich Himmler, who wanted the ghetto destroyed and its population exterminated, and Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, who hoped to exploit the Jews' skills for the German war effort. The Jewish man forced to sell the victims' belongings while already trapped in the tightening noose of the barbed wire perimeter, can be seen as representative of the compromised leaders. With the help of such contextual knowledge, the image becomes clear evidence of the Nazis' inhumanity.

However, even when drawing on the accounts of Rosenfeld or other survivors, the viewers' perspective in such an interpretation remains that of Genewein, who aimed his camera over the shoulder of the Nazi shopper. The viewer is locked into a position from which the entire scene can, presumably, be fully deciphered, cognitively mastered, and understood: it is a perspective of the ghetto as a site where everything—including the Jews as interesting photographic subjects—is a commodity governed by Nazi ideology.

This reading must be undone.

A Look Beyond the Fence

When Jablonski films this photograph in his documentary, he does not show the slide in its entirety. From a preceding sequence in which the camera tracks the typewritten lines of a Nazi memo as it is being read in a voice-over, Jablonski cuts to a close-up of the German official's head and face (figure 4.8); from there he follows the German's glance down to the tie in his hands without panning the entire scene (figure 4.9). The entire sequence lasts for less than thirty seconds, not even long enough to register the two Jewish men shown with the German; they remain absent from Jablonski's film. The voice-over leaves no doubt about the fate of the ties' previous owners. It is revealed in an impersonal Nazi business memorandum addressed to Rumkowski, who in turn distributed it to the ghetto's shops and factories:

> Ghetto Authority to Rumkowski: Please check immediately whether an electrical or manually operated bone-grinder can be found in the Ghetto. The Special Kommando [*Sonderkommando*] Kulmhof is interested in such a grinder.

4.8 "Getto L'Stadt der 'Handel'" (Ghetto Łódź "Commerce"), color slide no. 172 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

4.9 “Getto L’Stadt der ‘Handel’” (Ghetto Łódź “Commerce”), color slide no. 172 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

"Kulmhof" was the name the Germans gave the town of Chełmno. The voice-over implies that every tie in the photograph was taken from or bartered by a Jew deported to his death there.[59] By combining visual evidence of the Nazis' robbery of the Jews with a memo asking for a machine to grind bones—clearly intended to both destroy the corpses as potential evidence and forestall the possibility of properly burying and possibly commemorating the dead—Jablonski yokes together two facets of the destruction. The voice-over ends as the camera follows the Nazi's gaze to the array of ties hanging from the fence (figure 4.10). Yet, while the soundtrack leads the viewer aurally away from the gaudy ties inside the Łódź ghetto and beyond its fences toward Chełmno, the unfilmed site of unfathomable and irreversible atrocity, the camera continues to move. Its continuing search of the image suggests that viewers too must keep on looking at a scene where the Nazi vision dictates only death.

After scanning the fence and ties as if allied with the Nazi's detached appraisal and visual appropriation, Jablonski's camera settles briefly on the far left side of the slide. There, unexpectedly, and all but invisible (even when scrutinized and enlarged with a magnifying glass) is a boy's face peeking back at the viewer from behind the fence (figure 4.11). Only when viewers abandon the unwittingly assumed Nazi perspective and look for something beyond its death-bringing vision—something beyond the fence, beyond the slide—can they see this face. By peering out from behind the fence and the row of ties that almost hide him from view, the boy for a moment perceives, and thus deflects, his objectification and implicit subordination to the gaze of the Nazi official, the photographer, and, ultimately, the film's viewers. Even though Jablonski's camerawork, his search to find and arrest a hidden figure, mimics the Nazis' terrifying searches for people to be murdered, he deploys those tainted strategies to bring into view a hidden presence and into memory a forgotten person.

In other slides of pedestrians frozen in mid-step by Genewein's camera, some individuals have stopped and turned to face the photographer. Their faces, too, undermine the photographer's desire to completely "own" the depicted site; they subvert the slides' implicit message that his presence is unnoticed by his presumably passive subjects. Jablonski's roving camera—unlike Genewein's—singles out and settles on faces at the actual or figural periphery of the scenes captured in the slides. The spectral technique of the close-up momentarily defers, and thus renders poignant, the disappearance

4.10 "Getto L'Stadt der 'Handel'" (Ghetto Łódź "Commerce"), color slide no. 172 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

4.11 "Getto L'Stadt der 'Handel'" (Ghetto Łódź "Commerce"), color slide no. 172 (enlarged detail). Collection of Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt.

of the photographed person that this type of shot usually announces. In occasional medium takes or long shots, Jablonski deliberately passes over details that could be significant to historians. His camera searches for something else, something beyond the grid of knowledge that labels photographs as evidence. By moving across the ties in the marketplace scene, for example, he locates a blind spot in the Nazi's vision that differs markedly from the "interiority" and insight into the Nazi's mind achieved by the historians referred to earlier in the chapter. The transparent fence and the transparent slide mark the Nazi's blindness—a blindness not of ignorance or lack of vision but of a stubborn and incriminating refusal to see what he is doing, to look beyond what he wants to know. If viewers ignore the deflections of the Nazi's gaze from behind the fence, they too leave in place, as Fatimah Rony argues in her study of ethnographic films, "the process by which indigenous people continue to be reified as specimens, metonyms for an entire culture, race, or monolithic condition."[60] Although the Jews caught on film by the camera-wielding Nazi could rarely evade his probing lens, many of them did stare back. These returned glances mark the camera as a tool that cannot be entirely subordinated to the intentions of the photographer. The Nazi's camera was a shooting technology intended to leave a record of denial—a denial of suffering and of any future for the Jews. Although the photographer aimed to record a staged and incontestable or "monolithic" version of ghetto reality, his camera, as Flusser writes of every camera, "redirects his intentions back to the interests of the camera's program"—a program that knows no politics, no morality, no intention.[61]

On the level of message or content, Jablonski's film makes no claim that it can free the Jews of the Łódź ghetto. The eerily deserted black-and-white scenes filmed in the present-day city bear witness to an absence that cannot be filled. Nothing in the film suggests that hope kept anyone there alive.

How effective, then, is the strategy of endowing these disconcerting slides with an imagination and force that seeks to remove them from the brutally restrictive setting of their production? This question is primarily aesthetic. Yet it is inseparable from the unsettling concern about whether we might see the Holocaust in a new way—whether the viewers' imagination can be, in Lanzmann's words, "made to work" in order to (re-) invest the act of commemoration with ethical significance.[62] Jablonski's cinematic gestures suggest that the Jews in these photographs might for a short moment be unlocked from the grip of a traumatic past. This ambition, which I identify as the daring central gesture of Jablonski's film, also motivates some of

the noncinematic Holocaust scholarship and art. It merits attention, for it both presents the possibility that art can remain on the side of life when confronting death and introduces the controversial notion of posthumous rescue into a situation drenched in despair and hopelessness. Significantly, Jablonski does not use the techniques of filmmaking—long shots, startling juxtapositions, fade-outs, movement, plot, animation, lighting, and color effects—to suggest that the horrors of the Holocaust can be kept at bay (à la *Life is Beautiful*). Instead, he exploits available technologies to convey these horrors and to salvage the past from both uplifting but falsifying renditions and the totalitarian Nazi gaze that continues to invisibly shape contemporary ways of seeing.

The Need for Film

In distinguishing photographs from the mental images of the human imagination, Siegfried Kracauer asserts that "photography grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum; memory images retain what is given only insofar as it has significance." Because they do not capture meaning, he states, photographs remain "*unredeemed*"; that is, they show reality not as a visual field governed by a single perspectivizing vision but as a "disintegrated unity."[63] In light of the face behind the fence, which the viewer sees only after Jablonski has taken Genewein's slide apart, this is a crucial insight: the ghetto slides, as Hanno Loewy suggests, "disintegrate before our eyes."[64]

Because film presents images not as a succession of still photographs but as undistinguishable from movement, it can continually restage this "disintegrated unity" without either instituting coherence or succumbing to total fragmentation. Film may uncover traumatic memory because it does not necessarily imply a cumulative effect or logic, or a unified point of view. This ability to register an event's lack of coherence is singularly programmed into the technology, whereas it is unavailable to human consciousness. Memory cannot replay an incoherent scene in order to reexamine it more closely *as* incoherent; it either surrenders to the craving for meaning or shatters under the impact of trauma. This odd circumstance—that human perception, unlike a camera, views reality as coherent, except when it has suffered a devastating shock—points to the hidden matrix linking trauma and photography. Unless it has been traumatically disrupted, and thus cannot be properly called "memory," memory lacks a rewind button, the capacity to replay instants of experience without aligning them with

meaning; it arranges things according to a *then* and *now*, a *before*, *during*, and *after*. Everything seen is pried out of its singular occurrence and reviewed as part of a series of events unfolding through lived time.

"The Crumbled Elements of Past Reality"

"From the perspective of photographic representation," Kracauer writes, "memory images appear to be fragments—but only because photography does not encompass the meaning to which they refer and in relation to which they cease to be fragments." Even when a photograph is deliberately staged, this constitutive randomness cannot be completely suppressed. When Jablonski isolates a face with his camera and pulls it from the color slide, he can do so because the depicted elements do not "cease to be fragments." His film, therefore, turns to advantage photography's failure to "encompass the meaning" according to which disparate elements are organized into a reality governed by the viewer's, and in this case, the Nazi's perspective. What Kracauer calls "the stockpiling of crumbled elements of past reality" in the photograph allows Jablonski to break through the stronghold of the Nazi gaze.[65] *Fotoamator* thus counters the historians' conviction that no Nazi-created image can be freed from the Nazi aesthetic. The camera reparticularizes what is otherwise swept up in narratives of destruction and despair. The film, in effect, reshoots Genewein's photographs of the Łódź ghetto to rescue the images in them from the persistent Nazi gaze and, by extension, to revive and rescue the Jews in a momentary reprieve that is not simply represented in the slides but is disruptive of them.

The practice of isolating individual faces to undo the anonymization of the Holocaust carries with it the hope of recognizing a human countenance amidst the faces caught on film. Because a technical effect of photography allows images to ferry an instance of the past across the impassable divide of death into the present, "citing" a photograph can double this impression of halted time.[66] Yet, whether textual or pictorial, such second-degree citations from the Holocaust testify in the end to the impossibility of arriving at a complete, greater whole. The feverish activity of citing remains interminable.

To See Memory Screened

The film *Fotoamator* recognizes that, given the ubiquity of Holocaust images in contemporary culture, the obligation to face what is "too dreadful to behold in reality" requires an active, critical, and fundamentally creative

stance.[67] Rather than passively receiving such images, we must revise the regime of representation the Nazis instituted. In his memoirs, Jorge Semprun describes seeing a film about Buchenwald, where he was imprisoned during the war. He stresses that the chance exposure to this newsreel footage soon after his liberation from Buchenwald confirmed the reality of his own memories: "Seeing . . . on the movie screen . . . the roll-call square of Buchenwald . . . I saw myself returned to reality, reinstated in the truth of an indisputable experience. Everything had been true, so, it was all still true. Nothing had been a dream."[68]

The important point here is that the film does not simply corroborate the survivor's experience. Semprun here asserts that what is on the screen—what he, a person who was there, sees—establishes this nightmarish experience as real *for the first time.* As if adhering to the structure of a traumatic memory that becomes a memory only some time after its occurrence, the film confirms the survivor's experience as a reality rather than as a nightmare, a hallucination, something unreal. Semprun seems to suggest that when we view certain Holocaust films, we might not see a reality that was experienced fully by others but a reality that becomes *more* real—or real for the first time—in its cinematic representation. Because the camera records what it "sees" without consciousness, film approximates the memory of a traumatic reality that was not fully experienced by its victims and offers the same impression of being strictly, literally real.

Although the film of Buchenwald confirmed Semprun's memories, its simple newsreel realism ultimately proved insufficient. In fact, he argues that the depicted reality can become fully graspable only when representations of the camps are rendered more artificial, more cinematically unfamiliar, or *verfremdet.* Semprun thus stresses film's need, and ability, to tear reality out of the numbing factuality of straightforward realism: "One would have to work on the body of the film, on its very cinematic material: stopping the sequence of images occasionally to freeze a frame, offering close-ups of certain details, sometimes showing the action in slow motion, speeding it up at other moments. . . . One would have had to treat the documentary reality, in short, like the material of fiction."[69]

Semprun's demand to arrest the onrush of moving images in the Buchenwald film aims at isolating what threatens to pass by, as if invisibly, yet again—as it did during its original occurrence. To correspond more closely to what he experienced, the pictures would have to be treated like fic-

tional images. Historical reality, then, needs to be aggressively pried out of the modes of mere recording or formulaic remembrance. Semprun recalls that although the film initially confirmed his memories, doubts soon surfaced: "or rather: [images] which I knew for certain came from Buchenwald, without being certain of recognizing them. Or rather: without being certain of having seen them myself. And yet I had seen them. Or rather: I had experienced them. It was the difference between the seen and the experienced that was disturbing."[70]

Semprun's insight here is central: that the experience of trauma might be an experience without vision—that is, sights that are not endowed with meaning. Jablonski's film shares Semprun's suggestion because it does not "stop . . . and freeze" the photographic evidence but, "like fictional material," *puts it in motion.* Jablonski's cinematic interventions render the slides from the ghetto recognizable *for the first time* as part of lived reality. Semprun's postwar reflections help us to understand Jablonski's irreverent film as a complex and daring response to the Shoah. For the unexperienced reality of the Holocaust to become accessible, it must be estranged, lest it congeal into that repertory of cultural images to which we have learned to respond as if they were real.

Semprun, however, makes no promise that the operations he proposes will lead to understanding. He emphasizes that the "dimension of unreality, the context of fiction inherent in any cinematic image, even the most strictly documentary one, gave the weight of incontestable reality to my innermost memories."[71] Although these images externalize memories that are lodged like intrusive barbs in the psyche and allow them to be recognized in their "incontestable reality," they do not necessarily lead to understanding. At stake in this effort is the reinstatement of reality, not truth. Through its retention on film, Semprun implies, the factual reality of the Holocaust may be kept out of the reach of historicism—an outlook that, even when most explicitly secular, shares in the promise of revelation.

The Fate of Aura

Instead of the currently popular one-sided readings of Kracauer and Benjamin, I argue that we need to return to a concept of *aura* that may permit us to partially recover the troubling realities potentially lingering in photographs of historical trauma. To be sure, this tentative recovery must always remain incomplete. The bequest emanating from Genewein's images

must be acknowledged as an impetus for further work. If photographs yank their subjects out of the sheltering context of historical circumstance, they also harbor the potential for recovery because the images—especially in amateur photos—capture elements in their contiguity, rather than in a meaningful relation. A viewer endowed with infinite patience could possibly witness how even Jablonski's film ultimately disintegrates into disparate elements, which Kracauer calls "the fortuitous, the endless, and the indeterminate."[72] Instead of leaving us with an absolute loss, however, this disintegration would cause some of these elements to fall once more outside the purview of established ways of looking. Democritus metaphorized this disjointed and nontotalizing gathering and dispersion of disparate elements as the rainfall of reality, "atoms and void." Kracauer terms it the "disintegrated unity" of reality captured in photographs that might be salvaged in film.

While I have invoked the aura of these images, and thus risked resurrecting a superstitious belief, I have relied on the method of careful reading—and thus on an "enlightenment" approach—to identify this aura. Yet simply recognizing how easily images can be manipulated for propaganda purposes does not automatically provide us with a reading strategy that dissects such ideological manipulation—the first step in a critical reading against the grain—and successfully brings these images under control. Many Holocaust images cannot be salvaged from the reach of the Nazi gaze. To delude ourselves about this fact is to fail to recognize the magnitude of the German crime. Yet to leave all Nazi images undetonated, as mere illustrations of established knowledge, seems equally problematic. It is also naïve to believe that contextual and historically informed interpretations will account fully for all that is passed on to us in these images. Their meaning, to phrase it differently, must be determined through formal analyses that, finally, break with the pictures' original uses. To insist that the meaning of Nazi-photographed images is established exclusively by their creators' intentions and uses implies that the Nazis have subdued the force of critical analysis with their murderous assault on the means of respectful commemoration. If we see the photographs from the Łódź ghetto as solely expressions of a Nazi aesthetic, or dismiss them as falsifications of a reality whose truth might be unearthed by historical research, the individuals pictured in them will remain stereotyped icons of an ideology that aimed at stripping them of their humanity.

"Rescuing Time from Its Proper Corruption"

After Jablonski's camera has lifted the barber's face from the crammed workspace and into the visual space mapped by the film, the focus dissolves. The aura of a human countenance lingers briefly, until the promise of salvation disappears. Yet the face is handed back not to oblivion but to unclarity. The man's features become blurred, color is drained from the film, and the image fades to an abstract screen of grays. The documentary's voice-over for this shot of the face and its fade-out consists of a cynical Nazi memo noting "the Jews' stubborn belief in a miraculous change of their predicament." After the fade-out we hear Mostowicz's voice declaring in Polish that "a miracle was all I could count on. And that miracle had to be an earlier end of the war, before the Germans would eradicate us all." The man's face melts back into the ghetto reality where no such miraculous turn would occur. So, what is it that occurs in this abyssal opening between the Nazis' cynical remark about the Jews' "stubborn belief" and Mostowicz's attempt to communicate what hope for a "miracle" could have meant for the Jews in the Łódź ghetto? In his essay on photography, Bazin writes that the photograph "rescues time" from its otherwise inevitable "corruption."[73] Jablonski's film opens up momentarily a space between the photograph's future and the irreconcilable notions of a "future" held by the Nazis and the Jews to acknowledge suffering, without covering it with what Mostowicz has called "the veil of dispassionate knowledge."[74] It is important not to confuse this space with the concept of eternity. It is the opening of time that has not yet been completed. By positioning the slow dissolve of the Jewish barber's face between the Nazi's cynical mention of the Jews' "stubborn belief" and Mostowicz's acknowledgment that this hope was both vitally necessary and utterly unrealistic, Jablonski confronts us face-to-face with the role of illusion as part of the suffering in the Łódź ghetto without resolving the issue.

The little boy's face behind the neckties cannot hold back the narratives of mass murder read in voice-overs at this point. Yet for a moment his countenance is suspended in a similar space between Mostowicz's tortured memories and the dispassionate historical knowledge, until it is eclipsed, or "corrupted" as Bazin puts it, by these two distinct narratives. His fragile presence is not comparable to the heroism of armed resistance. Yet to deny the boy's face the possibility of expressing a range of emotions that include rage, anger, contempt, accusation, and pride, but also solicitation, curiosity, and hope, would mean to pass verdict on and thus blind ourselves to a

moment bequeathed by the camera. By setting the still image in motion, film briefly embalms this potential without fetishizing it as an ahistorical object-image that revises, represses, or falsifies the inevitable. Genewein's version of the ghetto as a work site, and the historians' accounts of the ghetto as a site of decelerated mass murder, are equally inadequate. *Fotoamator* returns time and again to the "illusion of innocence" in the photographs to show how the understanding of *ignorance*, *innocence*, and *illusion* was compromised in this context.

Amidst the deserted streets of Łódź and the conflicted memories of Mostowicz—who attributes his survival to his compromised position as ghetto physician—there is hardly a place of refuge. Jablonski eschews vicarious identification as an inadequate response. He does not place himself on screen as the moral lightning rod for the testimonies addressed to viewers through him. Critics who champion self-reflexivity as a panacea against essentializing representations might fault Jablonski for remaining on the other side of his own camera, or for failing to interview Poles who remember the ghetto from the outside.[75] Yet authorial self-staging does occur here—in the deliberate foregrounding of the medium that renders Jablonski's signature readable in his edits and cuts. The filmmaker's presence on the screen could have usurped Jewish memory and, paradoxically, spared viewers from the self-examination he intends to inspire in them. In his absence, they are forced to look for themselves, actively, and in full awareness that this act of looking occurs now for the first time.

By denoting film not merely as a medium but also as a message from the past, Jablonski strains the role of the camera to the extreme. By showing a whirring slide projector and including eerie time-lapse footage of children playing in today's Łódź, he is already marking everything he salvages from the ghetto photographs as part of a mechanically recorded past. Yet he does so, surrendering the traces of humanity in these photographs to the mnemotechnics of the film camera, in order to pry open the bond welding Nazi ideology to the recording technologies filmmakers still use both to account for and to undo that ideology's dehumanizing effects. Along with these technologies, we have inherited the blind spots that permit us to read these techniques against the Nazis' intentions.[76] The self-consciously cinematic *Fotoamator* suggests, in the spirit of Benjamin, that the Nazis' effects on contemporary ways of seeing are best resisted by turning their favored media against them.

Photography's Legacy

The deflections of the Nazi gaze shown in certain of the images from Łódź constitute in themselves no sovereign challenge to the photographer's gaze. They cannot successfully overturn the hierarchies established by the Nazis in the ghetto, where life was finely calibrated not in terms of hope but in dekagrams of bread. However, in order to stay mindful of the Nazis' assault on the humanity not only of their victims but of all humankind, we can, and must, examine these momentary deflections critically, rather than passively receiving or melancholically noting them. We have already observed the medium of photography's unique ability to record such deflections in spite of the Nazis' intentional misrepresentations and the denial of a future for their victims brought about by the historicist outlook. Because photographic images show more than what and *how* the photographer sees, they offer a crucial vantage point from which to unmask a perpetrator's perspective or discern the link between an ideological and a technical point of view. This technical dimension of photography makes it possible for us to view photographs from the Holocaust, regardless of their authorship, without inevitably betraying the people shown in them. If, however, that technical dimension records in these photographs something that might be saved from the Nazi gaze, it also undercuts our facile identification with the "humanity" portrayed in them. Such an identification can be achieved only at the risk of hitching the photographs' visual field onto a single viewpoint drenched in empathy. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the empathic, identificatory perspective favored by some critics remains tied to the seductive myth of a viewer's self-aware, unified, and all-encompassing nonalienated gaze. The notion of such a gaze is itself part of the legacy of the Nazi worldview.

When critically examined, photographs might do more than confirm a destruction that is then condemned—or helplessly acknowledged—by the viewer in a fit of pathos or moral righteousness. Regardless of how much empathy or identification is aroused, the Barthesian shudder viewers experience when looking at the ghetto images undermines most assumptions about the relations between self and world, and about the history that links and separates these two poles. Moreover, identificatory responses indulge the illusion that we might somehow be able to assimilate the Holocaust fully into our understanding, or that the experience of those who were there is something they can fully "own," explain, remember, and recount. Oskar

Rosenfeld's severe motto for his own writings in the ghetto is relevant in this context: "To say it *metaphorically:* very objective . . . eliminate anything that is sentimental, read yourself far away from the entire world, without thinking at all of the surroundings, alone in space, not intended for human beings . . . as memory *for later days.*"[77] The photographs from the Łódź ghetto, mechanical, cold, and existing apart from human memory, exceed their intended purpose by reaching a world that is still unprepared for what can be seen in them. The appeal to Rosenfeld's "*later days*" passed through Genewein's camera into our present and now passes through Jablonski's lens to his viewers, and beyond them.

Jablonski's searching camera tries to unfreeze instances of humiliation in which the photographs' timelessness appears to correspond to the timelessness of the traumatic past. He refuses, and possibly refutes, the claims of the Nazi photographer to be the all-seeing, all-knowing subject. With his fugitive film images, the cinematographer deconstructs a monolithic understanding of the Nazi's vision and refuses to relegate all Nazi images to the archives. By reshooting, instead of simply reshowing these photographs, he refuses to leave the Jews in the ghetto within the constricted documentary shots that are both product and reflection of ghetto overcrowding and the confines of Nazi ideology.

Although the notion of patience, of waiting for improved circumstances, has been tainted by the historical circumstances of the Łódź ghetto, we must reconsider these photographs patiently and not wait passively for more sophisticated modes of analysis. If we hope to improve upon our inadequate response in the future, we can consider current interpretations such as *Fotoamator* not as redemptive but as provisional but important relays in the complex processes of transmission that seem to have usurped what was once called tradition. "The expectation of anything good has long since died in the ghetto," wrote Oskar Rosenfeld on 17 May 1944—a few weeks before he was deported to Birkenau and gassed upon arrival. If there is hope for an adequate response, that hope, to borrow from Kafka, is not for us.

Conclusion

In his study of Georges Bataille's notion of "inner experience," Peter Connor discusses the French philosopher's fascination with a series of photographs of Fou-Tchou-Li, a Chinese man convicted of the murder of a prince in 1905 and condemned to undergo "The Torture of the Hundred Pieces."[1] The French philosopher contemplated these photographs of a man's mutilation, dismemberment, and tremendous suffering, Connor suggests, in order to interrupt the otherwise seemingly unstoppable flow of thought by prompting for the viewer a sudden experience of ecstatic, overwhelming mental "transport." Elevating the photographs into icons of suffering that may facilitate transcendence over conventional thought processes, Bataille deliberately sought to dissociate the violence they depict from its political and historical context.

For Connor, Bataille's fascination with these photographs of trauma raises a poignant question that also informs my own analyses of photography. Is Bataille's "exultation of violence" merely an antibourgeois provocation like the surrealists' celebration of the perverse, the abject, and the unformed? Or can the viewer contemplating photographs of trauma detect in them, as Bataille suggests, the "expression of a profound but repressed human truth?"[2] Or, to generalize Connor's question still further, does looking at photographs of trauma result in a knowledge that transcends its historical and political causes by revealing the utter senselessness of traumatic violence—what Bataille terms "the infinite 'absurd' of animal suffering"?[3]

The photographs of the wide-eyed condemned man whose arms have been cut off at their sockets prompt no word from Bataille about the political or social justifications, functions, or reasons for such a torture. Recent critics have chided him for his enthrallment with these images, contending that he seems to substitute "for a juridico-political phenomenon [. . .] a religious phenomenon."[4] Yet Bataille's seeming disregard for political and historical contexts, Connor explains in an important rejoinder to these critics, resulted from his deep concern in the 1930s with the manifestations of evil,

violence, and suffering he saw as endemic in modernity. Bataille sharply faults modern societies in general, and liberal thinking in particular, for their refusal to even acknowledge the presence of evil in their midst.

The effort to place violence in its historical context, Bataille insists, all too often serves to screen from view and from analysis the full range of human experience. Far from being pornographic, as some critics have suggested, these photographs of human trauma can open our consciousness—to paraphrase a comment by Bataille from a slightly different context—"to the representation of what man really is."[5] To condemn as pornographic Bataille's Chinese torture photographs (which he published at the end of and as the culmination of *The Tears of Eros* [1961], his image atlas of human experience) is as shortsighted and as much a sophomoric provocation as André Breton and Louis Aragon's misogynist celebration of Jean-Martin Charcot's photographs of hysterics as "the greatest poetic discovery of the nineteenth century."[6] The pictures of a man at the nearly inconceivable limit of experience expose to viewers a sight that opens, rather than forecloses, complicated questions about society's fascination with death as a spectacle, the human capacity for evil, and the very nature of experience. Bataille specifically underscores these questions by printing in his book cropped scenes from the original photographs showing the spellbound spectators, their faces mesmerized by the spectacle of a public execution.

Placing these photographs into their sociopolitical and historical context, Bataille argues, could prompt viewers yet again to close their eyes, and indeed their "human consciousness," "to the zenith of horror."[7] According to Bataille, evil is tolerated and spread by pretending that human beings are not evil. Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt and Siegfried Kracauer, we might add that evil is also spread by relegating it to realms beyond the range of vision and the reaches of reason and declaring it to be demonic, monstrous, or inhuman.

For Bataille, the refusal to engage the moral, legal, or political dimensions of these violent photographs in fact serves an explicitly political purpose. To prevent the suffering of trauma and the human capacity for evil from being obscured or overlooked, he suggests that we need an analysis of trauma photographs that provisionally brackets condemnation and moralizing in a gesture I termed in the Introduction a "strategic isolation." For this reason, none of the photographs discussed in this book, as chapters 3 and 4 make explicit, serves as the basis of a political analysis, conclusive historical narrative, or moral critique. Unless viewers suspend their faith in the future,

in the narrative of time-as-flux that turns the photographed scene into part of a longer story (whether melancholic or hopeful), they will misconstrue the violence of trauma as a mere error, a lapse from or aberration in the otherwise infallible program of history-as-progress. This conclusion we must avoid at all costs. If viewers find that the photographs in this book defy simple readings, their amazement at that intractability can be the beginning of knowledge *only*, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, if this amazement prompts them to realize that the "view of history which gives rise to it is untenable."[8]

I therefore close my discussion of the affinities between photography and trauma by insisting that they both mark crises not of truth but of reference. The images considered open questions not about their facticity but about the ways in which some events attain full meaning only in retrospect—or to use the Freudian term, *nachträglich*, or belatedly—and how this belated registration may facilitate or block remembering or forgetting. The dismissive objections to Bataille's deliberate decontextualizing of the Chinese torture photographs serve to remind us that this crisis of reference will not be resolved by calling in the historians.

The apparently decontextualizing approach permits us to analyze violence from a perspective that does not presume a uniformly applicable visual and moral slant. It may help to see previously overlooked pockets of resistance by suspending the narcissistically satisfying and morally correct, but limiting, perspective that results from equating the photographer's gaze and intentions with an infallible epistemological position. Confronting the photography of trauma requires us to suspend our moral certitude and to decode the ways in which the camera programs the shots. Photographs of trauma present to the viewer representations that call into question the habitual reliance on vision as the principal ground for cognition. Each photograph, by virtue of the medium, inevitably turns the viewer into a latecomer at the depicted site. It thus summons him or her to a kind of vigilant and responsible viewing that will not foreclose the potential for understanding the full range of human experience—what Bataille terms "the totality of *what is.*"

Photography, both at its most banal and at its most profound, holds the future in abeyance. Benjamin, Roland Barthes, André Bazin, and their eagerly melancholic followers view this future as the depicted subject's crypt. Yet, because each photograph opens onto a future that, from *within* the image, is still radically undecided, we need a way of looking that eschews the consolations of preemptive melancholia. At the very least, our sorrowful realization that the photograph announces the future death of the

subject should be paired with an equally poignant awareness of photography's promise of a reality that is yet, as Kracauer put it, "unredeemed."[9]

Photography and trauma dispel the illusory certainty that what is seen is what can be known. The problematic belief in the camera's absolute objectivity, strikingly embodied by Jean-Martin Charcot and Walter Genewein as self-blinded master–photographers, inhabits all photographic practice. As I have shown in the analyses of their photographs, we can and must deconstruct this certitude about an all-encompassing, objective point of view. Paradoxically, the moralizing, if very understandable, condemnation of Charcot's and Genewein's photographic projects in the name of feminism, antifascism, and mourning would block just such deconstructive readings. If one can, precariously and temporarily, assume the enemy's gaze, which both principally historicist and formalist approaches obscure, one can see through his photograph to a site less foreclosed than (in Eduardo Cadava's words) "a cemetery," "a small funerary moment," or "a grave for the living dead."[10] Photographs can then become a potentially open-ended form of testimony to, and a call for, a new way of seeing—what Benjamin describes in a different but related context as "the history of how a person *lives on*, and precisely how this afterlife, with its own history, is embedded in life."[11]

Ultimately, all of the images discussed in this book issue a demand that viewers do more than just look. We do not meet this demand by mentally projecting ourselves into the scene of trauma but by acknowledging that photography gives refuge to a time that is radically contingent, Democritean, unredeemed. Every photograph is addressed to a beyond that remains undefined; at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the metaphors of cemetery, grave, and crypt, disturbingly, no longer provide this open-endedness. This beyond can no longer be simply aligned with Marxist-messianic hopes by Benjaminians, melancholic shudders for Barthesians, or the mystical glow of the goat-horned disciples of Bataille. The photographs discussed in this book reveal that no single one of these approaches entirely encompasses the crisis of reference witnessed here. Regardless of one's theoretical leanings or mental predisposition, these photographs of trauma call on viewers to assume a responsibility with regard to the image, and thus to become potential witnesses. They open up a future that is not known and, because it is unknown, might yet be changed.

Notes

Introduction

1. For a genealogy of these ways of seeing, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).
2. Heraclitus, *Fragments. The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*, tr. Brooks Haxton (New York: Penguin, 2001), 27, 96 n41.
3. See Ulrich Raulff's discussion of these opposing and complementary conceptions of time in *Der unsichtbare Augenblick: Zeitkonzepte in der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1999), 9.
4. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken , 1968), 83.
5. Benjamin refers to the Democritean notion of *eidola* in the section on photography in "Das Passagen-Werk," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12 vols., ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 22: 828.
6. Attributed to Democritus, in *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus. Fragments*, ed. and tr. C. W. W. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 9.
7. Vilém Flusser, *Standpunkte: Texte zur Fotografie*, 10 vols., ed. Andreas Müller-Pohle (Göttingen: European Photography, 1998), 8: 152.
8. Ibid.
9. Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, tr. Anthony Mathews (London: Reaktion, 2000), 9.
10. Flusser, *Standpunkte*, 8–16.
11. Antonin Artaud, "Theater and its Double," in *Antonin Artaud: Collected Works*, 4 vols., ed. Victor Corti (New York: Riverrun Press,), 4: 6.
12. Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 31, 32.
13. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 5.
14. Ibid., 4; Bessel van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisath, eds., *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 52; Bessel van der Kolk, Nan Herron, and Ann Hostetler, "The History of Trauma in Psychiatry," *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 17 (1994): 589.

15. Cathy Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," in Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.
16. Important discussions of Freud's use of the metaphor of the camera are found in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1997), 187; Sarah Kofman, *Camera Obscura of Ideology*, tr. Will Straw (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 21–29; Kaja Silverman, *World Spectators* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 75–101. I thank my son Raphael for alerting me to Kofman's book during a visit with Gerard Aching.
17. Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," in *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*, ed. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 208.
18. Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 6.
19. Allan Sekula offers a spirited critique of the photograph's "intrinsic significance [as] bourgeois folklore." "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," in *Photography in Print*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 454. Ruth Leys criticizes the model of trauma as the imprinting of reality on the mind without, however, offering an alternative perspective or synthesizing view of debates she sees as "fated to end in an impasse." Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 305.
20. Victor Burgin, "Something about Photography Theory," *Screen 25* (January-February 1984): 65 (cited in Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 10).
21. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7.
22. Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, 198 n.11.
23. Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 12.
24. Sigmund Freud, "Charcot (1893)" in *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, ed. James Strachey, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), 18–19.
25. Freud's writings on the visual arts attest to the fact that the power of images remains a stumbling block in psychoanalytic theory. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), esp. 284.
26. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), esp. 147–154.
27. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 51–53.
28. For a discussion of the Holocaust as a crisis of witnessing, see Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), xvii.
29. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press 1991), 129.
30. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).
31. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, tr. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Viking, 1990).
32. For a systematic deconstruction of various myths of an "origin of photography," see Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, esp. 17–50.

33. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, tr. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 1.
34. Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 46–47.
35. Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 24. I have benefited greatly from discussions about this book with Michael Lobel, who first brought it to my attention.
36. Wright Morris, "In Our Image," in *Photography in Print*, ed. Vicki Goldberg, 536.
37. Cadava, *Words of Light*, 13. Benjamin's comment was originally made in a discussion about the published correspondence of letter writers. See Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, eds., *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 149.
38. Cadava, *Words of Light*, 13 (emphasis added).

Chapter 1

1. Walter Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography," in *One-Way-Street and Other Writings*, tr. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), 243. ["Kleine Geschichte der Photographie," in Tiedemann, ed., *Gesammelte Schriften* II/1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 370.]
2. D.-M. Bourneville and Paul Régnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière: Service de M. Charcot*, 3 vols. (Paris: V. Adrien Delahaye, 1876–1880 (hereafter cited in text as *IPS* 1–3: page number). All translations of Charcot's writings are my own unless otherwise indicated. Photographs in figures 1.1–1.9 are from the first edition. Figure 1.10 was published in the second issue of the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* (1889).
3. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).
4. Freud, *Collected Papers*, trans. supervised by Joan Rivière (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), 1: 11.
5. Jacques Derrida refers to Benjamin's and Barthes's works as "the two most significant texts" on the question of the referent in "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," tr. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, in *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 264 (translation modified).
6. Charcot, *Oeuvres complètes*, cited in *Charcot, the Clinician: The Tuesday Lessons*, ed. and tr. Christopher G. Goetz, (New York: Raven Press, 1987), xxiii. In 1928, fifty years after the peak of Charcot's fame, Louis Aragon and André Breton paid homage to his prurient practice with stark sarcasm by republishing some of his photographs, praising them as "the greatest poetic discovery of the late nineteenth century" (Breton and Aragon, "Le cinquantenaire de l'hystérie [1878–1928]," *La révolution surréaliste* 4 [1928]: 21–23).
7. Pierre Marie, cited in Georges Guillain, *J.-M. Charcot, 1825–1893: His Life–His Work*, tr. Pearce Bailey (New York: Paul E. Hoeber, 1959), 136: "Living in this way among the epileptics, checking them in their falls, and taking care of them during the seizures after they had fallen, the young hysterics were susceptible to powerful impressions and because

of their tendencies to mimic, which is so characteristic of their neuroses, they duplicated in their hysteric fits every phase of hallucinations . . . sometimes terrifying to behold."

8. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Delta, 1977), 11–12.

9. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), 12.

10. Freud, "Charcot (1893)," in *Collected Papers*, 1: 18–19.

11. Charcot has proven an easy target for critics who fault a perceived lack of feminist ideals in the man who first took hysterical women seriously. Martha Noel Evans admirably avoids such a reductive view in *Fits and Starts. A Genealogy of Hysteria in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 44–46.

12. Notable exceptions are Joan Copjec's "Flavit et Dissipati Sunt," in *October* 18 (1981): 20–40, which discusses the status of the image in psychoanalytic theory, and Georges Didi-Huberman's *Invention de l'hystérie: Charcot et l'iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Macula 1982), which considers the medium of photography itself.

13. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays in Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 232.

14. Whereas I follow Solomon-Godeau's analysis of the way in which sexuality is presented in photography, I have reservations about her conclusions on American feminist debates over what she refers to as the "censorship" of pornographic images, a category that must be considered when looking at Charcot's pictures. See especially her "Reconsidering Erotic Photography," in ibid., 229–231. Although the line between the erotic and the pornographic may indeed run in a blurred zone that needs to be rethought according to the way in which photography adopts and distorts previous modes of representation, we can nonetheless subject Charcot's practice to a critique that considers his work pornographic precisely because he uses a camera. Not all opponents to violent and degrading pornography limit their analyses to a thematic consideration of the images in question; their work, which also considers the practice of taking pictures, may in fact correspond in large part to Solomon-Godeau's otherwise brilliant examinations of the relations among photography, sexuality, and sexual difference.

15. On the status of the image and its philosophical underpinnings in psychoanalytic theory, see also Copjec's "Flavit et Dissipati Sunt." On the "sight-retreat" in psychoanalysis, see Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 99; and, on Freud's rejection of the image and the use of photography and film in psychoanalysis, see Steven Heath, *The Sexual Fix* (New York: Schocken, 1984), 38. For further links between psychoanalysis and the technical media, see also Laurence A. Rickels, *The Case of California* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

16. On the textual level, Charcot's case studies frequently continue or reproduce an earlier moment of abuse, as when, for example, Charcot omits from the summary list of possible origins of a patient's hysterical symptoms her rape by her employer, which is reported in the doctor's lengthy case description some pages earlier. Thus *IPS*, 2: 167–168 offers a summary of Augustine's case that mentions only her adolescent "affairs," whereas on p. 126 of the same volume, her own testimony records the rape by her em-

ployer (also her mother's lover). At no point during the case study is there any indication that Augustine's testimony regarding the rape was open to question.

17. "Keep in mind—this should not require much effort—that the word 'hysteria' means nothing. Little by little you will acquire the habit of speaking of hysteria in men without thinking in any way of the uterus" (Charcot, in Goetz, *Charcot, the Clinician*, 116).

18. Charcot, *L'hystérie: Textes choisis et présentés par E. Trillat* (Toulouse: Privat, 1971), 158 (translation modified from Goetz, *Charcot, the Clinician*, 116).

19. Freud, "Some Points in a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Paralysis (1893)," in *Collected Papers* 1: 54 (emphasis in original).

20. Charcot's photography of hysterical patients may be viewed as the attempt to make the body express itself in the medico-scientific idiom; hysteria would then mark the appearance of a *differend:* in Lyotard's sense of the term, a nonlitigable conflict between two parties who do not share an idiom. See Lyotard, "Speech Snapshot," in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 129–34; and Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, tr. Georges van den Abeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

21. Guillain, *J.-M. Charcot, 1825–1893*, 138–139.

22. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 91; Charcot, *L'hystérie: Textes choisis*, 158; Charcot, cited in Freud, *Collected Papers*, 1: 22.

23. Charcot, cited in Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 119.

24. Ibid.

25. Freud, *Collected Papers*, 1: 10.

26. Charcot, *L'hystérie: Textes choisis*, 158.

27. The willingness to use all available technologies nonetheless explains Charcot's confident decision to revive the ill-reputed practice of hypnosis: "In fact, if one wishes to succeed thus in imitating in the hypnotized patient a nervous affectation that is independent from hysteria, then one has before one's eyes nothing else but an imperfect copy that can never be confused with the original. We thus have here a method of investigation that may allow us to determine whether a clinical syndrome is or is not under the influence of hysteria" (Charcot, in *La nouvelle iconographie* (periodical) 1 (1889). See also Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

28. "Mais à la vérité, je ne suis absolument là que le photographe; j'inscris ce que je vois" (Charcot, *L'hystérie: Textes choisis.*, 121).

29. Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 32

30. Cited in ibid., 50.

31. "Singulière faiblesse de nos facultés d'observations qui fait que nous ne voyons pas les choses cependant parfaitement visibles sans le concours d'une adaptation particulière de notre esprit. Une fois la chose vue et bien vue, il est facile d'apprendre aux autres à la voir à leur tour. Mais le tout est de la voir une première fois" (Charcot, *Leçons du mardi*, 22).

32. On the role of the picture in medical science prior to Charcot, see Michel Foucault's discussion of the relationship between the conceptual framework of scientific language and the integration of the image into this preexisting configuration. *The Birth of the Clinic*,

tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage, 1975), esp. 112–114. On the hysteric's "*délire des paroles*," see *IPS*, 2: 148: "L. a bavardé sans cesse depuis hier sans avoir d'attaques et son bavardage continue encore: c'est un véritable délire des paroles." Although on a theoretical level Charcot attempted to drydock the fluid semiotics of hysteria, his practical examinations were concerned not only with the metaphors of fluidity but with the actual measuring and recording of each patient's vaginal secretions at hourly intervals (*IPS*, 3: preface).

33. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12.

34. This shock should not be confused with the Benjaminian "*choc*," which is a kind of aesthetic rupture that suspends cognition with the promise of a later enhanced understanding of this suspension; the shock of the flash does not guarantee such belated cognitive fulfillment.

35. According to Freud, the patient understands anatomy through clothing rather than through science, because for a hysteric, "the leg is the leg up to its insertion into the hip, the arm is the upper extremity as mapped out by their clothing" (Freud, *Collected Papers*, 1: 54).

36. *IPS*, 3: 205. Throughout the *Iconographie*, proper names appear in various stages of mutilation. The indeterminacy of B . . ., instead of B. or her full name, may suggest on a typographical level the difficulties of "arresting" the hysterical patient. See, e.g., the image of S . . . (*IPS*, 3: 222): "Ma . . ., dite N . . ., Suzanne, lingère, 19 ans . . .," who is later referred to as S . . . .

37. On the shifts in Augustine's name in the case studies, see Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 86.

38. On the body's flexibility and rigidity, see *IPS*, 3: 193 and Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 191.

39. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 49 (emphasis in original).

40. Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 205.

41. Cited in ibid., 50.

42. Benjamin, "Small History of Photography," 247.

43. William Mortensen, *Flash in Modern Photography* (San Francisco: Camera Craft Publishing, 1941), 12–14.

44. Benjamin, "Small History of Photography," esp. 243.

45. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 102. See Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 50–63, for the link between Charcot's photographic practice and the images of criminals in Cesare Lombroso's *Atlas de l'homme criminel* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1878).

46. Guillain, *J.-M. Charcot, 1825–1893*, 23. This motivation also shows up in nineteenth-century science's affinity with the freak show, magic, and the occult. "The scientific imperative, the demand in the nineteenth century for an epistemologically reliable inquiry into the nature of things, derives part of its strength from the powerful competition represented by fascination for the freak and the occult, which is always on the way to technology" (Ronell, *The Telephone Book*, 366).

47. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 454; Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, 233.

48. In the conclusion to the *Iconographie*, Charcot extends this view by diagnosing artistic representations of "demonic possession" from antiquity to modernity as hysterical symptoms, thus deriving from the image evidence of a hidden mental disease. Compare this passage with Charcot's *Les démoniaques dans l'art* (with Paul Richer [Paris: Delahaye & Lecrosnier, 1887]) on depictions of hysterical patients in (art) history. On the hysteric's absorption of the medical ways of looking at herself, see also Didi-Huberman, "The Figurative Incarnation of the Sentence (Notes on the 'Autographic Skin')," *Journal: A Contemporary Art Magazine* 5 (1987): 66–70.
49. See Elaine Showalter's otherwise insightful discussion of Charcot's practice in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and Culture in England, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 147–154.
50. For a reading of the hysterical body as memory of the "abandoned body," see Robert D. Romanyshyn, *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (London: Routledge, 1989), 163–169.
51. On the notion of the moment in relation to *techné* and its apparition in the shape of the photographic apparatus, see Derrida, "Deaths of Roland Barthes,"289.
52. Mortensen, *Flash in Modern Photography*, 78.
53. Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, 233.
54. Only the last three photographs in the *Iconographie* show an experimenter's hand in a way comparable to the traces of manual production found in drawing, painting, and sculpture. These three images refer back to the manual tradition of painting by depicting the use of a pencil or small stylus to tactilely stimulate the subject's facial muscles (figure 1.11). Their inclusion in the *Iconographie*, however, is a nearly inadvertent afterthought that neither corresponds to nor illustrates the arguments of the work as a whole: "Au moment de livrer à l'impression la dernière livraison de ce volume, nous avons vérifié de nouveau les faits consignés dans les observations et nous en avons profité pour représenter quelques-unes des expériences relatives à l'hypérexcitabilité musculaire. Nous avons choisi la malade de l'Observation I, Wit . . . Les trois dernières planches la montrent en léthargie (*somniation*); l'*hypérexcitabilité musculaire*, on s'en souvient, est présente" (*IPS*, 3: 228). Ultimately, even the clinically detached Charcot had to figuratively sign his patients. On the "absent presence" of the doctor who presumably positioned patients during a photographic session, see Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, esp. 222–224, and Copjec, "Flavit et Dissipati Sunt," esp. 38–40. A famous collection of similar images is in Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne, *Album de photographes pathologiques complementaire du livre intitulé* De l'electrisation localisée (Paris: : Baillière, 1862).
55. Borch-Jacobson, *Emotional Tie*, 44.
56. For a summary of the differences between Charcot's understanding of hysteria and later psychoanalytic approaches to the same symptoms, see Freud, *Collected Papers* 1: 9–22.
57. Freud, "Extracts from Freud's Footnotes to His Translation of Charcot's Tuesday Lectures," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, tr. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), 1: 137.
58. Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'hystérie*, 183.
59. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 38. Laplanche and Pontalis suggest that Freud opposes the notion of "acting out" [*agieren*] to ordinary

remembering to emphasize that "the two [are] contrasting ways of bringing the past into the present" (J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, eds., *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith [New York: W. W. Norton, 1973], 4–6). Humphrey Morris suggests that "'acting out' through which the patient repeats a past 'he has forgotten and repressed' cannot simply be contrasted with translation into words but must be taken to include narration *as* an enactment set going by disavowal" (Morris, "Translating Transmission: Representation and Enactment in Freud's Construction of History," in *Telling Facts: History and Narration in Psychoanalysis*, ed. Joseph H. Smith and Humphrey Morris [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992], 92).

60. "Photography . . . with its time lapses, enlargements, etc., makes such knowledge possible" (Benjamin, "Small History of Photography," 242).

61. Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," 264.

62. Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," in *Standard Edition*, 4: 96–104.

63. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 91.

64. Ibid., 4.

65. For an earlier reading than Benjamin's, see André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9–16.

66. Benjamin, "Small History of Photography," 242 (translation modified); Benjamin is referring to a photograph of a married couple.

67. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

68. Benjamin, "Small History of Photography," 243.

69. Ibid., 242.

70. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 115. The photograph is a hallucination but, as Bazin reminds us, it is a "hallucination that is also a fact ("Ontology of the Photographic Image," 16).

71. Londe is credited with using bright explosives in the Salpêtrière photo studio in the 1870s. On the invention and development of the flash, see Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *The History of Photography: From the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), 426–432.

72. Derrida has carefully worked out the traces of this absence with regard to photography in "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," 290.

73. *IPS*, 1: preface. On suppression of the visual, see also Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

74. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1975), 220.

75. Gilles de La Tourette, "De la superposition des troubles de la sensibilité et des spasmes de la face et du cou chez les hystériques," in *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* (periodical) 2 (1889): 107–129, 114.

76. Hortense's affliction worsened during "treatment" at the Salpêtrière, until one day her vision returned "naturally and spontaneously." Shortly after, she was dismissed at her own request (ibid., 119).

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.
79. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 222.
80. Freud, *Collected Papers*, 1: 19.
81. Caruth, "Introduction," in Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 14.
82. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 4, 65.
83. Ibid., 65.
84. Avital Ronell suggests that television shares a specific link with the structures of trauma, in "Trauma TV: Twelve Steps Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millenium* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1995).
85. Charcot, *Leçons du mardi*, 36 (emphasis in original).

Chapter 2

1. Walter Benjamin was among the first to note the historical shift from the perception of *landscape* as the setting for an individual's passage through time to *terrain*, where coherent experience may no longer be available. Benjamin diagnosed the destruction of the landscape as the setting for historical experience and its violent transformation into mere terrain [*Gelände*] in the 1920s, when Europe was confronted by the vast, scarred areas left all but uninhabitable by warfare. The enormous battlefields of World War I had ceased to serve as settings for historical experience and had been seen purely in terms of strategic usefulness and ability to conceal troops. For a discussion of Benjamin's postwar notion of landscape, see Cornelia Vismann, "Landscape in the First World War," *New Comparison* 18 (1995): 76–88; and Bernd Hüppauf, "Räume der Destruktion und Konstruktion von Raum: Landschaft Sehen Raum und der Erste Weltkrieg," *Krieg und Literatur/War and Literature* 3 (1991).
2. Dirk Reinartz and Christian Graf von Krokow, *Deathly Still: Pictures of Former German Concentration Camps*, tr. Ishbel Flett (New York: Scalo, 1995).
3. Mikael Levin, *War Story*, text by Meyer Levin (Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997).
4. Here and throughout I use the term *Holocaust.* Its problematic religious connotations of "sacrifice" have been analyzed by Omer Bartov, who also discusses the problems with alternative terms in *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56. See also Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 132n.2. Replacing the term *Holocaust* with such terms as *Shoah*, *Churbn*, *Auschwitz*, or *Final Solution* would not only result in further problems (some of which have been discussed by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, tr. Georges van den Abeele [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988]). It might also suggest that we have arrived at an improved understanding of the event that the term *Holocaust* had left obscured. Notwithstanding the important studies by historians, I want to avoid the suggestion of such an improved understanding.
5. For the sense in which I use the Benjaminian term *auratic*, see n. 36.

6. Erich Hartmann's flawed *In the Camps* (New York: Norton, 1997) contains highly stylized images of former camps and contemporary memorials. After rehearsing pervasive tropes of Holocaust imagery and relying on a questionable, quasi-metaphysical aesthetics of light and dark (some of which is also employed by Reinartz), Hartmann ends with images suffused with a clichéd sentimentality that relieves viewers of the obligation to consider their own placement, situation, and subject-position vis-à-vis these sites.
7. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking, 1964), 268.
8. Greil Marcus, *The Dustbin of History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 91.
9. See Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
10. See also Joachim Ritter, "Landschaft," *in Subjektivität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 141–65; and J. H. Van den Berg, "The Subject and his Landscape," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), 57–65.
11. See Geoffrey H. Hartman's "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness,'" in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Bloom, 46–57.
12. Joseph Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 20 (emphasis in original).
13. John Barrell's study of images of the poor in English landscape painting addresses a similar concern. Although he warns against the illusion of identification with the rural poor in these paintings, the canvases he analyzes permit viewers to project themselves into the sites in ways that, I show, are cut short in the work of Reinartz and Levin. See Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
14. For a discussion of approaches to the Holocaust as an ineffable event that nonetheless has permitted interpreters to draw lessons from it, see Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "Representing Auschwitz," *History and Memory* 7 (1996): 121–54.
15. For discussions of the questions of cultural transmission of the Holocaust, see Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and the discussion and notes in chapter 3.
16. See, e.g., Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow, or The Nature of the Offense* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991); D. M. Thomas, *Pictures at an Exhibition* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993).
17. Reinhard Matz, *Die unsichtbaren Lager. Das Verschwinden der Vergangenheit im Gedenken* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1993), 19f. See also Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Introduction: Darkness Visible," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Hartman (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1994); Yael Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," *Representations* 45 (1994): 72–100.
18. Jacques Derrida, "Shibboleth for Paul Celan," in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 50.
19. Important debates center on the Romantic and aesthetic representation of surroundings and focus on the claim that all landscape art, because it tries to make the real desir-

able by means of aesthetic conventions, amounts to the artistic equivalent of militaristic, colonial desire. New historicist critics expose the presumably aesthetic focus of influential formalist critics of landscape art such as John Ruskin, Kenneth Clark, and E. H. Gombrich as complicit with nefarious nationalistic tendencies. See Ruskin, *Lectures on Landscape* (Orpington and London: George Allen, 1897); Gombrich, "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966); Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: Murray, 1949). New historicists draw on the "hard facts" and "social energies" of history and cite the social contexts of the production and reception of landscape art to expose the imperialist drive presumably obscured in traditional aesthetically oriented art criticism. For the most pertinent historicist criticism, see the essays in W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). The assertion is that the purely aesthetic, Ruskinian approach to landscape art carried out in terms of organization of space, illusion of depth, viewer's placement, and the "experience of place" remains willfully blind to, and indeed complicit with, the Enlightenment's dark underside and the tremendous human costs of Europe's industrial and cultural development. The complicity between artistic landscape depictions and colonialist expansion cannot be denied; as I show in this chapter, this complicity might be deconstructed from within the genre of landscape photography.

20. Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, tr. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), 91.

21. For sophisticated readings of the landscape tradition and its relation to imperialist ambition, see the essays in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power.*

22. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 27.

23. Nadine Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1984): 424.

24. Dan Diner, "Zwischen Aporie und Apologie: Über Grenzen der Historisierbarkeit der Massenvernichtung," *Babylon* 2 (1987): 33; Raul Hilberg, *Unerbetene Erinnerung: Der Weg eines Holocaust Forschers* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994), 174–75. See also Saul Friedlander, "'The Final Solution': On the Unease in Historical Interpretation," in his *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

25. Langer distinguishes between "common" and "deep memories" in *Holocaust Testimonies*, 1–39.

26. The term *concentrationary* universe hints at this unbridgeable gap between the notions of a "place" or "world," and the occurrences in these nonplaces; it was used first by David Rousset, *L'univers concentrationnaire* (Paris: Payot, 1946). See Michel Pollack, *L'expérience concentrationnaire: Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale* (Paris: Metailie, 1990). On the relations between the places of the Holocaust and the knowledge of these places, see also Claude Lanzmann, "Le lieu et la parole," in *Au sujet de Shoah*, ed. Michel Deguy (Paris: Belin, 1990), 294.

27. The tension between a landscape photograph's aesthetic appeal and its documentary dimensions has resulted in debates about the possibility of categorizing such photographs as either aesthetic *landscapes* organized in terms of flatness, illusion of depth, and "aesthetic

signification [of] sublimity and transcendence" or purely informational *views*, in which space is properly "grounded, coordinated, mapped . . . not so much by perspective as by photographic grid" (Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Myths* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985], 133–35). Krauss analyzes the difference between landscapes and views by discussing photographs meant to document terrain slated for industrial, civilian, or military exploitation. See also Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

28. The term *unstoried* in relation to a place was first used by Washington Irving, in the preface to his 1819 *Sketchbook*, to refer to the expanses of the American West before their colonization by European settlers.

29. For an illuminating discussion of the link between anamorphic perspective and modern subjectivity, see Tom Conley, "The Wit of the Letter: Holbein's Lacan," in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, ed. Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York: Routledge, 1996), 45–63.

30. Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 15.

31. On the centrality of Ohrdruf in the U.S. press coverage of Nazi crimes at the end of the war, see Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), esp. 86–120.

32. Levin, *War Story*, 155. Page numbers for quotations from this work hereafter appear in text in parentheses.

33. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi discusses the paradoxical notion of a "place without the self," which I discuss here from an art-historical point of view, in the relations between photographs and writing in the work of the poet Dan Pagis; Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in Modern Hebrew Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 166.

34. William Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

35. Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 121.

36. In order to strip the term *aura* (and its adjective, *auratic*) of its aura, we might best describe it as a ghostly premonition or a spell (in its Victorian usage), rather than as the nostalgic glow of authentic presence, as it is often misconstrued. In *Agon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), Harold Bloom usefully draws on Benjamin's definition of *aura* and earlier explanations to define aura as "an invisible breath or emanation . . . a breeze, but most of all a sensation or shock, the sort of illusion of a breeze that precedes the start of a nervous breakdown or disorder" (230). Benjamin's notion of the disappearance or destruction of the aura through technical reproduction has become a commonplace of photography criticism. This notion—which Benjamin modified in "Small History of Photography"—is often imported from his later essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken 1968). Ariella Azoulay has shown Benjamin's essay to be a "eulogy . . . to the loss of place . . . a transition from a unique place in which one must be present to experience it to a place that can be experienced without necessarily being there, due to the various technologies

of reproduction" (Azoulay, *Death's Showcase* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001], 21, 22). Theodor W. Adorno offers a critique of Benjamin's thesis about the disappearance of aura in all mass-produced works in *Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1984), 82.

37. See Michael Fried's work on absorption in *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For a history of the camps and a preliminary bibliography of survivor testimonies on Sobibór, see Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibór; Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

38. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 91.

39. On kitsch and sublimity in Holocaust representation, see Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, tr. Thomas Weyr (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); and Lyotard, *Heidegger and 'the jews*,' tr. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

40. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has analyzed the ideological reworking of the Romantic tradition into "National Aestheticism" in *Heidegger, Art, and Politics*, tr. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 58.

41. Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 145.

42. Robert Jan van Pelt analyzes the link between the Holocaust and Heidegger's thoughts on space and dwellings (to which the term *Lichtung*, for "clearing," alludes here). Van Pelt and Carroll William Westfall, eds., *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

43. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 28.

44. Caruth, "Introduction," in Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 14. For other discussions of representations of the Holocaust informed by trauma theory, see esp. the essays in Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance;* Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tal, *Worlds that Hurt.*

45. See, for example, Lenore Terr et al, "Children's Responses to the Challenger Spacecraft Disaster," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 153 (1996): 624.

46. Lanzmann, "Le lieu et la parole," in *Au sujet de Shoah*, 294.

47. Among the vast theoretical writings on trauma, the following texts are of particular interest to discussions of the precision of traumatic memory: Pierre Janet, *L'amnésie et la dissociation des souvenirs par l'émotion* (Paris: F. Alcan 1904; reprint, Marseille, 1983); Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, vol. 2 of Freud, *Standard Edition;* Jacques Lacan, "Tuché et Automaton," in *Le Séminaire*, vol. 11, *Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychoanalyse*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1973); Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980); Bessel A. van der Kolk, *Psychological Trauma* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1987); Bessel van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisath, eds., *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996);

J. L Singer, ed., *Repression and Dissociation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). Ruth Leys is skeptical about the literalist notion of traumatic memory but acknowledges—and regardless of the differences between theoretical models, this is relevant for the present purposes—that this conception, which is as historically and culturally specific as others, "is deeply entrenched . . . in the cultural imagery of the West" (Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 263).

48. The best-known example of this use of documentary photographs may be the so-called Auschwitz Album, taken by an unknown Nazi photographer and discovered by the survivor Lili Meier at the Dora labor camp; see Peter Hellmann, ed., *The Auschwitz Album: A Book Based upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili Meier* (New York: Random House, 1981). See also the articles by Cornelia Brink, Detlev Hoffmann, and Hanno Loewy on the use of photographs in postwar Holocaust education and memorialization, in *Auschwitz: Geschichte, Rezeption und Wirkung*, ed. Fritz Bauer Institut (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996). Marianne Hirsch offers an intriguing analysis of the role of family snapshots in Holocaust commemoration in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

49. On moral concerns about the desire for absolute understanding, see esp. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and Lyotard, *The Differend.*

50. Manuel Köppen, ed., *Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1993), 166.

51. On the question of whether the "Final Solution" can be integrated into a historical narrative, see the debate between Hayden White, Martin Jay, and Carlo Ginzburg in Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

52. LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, 46 (emphasis added).

53. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explores the violent aspect of the enlightened subject's subjugation of the outside world that is necessary for the subject's constitution.

54. The term *secondary witness* occurs in Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); and in Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 39. Geoffrey H. Hartman has elaborated on this concept in "Holocaust and Intellectual Witness," *Partisan Review* 65 (1998): 37–48.

55. On the work of Reinhard Matz, who tries to capture the nature of "memory-tourism," see James Young, "Das Erinnern und die Rhetorik des Fotos—Reinhard Matz," in *Die unsichtbaren Lager*, 15–19.

56. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 53.

57. Peter Weiss, "Mein Ort," in *Rapporte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981); Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, 145–147, Young, *Texture of Memory;* Shama, *Landscape and Memory.*

58. Such total amnesia is rare in survivors of trauma but often determines the reality of those who come in contact with them. For an exceptionally effective and moving account

of the dangerous sense of overwhelming mystery caused by the voiding of memory during the Holocaust, see David Grossman's novel, *See Under: Love* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1991).
59. Vilém Flusser, *Standpunkte: Texte zur Fotografie*, ed. Andreas Müller-Pohle (Göttingen: European Photography, 1998), 8: 157.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.

Chapter 3

1. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), xviii.
2. Ibid.
3. For discussions of the impact of the Holocaust on American public consciousness, see Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," in *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 119–150; Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Mariner, 2000).
4. Levin, *In Search, An Autobiography* (Paris: Authors' Press, 1950); Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) , 162. While Meyer Levin's personal sense of shock and stunned disbelief, though always mediated by his commitment to the task of reporting, is surely authentic, the global reaction of incredulity to his "news" of the existence of the camps was disingenuous in many quarters. As Walter Laqueur has shown, news about the camps existed, though some of this information was classified by the U.S. government and unavailable to the public. *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution"* (New York: Holt, 1998).
5. Thomas Mann to Meyer Levin, September 22, 1950, Meyer Levin Collection, Department of Special Collections, Boston University.
6. Levin's dispatches are preserved in the Meyer Levin Collection, Department of Special Collections, Boston University (hereafter ML Collection).
7. Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 162.
8. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 202.
9. Mikael Levin, *War Story*, text by Meyer Levin (Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997), 127. (Hereafter, page numbers of quotations appear in text within parentheses.)
10. Meyer Levin, "I Witnessed the Liberation," *Congress Weekly* (April 18, 1955), 3–4, ML Collection.
11. Albert Einstein, blurb on jacket cover of Meyer Levin, *In Search*, ML Collection.
12. Meyer Levin's obsession with the stage adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which he first brought to the attention of an American publisher, is chronicled in his *The Obsession* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); Lawrence Graver, *An Obsession with Anne*

Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Ralph Melnick, *The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank: Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1997. See also Ezrahi's discussion of a shift in receptiveness for Holocaust literature and its relation to Levin's work in *By Words Alone*, 200–202.

13. Meyer Levin, *The Nation*, July 28, 1945 (emphasis in original).

14. Monica Strauss, "The Landscape of Memory," *Aufbau*, May 9, 1997, 14.

15. For a discussion of the back-figure, or *Rückenfigur*, in Romantic painting, see Joseph Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of the Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

16. One of the groups responsible for mounting the poster has published its account. See Benjamin Ortmeyer, ed., *Eyewitnesses Speak Out Against Denial: Testimonials by 100 Surviving Jewish Students of Their School Days in Frankfurt on Main/Germany During the Nazi Era*, tr. Ruth Bader (Bonn: Wehle, 1994). The book includes photographs of the official ceremony during which the poster was attached.

17. Andreas Feininger, *Andreas Feininger, Photographer* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 20–21 (emphasis in original).

18. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in his *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken , 1968), 188.

19. On the notion of a "witness through the imagination" or "vicarious witness," see Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 52–53; Norma Rosen, "The Second Life of Holocaust Imagery," in her *Accidents of Influence: Writing as a Woman and a Jew in America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Froma Zeitlin, "Vicarious Witness: Belated Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature," *History and Memory* (1998): 5–42; Efraim Sicher, *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz* (Champagne/Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

20. The woman in Levin's photograph is the haunting revenant of the female passer-by—like the woman in Charles Baudelaire's 1860 poem "À une passante"—who has come to signal the beginning of modernity and the concurrent rise of photography as a mode of visual retention. In Baudelaire's sonnet, the observer's enchantment with a passing woman coincides with, and is in fact prompted by, her departure. Her attraction stems from loss, and the poet's realization that she exists only as a vanishing figure is rendered in the quasi-photographic line "*Un éclair . . . puis la nuit! Fugitive beauté*" (A flash . . . then night!—Fleeting beauty). Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil and Paris Spleen*, tr. William Crosby (Brockport, N.Y.: BOA, 1991), 176–77. For Benjamin, whose studies on modernity focused stereoscopically on Baudelaire and photography, the momentary loss of expression in this encounter with the passer-by—indicated by the ellipsis between "a flash" and "then night!"—is the basis of his reading of Baudelaire as the first modern poet. "The sonnet supplies the figure of shock, indeed of catastrophe," writes Benjamin, and this shock emerges as the mark of Baudelaire's modernity (Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 169).

21. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, tr. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 1.
22. Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 12–13.
23. Ibid.
24. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 90.
25. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. E. B. Ashman (New York: Continuum, 1983), 371.
26. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 232 (emphasis in original).
27. See Larry Schaaf, "Photography Becomes an Art," in his *Out of the Shadows: Herschel, Talbot, and The Invention of Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 103–51.
28. Graham Clarke, *The Photograph* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24 (emphasis in original).
29. See Vilém Flusser, "Der fotografische Blick," in *Standpunkte: Texte zur Fotografie*, ed. Andreas Müller-Pohle (Göttingen: European Photography, 1998), 8: 152–58.
30. Cited in Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present* (Garden City, N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1964), 43.
31. See the work of Charles Marville and Eugène Atget for images of Parisian neighborhoods just before Hausmann ordered them to be torn down in the nineteenth century. Benjamin and others have compared those neighborhoods to scenes of a crime. See Marie de Thézy, *Marville Paris* (Paris: Hazan, 1994), and Laure Beaumont-Maillet, *Atget Paris* (Paris: Hazan, 1992).
32. For such an approach, see Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3: "I felt guilt about bafflement because I suspected its origins: that it arose because . . . I had refused full imaginative engagement [with the Holocaust]." Clendinnen's faith in "full imaginative engagement" prompts her to project her sentiments onto a Nazi photographer's picture of an old woman and several young children presumably walking to their deaths in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Clendinnen inadvertently effaces the old woman from the image, and from memory by imagining herself as one of the girl's grandmothers: "I cannot easily bear to look at that photograph [reproduced on the cover of Clendinnen's book]. Had [the girl] lived, she would be an old woman by now. As it is, she is forever my granddaughter, trudging towards death in shoes too big for her" (10). "Full imaginative engagement," as shown in this effacement of a Jewish grandmother in the name of the sentimental imaginative transhistorical adoption and rescue of the Jewish child seen as the icon of vulnerability and "innocence," is a risky ambition.

Chapter 4

1. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken , 1968), 255 (emphasis in original).

2. Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 9.
3. Edgar Morin, *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire* (Paris: Minuit, 1956), 30 (cited in Cornelia Brink, "Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps," *History and Memory* 21 [2000]: 140).
4. The slide collection has been copied and preserved for research in the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt.
5. The collection also includes affectionately posed images of Genewein's smiling coworkers and family. Other pictures show Genewein with family and friends on tourist excursions in war-ravaged Poland or eating in someone's living room. The lasting impression of the collection, however, is of a sober textbook illustration of labor-intensive manufacturing.
6. Florian Freund, Bertrand Perz, and Karl Stuhlpfarrer, "Bildergeschichten—Geschichtsbilder," in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*"*: Das Getto in Łódź, 1942–1944*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Gerhard Schoenberger (Vienna: Löcker, 1990), 58.
7. Hilmar Hoffman, "Geleitwort," and Freund et al., "Bildergeschichten—Geschichtsbilder," both in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 6, 57, 58.
8. Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16 (emphasis in original).
9. Ibid., 37.
10. Gertrud Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), 179. For Koch, when individual Jews in the photographs from the Łódź ghetto resist the photographer's attempt to arrange the picture according to his "fascist aesthetics," this resistance is futile and finally subordinated to the "cultural code" of a Nazi vision where the extermination is part of the viewers' "everyday awareness" (184). In Koch's view, whatever little agency the Jews have to shape these images becomes itself an expression of a Nazi perspective.
11. Ibid., 134.
12. In a statement expressing his belief that the camera exercises absolute control over its subjects, Lanzmann explains why he used no historical documentary footage in *Shoah*. Nazi films of executions or photographs from the ghettos, he asserts, "do not express anything. . . . I call them images without imagination. They are simply images, they do not have any force" (Claude Lanzmann, "Le lieu et la parole," in *Au sujet de Shoah*, ed. Michel Deguy [Paris: Belin, 1990], 297). Nazi images, Lanzmann argues, lack expressive force because they arrange stereotyped figures according to seemingly incontestable hierarchies. In these photographs nothing is truly seen, but an ideologically shaped vision of the world is rigidly imposed onto the photograph's subjects. None of the Jews in such images is depicted outside the Nazi vise of humiliation, destruction, and death. In Lanzmann's view, such photographs lack imagination because the Jews in them are not seen as alive but only as part of a racist scheme allowing for nothing but annihilation. In his film, *Shoah*, Lanzmann explicitly tries to counter this voiding of the imagination and "emptying of the gaze" in Nazi images. On the notion of an "emptying of the gaze," see Koch,

Einstellung, 171; and Bernd Hüppauf, "Emptying the Gaze: Viewing Violence through the Viewfinder," *New German Critique* 72 (vol. 24/3), 1997, 3–44.

13. Sybil Milton has criticized such assumptions as based on a flawed understanding of "legitimacy" and "authenticity"—categories that might be compromised by the very act of picture-taking, regardless of the photographer's intentions or ideology. Milton finds that among the thousands of Nazi-created photographs, "a relatively large number is free of gross distortion or ideological prejudice" (Milton, "Argument oder Illustration. Die Bedeutung von Fotodokumenten als Quelle," *Fotogeschichte* 8 [1988]: 62).

14. Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions*, 13.

15. Jurek Becker, "Die unsichtbare Stadt," in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 10.

16. Leon Zelman, cited in Freund et al., "Bildergeschichten—Geschichtsbilder," in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 58.

17. Morin, *Cinéma, ou l'homme imaginaire*, 32.

18. Hilmar Hoffmann characterizes the slides as "disconcerting" in "Geleitwort," in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 6.

19. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 6.

20. Since the Jews in the Łódź ghetto could not leave and were to a large extent forcibly deported there, the commonly used term "inhabitants" seems inadequate. "The root of all the evil of our sorrowful existence stems precisely from our being confined in a Ghetto—a deteriorating and demoralizing effect. This is the source of our physical and moral breakdown. The Ghetto and life in the Ghetto has no future because we are confined within its walls against our will, because it came about through brute force which disregarded all human feeling" (Dr. Israel Mklejkowski, "The Evil of the Ghetto," in *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege*, ed. Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides [New York: Viking, 1989], 149). See also Sara Zyskind, *Stolen Years* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1981); Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, ed., *Preserved Evidence: Ghetto Łódź*, 2 vols. (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998, 2000). There is no English-language history of the Łódź ghetto. Isaiah Trunk's Yiddish-language account, *Lodzsher Geto: a Historishe un Sotsyologishe Shtudie mit Dokumentn, Tabeles un Mape* (New York: YIVO, 1962), is the most important history. I am grateful to my colleague David Engel for this and other important information on Holocaust history.

21. Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* (London: Lime Tree, 1992), 172.

22. Hanno Loewy, quoting Arnold Mostowicz, in "P.W.O.K. Arieh Ben Menachems Album," *Fotogeschichte* 11/39 (1991): 35–40, 38.

23. For a discussion of Mordekhai Chaim Rumkowski and the general difficulty of evaluating Jewish responses to the Nazi terror, see Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1964); Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978); Dan Diner, "Jenseits des Vorstellbaren—der 'Judenrat' als Situation," in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 32–41; and Raul Hilberg, "Rettung und Kollaboration—der Fall Łódź," in "*Wer zum Leben, wer zum Tod . . ." Strategien jüdischen Überlebens im Ghetto*, ed. Doron Kiesel et al.

(Frankfurt: Campus, 1992), 63–76. On the futility of retroactively negotiating such "choiceless choices," see Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6–22.

24. Arnold Mostowicz, "Alltagsleben im Getto," in "*Wer zum Leben, wer zum Tod*," 48.

25. Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University. Tape T–224, testimony of Martin L.

26. Ibid., Tape T–530, testimony of Haddasah R.

27. All cited in David Patterson, *Along the Edge of Annihilation* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1999), 82.

28. [Unknown author], "*Les vrais riches*," *Notizen am Rand: Ein Tagebuch aus dem Ghetto Łódź* (May–August 1944), ed. Hanno Loewy and Andrzej Bodek (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997), 79.

29. The editors of a German edition of the diary state that the diary was found at Auschwitz. See Loewy and Bodek, "*Les vrais riches*," 22. For a slightly different account of its postwar retrieval from the destroyed ghetto, see the testimony of Abraham Benkel, in Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 505.

30. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 57–59.

31. Andrea Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography, and the Holocaust* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 6. Barthes does not quite conflate "photography as an unproblematic site of death and mourning," as Liss contends (6–7). See my discussion of an "undialectical" image in Chapter 3.

32. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

33. Ibid. (emphasis added). The Barthesian shudder can be traced back to Siegfried Kracauer: "A shudder runs through the viewer of old photographs" (Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and tr. Thomas Y. Levin [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995], 56).

34. "Oskar Rosenfeld's Notebooks," in *Łódź Ghetto*, 277.

35. Although I am concerned here with the ways in which any returned gaze might deflect the Nazis' eliminatory ways of seeing, the particularity of each facial expression is crucially important. The public reception of the Holocaust in America might have been different if the ubiquitous image of a small Jewish boy in a large tweed cap walking away from a train with his hands above his head as an SS man points a gun at him had been replaced with a different image. The photo of the boy has inspired pity, compassion, and sentimental outbursts of protective identification. It is part of an account of the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, the so-called Stroop Report named after the German officer in command during the ghetto uprising. For a discussion of responses to this picture, see Marianne Hirsch, "Looking at Holocaust Images . . .," in *Acts of Memory*, ed. Mieke Bal, Leo Spitzer, and Marianne Hirsch (Dartmouth: University Press of New England, 1999).

This iconic image could be supplemented by the photograph of a group of young people heavy with knapsacks and bags, presumably walking toward a train. All but one young woman are facing forward, weighed down by their burdens. She turns to face the photographer, but her hands are not in the air and she does not look forlorn or confused like the boy cast into a world made senseless by the actions of adults. Her face is contorted with rage and accusation toward the photographer, and her hair is flying around her head

with the force of her angry gesture. Her mouth is open as if she is yelling not just at the camera but at anyone looking at the image today. The photograph is reproduced in Adelson and Lapides, *Łódź Ghetto*, 220.

36. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?: Essays*, 2 vols., ed. and tr. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, 1971), 14.

37. Ian McEwan, *Black Dogs* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 15.

38. Oskar Rosenfeld, *Wozu noch Welt: Aufzeichnungen aus dem Getto Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1994), 67.

39. In Adelson and Lapides, *Łódź Ghetto*, 221.

40. Quoted in ibid., 317.

41. Chaim Kaplan, *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, ed. and tr. Abraham I. Katsh (New York: Collier 1973), 129 (cited in Patterson, *Along the Edge of Annihilation*, 216).

42. Tuvia Borzykowski, *Between Tumbling Walls*, tr. Mendel Kohansky (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1976), 151 (cited in Patterson, *Along the Edge of Annihilation*, 218–219).

43. These images are now located in the YIVO archives in New York City. Some have been published in Mendel Grossmann, *With a Camera in the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken, 1972).

44. Alan Adelson, ed., *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*, tr. Kamil Turowski (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 271.

45. Several of Genewein's color images are also reproduced in Adelson and Lapides, *Łódź Ghetto*.

46. Timm Starl draws attention to this "one-dimensionality" in a set of questions about images from the Fascist period. Starl in "Editorial," *Fotogeschichte* 28, no. 8 (1988): 2.

47. *Fotoamator*, a film directed and produced by Dariusz Jablonski, written and directed by Andrzej Bodek, Arnold Mostowicz, and Dariusz Jablonski (Warsaw: Seventh Art, 1998).

48. On this subject, see Robert Cohen's discussion of the reception of Peter Weiss's play, *The Investigation*, as a "communist" representation of Auschwitz. "The Political Aesthetics of Holocaust Literature: Peter Weiss's 'The Investigation' and Its Critics," *History and Memory* 2 (1998): 43–67.

49. Joel Snyder has traced the development by which photographs have come to be considered natural phenomena; see his "Picturing Vision" in *Poetics of Space: A Critical Photographic Anthology*, ed. Steve Yates (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 158–171.

50. Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 42.

51. The decision to film the liberated camps in black and white was based on Allied concerns that color projectors would not be available in movie houses where this footage was screened to German civilians in an effort to "re-educate" them. See Lawrence Douglas, "Film as Witness: Screening *Nazi Concentration Camps* before the Nuremberg Tribunal," *Yale Law Journal* 105 (1995): 449–481.

The German company Agfa developed its first color film in 1936. In 1998, several color photographs of Mittelbau-Dora were discovered. They were exhibited at the concentration camp memorial museum Mittelbau-Dora near Nordhausen, Germany, in the

spring of 1999. A small number of color photographs from the Warsaw ghetto, including three slides taken by Genewein, also exist.

52. Cited in Stanley Kauffmann, "Dark Surprises," *New Republic* (May 10, 1999), 36.

53. Lawrence Langer has warned repeatedly again the inflation of such hope. For this context, see Langer, "Foreword," *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, ix.

54. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 473.

55. Langer reflects on how the knowledge held by the victims of the Shoah collides with commonly held notions of the range of human knowledge in Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). See also Cynthia Ozick, "Roundtable Discussion," in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), 277–284.

56. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, tr. Georges van den Abeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 101.

57. On the face as knowledge that cannot be invested with specific content, see also Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Séan Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 75–88.

58. Excerpt from Rosenfeld's diary in "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*," 100. The original diary is in the Yad Vashem archive.

59. "Oskar Rosenfeld's Notebooks," in *Łódź Ghetto*, 177; see also Fortunoff Video Archive of Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, Tape T–1398, testimony of George G.

60. Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 24.

61. Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 47.

62. Lanzmann, "Le lieu et la parole," in *Au sujet de Shoah*, 297.

63. Kracauer, "Photography," 50, 56 (emphasis in original).

64. Hanno Loewy, "Spuren," in "*Unser einziger Weg*," 58.

65. Kracauer, "Photography," 50, 52.

66. The Kracauerian hope of "rescue" through revision that informs Jablonski's film silently pulses through various representations of the Shoah. It is a gesture of *citation* meant to link individual names and faces metonymically to a fuller memory and lead toward a "mending" of the world where its scars are preserved rather than toward a reconciliatory "healing" in which the assault is repressed. See Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xxv. A similar gesture informs other projects, such as Yaffa Eliach's "Tower of Faces" in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Serge Klarsfeld's antimonumental memorial book of Jewish children deported from France, and a German research team's efforts to label every last personal snapshot and family photograph discovered in two suitcases at Auschwitz-Birkenau after the war. See Yaffa Eliach, *There Once Was a World* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996); Serge Klarsfeld, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); and Kersten Brandt, Hanno Loewy, and Krystyna Oleksy, eds., *Before They Perished: Photographs Found in Auschwitz* (Munich: Ke-

hayoff, 2001). The practice of endowing photographs with captions and contexts is intended to unlock the photographed individuals from the sepia-tinted pastness of the image. In these projects, the scrupulous search for the life-world of the photographed people is meant to counter both the stereotyping effects of the Nazi gaze and the pull into the vortex of their subjects' terrible fate. The act of identifying individuals in such photographs exceeds the level of a merely constative ascription. To supply context and captions from prewar existence is a performative act that seeks to invest with the aura of life and humanize those who were dehumanized when framed by Nazi photographers. This hope had originally inspired those who tallied lists of survivors' names, people like Meyer Levin—who drove his jeep scrawled with survivors' names from camp to camp in 1945—and others who prepare or study post-Shoah memorial books or *yizker-bikher*. For a useful introduction on *yizker-bikher*, see Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarim, eds., *From A Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, (New York: Schocken, 1983).

67. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Rescue of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 306.

68. Jorge Semprun, *Literature or Life*, tr. Linda Coverdale (New York: Penguin, 1997), 200. (The film of Buchenwald he saw was shot by Allied soldiers.)

69. Ibid., 201.

70. Ibid., 199.

71. Ibid., 200.

72. Kracauer, "Photography," in *Classic Essays in Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg, 264–65.

73. Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, 14.

74. Mostowicz, "Alltagsleben im Getto," in *Wer zum Leben, wer zum Tod*, 49.

75. I consider this lack of a "Polish" voice a shortcoming of *Fotoamator*. For a discussion of the relations between Polish Jews and ethnic Poles during WW II, see Antony Polonsky, ed., *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 1989).

76. Avital Ronell was among the first to search for the blind spots in the legacy left by the Nazis' obsession with technology. See Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); and "Trauma TV: Twelve Steps Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in her *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

77. Rosenfeld, *Wozu noch Welt*, 36 (emphasis in original).

Conclusion

1. Peter T. Connor, *Georges Bataille and the Mysticism of Sin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Giorgio Agamben, "La vie nue," *Revue de la littérature générale* 95:1 (1995), 410–411 (quoted in Connor, *Georges Bataille*, 161).

5. Quoted in Connor, *Georges Bataille*, 141.
6. André Breton and Louis Aragon, "Le cinquantenaire de l'hystérie (1878–1928)," *La révolution surréaliste* 4 (1928): 21–23).
7. Quoted in Connor, *Georges Bataille*, 141.
8. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 257.
9. Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and tr. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 56.
10. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 10.
11. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, eds., *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 149 (cited in Cadava, *Words of Light*, 13).

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