

**CRISIS AND CLASSIFICATION: PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT TYPOLOGIES
IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY GERMANY**

by

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For Mom and Bernd

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Preface

This dissertation investigates the heuristic aims and aesthetics of several different photographic portrait typologies (Eugen Fischer, August Sander, and as a counter example, Helmar Lerski) against discourses of decline prevalent in a variety of cultural contexts in early 20th-century Germany, from the human and social sciences to philosophy and the arts. I analyze relationships between crisis and classification by exploring how these widespread, scientifically informed representations order, narrate, and intervene in a modernity characterized by mass culture, the anonymous city crowd, and the perceived loss of individuality. In deconstructing the desire to visualize individuals and the masses as types, close readings of photographs and related texts by contemporaneous authors, philosophers, and artists work to reject typologies as pure expressions of the positivist ethos, and highlight instead their tenuous position between opposing epistemic poles - between empiricism and philosophical speculation, science and art.

The study results from a sense of awe regarding the ubiquity of typologies: not only in Weimar Germany, which scholars of the era have cited as the locus of a ‘classification mania,’ but before the First World War as well. Also striking are the manifold places in which typological depictions of people turned up to take hold of viewers’ imaginations. From the pages of rationalistic tomes on human sciences like physiology or bio-anthropology, to manuals on criminology, to pristine gallery walls,

modernist art books, and cluttered newspapers, variations of the photographic portrait typology assailed public audiences and academic disciplines alike. Most remarkably from perspectives on popular culture, they did so *not* via distraction and spectacle, but by way of quiet entreaties to concentrate, cognize, and even spiritually engage with manifold human types. Whether photographs of types appear as solitary portraits isolated on the page, accompanied only by titles or captions as with August Sander's *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Chapter Three); or attached to hundreds of pages of text and grouped four to a page as in Eugen Fischer's racial typology (Chapter Two), photographic typologies seemed fundamentally at odds with the maelstroms of political and social life from which they emerged.

Yet the vast terrain covered by these classificatory images, together with their broad appeal, suggests epistemological tensions at work within their own ordered schemes: tensions between describing and theorizing; observing and aestheticizing; looking and intuiting. In focusing on these tensions I have aimed to separate out common tropes and conventions of portrait typologies from uncommon ones, and to establish what unites and what separates these representations as they appear in multifarious contexts. My approach itself is therefore loosely taxonomic, but tempered by suspicion toward the totalizing gesture. I have tried to avoid strict subsumption of portrait typologies beneath any one hegemonic theory by sticking with close readings of images and their inter-medial dialogs with other related literary and visual expressions. What results I hope is the description of a landscape of vision and representation in which these typologies appear.

This priority emerged at first out of sheer defiance: what interested me - namely the heterogeneous manifestations of a single formal and conceptual structure - would, time and again serve as a paradigm for a single critical idea, and this despite the apparently divergent political and heuristic aims of various instances of typology. In readings of typologies, the part - realism, typological structure – seemed to forever stand in for the whole - for positivist ideology and the mystification of social relations.

With August Sander's typological photographs, the problem appeared to reach crisis proportions: *Antlitz der Zeit* and *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, photographic atlases which I consider highly enigmatic, narrative, sensuous and contradictory, found altogether comfortable positions under theories of the archive, in critiques of realism and (sham) objectivity; as models of totalizing classificatory gestures, or the artificial systematizing of humans as types. Alternatively, Sander could be understood to *resist* these systems, and a defensive litany about taxonomies as ideological apparatuses, instruments of power, surveillance, and control ensued along the same lines, in variously tortured tones.¹

Foucault, in *The Order of Things* (1970) describes the overarching view of typological representations which derive from natural history as follows:

By virtue of structure, the great proliferation of beings occupying the surface of the globe is able to enter both into the sequence of a descriptive language and into the field of a mathesis that would also be a general science of order.²

Photography scholars, in turn, have applied the critique of reductionism and instrumentalism specifically to photography:

¹ Of course there are investigations of Sander's work which also escape this discourse as well; see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

² Foucault (1970) 136.

Photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the Other, to define both the generalized look – the typology – and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology.³

Even more harrowing is the base pragmatism of portraits in general:

To the extent that bourgeois society depends on the systematic defense of property relations, to the extent that the legal basis of the self lies in property rights, every proper portrait of a ‘man of genius’ made by a ‘man of genius’ has its counterpart in a mug shot. Both attempts are motivated by an uneasy belief in the category of the individual.⁴

Such readings have of course been critical to our understanding of the political agendas of classificatory schemes, but as Mary Louise Pratt notes, analyses of natural history such as Foucault’s (applied here via portrait typologies to the social realm) “do not always underscore the transformative, appropriative dimensions of its conception.”⁵

This is particularly the case with respect photographic portrait typologies that circulated during the years directly before and after the First World War. Here it seems especially important to make allowances for the felicitous, emotive impact of typological and comparative seeing, and the often formally elegant and clear pictures of society they produced. For such works invariably held immense promise for a culture in crisis – whether its crisis was one of language, of vision,⁶ of democratic institutions, of capitalism, or of crisis for its own sake (i.e., for the sake of political mobilization.)⁷ In this context the important critical perspectives above threaten to transfigure viewers’ sense of bestowing an empowered and radically expanded vision into a saga of dismal subordination to the dictates of false ideologies and scopic regimes.

³ Sekula (1986) 345.

⁴ Sekula (1986) 345.

⁵ Pratt (1992) 31.

⁶ Cf. Huyssen (1998) “The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism,” in *Modernism/Modernity*, Volume 5, Number 3, September 1998, pp. 33-47.

⁷ Cf. Föllmer & Graf (2005), “*Einleitung: Kultur der Krise*” on the manufacturing of crisis discourses in Weimar as a means of galvanizing public will.

The point is that the political tenor of these critiques can limit the attention we pay to more subtle aspects of typological depictions, even when the critique is local and historically specific. Thus even Benjamin's profound and timely question, whether representations at hand 'aestheticize politics or politicize art,' can obscure qualitative differences among typological visions,⁸ and their lateral relationships to other kinds of expression. George Baker refers to the "grey zone" between Benjamin's poles as an unfortunate one,⁹ and while this is certainly true from a critical perspective, it is less unfortunate with respect to the prerogatives of open and inquisitive cultural analysis.

When reading John Tagg on photographic realism as a modern fetish in the service of the state; or Sekula on the 'anonymous authority' of photographs and their 'preclusion of anything but affirmation,' or even Jonathan Crary on the historical periodization of vision as a "political choice that determine[s] the construction of the present"¹⁰ - one gains a sense of W.J.T. Mitchell's motivation for penning the following lines: "In short I think it may be time to rein in our notions of the political stakes in a critique of visual culture and to scale down the rhetoric of the 'power of images.'"¹¹

What does Mitchell suggest? His proposal is not, of course, to fall back on what historian Julia Adeney Thomas calls naïve models of 'recognition,' whereby photographs – once again transparent and pre-discursive– serve to embolden viewers' personal sentiments and interpretations.¹² This is an approach Mitchell would align with sheer idolatry, and one which I construe in terms of its excessive aestheticism since it grants

⁸ Cf. Benjamin (1936) "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." 217 – 241.

⁹ Baker (1996) 88.

¹⁰ Cf. Crary (1992) 7; Tagg (1988); (Sekula (1984) 3.

¹¹ Mitchell (1996) 74.

¹² Cf. Thomas (2009). This excellent essay maps two 'highly unsatisfactory' ways historians tend to work with photographs.

inordinate priority to the viewer's connection to the image and his or her visceral experience of it.¹³ Instead, Mitchell's entreaty is that we ask images what *they* want.¹⁴ In making this 'slight strategic shift' in our approach to images – away from iconoclastic critique and idolatry – we must attend to several important caveats:

It's crucial [...] that we not confuse the desire of the picture with the desires of the artist, the beholder, or even the figures in the picture. What pictures want is not the same as the message they communicate or the effect they produce; it's not even the same as what they say they want. Like people, pictures don't know what they want; they have to be helped to recollect it through a dialogue with others.¹⁵

What Mitchell cleverly calls for in this 1996 essay "What Images 'Really' Want"¹⁶ in effect differs little from the methodologies of symbol interpretation put forth ten years earlier in *Iconology*: it is a plea for a dialectical view of images. The dubious and compelling "personhood" metaphor employed here however adds an element of empathetic obligation: pictures are conflicted, like us. They don't know what they want, and we should help.

Mitchell's metaphor creates a middle ground between the iconoclasm and 'blind sight'¹⁷ of deconstruction and one's personal '*expansion of the self through joy and freedom*' into the images themselves.¹⁸ Asking what pictures want helps navigate

¹³ Thomas (2009) 158.

¹⁴ Cf. Mitchell (1996, 2006).

¹⁵ Mitchell (1996) 81.

¹⁶ Cf. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lies and Loves of Images*, 2006 for a much-expanded version of the essay.

¹⁷ Cf. Thomas (2009) 13.

¹⁸ I borrow this characterization of the aesthetic mood from Simmel (1971) "The Miser and the Spendthrift" in Simmel, Georg. *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Here Simmel, appropriate to the discussion of the use of historical photographs, notes that aesthetic contemplation is possible for any object, "and only especially easy for the beautiful." (This, presumably, results from the fact that a beautiful image, as opposed to an ugly, disturbing, or banal one, represents a space we would like to occupy and merge with. Images can also be so intriguing, so captivating, odd, or mysterious, however, as to incite the similarly powerful desires to occupy them.) For Simmel, the aesthetic mood is "characterized by emancipation from the stuffy dull pressure of life," – that which we might call discourse and research - "and the expansion of the self with joy and freedom into the objects whose reality

‘iconologists’ through a terrain whose ‘volumptuous and analytical aspects’ make both ‘sensuous and cognitive appeals.’¹⁹

But how can the assumption of conflictedness apply to photographic portrait typologies - representations which show such heuristic resolve? Clearly, like scientific atlases from earlier centuries, their mission is the ‘calibration of the eye’; they serve to ‘teach what to see and how to see it.’²⁰ Typologies want to discipline our vision, structure our sight, and train us how to distinguish the essential from the arbitrary, all while captivating us with their own view ‘man.’ But that even these formally stringent, carefully arranged images need help recollecting their desire is everywhere manifest. Almost inexplicably, Eugen Fischer’s racial ‘Others’ possess at times the magisterial beauty of Walker Evans’ share croppers; or, as noted in the chapter, his ‘Bastards’ are as striking and alluring as Lendvai Dirksen’s *Volksgesichter*. Similarly anomalous is the fact that Sander evidently drew inspiration from the mug shot for his ‘*Kulturwerk in Lichtbilder*’ (*Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*) after the Nazis arrested and killed his Communist son. These and arguably all images send incompatible messages.²¹

would otherwise violate it.” The aesthetic mood, he notes, “most thoroughly closes the gap between the self and the object.” This description resonates acutely with Thomas’ critique of ‘recognition’ as an approach to historical photographs. In each mode, the image becomes an illustration of one’s own subjectivity; an image, therefore, which fails to move the historian beyond her own foregone conclusions.

¹⁹ Cf. Thomas (2009) 11.

²⁰ This Daston writes, is the mission of the ‘scientific atlas’ which is the object of her study in *Objectivity*. The atlases she discusses often constitute typologies, yet are not discussed as classificatory schemes per se. Galison & Daston (2007) 44.

²¹ Mitchell (1996) 81. Cf. Hamilton (2001) 63 for vindication of a sense of the conglomerate, contradictory experience of looking at modern portraits. Hamilton notes that in the 19th century, the conventions of portraiture established in one area (scientific or pseudo-scientific photography, or in social portraiture) influenced modes of depiction in the other, so that one witnesses popular fascination with phrenology and physiognomy molding styles in studio portraiture as well as approaches to the anthropology of subject races, the diagnosis of mental disease or the identification of criminals. In Germany, this tradition clearly lived on well into the 20th century. Knowing this alone however, does little to account for the desire of the images.

Mitchell's assertion that the interpretation of images requires *dialogues* is one which virtually summons inter-disciplinarity. This is because as "complex individuals occupying multiple subject positions and identities" images require multiple perspectives to 'help' them recollect their desires.²² These may be brought to light by literary dialogues, dialogues with art, philosophy, or film, or with visuality per se.

One desire which photographic portrait typologies seem to hold in common is, as already noted, the heuristic desire to teach people how to see; they want to seduce viewers with a particular model of vision. On this note it is perhaps remarkable that, given such a highly circumscribed object of study as 'photographic portraits in typological arrangement,' epistemologies even here vary considerably among the examples I explore. They range from total faith in the identity of images and concepts (Fischer), to a belief that empirical facts warrant metaphorical interpretation because they give way to more non-visible truths (Sander); to the view that 'natural' vision benights and oppresses its beholders (Lerski.)

Somewhat unlike Jonathan Crary, then, I believe that images and representations *do* have much to say about how we see, or better, how we should see. While I agree that a 'history of vision' may depend on far more than an account of shifts in representational practices, different representations nevertheless suggest different, historically specific regimes, different 'visions,' and different epistemologies.

This diversity holds even though vision and its effects are always "inseparable from the possibilities of an observing subject who is both the historical product and the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions and procedures of subjugation."²³ The

²² Mitchell (1996) 81.

²³ Crary (1990) 5.

three primary ‘observers’ studied in this dissertation, for instance, have been influenced by similar cultural- historical conditions. They represent one and the same generation; each was trained in either Germany, Switzerland, or Austria; and each divided his time between urban hubs like Berlin and Linz, and rural or provincial ‘escapes’ like Freiburg im Breisau, the Westerwald, or farmlands in Palestine. And yet, Eugen Fischer (1874 – 1967), August Sander (1876 – 1964) and Helmar Lerski (1871- 1956) each appropriate distinct ‘visions’ and epistemologies which they bring to bear on their human subject matter²⁴ and their construal of individuals as types.

These epistemologies and their foundations in distinctive ‘scopic regimes’ can be construed in the images and texts themselves; and they reflect on the perceived knowability of the individual, and his relationships to nature or society.

In attending to the relationship between vision and representation, I take leads from many scholars, including historians of science Peter Galison and Lorraine Daston. In their complex study of ‘objectivity,’ they attempt to track an entity as abstract as epistemology via the concrete details of photographs and drawings; they attend to how scientific atlas images espouse epistemic virtues.²⁵ Art Historian Wolfgang Ullrich also looks at pictures as clues to epistemology, and in doing so, complicates our notions concerning pictorial photography of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Far more than the embarrassing and reactionary bourgeois attempt to repress the mechanical apparatus

²⁴ The fact that these individuals were each born (and buried) within five years of one another is sheer coincidence, not a criteria for selection. The coincidence does, however, help make the point that “problems of vision” are more than just fundamental questions about the body and the operation of social power. Cf. Crary (1990) 3.

²⁵ Daston & Galison (2007) 27.

in the name of art,²⁶ he discusses pictorial images in their desire to challenge the Enlightenment idea that clear seeing could lead to truthful inferences about the world. Ullrich achieves these readings through the prompting of dialogues between, for instance, the hazy, atmospheric photographs by Heinrich Kühn, and Goethe's Wilhelm Meister who complains about the discomfort and alienation wrought by his first pair of glasses.

In the following chapters, I have attempted to work with similar models of dialogue while also attending to the scopic alliances of the images in question. In doing so I have sought to work with photographic portrait typologies in all their component parts, including the conceptual *Menschenbilder* they espouse, their reliance on photographic mimesis and realism, and their exploitation of classificatory structures and standardized compositions.

Chapter One "Typologies as Forms" is concerned with typological seeing and typological thought rather than concrete typological representations. It aims to establish some relevant literary and cultural perspectives (Naturalism, Decadence) on typological thought with the aim of establishing the stakes of *un-* systematic seeing. It further posits the real and quasi-scientific methods of typology against a 'philosophy of life' (Friedrich Nietzsche, Georg Simmel, Hugo von Hofmannsthal) which opposes them in critical ways. Modernist critiques of typological thought are analyzed alongside empiricists' value claims for classificatory schemes as meaningful descriptions of reality. The chapter establishes a limited but inter-disciplinary picture of vision and epistemology in which early 20th century photographs of human types (racial, social, or otherwise) can be

²⁶ Ullrich himself does not engage this iconoclastic discourse; I evoke it here with reference to Brecht's and others' modernist notions concerning conventions of bourgeois art. Cf. my discussion in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

located and analyzed. It further works to highlight the semantic and visual tension inherent in photographic portrait typologies as classificatory projects.

Chapter Two, “Cosmos Construction in German Southwest Africa: Vision, Identity and Intervention in Eugen Fischer’s *Rehebother Bastards* (1913)” examines an early 20th century scientific text and its photographic portrait typology as a symbolic system geared toward overcoming the “sameness” of modernity and cementing an authentic and genetically uncompromised collective Self. I explore how the bio-anthropologist and later Nazi eugenicist Eugen Fischer exploits a particular *Bildaesthetik*, rhetoric, and scopic regime to create a biological cosmos in which a German nation in crisis could imagine itself – via a foreign Other.

Chapter Three “August Sander’s Melodramatic Imagination: Re-thinking the Sander Myth” investigates several theories of physiognomy (Lavatar, Goethe) and realism (Peter Berger) to suggest the cultural resonance of August Sander’s photographic archive “People of the 20th Century” when read as a melodramatic – i.e., highly pressurized and metaphorical - narrative of inexorable decline, rather than as a factually representative inventory of objective social types of the Weimar era, or a panopticon. I analyze the style and ambiguity of Sander’s ‘exact photography’ in light of key notions of art and civilization described in Oswald Spengler’s (in)famous and likewise melodramatic study, *Decline of the West* (1918).

In the final chapter, “Dialectics of Transformation: Helmar Lerski’s *Verwandlung durch Licht* (1936) between Expressionist Anti-Typology and Portrait of the *Charakterkopf*,” I examine Lerski’s serial portrait project as a dialectical image whose tensions are greatest when read in the context of Brecht’s *Lustspiel* and sociological

lexicon, *Mann ist Mann* (1926). Though Lerski's *Verwandlung* issues a multi-faceted assault against the typologizing ethos of the 1920s and 1930s to exalt the unique totality of his sitter, the work's contentious critical reception often suggests failure in this regard. In analyzing how Lerski's photographic practice reduces his sitter to 'human material' much as Brecht's soldiers exploit the 'softness' of Galy Gay, I explore two polar *Menschenbilder* of the era and their conceptual overlap. The conclusion traces commonalities between the artists' aesthetic theories particularly with regard to photography as a realist medium and 'apparatus.'

If in this preface I have positioned myself in far too broad a field (visual and cultural studies), one defense lies in the following chapter. In it, we see why typology per se has largely evaded analysis (except in the critical contexts noted here.) While countless scholars have focused on the *things that get typologized*, like plants, physiognomies, mine shafts, or somatic types, typologies themselves are like glasses: one looks through them rather than at them; in this sense they are mostly invisible.

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Chapter One: Typology as Form

1. Introduction

Today, the 1920s and 1930s are widely recognized as having been in the grips of an ‘obsession with taxonomies’ (Lynne Frame)¹ and a ‘classification mania’ (*Furor des Rasterns*,’ Helmut Lethen). As Lethen notes of the socio-cultural climate in Berlin in the 1920s, this popular mania follows in part from the disintegration of traditional ways of life:

The trusted schemata of Wilhelmian social orientation are put to an extraordinary endurance test. If a power structure is rocked by social change and if, as a result, the conformity-inducing pressure of established living schemata suddenly declines – then there will be some recoil. When the external moorings of convention relax, when the blurring of familiar boundaries and roles and ideological constellations stimulate fear, elements of ideological stabilization and schematicism come more forcefully into play. In a classification mania, contemporary observers of the social field categorize phenomena ranging from body type to moral character, from handwriting to race. / Thus the 1920s appear to us both as a period of overheated social mobility, blurred class distinctions, and exaggerated reassertions of old orienting values and as a decade in which distinctions between friend and enemy, between opposing fronts, are very clearly drawn.²

The logic of drawing clear distinctions Lethen describes here is profoundly typological, and the tendency to *classify* is the recoil to which he refers. Indeed as other scholars of the Weimar era note, this logic can arguably best be seen at work in contemporary

¹ Cf. Frame (1997) 13.

² Lethen (2002) 22-23.

characterizations of women as distinct types;³ but also in the division of people into their social roles; human physiognomies into racial or criminal types; or individuals into psychosomatic types like Ernst Kretschmer's.⁴

At the same time, however, Lethen's attention to "blurred class distinctions" is evocative of discourses on 'the masses' and 'the crowd,' another major focal point of interest in the Weimar Republic.⁵ Specifically, as Stefan Jonsson describes, an intellectual elite felt the masses threatening their "cherished ideals of Geist, Bildung, Reason, Order, Authority, Community, and Cohesion."⁶ Contempt for the masses was therefore a "typical characteristic of most intellectuals of the Weimar Republic."⁷ Perceived further as a primary threat to "Kultur, Persönlichkeit, Seele, Innerlichkeit, and Individualität," the masses appeared as a symptom of decline.⁸ In other words, the crowd was itself a crisis: as the product of a large, heterogeneous society, it signaled a dramatic break with small societies in which differentiation is limited.⁹ Conceived as the opposite of individuality and the opposite of social organization, crowds comprised 'social matter,'¹⁰ and remained amorphous and frightening in their lack of distinction.

³ Cf. Kerstin Barndt, "Aesthetics of Crisis: Motherhood, Abortion, and Melodrama in Irmgard Keun and Friedrich Wolf," in *Women in German Yearbook* 24 (2008), 71- 95 for a mapping of feminine types in Weimar women's literature; and Lynne Frame, "Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman," in Ed. Ankum, Katharina. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Cf. also Sabine Hake, "Faces of Weimar Germany" in *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, (1997), 117 – 147; and Richard Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2004. on the popularity of physiognomics in the Weimar Republic.

⁴ Cf. Kretschmer, Ernst. *Körperbau und Charakter. Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten*. Berlin: Springer, 1921.

⁵ Jonsson (2010) 283.

⁶ Jonsson (2010) 83-4.

⁷ Helmuth Berking cited in Jonsson (2010) 288.

⁸ Jonsson (2010) 288.

⁹ Jonsson (2010) 285 – 286.

¹⁰ Jonsson (2010) 285.

Clearly, the crowd is intricately related to the urge to classify which Lethen describes. It is thus surprising that when noting the preoccupation with ‘the masses’ among writers, thinkers, artists, and filmmakers of the Weimar Republic, Jonsson omits consideration of popular photographic typologies as precisely one new way of depicting society.¹¹ Instead, he describes an “aesthetic crisis” in which “there are no longer any generally accepted ways of depicting society.”¹²

How typologies and specifically photographic portrait typologies work against this crisis of representation, and how they intervene in particular social and political crises of their times shall be explored in later chapters on a case to case basis. The present chapter seeks to understand typology in terms of its precise concepts and methods – a task which many important, critical readings of ‘insidious’ typological representations in Weimar and beyond have often under-valued.¹³ It also excavates several critiques of typological thought which attend not to specific contents (such as physiognomy),¹⁴ but to typology as a form: that is, classification of types as a heuristic device and epistemic tool, a way of seeing and knowing. In doing so, the chapter maps the promises and challenges of systematic sight in the modern era.

Like the role of sight and vision more generally (at least until the visual turn), typology in Western thought has appeared to “belong among things too obvious to be

¹¹ Indeed Jonsson (2010) 283 notes that the emergence of the masses lead to a situation in which “there are no longer any generally accepted ways of depicting society.”

¹² Jonsson (2010) 283.

¹³ Concern like Frame’s (1997) 13-14, 33 with the ‘regulation of the self and other,’ with the disciplining of the populace, and social surveillance are important implications of typologies, yet they deserve at least partial consideration in the context of the fundamental and essential qualities of classification to human thought.

noticed.” (Hannah Ahrendt).¹⁵ Philosopher of science Kenneth T. Bailey attributes our failure to analyze taxonomies and typologies to the ‘ubiquity’ and ‘centrality’ of classification to “all facets of our lives.” Classification, he argues, “is one of the most central and generic of all our conceptual exercises. It is the foundation not only for conceptualization, language, data analysis or, for that matter, social science research.”¹⁶

Perhaps as a consequence of not knowing where to begin, encounters with typology as form entail extremely parsimonious definitions and descriptions thereof. Art historian Michael Friedus notes in an photography exhibition catalog titled “Typologies,” that

A typology, simply put, is a collection of members of a common class or type, and is assembled by observation, collection, naming and grouping. These actions allow the members of the class to be compared, usually in search of broader patterns.¹⁷

Photography scholar Anne Maxwell in a study of eugenic photographs relies on the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* definition of ‘type’ in order to come to terms with the phenomenon of racial types. It defines a type as ‘A person or thing that represents the characteristic qualities of a class; a representative specimen.’¹⁸ Still other inquirers into the things that get typologized (if not typology itself) rely on descriptions like ‘concatenation’ or parataxis,¹⁹ - which relate equally well to the ‘series’; they thus tell part but not all of typology’s story.

In many ways, these definitions and descriptions are adequate: they begin, at

¹⁴ Though Frame (1997) discusses typology, taxonomy, and classification, her interests lie more precisely in the discourses of human biology and physiognomy. This is also the case with Gray (2004), and Hake (1997).

¹⁵ Cf. Levin (1993) 2. Levin quotes Ahrendt from *Life of the Mind*.

¹⁶ Bailey (1994) 1.

¹⁷ Friedus (1991) 10. The exhibition “Typologies” featured work by contemporary photographers like Edward Ruscha, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Roger Merten, and Candida Höfer.

¹⁸ Cf. Maxwell (2008) 9.

least, to account for what one perceives when one sees typologically, namely patterns of similarity and difference, captured in representative forms. Such notions, while helpful starting points, do little, however, to account for the epistemic battles which surround the typological gesture or worldview, or, more importantly, to help discern different epistemological treatments of the type. They also stand to benefit from a history of typology which can account for its promises and appeals in modernity.

2. Typology in Modernity & Modernisms

In the case of the rise of photographic portrait typologies in the late 19th century, their cultural work should first be considered with respect to modernization in the broadest sense. Reinhard Rürup draws on the theoretical grasp of modernization forged by the systematic social sciences to describe social, technological, and economic changes in the 19th century as follows:

...die Entstehung einer säkularisierten und rationalisierten ('entzauberten'), durch wirtschaftliches Wachstum, neue Technologien, soziale Differenzierungen, wachsende Staatsfunktionen und zunehmende Mit- und Selbstbestimmungsmöglichkeiten der Bürger charakterisierten Gesellschaft, die als Ganzes ebenso wie in allen wichtigen Teilbereichen deutlich von der älteren 'vor-modernen' Gesellschaft unterscheidbar ist.²⁰

That this description evokes the spirit of photography in manifold ways accounts for the common assertion that the history of photography *is* the history of modernity: catchwords of modernization – technology and rationalization, social difference and (democratic) self-determination – constitute the key terms photography's social history as well. Photography becomes less a miraculous invention by 'two founding saints Daguerre and

¹⁹ Gray (1990) 373.

Talbot,' but the "desired object" of discursive practices in modernity.²¹ Likewise it is the pre-modern society – described by Rürup as "*eine feudale, ständisch gegliederte, absolutistisch regierte Gesellschaft*"²² -which, though anathema to photographic culture, recalls the rigid order of the typology, and its embedded hierarchies.²³ This pre-modern culture is the one which history of photography textbooks typically describe as 'not yet ready' for photography.²⁴ Somewhat counter-intuitively, however, it was also 'not yet ready' for typology.

This is because typology is said to have emerged as a heuristic or scientific tool under the same unstable conditions that mark modernity- conditions of transformation well-captured by Rürup's geological language:

Scheinbar versteinerte Zustände gerieten in Bewegung, politische und gesellschaftliche Verkrustungen brachen auf, neue, in ihren Konsequenzen kaum überschaubare Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten zeichneten sich ab.²⁵

If, as Rürup notes, such transformations reached deeply into the lifestyles of the various social groups, "*lösten Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen aus, bewirkten Unsicherheiten und Krisen,*"²⁶ then typologies likely accommodated certain psychic needs for structure and clear seeing; a kind of seeing which in the pre-modern era could be taken for granted.²⁷

Though empiricists like Hempel (but also empirically-minded typologists like Kretschmer, Jaensch, Lombroso, and Krafft-Ebbing) keep their writings pristinely

²⁰ Rürup (1984) 15.

²¹ Cf. Geoffery Bachten, 'Desiring Production Itself: Notes on the Invention of Photography,' in *Cartographies: Poststructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces*, eds. Rosalyn Diprose and Robyn Ferrell, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991, p. 15.

²² Rürup (1984) 13.

²³ On the often inherently hierarchical structure of typologies, see Jackson (2004) 55 and Frame (1997) 13-14.

²⁴ Cf. Rosenblum and Lemagny (1984) 15.

²⁵ Rürup (1984) 13.

²⁶ Rürup (1984) 13.

unscathed by any and all psychological and psychic determinations conceivably attached to typological schemes,²⁸ historians of science, cultural historians, and theorists of identity have uncovered them nonetheless. According to intellectual historian J.B. Mayr, for instance, the tidy and user-friendly system of ‘downward classification’ (which Hempel discusses as “hierarchically ordered groups” – like cohorts, orders, families, tribes, genera, species, etc.)²⁹ is most notable in centuries when individuals desired and sought order and logic in the created world.³⁰ Similarly, John P. Jackson notes the imperative to chart human difference empirically as a phenomenon coincident with the messiness of *de*-colonization and abolitionism, rather than with the stability afforded by strictly absolutist societies.³¹

Typological seeing and representation thus render its subjects immutable at times when identities are most contested. This is a notion which maps well onto current discourses concerning identity and identity crisis, whereby assertions of identity are held to be historically specific, and the moments in which they emerge are deemed moments of crisis.³² As Korbena Mercer notes of the social climate in Africa in the 1990’s, for instance,

Just now everybody wants to talk about ‘identity’... identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.³³

²⁷ Cf. Crary (1990) on the camera obscura model of vision characterizing sight in the 17th and 18th centuries.

²⁸ Cf. Krafft-Ebing *Text-Book of Insanity* (1904); and E.R. Jaensch, *Eidetic Imagery and the Typological Methods of Investigation* (1930). If anything, the social-psychological impetuses of such studies are traced by their authors back to timeless problems beginning in antiquity, as in the case of W.H. Sheldon, in *The Varieties of Human Physique* (1940).

²⁹ Hempel (1965) 138.

³⁰ Mayr (1982) 159.

³¹ Cf. Jackson (2004) 57.

³² Woodward (1997) 9-11.

³³ Mercer in Woodward (1997) 15

In this respect, typologies can be understood as interventions: attempts to re-establish and make manifest a ‘natural’ social order. As Lynne Frame notes of Weimar Germany, classificatory schemes “give contours to a society in disarray.”³⁴ In this way their value is often compensatory.

Such psychic or symbolic considerations should not, however, overshadow other more concrete aspects of 19th century modernization accountable for the rise of typologies. These include the rapid growth of scientific culture in Germany around the turn of the century; the threatening, de-stabilizing, altogether new urban phenomenon of the ‘faceless’ urban crowd;³⁵ or advances in mechanical reproduction which first allowed for the widespread circulation of visual typologies.³⁶ With respect to these developments, the rise of typology must be seen as robustly progress-oriented and problem-solving, rather than merely romantic, nostalgic, or compensatory. That they embody two contradictory drives points to a fundamental tension of photographic portrait typologies: on the one hand they represent the technical and conceptual modernization of traditional portraiture and a move away from tropes of 19th century bourgeois self-glorification. On the other hand, they appear to venerate older models of stable and coherent identities.

From the perspective of cultural or literary studies, what is most striking about these grid-like, static forms is their sharp contrast in late 19th and early 20th century Germany, to myriad modernist and popular enterprises whose paths they invariably crossed. Comparison hardly needs to be made between Expressionist emotion and the

³⁴ Frame (1997) 13.

³⁵ Cf. this dissertation Chapter 3, section 3.2.1 “Metaphor and the Ineffable.”

³⁶ Cf. Gray (2004) who strongly emphasizes the role of advances in mechanical reproduction of images in his history of physiognomic thought.

reserved cogitation of typology on the other, nor between the elegance of typological photographs and the obvious constructionism of Dada portraits- whether marked by the hyperbole of John Heartfield or the deconstructionist assaults of Hanna Höch.³⁷ Time and again the typology would seem to figure as the realist marker of the status quo against which modernisms launched their critique.

The same goes for portraiture – or the contents of the typologies in question here.

As Richard Ormond notes,

Portraiture has been discarded in the story of modern painting. It is viewed as something conservative and old-fashioned, commercially oriented and not truly creative. The tradition of formal portraiture has not survived the disintegration of the formal society on which it rested...The Jazz age belonged to a younger, more iconoclastic generation. ... To the [avant-garde] the portraiture is of course anathema. A portrait implies a contract between artist and sitter, which is at odds with the concept of creative independence and integrity. The portraitist is required to produce an image with certain conventions. The very idea of a 'likeness' is itself a compromise, and naturalistic painting, that is replicating the appearance of the real world, equally so.³⁸

At a time when the new phenomenon of an urban 'mass society' provoked rampant experimentation, and inspired musicians, photographers, painters and sculptors to search for new forms "suitable to the cacophony of modern life,"³⁹ and adequate to new experiences bound up with radically changed lifestyles and environments, photographic portrait typologies represent but the technological make-over of visual identification and categorization schemes dating back to early 18th century.

³⁷ Cf. Hake (1997) for an interesting study of the similarities between Sander's typology *Antlitz der Zeit* and John Heartfield's *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*.

³⁸ Ormond (2007) 11. Ormond notes that these ideas are finally changing.

³⁹ Weitz (2007) 253.

3. Philosophy of Typology

Photographic portrait typologies – found in galleries; art books; anthropological, criminological, psychological, and sociological studies; newspapers, and world’s fairs – constitute popular, aesthetic, and epistemological entities. The circulation of these and other non-visual typologies – (i.e. Jung’s archetypes, Weber’s ideal types, countless Kretschmar’s psycho-somatic types) was extensive enough throughout Weimar Germany that by the 1930s, scientists and philosophers of science Carl Hempel and Paul Oppenheim were writing explicitly on taxonomy and typology: these classificatory practices were held to be a question of broad intellectual, social and political relevance in Germany at the time.⁴⁰

Whether Hempel and Oppenheim wrote works like *Der Typusbegriff im Lichte der neuen Logik; wissenschaftlich-theoretische Untersuchungen zur Konstitutionsforschung und Psychologie* (1936) as an implicit critique of the scientific legitimacy of popular typologies of the early- and mid- 20th century is not clear:⁴¹ certainly their work transpired in the context of the Berlin and Vienna circles of empirical philosophy⁴² and thus responds at least in part to issues immanent to the young and evolving field of the philosophy of science. Nonetheless, Hempel’s ardent explication of typology as a scientific tool - his rigorous standards of definitional tests for scientific terms,⁴³ requirements for the reliability of classificatory criteria, and vigilance with regard to ‘valuational’ overtones in scientific concepts– represents a formidable threat to

⁴⁰ Cf. Cat (2010).

⁴¹ With respect to resistance to the Nazi regime, Hempel left Germany for Brussels in 1934 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1937 where he accepted a position as Rudolf Carnap’s assistant as Research Associate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago.

⁴² Cf. Cat (2010)

the rampant forms of pseudo-science of the era (racial, criminological, physiognomic, etc.).

As both a definitional and signifying practice, Hempel's 'typology' appears as an airtight system of objective meaning, and is hence immensely powerful. At the same time, however, Hempel's work on typology also endeavors to shed critical light the 'logical status' and 'methodological function' of *interpretive* sciences like Weber's sociology founded on empathetic understanding;⁴⁴ it judges 'lose' or 'literary' typologies largely fraudulent.

Hempel has written extensively on typology in an array of dense publications in the field of the philosophy of science. Here it must suffice to outline some fundamental ideas which can be brought to bear on later analyses of photographic portrait typologies as objects of cultural inquiry.

First, Hempel supplies a vocabulary with which typologies can be discussed. A 'universe of discourse,' for instance, refers to 'the totality of objects under consideration.'⁴⁵ In photographic portrait typologies it finds its form in the broadest heading or title: *Das Weib; Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*; Criminal Types; Somatic Types, or Nordic Types. The universe of discourse of one typology might be a subclass of another: "Nordic types" may constitute a subheading of racial types, for instance.

Hempel's emphasis on a universe of discourse as representing 'a totality' of things further suggests that it is obliged to cover *all* variations of its subject matter – a principle which Kenneth Bailey calls 'exhaustivity.' If one wants to look at

⁴³ Cf. for instance the section 4 of "Fundamentals of Taxonomy," "Empirical Import of Scientific Terms: Operational Definition," in Hempel (1965) 140.

⁴⁴ Hempel (1965) 161.

⁴⁵ Hempel (1965) 161.

physiognomies for instance, one must look at all variations thereof; one may not pick and choose. This principle is closely related to exclusivity, which Bailey describes via the following formula: “if *N* persons are to be consummate, there must be an appropriate class for each (exhaustivity), but only one correct class for each, with no case being a member of two classes (mutual exclusivity).”⁴⁶ The principle of exclusivity resonates with Hempel’s assertion that classification is, strictly speaking, a ‘yes-no, either-or’ affair.⁴⁷ On the other hand, there exist typologies whose categories are ordered linearly on an axis or rating scale according to a logic of ‘more or less.’⁴⁸

Of primary importance is Hempel’s attempt to circumscribe the role of typology and taxonomy in the realm of scientific concept formation at large. In doing so, he associates their heuristic potential and purpose with the ‘natural history stage,’ noting that, “the vocabulary required in the early stages of this development will be largely observational: It will be chosen so as to permit the description of those aspects of the subject matter which are ascertainable fairly directly by observation.”⁴⁹ Theoretical stages of science, in contrast, are “more or less removed from the level of directly observable things.”⁵⁰ This characterization of the work of typology resonates with the idea that it is, first and foremost, a ‘visual practice.’⁵¹

This being the case, typology is relegated to the tracking and tracing of ‘observables.’ Observables for Hempel are terms which signify directly observable characteristics of physical objects: properties or relations whose presence or absence in a

⁴⁶ Bailey (1994) 3.

⁴⁷ Hempel (1965) 151.

⁴⁸ Cf. Hempel (1965) 153 on ‘ordering’ vs ‘classification.’

⁴⁹ Cf. Hempel (1965) 150.

⁵⁰ Hempel (1965) 140.

⁵¹ Cf. Jay (1993) 588 on typology as visual practice.

given case can be inter-subjectively ascertained, under suitable circumstances, by direct observation. *Observables*, he adds (terms such as ‘hard’, ‘liquid’, ‘blue’, ‘coincident with’, ‘contiguous with’, etc.) ideally comprise all scientific operations.⁵² If observables are ‘inter-subjectively verifiable,’ they are objective. The ensuing knowledge is universal (rather than individualistic).⁵³ Taxonomies seek to order and arrange entities according to things we can all agree on. Beauty or ugliness, for instance, should not count.

Typologies are related to natural history, so that modern photographic portrait typologies represent something like the late ancestors of leaf and shell schemata or elegant bird engravings which appear neatly numbered or labeled with descriptive Latin tags in 18th and 19th century atlases.⁵⁴ These taxonomies, as Hempel suggests, represent an early stage of science from which later, more theoretical knowledge process and have been associated with the so-called ‘natural history stage.’ Primarily, this stage seeks to *describe* the phenomena under study and to establish simple empirical generalizations concerning them. In later, more ‘theoretical’ stages, increasing emphasis is placed upon the attainment of comprehensive theoretical accounts of the empirical subject-matter under investigation.

The fundamental assumption of typologies is that empirical phenomena, rather than being inherently unique, idiosyncratic, variable or anomalous fall into general

⁵² This is to say that “any scientific statement, however abstract, could be transformed, by virtue of definitions of its constituent technical terms, into an equivalent statement couched exclusively in observation terms.” This view reflects what Hempel calls the “*narrower thesis of empiricism*,” and is characteristic of earlier forms of positivism and empiricism, but “does not hold up under closer scrutiny.” Hempel (1952) 24.

⁵³ Hempel (1965) 141 writes that “science aims at knowledge that is objective in the sense of being inter-subjectively certifiable.”

⁵⁴ See for example Carolus Linneaus, *Hortus Cliffortianus* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1739) reprinted in Daston & Galison (2007) 148.

patterns and conform to certain regularities.⁵⁵ Instead, it can be ordered into ‘types’, classes, and subclasses, and the knowledge of these intends to be universal rather than individualistic.⁵⁶

So far we have established the fact that typologies arrange and order phenomena visually, according to observables. But to what end? Typologies of course, aim to be *useful* in formulating general laws and theoretical principles which reflect uniformities in the subject matter under study, and which thus provide a basis for explanation, prediction, and generally scientific understanding.⁵⁷ This is the point of finding patterns and regularities in nature: if empirical phenomena are found *not* to be idiosyncratic, variable and anomalous, then they must fall, assumedly, into general patterns and conform to certain regularities.⁵⁸ Empirical phenomena can be ordered into ‘types’, classes, and subclasses, *genus, taxa, etc* which become knowable and usable. Bailey mentions “reduction of complexity” as “a chief goal of classification.”⁵⁹ The fundamental mission of typology, notes Hempel, is to ‘*carve nature at the joints.*’⁶⁰

In the following sections I explore several literary, cultural, and philosophical perspectives which question the feasibility of such an aim, particularly with respect to society as opposed to nature.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hempel (1952) 1, 20 on the explanatory and predicative principles of scientific discipline.

⁵⁶ Hempel (1965) 141.

⁵⁷ Hempel (1965) 141.

⁵⁸ Cf. Hempel (1952) 1, 20.

⁵⁹ Bailey (1994) 12.

⁶⁰ Hempel (1965) 147.

4. Literary and Cultural Perspectives on Typological Thought

4.1. *Lebensphilosophie* and the Critique of Forms

The picture of things still moves and shifts continually, and perhaps more and faster from now on than ever before; continually, the most select minds bristle at this universal bindingness – the explorers of truth above all!

-Friederich Nietzsche⁶¹

According to Georg Simmel, whose analysis of forms is made most explicit in his *lebensphilosophische* essays “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1921) and “On the Concept and Tragedy of Culture” (1911), form stands in a forever antagonistic opposition to life which is analogous to an unceasing, ever-flowing and changing river: as in the epigram above, life is characterized by motion. Forms, however, are imperative to the act of understanding life, and to assessing reality as anything other than “the raw material of the cosmos... a qualitatively and quantitatively infinite manifold of indistinguishable phenomena.”⁶² If the term ‘life’ seems strange or vague, Simmel cannot help us except via the following descriptive footnote:

1. Since life is the antithesis of form, and since only that which is somehow formed can be conceptually described, the concept of life cannot be freed from logical imprecision. The essence of life would be denied if one tried to form an exhaustive conceptual definition. In order for conscious life to be fully self-conscious, it would have to do without concepts altogether, for conceptualization inevitably brings on the reign of forms; yet concepts are essential to self-consciousness. The fact that the possibilities of expression are so limited by the essence of life does not diminish its momentum as an idea.⁶³

⁶¹ Nietzsche (2001) 77.

⁶² Oakes (1980) 10.

⁶³ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 26.

‘Life’, then, must remain an open *idea* as distinct from a *concept* which would artificially constrict or reduce it; life is pre-conceptual, pre-lingual, pre-representational. Above all, we can note that for *Lebensphilosophie*, complexity is not crisis: it is just Life – *das Leben*.

Simmel discusses modernity as an age intent on destroying forms, where forms constitute the shape in which phenomena are captured and housed as experience or knowledge.⁶⁴ In this new, destructive era, “opposition is directed against forms because they force [contents] into generalized schemata and thereby overpower [their] uniqueness.”⁶⁵ Simmel’s observation applies to the ideas of the younger generation and to the modernist sensibility: indeed he describes forces opposed those which aim at stabilizing identities and combating change and flux in modernity. Further, Simmel’s term ‘schemata’ is highly suggestive of the typology: as diagrammatic presentations or structured frameworks or plans, schemata, like the typology, are useful if not indispensable to the ordering and organization of human thought. They would seem to provide the foundations of reason itself.

Simmel here, it should be emphasized, is describing the social world. As such, the dynamism of Heraclitean *Lebensphilosophie* accounts for an ontological distinction between the physical and social world, and is notable as well in Simmelian concepts like *Vergesellschaftigung*, particularly in its component *Wechselwirkung*. This distinction is fundamental to the philosophy of social science and conceptualizations of the relationship

⁶⁴ Chandos is interesting in this regard since, rather than actively ‘destroying’ forms, he unwittingly descends into the position of no longer believing in them. The difference between the youth of whom Simmel speaks and Chandos is thus fundamental: while the former considers itself revolutionary in its decadence, the latter is reluctantly so, such that Chandos struggles, at first, to come to terms with formlessness.

⁶⁵ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 23.

between sociology (or anthropology) and the natural sciences. For Simmel, 'society' is an inter-subjective creation that is recreated continuously by its participants as a result of their subjective understanding of it.⁶⁶ For Simmel, then, the static and essentialist taxonomies appropriate to shells and birds are held, therefore, to be fully at odds with knowledge of the human individual in his or her society.

4.1.1. Human Types as Forms

Simmel's critique of forms as destructive of uniqueness proves profoundly germane to investigations of typologies as representations of human beings or human societies. Indeed Simmel's mention of *identity* in the following passage references this:

[Forms] acquire fixed identities, a logic and lawfulness of their own; this new rigidity inevitably places them at a distance from the spiritual dynamic which created them and which makes them independent.⁶⁷

The 'type' as depicted in the photographic frame constitutes the form through which humans become knowable. In lieu of the Type, there exists only the individual, a qualitatively and quantitatively infinite manifold of indistinguishable phenomena analogous to life itself: in the individual, spirit, psyche, tradition, habit, appearance, personality, and culture conflate in infinite ways. The resulting individual, like life, thus comprises the source of "homogeneous and undifferentiated process[es] .. inaccessible to analysis."⁶⁸ Beyond its fundamental inscrutability, then, lies the essential uniqueness of the individual: its one-of-a-kind quality.

The search for originality Simmel attributed to the youth of his day thus resulted in its aversion to all forms:

⁶⁶ Cf. Williams (2000) 89 on the ontological basis of interpretivism.

⁶⁷ Simmel, "The Conflict in Modern Culture" (1980) 11.

To accept any objective form, it is felt, would drain away human individuality: moreover it would dilute one's vitality by freezing it into the mold of something already dead. Originality reassures us that life is pure, that it has not diluted itself by absorbing extrinsic, objectified, rigid forms into its flow.⁶⁹

But classifying persons according to salient characteristics “simplifies our complex reality sufficiently to allow us to analyze it.”⁷⁰ The very stillness of the photograph, the restrictions of its frame, and the rigidity of the typological grid thus act together as a concise visual trope for the idea of form: in this context, the ‘type’ appears as the ‘dogmatic barrier’ – the form *par excellence*.⁷¹ The typological form functions similarly, for it too stands in contrast to the “restless rhythm of life, its ascent and descent, its constant renewal, its incessant divisions and reunifications”:

...in their rigidly individual shapes, in the demands of their imprescriptible rights, [forms] boldly present themselves as the true meaning and value of our existence. This audacity varies with the degree to which a culture has grown.⁷²

Simmel concludes that “although this chronic conflict between form and life has become acute in many historical epochs, none but ours has revealed it so clearly as its basic theme.”⁷³ By 1921 and the era of ‘classification mania,’ then, it appears that the forms of culture - ‘works of art, religions, sciences, technologies, laws, and innumerable others’⁷⁴ - greet Life with greater antagonism than ever before. In “classical examples” – assumedly

⁶⁸ Oakes (1980) 29.

⁶⁹ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 19.

⁷⁰ Bailey (1994) 12. Bailey continues: “Often typologies and taxonomies prove to be amazingly successful, allowing us to condense huge masses of data about populations or concepts into a small number of salient types or taxa.”

⁷¹ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 23

⁷² Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 23.

⁷³ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 25.

⁷⁴ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 11.

something like Greek sculpture— “life fuses completely with art”: in these forms, Simmel deems man’s “incessant attempts to shape and interpret this life” “successful.”⁷⁵

4.1.2. Simmel’s Life-Like Types

This discussion of Simmel as philosophically *contra* the Type may seem anomalous given Simmel’s own evocation of types like “The Stranger,” the gambler and the casanova as discussed in “The Adventurer”; “The Nobility” (1908) and “The Miser and the Spendthrift” (1907). Simmel’s types, however, do not correspond to the logic of *genus* and *differentia* embodied by typology.

This is seen most clearly in Simmel’s social types: for as ‘sociological forms’ these types represent kinds of *orientation* and *relation toward* a given group.⁷⁶ Since Simmel’s types are socially determined, the result of social circumstances and interactions, they are fluid and changing: a type is little more than a function of time, place, and position in a social group such that one and the same individual can represent various types at different times.

As non-class categories, the identity of Simmel’s types depends on contingent forces. This is most apparent in Simmel’s writings on ‘the Triad’ (focusing on “the sociological significance of the Third Element”) and ‘the Diad,’⁷⁷ wherein individual behavior and identity is understood as a function not only of a group, but as a function of the exact size of that group. The Simmelian concept of ‘group-affiliations’ further

⁷⁵ Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture” (1980) 17.

⁷⁶ This aspect of Simmel’s thought has aligned him with functionalism not only as a methodological principal but as an ‘ontological feature of his subject matter.’ Davis (1973) 325 quotes Lewis Coser who suggest that Simmel is a functionalist thinker in that he “considers the individual’s social actions not in themselves, but in relation to those of other individuals and to particular structures and processes.”

⁷⁷ Cf. Wolff, Kurt H. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* for a collection of these essays in translation.

suggests non-essential aspects of identity: since an individual's pattern of 'group-affiliations' is never exactly the same as that of any other individual, individuality persists despite approximations to a type.⁷⁸ As non-essential categories, relationships, or perspectives, typologizing Simmel's types – i.e. structuring them according to an exhaustive classificatory scheme- seems nearly futile: for they lack both an over-arching relationship to one another, and salient, mutually exclusive characteristics.

This point is particularly notable in the case of the "miser" and the "spendthrift," two types which appear, at first sight, to adhere to the logic of typology since they can at least be subsumed under the clearly-defined category 'relation to money,' and positioned with respect to one another as 'extreme types.' Nonetheless, Simmel's considerations take a surprising twist. For while he notes "the diametrical opposition of their visible behaviours"⁷⁹ and their "apparent polarization" throughout the essay, he concludes with an explanation of why "miserliness and prodigality are often found in the same person, sometimes in different areas of interest and sometimes in connection with different moods."⁸⁰ Clearly types for Simmel are not a 'yes-no, either-or' affair – which classification, according to Hempel, strictly speaking, is.⁸¹

The fundamentally *non- natural history* quality of Simmel's types raises the question of what to do with them: how and where to apply them, and what knowledge they should promote. If Simmel's types are ideal types like Weber's because they cannot

⁷⁸ Cf. Simmel, Georg. *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. (1964) 125.

⁷⁹ Cf. Simmel, Georg. *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. (1964) 186.

⁸⁰ Cf. Simmel, Georg. *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. (1964) 186, and "The Nobility" (1971) 203.

⁸¹ Hempel (1952) 151.

be defined by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, and concrete cases cannot be subsumed under them as instances,⁸² how are they to be used?

As Donald Levine notes, Simmel was “less concerned with attaining scientific closure in the sense of an exhaustive, rigorously demonstrated and consensually validated set of propositions than in speaking whatever truth he can about it in relation to his intellectual needs at any given time.”⁸³ Arguably, Simmelian types should best be understood as heuristic devices for the “*education of the individual*” and the cultivation of “subjective culture” which Simmel valued more than objective culture;⁸⁴ or, as Max Weber wrote conflictedly of Simmel’s types, as ‘stimulation.’⁸⁵ Given Hempel’s rejection of Weber’s far more systematic use of ‘ideal types’ as scientific, one must assume that Hempel would find in Simmel’s use of the type an un-testable, non-scientific, at best ‘suggestive’ program of intuitive idealizations lacking in both empirical import and applicability.⁸⁶

Because Simmel’s *Lebensphilosophie* in no way contradicts his formation of sociological types, I have called his types ‘Life-like.’ In their flexible relationships to other phenomena, they preempt the ‘audacity’ Simmel associates with the objective culture of his day: that is, its vehement extinguishing of life. In the following section we shall see that Naturalism takes concern for the preservation of ‘life’ even further, with a slice-of-life aesthetic which refuses to generalize at all.

⁸² Hempel (1965) 171.

⁸³ Levine in Simmel *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings* (1971) xii.

⁸⁴ Levine in Simmel *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings* (1971) xii. Levine quotes from Simmel’s “*Die Zukunft unserer Kultur*” (1909): “The great epochs which have pursued a *Kulturpolitik* have always focused their attention on the subjective factor – on the *education of individuals*.”

⁸⁵ Cf. Siegel, James T. “The Aesthetic Significance of the Face” (1999) 112.

⁸⁶ Hempel (1965) 159.

4.2 Naturalism's Idiosyncratic Types

Die Wahrheitsliebe des Dramatikers prätendiert nicht die absolute Wahrheit, sondern respektiert das kühn erfaßte Mysterium.

-Gerhard Hauptmann⁸⁷

Though Naturalism represents a literary genre inspired by the positivism of Comte and Taine, and though naturalists often proclaimed their reverence for virtues of natural sciences⁸⁸ like close observation and objective description, it breaks with science almost as soon as one takes seriously the mission of science and its methods. Even typology as an *early (natural history) stage* of any scientific discipline goes further than naturalism's 'slice- of-life' aesthetic, its refusal to generalize – is willing to take it. In contrast to typology which concerns itself with some level of abstraction and generalization aimed at the discovery of laws, Naturalism remains content with mere looking, even 'studying.' It provides little more than the welcome opportunity for readers to 'test a milieu' against their own experience.⁸⁹

As Fritz Martini points out, Hauptmann titled "*Bahnwärter Thiel*" a 'Novellistische Studie,' in order to emphasize the immediate, concrete observation of nature.⁹⁰

Vor allem... liegt in diesem Begriff, in Analogie zur Freiluftstudie, der Akzent auf der unmittelbaren, konkreten Beobachtung der Natur. Dieses Erzählen versteht sich primär nicht als ein Erfinden, sondern als ein *Beobachten* und ein *Erkennen*. Es will nicht fabulieren, *nicht also das*

⁸⁷ Cf. Machatzke, Martin, *Gerhardt Hauptman. Die Kunst des Dramas. Über Schauspiel und Theater*. "Aus der Rede 'Kunst und Wissenschaft,' (1912) 39- 40.

⁸⁸ Cf. Schmähling (1977) 14.

⁸⁹ Cf. Post (1979) 42.

⁹⁰ Cf. Post (1979) 42. Hauptmann's '*Studie*' also recalls Zola's 'studies' in preparation for novel-writing, his 'human documents' and 'experimental novels' which, according to Nordau, signal the author's scientific 'pretensions.' (Cf. Nordau 490; Cf. also Nordau's *Paris unter der dritten Republik* for a lengthier critique of Naturalism as pseudo-science.)

Willkürliche der freien dichterischen Imagination, sondern es will eine am realen Objekt genau beobachtete und erkannte Wirklichkeit aussprechen, welche die Wahrheit des Lebens bedeutet. Es will die Offenheit zum *empirischen* Wirklichen dieses menschlichen Lebens – ohne ein Tendenz, Erhöhung oder Verschönerung. Es gibt nicht seine Sinndeutung, sondern es stellt seine Wirklichkeit fest.⁹¹

These comments on the meaning of ‘study’ in Hauptmann’s title offer a coherent understanding of Naturalism’s larger theoretical project, aesthetics, and relationship to science. Yet upon closer examination, Martini’s comments give way to deeper aporias concerning the artistic process and the purpose of art, and the relationship of these to science – particularly with respect to the depiction of human types.

Two contemporaries of Naturalism to note and attempt to resolve these aporias were Max Nordau and Georg Simmel: Nordau in Book IV of *Degeneration* (1892) on realism, and Simmel in his essay “*Zum Problem des Naturalismus*” (1923). In these works, both critics recognized the ‘problem’ of Naturalism left mute in Martini’s description, namely: what is art if not an ‘*Erhöhung oder Verschönerung*’ (an exaltation or embellishment)? Unsurprisingly, these authors arrive at very different judgments of the genre, with Simmel rejecting only the naïveté of naturalism’s ‘theory,’ and Nordau chastising both its theory and its contents (its conventions, style, and grammar). In what follows I shall sketch their positions, then apply their respective views of Naturalism to the specific problem of the Type in naturalist literature.

⁹¹ Cf. Cowen (1973) 142 on Martini’s reading of *Bahnwärter Thiel* as ‘poetic realism.’ Italics mine.

Both Simmel and Nordau object to the term ‘Naturalism’ on the grounds that it naively denies its status as an artistic process and claims to be science.⁹² Simmel writes of the term’s “*substanzialistische Vorstellung, dem naiven erkenntnistheoretischen Realismus entsprechend*,”⁹³ while Nordau objects to Naturalist authors’ claims that they do something fundamentally different from any other artist, namely “observe things and tell them with truth.” “This attempt,” he writes “is common to every author, whoever he may be.”⁹⁴ For Nordau, ‘Naturalism’ disavows the artist’s ‘decision-making’ process; for Simmel her “*Schöpfungsprozeß*.” Simmel and Nordau further agree that ‘feelings’ (vague as Simmel notes the term to be) play a critical role in Naturalism as well as in Art more generally.⁹⁵

From here, however, Nordau and Simmel arrive at two very different judgments of Naturalism. Nordau - despite his assertion of the fundamental *Art-ness* of Naturalism - continues to take its claims to ‘scientificity’ seriously, and thus decries its writers as the most ignorant of pseudo-scientists. Simmel by contrast pronounces the meaninglessness of any and all terms like ‘naturalism’ and ‘realism’, and declares naturalism a mode of *l’art pour l’art*: he asserts its complete autonomy from any ideas or reality which may inspire its creation.⁹⁶ While Nordau’s aim in his discussion of Naturalism is to expose the arrogance of naturalist writers who think they can settle questions that have plagued

⁹² Wilhelm Dilthey is also critical of Naturalism’s association of art and science. See ‘*Die Drei Epochen der modernen Ästhetik und ihre heutige Aufgabe*’ (1892), *Gesammelte Schriften*, 19 vols (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1914 – 82), VI, ii (1924), 242 – 87.

⁹³ Simmel, “Zum Problem des Naturalismus,” 272.

⁹⁴ Nordau (1968) 475.

⁹⁵ Cf. Simmel “Zum Problem des Naturalismus,” 289 and Nordau 297.

⁹⁶ Simmel writes, “das ganze Gerede von naturalistische Prinzipien und ihrem Gegenteil [ist] völlig leer; jedem großen Kunstwerk gegenüber erscheint diese Partei- und Begriffsfrage hinfällig und gar nicht aufzuwerfen.” 288.

modern scientists for decades, Simmel endeavors to show how and why Naturalism can claim science as a model, but embody *l'art pour l'art*.

First, Nordau's exposé. Interestingly, Nordau's point is made most expressly when referring to Naturalism's depictions of human 'types.' Since Nordau's comments provide a good sense of the fervor and import of typological study of the criminal at the turn of the century,⁹⁷ and since he displays an adequate understanding of the 'type' as a representation of something essential and universal, I shall quote him at length:

Instead of an artistic creation [the naturalist author] attempts to give us science, and he gives us false science, since he has no suspicion of the influences which really form the man, and the details of the 'milieu' which he throws into relief as being the *causes* of individual peculiarities are probably the least essential, in any case, only a minimum portion of what, in the formation of the personality, has played a really determining part. Think of it for a moment. The one question as to the origin of the criminal has produced in these last twenty years thousands of books and pamphlets; hundreds of medical men, jurists, economists, and philosophers of the first rank, have devoted to it the most profound and assiduous research, and we are still far from being able to indicate with certainty what share heredity (sic) social influences (i.e. the 'milieu,' properly so called) and unknown biological peculiarities of the individual, have in the formation of the criminal type. And then there comes a wholly ignorant writer, who, quite by himself, with the sovereign infallibility claimed for himself by the author in his own province, decides a question which the combined ten years' labor of a whole generation of professional investigators has brought but very little nearer to a solution! This is an audacity only explicable by this fact, that the writer has not the very smallest idea of the weight of the task which he undertakes with so light a heart.⁹⁸

The notion, however, that artists and authors are indeed trying to "decide questions" germane to the social sciences is refuted - not only by Hauptmann's statement concerning

⁹⁷ While Nordau describes the weightiness and reserve with which scientists typologize, Lynne Frame writes of Weimar's taxonomic craze, that "Without hesitation, journalists, social critics of all hues, and scientists alike constructed human typologies and made pronouncements on their relative social 'worth.'" Frame (1997)13.

⁹⁸ Nordau (1968) 488.

the preservation of mystery in the above epigram - but also by Simmel's notion of naturalism as an autonomous art like any other:

Das Kunstwerk aber hat alle Fäden nach außen hin abgeschnitten und nach innen zu einer undurchbrechlichen Form zusammengeknüpft, es ist 'seelig in ihm selbst.' Alle seelischen Werte und Ereignisse, die darin investiert sind, haben die Form ihrer ursprünglichen Bewegtheit verlassen und eine in sich schwebende, vom Begriff der Kunst allein her bestimmte angenommen. Kein Kunstwerk ist als Kunstwerk aus seiner Zeit oder aus der Psychologie seines Schöpfers heraus zu rechtfertigen...⁹⁹

Besides representing a damning critique of Nordau's scientific-literary project,¹⁰⁰ Simmel's insistence on the autonomy of art – even Naturalism's sheds light on the genre's oft-disputed relationship to the type.

If depictions of the proletariat, women, or criminals seek not to 'settle' any questions germane to science, what do they do? As embodiments of 'secondary reflexes' they create *feelings* in the reader.¹⁰¹ Perhaps, additionally, they aim to achieve what Simmel's own arguably aesthetic, sociological types discussed earlier do¹⁰² - namely 'stimulate' the mind, and foster the individual's own general enlightenment by spurring 'contemplation.' In "The Problem of Naturalism," Simmel's distinction between the 'historically understood object' and the 'object to be understood' is decisive, for the thing to be depicted in the work of art is the latter.¹⁰³ In Hauptmann's words, it is mystery. As for naturalism's *claims* to scientificity, Simmel – like Martini above – emphasizes the *analogy* between impartial scientific study and autonomous art: neither serve other

⁹⁹ Simmel "Zum Problem des Naturalismus," 286.

¹⁰⁰ Particularly Simmel's discussion of older portraiture as distinct from contemporary portraiture provides a compelling diagnosis of Nordau's aesthetic stance as one marked by a fundamental lack of distance from artistic representation. See Simmel's discussion especially "Zum Problem des Naturalismus," 286 – 293.

¹⁰¹ Simmel, "Zum Problem des Naturalismus," 289.

¹⁰² Cf. Davis, Murray S. "Georg Simmel and the Aesthetics of Social Reality" for a reading of Simmel's sociology as grounded on his aesthetics.

¹⁰³ Davis (1973) 299.

interests or ideas, and for both the ‘scientific mechanistic worldview and Naturalist art, “die Wirklichkeit als solche ist indifferent, ideenfrei.”¹⁰⁴

A physiognomic sketch from Hauptman’s “*Bahnwärter Thiel*” helps dramatize the positions of Simmel and Nordau. In the depiction of Thiel’s wives – the deceased and beloved Minna and her pragmatic replacement Lene – we see the basis of a typological ordering of female physiognomic types, or more specifically, maternal types, since their essential role in the story is in relation to Thiel: they are mother figures to his son. Minna, thin, *zart* occupies one end of the spectrum while Lene, “*ein dick[es] und stark[es] Frauenzimmer, einer Kuhmagd aus Alte-Grund*”¹⁰⁵ - marks the opposite pole.¹⁰⁶

Yet as Klaus Post notes of Lene:

Sie soll für Thiel die Frau und zugleich die Mutter ersetzen. Zwar hat sie im Gegensatz zu Minna die starken Arme, um ein Kind zu beschützen, doch weiß Hauptmann gleich zu Anfang zu berichten, daß ihr bei aller Gliederfülle ‘die Seele abging,’ ihr ‘eine harte, herrschsüchtige Gemütsart, Zanksucht und brutale Leidenschaftlichkeit’ eigen war.¹⁰⁷

Lene’s *Kindesfeindlichkeit* which propels the story’s action thus contradicts the age-old concept of ideal femininity from which such typological characterizations seldom

¹⁰⁴ Simmel, “Zum Problem des Naturalismus,” 270. From this idea follows Simmel’s explanation of the traditional subject matter of naturalist work as things which themselves seem most free of ideas and values, since ideas and values should be de-emphasized in the name (or aesthetic) of ‘objectivity.’ (269 – 271). Simmel also seems to make some concessions based on the fact that the decades of Naturalism’s popularity coincided with the “Fanaticism for scientific exactness” – “Fanatismus für naturwissenschaftliche Exaktheit, deren Ideal auf alle möglichen, eigentlich ganz anderen Idealen zugehörige Gebiete übertragen wurde.” (281)

¹⁰⁵ Hauptmann in Post (1979) 8.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Frame (1997) 16. As ‘extreme types,’ Hauptmann’s types forge a dialogue with later, popular scientific typologies like Kretschmer’s which established the psychic qualities of the slender, angular physique of the *Gedankenmensch*, the rounded physique and good, uncomplicated nature of the *Gemütsmensch*.

¹⁰⁷ Post (1979) 60.

diverge.¹⁰⁸ Hauptmann depicts the traditional, earth-bound farmer— popularly considered ideal for marriage¹⁰⁹ – as dangerous and imbalanced.

Hauptmann’s typological gestures can thus be interpreted in several ways, though the idea that the author should be trying his hand at real constitutional psychology in the vein of Kretschmer or Sheldon – ‘settling the question’ of correspondence between psychic and physical traits, as it were - hardly needs discussion. Clearly Hauptmann’s two female characters intend neither to replace nor embody the archives of statistical research Nordau reveres for their truthfulness. Instead the question is whether Minna and Lene represent types at all, and if so, how they should be interpreted. Between Hauptmann’s statement that the dramatist respects the *mystery of the truth*, and Simmel’s claims that the ‘*Eigengesetzlichkeit*’ of reality cannot determine artistic creations, it becomes clear that typology serves the creative artist as “*Nahrung für das innere schöpferische Leben*” (‘nourishment for the inner creative life’).¹¹⁰ If morphological similarities exist between scientific typologies and artistic creations, it is only because the artist chooses to render them this way for the sake of his creative work.

Yet if Hauptmann decides to consistently *contradict* what appear to be scientific laws rather than follow them, this decision may also suggest a challenge to the notion of the type and typological schemes generally. Such a critique is conceivable since, as Nordau himself notes in the above passage, little had been concluded by “the combined ten years’ labor of a whole generation of professional investigators.”¹¹¹ Even Thiel, with his passive nature and ‘Herculean’ physique seems physiognomically anomalous while

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Frame (1997) 16.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Frame (1997) 16 on Gerhard Venzmer’s popularization of Kretschmer’s work and his interpretation of suitability for marriage.

¹¹⁰ Simmel, “Zum Problem des Naturalismus,” 274.

sociologically, as a worker or proletarian, his psychic breakdown, murderous actions, and ‘*moralische Impotenz*’ can in no way be construed as behavior representative of his milieu. Rather than validating dominant sociological and scientific laws, Hauptmann consistently emphasizes the coincidental characteristics of individuals. This was a tendency which even struck the ire of contemporaries who complained that Thiel represented a “*bedauernswerte Einzelgestalt*” (a ‘regretfully singular form’).¹¹²

If naturalism’s ‘slice-of-life’ aesthetic depicts “individual sections of life, shown in extensive totality, where the presence of detail in description, to the minutest degree, localizes the action, effectively excluding any symbolic intensification or *raising to type*,”¹¹³ (italics mine) much suggests the movement’s *critical* stance vis-à-vis typology specifically and science at large. If naturalism is devoted to the concrete particularization of reality,¹¹⁴ it represents more a snapshot-aesthetic than a portrait aesthetic; as such it would seem at least indifferent if not outright critical of the allegedly essential, unchanging truths and laws of typology as natural history.

The above sketch of the relationship between *Bahnwärter Thiel* and typology suggests how the movement’s reverence for keen observation can give way to an anti-scientific provocation which offended the sensibilities of progress-oriented critics who demanded ‘*aktivistische Not*’ and practical application toward social improvement. The amassing of superfluous detail notable in much Naturalist work also breaks – at least on one level- with the typological virtues of parsimony and reduction of complication (*Komplikationsreduktion*). These aspects of Naturalism show that the typological project

¹¹¹ Nordau (1968) 488.

¹¹² Post (1979) 53. This critique may hold other meanings as well.

¹¹³ Osborne (1971) 177.

¹¹⁴ Osborne (1971) 184.

of ‘*carving* nature at the joints’ – dividing it into empirically significant categories (Hempel) – is fundamentally anathema to the project of *l’art pour l’art* with which Simmel associates it: Naturalism creates an autonomous, mysterious slice of life that points again and again to the unknowability of life. It poses questions rather than answers.

In this there seems to be something already slightly *decadent* about Naturalism, that is, skeptical of the authority with which science carves nature into steadfast concepts and laws. In the following section I shall focus on typological thought in relation to the ambition of literary ‘decadence’ to ignore, actively erode, or programmatically dislodge even the most fundamental conceptual distinctions.

4.3 Decadence as Non-Distinction

The greatest danger that hovers and still hovers over humanity is the outbreak of madness – that is, the outbreak of arbitrariness in feeling, seeing, and hearing; the enjoyment in the lack of discipline of the head, the joy in human unreason. The opposite of the world of the madman is not truth and certainty but the generality and universal bindingness of a faith; in short, the non-arbitrary in judgment. And man’s greatest labour so far has been to reach agreement about very many things and to lay down a law of agreement – regardless of whether these things are true or false.

-Friederich Nietzsche ¹¹⁵

Typology’s combat against disorder finds a consummate foe in *decadence*, particularly as represented by the literature of the late 19th and early 20th century. Decadence is familiar enough through plot lines that trace generational and / or psychic decline, immorality, and the retreat of its protagonists into aestheticism or mental

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche (2001) 76.

collapse. Though the classification of decadence has itself been fraught with contention, one consistent if broad notion grounds my discussion: this is the fundamental concern of decadence with breakdown.¹¹⁶ Silke Weineck effectively sums up the trend when noting that in decadence, it is relatively easy to discern “the collapse of distinctive boundaries – male/female, art/life, interiority/exteriority, form/content, self/other, past/present.”¹¹⁷ With an eye on typologies, which according to Lavatar “help to *differentiate* the elementary things: self and other, inside and outside, male and female” decadence seems to signal the collapse of even the most ‘natural’ classifications.¹¹⁸ With the erosion of such categories, Lavatar continues, “spheres become mixed,” and the “balance of the individual” threatened.¹¹⁹ In social scientific terms, something like conceptual anarchy looms,¹²⁰ since ‘data’ (experience) can no longer be described by means of terms whose use is marked by determinacy and uniformity. Even the most fundamental classifications become conflated or ambiguous, graspable only in terms of their relative positions on a continuum, at best. With decadence, transitions between categories and classes of things “are gradual in all directions;”¹²¹ there are no distinctive boundaries.

¹¹⁶ According to Bernheimer, Nietzsche’s decadence involves (among many other, oft-contradictory things) “a subjectivity in which the self recognizes its own unknowability,” and the “pathological disorganizing and fragmentation of individuals and societies” (xv). In *Salome*, decadence marks a drama in which “the self is shattered in its encounter with the other,” such that any distinction between self and other is undermined. (xvi).

¹¹⁷ Weineck (1994) 39.

¹¹⁸ Hempel (1965) 147 himself uses the male/female distinction as an example of a very ‘natural’ – in contradistinction to ‘artificial’ - classification, one that would seem to ‘carve nature at the joints’: for “the two sets of primary sex characteristics which determine the division of humans into male and female are each associated, by general laws of by statistical connections, with a large variety of concomitant classification physical, physiological, and psychological traits.”

¹¹⁹ Cf. Frame (1997) 13 on Lavatar.

¹²⁰ Cf. Webb (1995) 169 on ‘conceptual anarchy.’

¹²¹ Cf. Hempel’s discussion of diagnosis vis-à-vis the problems facing Professor Strömngren regarding the “natural border line separating the whole group of neuroses and psychopathies from that which does not belong to it.” In other words, the trouble of making ‘sane / insane’ distinctions.

Harder to discern than breakdown itself, however, is its etiology. Many discussions of decadence, themselves taking on the passion of art for art's sake, find this question irrelevant.¹²² One answer to *why* breakdown, or the erosion of conceptual categories, is decadence's critique of Positivism.¹²³ While this answer may itself be problematic,¹²⁴ a more precise examination of it via 'typological thought' will hopefully help remedy its vagueness.

Two texts – Max Nordau's 1895 scathing critique of modernist culture *Degeneration* (1893) (already discussed in the previous section), and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's celebrated modernist manifesto "*Ein Brief*" (1902)¹²⁵ – bring decadence and issues of classification into a direct dialogue: the former by way of the medical doctor and self-proclaimed scientist Nordau diagnosing and condemning literary minds of his age on grounds of their weakness, inattention, and lack of will; the latter via a letter of apology by the writer Lord Chandos to his friend and mentor Francis Bacon, the 17th century father of the inductive scientific method.

While Nordau's *Degeneration* exemplifies the discourse of Degeneration – that is, the bio-medical approach to diagnosing and halting the alleged forces of decline – (but with a twist),¹²⁶ Hofmannsthal's "*Ein Brief*" exemplifies decadence as a critique of the aporias of concept formation and empiricism in the 'natural history stage.' In my reading of the story, Hofmannsthal's decadence – i.e., the protagonist's retreat into subjectivism following his perceived break-down of classificatory schemes – obeys a critical and

¹²² Cf. Furness (1994) Introduction.

¹²³ Cf. Bade (1985) 221.

¹²⁴ Cf. Furness (1994) Introduction.

¹²⁵ In making the case for the necessity of the term Decadence, Silke Weineck asks 'Could a book on Hofmannsthal be written entirely without it?' Weineck (1994) 37.

¹²⁶ The twist is of course the diagnosis of literature rather than criminality as in the case of Lombroso.

epistemological motive. So construed, literary decadence posits a trenchant critique of the authority of typological schemes and their logic.

As “*hochverehrter Freund*” and recipient of the letter of apology Chandos writes, the character of Francis Bacon is anything but arbitrary or inconsequential to Hofmannsthal’s story. At the risk of reading “Ein Brief” both too literally (as a philosophical critique of Bacon’s ‘naïve empiricism’)¹²⁷– and too allegorically (as modern man’s fall from faith in a knowable reality) - I shall nonetheless highlight aspects of the text which reveal Chandos’ ‘*Fall*’ as the crisis of empiricism.¹²⁸ My approach to the ‘crisis of language’ nonetheless acknowledges that the problem with ‘words’ are manifold for the modern poet, philosopher, empiricist, and Chandos;¹²⁹ their relationship to empiricism is undoubtedly but one aspect of the predicament.

This said, Chandos’ crisis nonetheless appears to revolve around Bacon’s notion of the idols. Reference to this primary principle of inductive scientific method is made in the letter’s second paragraph:

Sie [Bacon]...meinen, ich bedürfe der Medizin nicht nur, um mein Übel zu bändigen, sondern *noch mehr um meinen Sinn für den Zustand meines Inneren zu schärfen.*¹³⁰ (italics mine).

¹²⁷ On naïve Baconism and the straightforward gathering of facts, cf. Klee (1997) 63, 105. Kuhn (1962) 16 calls the kind of fact-gathering which may initiate a science but fails to produce a systematic body of knowledge a *morass*.

¹²⁸ Hofmannsthal’s assertion with respect to his poem “Sünde des Lebens” – that it is ‘philosophical but not didactic’ – applies equally well to *Ein Brief*. Cf. Del Caro (1993) 29.

¹²⁹ The crisis of language Hofmannsthal’s work enacts or dramatizes is more typically construed as the problematic relationship between ‘art and life, words and deeds.’ Such readings (particularly Del Caro’s emphasis on Nietzschean vitalism) are compelling and in fact related to my emphasis on empiricism, since the crisis of empiricism represents but part and parcel of this larger crisis wherein words run amok. “Ein Brief” represents less a lament of the crisis as its excavation: a philosophical answer to why words run out of control.

¹³⁰ Hofmannsthal (1969) 102.

This, Chandos' personal imperative to gain understanding of his inner condition, is aimed at solving the problem of why he can no longer write literature and echoes directly Bacon's insistence that before one begins with any knowledge acquisition, one must improve one's mind, i.e., free it from all idols¹³¹ like theological dogma, prejudice, etc.

Ironically, as Chandos sets out to respond to the kind imperative of Bacon's letter (his "*kostbarer Brief*") and begins 'opening himself entirely' to his friend as a means of overcoming his abandonment of literary activity, it becomes apparent that Chandos' alienation and complete inability "*über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder sprechen*"¹³² began precisely here: with the prerogative, inspired by his friendship with Bacon, to *free himself from idols*. That is, to approach life empirically with observation instead of theories, experience rather than dogma, and to release himself from what philosophers of science call the 'stranglehold of apriorism.'¹³³ Chandos' Baconian imperative to approach life with a blank slate, to consider seriously only facts rather than ideas, incites his decline.

Chandos of course is unaware of the cause of his crisis even by the letter's conclusion (he thus apologizes to Bacon for the "*ausgebreiteten Schilderung eines unerklärlichen Zustandes*").¹³⁴ Initially, he proposes *hubris* as the cause of his fall, only to reject it, declaring "*dergleichen religiöse Auffassungen haben keine Kraft über mich!*" This pedantic assertion, arguably less convincing than his rationale for the vengeance of a supreme being, is, however, in keeping with Bacon's criticism of the system of

¹³¹ Cf. Klein, Jürgen (2009): <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/francis-bacon/>

¹³² Hofmannsthal (1969) 106.

¹³³ Chandos, of course, could be ridiculed for signing on to such an impossible mission as approaching everyday life – rather than isolated research- according to the tenets of Bacon's empiricism.

¹³⁴ Hofmannsthal (1969) 112.

speculation established by theologians as an obstacle to the progress of science.¹³⁵ Chandos' assertion of non-religiosity points to his commitment to purging the idols. But where does purging the idols end?

Chandos writes, now less confidently, that "*auch die irdischen Begriffe entziehen sich mir in der gleichen Weise.*"¹³⁶ Where his torture *began* with abstract words like "'Geist,' 'Seele,' oder 'Körper'" – words nearing the *edge* of conventional understanding¹³⁷ whose classifications are always challenging and whose meanings in conversational language and even scientific discourse remain forever more or less vague¹³⁸ – eventually words used to make judgments even in familiar conversation become problematic: "...*alles erschien mir so unbeweisbar, so lügenhaft, so löcherig wie nur möglich.*"¹³⁹ The sense of 'löcherig' (full of holes) seems best understood with respect to an ideal classificatory system comprised of an exhaustive set of concepts that leave nothing out.

Chandos' problem as a writer in particular lies with the Baconian ban on apriorism and deductive reasoning, hence pre-formed conceptual thought. Yet words, of course, are concepts, and not every word can be used reliably, that is, can be tested for accuracy: the *unreliability* of concepts large or small, with their non-uniformity of usage and their highly subjective meanings leads Chandos logically to their renunciation. (Chandos' characterization of speakers' class, their occupations and personas implicates their knowledge as mere opinion – which is to say, not inter-subjectively verifiable, 'non-

¹³⁵ Hofmannstal (1969) 112.

¹³⁶ Hofmannsthal (1969) 106.

¹³⁷ Cf. Hempel (1952) 15 on 'conventional understanding.'

¹³⁸ Cf. Hempel (1952) 11. Carnap proposed the procedure of 'explication' to deal with expressions whose meaning in conversational language or even in scientific discourse is vague. Explication aims at giving "those expressions a new and precisely determined meaning so as to render them more suitable for clear and rigorous discourse on the subject matter at hand."

determinate’, ‘unprovable,’ ‘lie-like,’ and ‘porous’). Chandos has become skeptical of words because they represent concepts which he cannot empirically verify: like Comte’s positivism, Bacon’s empiricism insists that all knowledge is based on facts. “All good intellects have repeated, since Bacon’s time, that there is no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts.” In Comte’s third stage – the positive stage – knowledge is empirical; all else is opinion.¹⁴⁰

Famously, the path of Chandos’ skepticism toward the reliability of language leads to the nihilistic scenario of single words swimming around him and eventually staring him down:

Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen. Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich; sie gerannen zu Augen, die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder hineinstarren muß: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt.¹⁴¹

In the context of Bacon’s disdain for rhetoric – his famous rejection of the book learning of the humanists on the grounds that they “hunt more after words than matter”¹⁴² – this scenario appears to mark the *revenge of the word*, not to mention the senselessness of non-methodical, non-theoretical empirical inquiry, and the haphazard breaking down of phenomena into ever smaller, less meaningful pieces. Recalling Hempel’s typological vocabulary, Chandos’ failure to find *terms to unite parts* reads like *taxa*, traits, or *differentia without* a ‘universe of discourse.’ It thus presages the fact that for latter-day empiricists like Hempel and Carnap, the hunt for matter *had become* the hunt for words,

¹³⁹ Hofmannsthal (1969) 107.

¹⁴⁰ Webb (1995) 107 quotes Comte, *System of Positive Polity*.

¹⁴¹ Hofmannsthal (1969) 107.

¹⁴² Hofmannsthal (1969) 107. Klein (2009) notes that Bacon “criticizes the Cambridge University curriculum for placing too much emphasis on dialectical and sophistical training.

and an infinitely complex one at that. The ultimate objective of rational reconstruction (or ‘explication’) is, according to Hempel, nothing less than “the construction of a language which is governed by well-determined rules, and in which all the statements of empirical science can be formulated.”¹⁴³ Coming up with this new language requires the solution of complex logical and methodological problems of concept formation in empirical science.¹⁴⁴

Yet the intricacies of precise language and concept formation *themselves* did not propel Chandos’ fall into vertigo. Instead, ‘*Ein Brief*’ traces the crisis back to one of vision. Hofmannsthal suggests that we understand the return of the word as the result of Chandos’ compulsion to *see* everything in “*einer unheimlichen Nähe*” – a *Zwang* inspired – ironically - by Baconian faith in the power of observation:

So wie ich einmal in einem Vergrößerungsglas ein Stück von der Haut meines kleinen Fingers gesehen hatte, das einem Blachfeld mit Furchen und Höhlen glich, so ging es mir nun mit den Menschen und ihren Handlungen.¹⁴⁵

The magnifying glass stands at the center of Chandos’ crisis: an empirical tool of scientific observation, it functions as an exacerbation of vision and observation to expose for Chandos the arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy of human vision. Corporeal, subjective,

¹⁴³ Hempel (1952) 23.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Hempel (1952) 50. An outline of some of Hempel’s terms gives an impression of the complex, logical and methodological problems of concept formation. There exists for the empiricist a ‘natural language’ which admittedly cannot fully satisfy conditions of determinacy or uniformity and is always somewhat vague; and a ‘scientific language’ which transcends natural language via precision. The precision of the later relies on adequate distinctions not only between phenomena itself, but between kinds of *definitions* of the phenomena in question: empiricists thus negotiate ‘nominal’; ‘real’, ‘analytic,’ and ‘operational’ definitions of terms, as well as logical analyses or rational reconstructions, which Carnap termed ‘explication.’ Cf. Hempel (1959) 141 on Carnap. Hempel (1952) 14 notes that all definitions must further meet the requirement of *syntactical determinacy* which states that a definition must make clear the logical form of the contents in which the term is to be used. On nominal, real, and analytic definitions see Hempel (1952) 2-3. Nominal definitions deal strictly with the meanings of linguistic expressions by stipulating a *definiendum* which is synonymous with the *definiens*. ‘Real definitions’ are concerned with expressions already in use rather than, like nominal definition, with introducing a new expression. On operational definition see Hempel (1959) 141.

and contingent upon optical devices in use, vision itself seems bound to undermine the aim of science to produce universal knowledge.¹⁴⁶ It leads not to the discovery of truth, but to profound alienation.

Chandos' new perspective is marked by what Hempel would consider a void of 'observables,' observables being terms which signify directly observable characteristics of physical objects: properties or relations whose presence or absence in a given case can be inter-subjectively ascertained, under suitable circumstances, by direct observation. Ideally, *observables* (terms such as 'hard', 'liquid', 'blue', 'coincident with', 'contiguous with', etc.) comprise all scientific operations.¹⁴⁷ Yet for Chandos, the very tools of science disrupt the identity of appearance and essence such that *observables* become themselves inconceivable.

Though words are clearly central to his breakdown (words attack, disorient, destabilize rather than synthesize meaning), their assault follows from a "disturbance of vision," as it were: vision grounds the use of meaningful words so that an experienced crisis of language, as Andreas Huyssen suggests, finds at its source a crisis of 'normal' or 'conventional' vision.¹⁴⁸ After the experience with the magnifying glass of seeing things radically differently from how they at first appear, Chandos sheds the "*vereinfachenden*

¹⁴⁵ Hofmannsthal (1969) 107.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Hanson in Hempel (1952) 146 for a discussion of scientific seeing and observing as "theory-laden" undertakings: results of seeing with the microscope, fluoroscope (for a lung for instance), or x-ray photographs show intersubjective variation even among expert observers.

¹⁴⁷ This is to say that "any scientific statement, however abstract, could be transformed, by virtue of definitions of its constituent technical terms, into an equivalent statement couched exclusively in observation terms." This view reflects what Hempel calls the "*narrower thesis of empiricism*," and is characteristic of earlier forms of positivism and empiricism, but "does not hold up under closer scrutiny." See Hempel (1952) 24.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Huyssen "The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism," in *Modernism/Modernity*, Volume 5, Number 3, September 1998. pp. 33-47.

Blick der Gewohnheit.”¹⁴⁹ Though the magnifying glass could be considered a grounding tool, adept at keeping one’s eyes on the ‘facts’ rather than ‘in the clouds,’ it has for Chandos a far more radical effect than either of these options (fact-gathering or philosophizing) suggest.¹⁵⁰ Visual phenomena are *experienced* through the magnifying glass more than they are *seen* in the sense of observed: a corporeal or embodied experience, it transforms the protagonist from a being who reasons and intellectualizes to one who reacts physiologically and viscerally to sense impressions. As Adrian Del Caro notes, Chandos becomes “able to experience life in its manifold forms from insect to rodent to human.”¹⁵¹

To call the problem of Lord Chandos the ‘problem of modern literature’¹⁵² – particularly given the addressee of his letter –seems to artificially circumscribe and radically underestimate it¹⁵³ – that is, unless literature itself is held to be the privileged domain of inquiry into problems of epistemology; the nature of vision, sensory perception and the Real.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Hofmannsthal (1969) 107.

¹⁵⁰ DeGroot (1965) 17. This was the function of the microscope according to Ernst Haeckel’s student and biographer who, on the subject of Haeckel’s anti-theological views, wrote: “The microscope kept the attention of students to facts, and did not suffer them to lose themselves in the clouds. Thus a foundation stone was laid in Haeckel’s thoughts which he would never discard.”

¹⁵¹ Del Caro (1993) 30.

¹⁵² Cf. Schultz “Hofmannsthal and Bacon: The Sources of the Chandos Letter.” Gerhardt Austin (1981) 61 comments rightly that Schultz’s observations are “für die Erhellung des entscheidenden Gedankenganges unergiebig.” Del Caro (1993) 27 also focuses attention on the poet as the person who “ranks first among the practitioners of language gone rampant.”

¹⁵³ Given the discussion of definition in the sciences, and the unique requirement of empiricism to employ ‘observables’ determinate and uniform in quality, the problem of Lord Chandos seems more acutely to be the problem of empiricism; literature, in turn, appears more as a way out, since its terms do not require a high degree of uniformity by different ‘investigators.’ Cf. Webb (1995) 77 on ambiguity in literature versus science.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Rose (1978) 35 for a description of the literary criticism of Lukács and Benjamin and their era as being “not a discrete discipline but inseparable from the basic questions of epistemology and philosophical experience, and, conversely, philosophical questions could not be considered apart from cultural forms.”

As this reading suggests, ‘decadence,’ at least, is fundamentally concerned with these issues. It is fundamentally concerned with *truth* in opposition to the application of practical reason toward the ends of “a law of agreement” (see the Nietzschean epigram at the outset of this section); and with the pragmatic conveniences afforded by taxonomic order. The preoccupation of decadence with decline is thus well understood as a rejection of self-preservation and progress as fundamental values. It is in the context of the self-preservationism at the heart of science that the masochism of the literary modernist, parrying shocks and paying a price for truthful experience, becomes conceivable.¹⁵⁵ Both Baudelaire (according to Benjamin) and Hofmannsthal remain committed to *not* positing ‘order and harmony where none exists’; they are willing to “perish instead in a world with no illusions.”¹⁵⁶ For these modernist authors, *order is idola*.

Finally, as Hofmannsthal’s story shows, the problem of words and empiricism extends beyond issues of knowledge to interfere with the coherence of identity. That even identity is at stake in use and misuse of words, terms, and concepts is notable in Chandos’ inability to conform to the norms associated with his class and position; that is, to *be* the aristocrat Lord Chandos. Now drawn to the raptures of random phenomena, viscerally distraught over the fate of rats, and secretly bored with the affairs of his estate, Chandos identifies obsessively with Crassus - the orator of the Roman senate who infamously and inconceivably mourned the loss of a pet eel before the eyes of his peers. If we understand Crassus as having been dominated by emotionalism bespeaking weakness, or even by mere empathic understanding in a setting that called for reason if

Also note the wide-ranging ‘interdisciplinarity’ of literary authors like Hofmannsthal (or Musil): writers whose university work included courses in the philosophy of science.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Walter Benjamin, “On some motifs in Baudelaire.”

¹⁵⁶ Del Caro (1993) 31.

not *Realpolitik*, we can understand him as representing a ‘free spirit’ in the midst of a cohort embroiled in the rationalistic pursuit of power and survival.

Beyond an initial crisis of conceptual thought marked by the inability ‘*Teile...mit einem Begriff umzuspinnen,*’ then, lies for Chandos the solstice of not-knowing, and of aesthetic contemplation. By the end of his letter Chandos seems inclined to take up the Nietzschean postulate that “What is required...is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of Appearance.”¹⁵⁷ Aestheticism, as mentioned at the outset, becomes an epistemological necessity once the inductive logic of empiricism as an approach to life is taken to its extreme, i.e.; is exercised under ‘open’ circumstances in which constant and stringent ‘explication’ of terms becomes untenable, and *observables* unthinkable.

This rather lengthy reading has aimed to suggest the stakes of un-systematic seeing, and of corporeal, non-objective vision. It represents a kind of seeing which for Max Nordau was bound up with utter madness.

Decadence and aestheticism obey critical, epistemological convictions: how differently decadence is viewed through positivistic eyes like those of Max Nordau. Nordau, in opposition to a ‘decadent’ like Chandos, represents what might practically be termed a ‘Degenerationist,’ (not to be confused with a ‘degenerate’). Degenerationists, like ‘clear-headed poets,’ know enough to ‘call a cat a cat,’¹⁵⁸ and to them, Chandos and Crassus would doubtlessly qualify as hysterics, mystics, mad men, or ego-maniacs. With

¹⁵⁷ Nietzsche (2001) 38. Hofmannsthal’s language in ‘Ein Brief’ is remarkably evocative of Nietzsche’s here: both when Chandos looks through the magnifying glass and later when describing his ride ‘*im tiefen, aufgeworfenen Ackerboden*’ and “*welligen Feldern.*” Cf Hofmannsthal (1969) 108.

¹⁵⁸ Nordau (1968) xvii.

regard to language, the only problem for the Degenerationist resides in the mental inadequacy or weakness of its user: disavowing the intricacies of scientific concept formation, Nordau notes that words only produce confusion in “muddled or ignorant brains.”¹⁵⁹

Degenerationists’ comfort level with words and concepts and their ability to formulate a truthful *law of agreement* (to borrow Nietzsche’s term from the epigram above) among heterogeneous individuals is a hallmark of 19th century science obsessed with the classification of delinquency. Mental illness could, for instance, be divided into “Psychic Stigmata” and “Physiological Stigmata”, with the latter subdivided into five classes of ‘anomalies.’ Falling under “Psychic Stigmata” were, for example: “Insanity. Idiocy. Imbecility. Feeble-mindedness. Pavor nocturnes. Precocity; one-sided talents; disequilibrium. Eccentricity. Oral Delinquency. Sexual Perversion.”¹⁶⁰ Presumably (despite their allusions to the resurrection of Christ, and the branding of animals) these categories were denotative and universally indisputable; their divisions were held to obey both the law of exhaustivity (they cover all mental illnesses) and exclusivity (symptoms of mental disorder cohere into these categories so that they belong to one or another illness, but never two or more). These classifications were further held to be invulnerable to such logical errors of definition like circularity or infinite regress,¹⁶¹ or the subjectivity implied by the valuational aspects of their definitions.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Nordau (1968) 555.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Carlson 128. The list derives from a popular 1899 textbook on neurology and psychiatry widely used in the United States.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Hempel (1952) 15 and Hempel (1965) 141 for discussions of infinite definitional regress and definitional circles.

¹⁶² On the problem of ‘valuational overtones’ in the specification of psychiatric concepts, see Hempel, (1965) 145. Hempel writes that “it is to be expected that [the use of valuational definitions] in concrete cases will be influenced by the idiosyncrasies of the investigator; this will reduce the reliability of these concepts and of those for which they serve as partial criteria of application.”

Nordau, of course, is famous for applying these terms not to criminals as his mentor Lombroso had done,¹⁶³ but to writers like Ibsen, Kafka, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Tolstoy, and more. Grounding his and other quirky terms of 19th century science – conditions like ‘Dipsomania, monomania, graphomania’ – is a faith in classification as a reliable heuristic tool and the accuracy of generalized conceptual terms. Oftentimes behind them is a faith in the tidiness of a reality reflective of these categories (scientific realism).¹⁶⁴ Degenerationists believe in the fundamental adequacy of words to refer to phenomena.

Use of these terms, however, could also reflect something other than optimistic faith in representationalism or scientific realism, but follow from the position of anti-realism: from the acceptance (even among some kinds of positivists) that, given a fundamentally unknowable reality, the mission of science is and cannot be other than ‘orientation.’ This is the position of Ernst Mach (a professor, incidentally, of Hofmannsthal in Vienna) who was reputed for teaching “ignorance, non-knowing, *Unwissenheit*.”¹⁶⁵ Following from his physiological studies revealing “simply no isomorphism between reality and appearance”¹⁶⁶ this is Mach’s view of science:

The role of science is to improve our orientation in the world. The biological task of science is to provide the fully developed human with as perfect a means of orienting himself as possible. No other scientific ideal can be realized, and any other must be meaningless. [AS: 37]¹⁶⁷

Science as the instrument for preservation of the species stands in marked opposition to a Baconian philosophy of science that insists on inquiry that “will direct [the scientist] and

¹⁶³ Nordau’s *Degeneration* is dedicated to Lombroso.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Van Fraassen (1980) 8.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Bernheimer (2002) 17.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Ernst Mach in Pojman (2009).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Ernst Mach in Pojman (2009).

give him light to new experiences and inventions” (Bacon, III [1887], 232). While Bacon held faith in the purging of the idols as a guarantor of truth, Machian investigations into the physiological foundations of sensory experience reveal that reality as such is unknowable. As Pojman writes of Machian positivism:

Bacon is problematic: there is no real *tabula rasa*; once you rid yourself of idols, some pre-formed cognitive structure replaces it. The exclusion of superstition, imposture, error, and confusion may be obligatory for Bacon—but by Mach’s time, known to be impossible.¹⁶⁸

The shift is from realism to anti-realism, and science as an impartial discoverer of laws, to science as instrument of survival.

It is unclear to me what kind of positivist – the representationalist or the Machian anti-realist – Nordau represents.¹⁶⁹ Indeed Nordau seems conflicted on the issue. On the one hand, he holds science up as a spiritual, self-denying pursuit consistent with Bacon’s utopianism:

What saintly legend is as beautiful as the life of an *inquirer* who spends his existence bending over a microscope, almost without bodily wants, known and honored by few, working only for his *own conscience* sake, *without any other ambition* than that perhaps one little new fact may be firmly established, which a more fortunate successor will make use of in a brilliant synthesis, and insert as a stone in some monument of natural science?¹⁷⁰

Nordau’s depiction of the scientist’s work is “bee-like” in a Baconian way: “Like a bee, the empiricist, by means of his inductive method, collects the natural matter or products

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Pojman (2009) on Ernst Mach.

¹⁶⁹ While much has been made of Nordau’s lack of understanding of the arts, an analysis of his scientific method, its sources, and particularly his position regarding human physiology (or Machian positivism) remains to be written.

¹⁷⁰ Nordau (1968) 110. Italics mine.

and then works them up into knowledge in order to produce honey, which is useful for healthy nutrition.”¹⁷¹

This metaphor’s focus on salubrity signals the fact that Nordau expects art to fulfill the biological requirements of science: in a Darwinian discussion of the function of the brain and the senses not entirely dissimilar to Mach’s,¹⁷² Nordau notes that effective brains must produce clear presentations of the world by repressing all interferences:

The stronger the will, so much the more completely can we adapt the whole organism to a given presentation, so much the more can we obtain sense impressions which serve to enhance this presentation, so much the more can we by association induce memory-images, which complete and rectify the presentation, so much the more definitely can we suppress the presentations which disturb it or are foreign to it.¹⁷³

Only in so doing does progress become conceivable, and the role of art is to excite the emotions in ways conducive to human advancement.¹⁷⁴ At the conclusion of Nordau’s critique, he thus speaks to the need for ‘mental therapeutics’ and the ‘hygiene of the mind.’¹⁷⁵

Then, however, Nordau concludes with the judgment that accurate and expert ‘attention’ to empirical matters can “eliminate all errors, all superstition” – as if the *tabula rasa* were again conceivable:

False ideas of the connection between phenomena arise through defective observation of them and will be rectified by a more exact observation. Now to observe means nothing else than to convey deliberately determined sense-impressions to the brain, and thereby raise a group of presentations to such clearness and intensity that it can acquire preponderance in consciousness. Arouse through association its allied memory-images, and suppress such as are incompatible with itself.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Klein (2009) on the homology between empiricism’s ‘working up of knowledge’ and historicism as a piling up of historical facts. Cf. also Winkiel (2008) 13-14.

¹⁷² See Pojman (2009) on Ernst Mach’s discussion of science as the most evolved feature of human memory. Nordau nowhere quotes Mach.

¹⁷³ Nordau (1968) 55 and 40-53.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Nordau (1968) 546 – 547 on art’s role in exciting the emotions and ‘drawing tears.’

¹⁷⁵ Nordau (1968) 559.

Observation, which lies at the root of all progress, is thus the adaptation through attention of the sense-organs and their centres of perception to a presentation or group of presentations predominating in consciousness.¹⁷⁶

Needless to say, degenerates (a classification which subsumes decadents) are incapable of formulating clear presentations by way of the mental discipline Nordau describes. “Untended and unrestrained by attention, the brain activity of the degenerate and hysterical is capricious, and without aim or purpose.”¹⁷⁷ Nordau then suggests that

Representations mutually alien or mutually exclusive appear continuously. The fact that they are retained in consciousness simultaneously, and at about the same intensity, combines them (in conformity with the laws of conscious activity) into a thought which is necessarily absurd, and cannot express the *true* relations of phenomena.¹⁷⁸

To entertain simultaneously mutually alien or mutually exclusive representations is to fail to define a ‘universe of discourse,’ to single out differences and similarities among phenomena, and to order their components into classes and subclasses; in short, the degenerate and decadent cannot taxonomize. There is perhaps no better exemplar of this ‘failure’ than Chandos, who, as mentioned earlier, is “able to experience life in its manifold forms from insect to rodent to human”:¹⁷⁹ as the earlier discussion of Chandos’ identity suggests, the importance of his status as ‘Lord’ eroded as random phenomena captured his attention.

From the perspective of decadence, classification appears to be what Nietzsche called the “discipline of the head which preserves humanity,”¹⁸⁰ yet one invariably reliant on fundamental untruths and artificialities. For the ‘degenerationist,’ however, the only

¹⁷⁶ Nordau (1968) 55.

¹⁷⁷ Nordau (1968) 56.

¹⁷⁸ Nordau (1968) 56.

¹⁷⁹ Del Caro (1993) 30.

obstacle to truth is human weakness. In his final ‘prognosis’ of the art, poetry, and philosophy of the 20th century, Nordau thus fittingly makes use of the language of classification by subsuming all the varied ‘symptoms’ of degenerate art under the “genus melancholia,” or “the psychiatric symptom of an exhausted central nervous system.”¹⁸¹ His literary criticism represents the fleshing out of a table of disease: one imagines ‘the melancholic type’ divided into ‘artists and philosophers’ and subsumed by the personages discussed in Nordau’s work.

If Chandos is the decadent hero, it is because his breakdown can be traced back not to the mental and perceptive weaknesses Nordau describes, but to an acute grasp of Baconian empiricism, and the contradictions inherent in the establishment of universal thought. Presumably, the promise of order photographic portrait typologies solicit would have hold little sway over the mind of the conscious decadent.

6. Conclusion

As its title suggests, this chapter has sought to understand typology as form, which is to say, typology as a heuristic tool, as an ordering structure, and a representational strategy.¹⁸² It has aimed to contextualize typology historically and culturally, both in modernity and several of its modern sciences and modernisms. What has emerged is a contentious divide between perspectives which value typological order, and those which decry its rigidity. Put schematically, typology either observes life or extinguishes it. Its heuristic aim of *Komplikationsreduktion* is viewed by critics as simply

¹⁸⁰ Nietzsche (2001) 76.

¹⁸¹ Nordau (1968) 536.

reductive. Where friends of typology value its clear, stringent seeing and ordering, foes perceive its hubristic and hopelessly naïve ‘audacity’ (Simmel). Nordau has told us that the ability to classify and taxonomize separates healthy minds from ‘decadents’; or, with respect to Chandos, nobility from rodents, and the articulate and rational from the mute and deranged.

With the aid of voices like Carl Hempel’s I have sought to allow typology to speak for itself, as it were. Kenneth Webb writes an articulate and reasonable-sounding defense of typological thought which synthesizes some of the tensions of typological classification outlined in this chapter:

Classification inevitably involves information loss, but, equally inevitably, cannot be dispensed with. Thought itself is unimaginable without classification since, were everything undifferentiated, there would be nothing to think about. However, while necessary for the most primitive cogitation, risks are involved that the inherent richness of phenomena is lost. [...]

Webb further suggests a resolution:

The preservation of richness cannot be achieved by a refusal to classify but rather is related to the number of classificatory schemas taken into thought simultaneously and the complexity of the relationships between those schemas. Similarly, creativity or intelligence may be thought of as the ability to see new and useful forms of classification as well as the ability to manipulate and relate known classifications.¹⁸³

This chapter’s outline of various kinds of types – from Hempel’s stringent ‘either – or’ types, to Simmel’s “life-like” types, and naturalism’s “mysterious” types – should help sensitize the viewer of photographic portrait typologies to the various heuristic and aesthetic aims of such images. My comparison of Lord Chandos and Max Nordau has

¹⁸² For a variety of reasons, this chapter alludes to Adorno’s “Essay as Form,” but argues from a more nuanced view of typology than Adorno’s on positivism.

¹⁸³ Webb (1995) 56.

further aimed to establish the breadth of experience and vision bound up with typological schemes.

**Chapter Two: Cosmos Construction in German Southwest
Africa: Vision, Identity and Intervention in Eugen Fischer's
Rehebother Bastards (1913)**



Fig. 1: Portrait of Eugen Fischer .

1. Introduction

In a discussion of anthropology's epistemological troubles, Edwin Ardener writes of the "uselessness of old monographs": "monographs which used to appear exhaustive now seem selective; interpretations which once looked full of insight now seem mechanical and lifeless."¹ Far from being useless, however, such texts can emerge as treasures for students for cultural studies, history, sociology, or any other field that might draw usefully from the historical instances of 'ethnographic discourse' they may provide.² This chapter examines one such monograph, Eugen Fischer's *Die Rehebother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen. Anthropologische und ethnographische Studien am Rehebother Bastardvolk in Deutsch Südwest-Afrika*, (1913), (*The Bastards of Reheboth and the Problem of Miscegenation in Man*),³ and pays particular attention to how its representations imagine an ordered world-system – a cosmos- within which a German nation in crisis could re-figure itself in salient and stable terms.

As much as any anthropological tome of the colonial era, Fischer's study fits Ardener's above description: for the ubiquity of its cultural assumptions of European racial and cultural superiority, its faith in a scientific approach to the study of man and society, its overt nationalism and paternalism, and especially its biologization of culture.

¹ Ardener (1971) 449. Cf. also Asad (1973) 10. For a glimpse of the very latest on the controversies surrounding anthropology as a science, see "Anthropology a Science? Statement Deepens Rift," *New York Times*, December 9, 2010. Here Richard Wade discusses a decision by the American Anthropological Association at its recent annual meeting to strip the word "science" from a statement of its long-range plan. For many, this decision has been viewed as 'attack on science' that follows from two influences within anthropology: "One is that of so-called critical anthropologists who see anthropology as an arm of colonialism and therefore something that should be done away with. The other is the postmodernist critique of the authority of science." See <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/10/science/10anthropology.html>.

² Cf. Steinmetz (2007) Introduction.

³ RB from now on.

For Fischer, personal traits like educability (*Bildungsfähigkeit, Erziehbarkeit*),⁴ cunning (*Geschick*)⁵, reliability (*Zuverlässigkeit*), energy, foresight, competence, judgment (*Urteilsfähigkeit*), pride, and even cleanliness (*Reinlichkeitssinn*)⁶ -notable in the manner in which his subjects tended to their laundry-⁷ were conceived as hereditary traits determined by his subject's degree of European versus Non-European 'blood.'⁸ For Fischer culture itself bespoke a genetically determined entity impervious to social convention, human ideals, desires, prejudices, or economic structures.⁹ Instead it was imagined as a product of supra-individual blood circulation that destined both personal and collective fates; as such, it could be only more or less pure, more or less powerful, hence more or less *völkisch* and authentic.

This chapter therefore interrogates Fischer's study and its photographic portrait typology not for objective knowledge of its subject, but as a symbolic system of representation geared toward creating a space in which national, racial identity-formation could take place. The photograph above (Fig. 1) shows Fischer forging this system, at work ordering the cosmos that RB would present its readership in 1913, four years after his visit to GSWA. Bee-like, Fischer builds empirical evidence up into knowledge; reduces the chaos associated with modern social life wrought, purportedly, by rampant miscegenation; and intervenes in the *Gleichmacherei* imposed by modern

⁴ Fischer (1913) 237.

⁵ Fischer (1913) 16.

⁶ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) Introduction, who points out that the traits with which natives were most frequently characterized suggested their potential for subordination.

⁷ Fischer (1913) 63: "...der holländische Reinlichkeitssinn hat sich deutlich vererbt."

⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) 236. Fischer's use of this rather vernacular term signals his rejection of chromosome study, and the debt his brand of genetics still paid to popular belief. See my discussion below (Section IV "Confident Seeing: Visualism and Fischer's Scopic Regime") on genetics in Germany as a particularly visual rather than lab-confined discipline.

⁹ Cf. Fischer (1913) on class.

circumstances.¹⁰ For Fischer, these result from a ‘*Gleichmachung strebende Großstadtkultur*’ and its attendant novelties like the mass press, radio, traffic engineering, (*Verkehrstechnik*), and passenger travel (*Reiseverkehr*). For Fischer, these late 19th and early 20th century developments threatened the “*Verwischung des Einzelvölkischen*” and lead to “*internationaler ‘Gleichmacherei.*’”¹¹

The ennobling portrait in Figure 1 also offers a glimpse of Fischer building his career. In 1921 he would be appointed director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics (KWI-A) and would continue to hold this office throughout the Nazi Regime. Upon establishing himself as an empirically-minded problem solver and patriot with first hand experience in German Southwest Africa, the medical doctor, biologist, and pioneer in the field of human genetics received something like a free press pass to speak authoritatively before educated audiences on subjects ranging from miscegenation and die *Kolonialfrage* (1910) “*Der völkische Staat biologisch betrachtet*” (1933), and - more interestingly because farther afield from his actual arena of expertise, “*die Schuldfrage und Aussenpolitik*” (1923). It seems that Fischer needed only mention the then still largely foreign term ‘Mendelian genetics’ to (re)establish and assert his eminent reputation and his prestige as a “*naturwissenschaftlich denkender Beobachter.*”¹²

Though Fischer’s dissertation was submitted in the department of Anatomy at Freiburg and explored abnormalities in the skulls of young moles (*Maulwürfe*), and although his closest colleague was the plant biologist Erwin Bauer from whom Fischer

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter 1 section 4.2 “Decadence as Non-Distinction” in this dissertation on empiricism as ‘a bee-like activity.’ Cf. Fischer (1933) 6 on ‘*die zu internationaler Gleichmachung strebende Großstadtkultur,*’ and Fischer (1910) on ‘*Gleichmacherei*’ in modern life.

¹¹ Fischer (1933) 6.

appropriated the term ‘Bastard’ as a non-normative, technical one to mean ‘cross-breed,’¹³ Fischer became renowned as the father of German eugenics and a nationally recognized social therapist. Today, his career is most notable for signaling continuities between colonialist-era genocide and Nazi genocide, and the dangers of politically - instrumentalized science.¹⁴ Max Weinreich, for one, noted in 1945 that

There were in the memory of mankind Jenghiz Khans and Eugen Fischers but never before had a Jenghiz Khan joined hands with an Eugen Fischer. For this reason, the blow was deadly efficient. In 1939, there were 16,723,800 Jews in the world; 9,479,200 of them lived in Europe; of the latter, 7,950,000 belonged to Eastern Jewry. Six million Jews in Europe are no more.¹⁵

Historian Robert Proctor notes that Weinreich’s charge “must rank among the most serious ever posed against an anthropologist.”¹⁶ Few would dispute the extent to which Fischer, especially given his lofty position in the Nazi Regime, personifies instrumental science. Fischer’s close friend Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer stated that Fischer had placed the “sword of [his] science at the service of the state.”¹⁷ One can add to such verdicts that it was largely the prestige Fischer gained early in his career with the

¹² Fischer (1913) 300.

¹³ It is notable that Fischer considers his use of the term ‘Bastard’ to be in keeping with the nomenclature of animal and plant biology: Menzel used the term ‘Bastard’ to refer to plant crossbreeds, and Fischer’s colleague Baur, whose definitions Fischer appropriates, likewise intended to employ ‘Bastard’ non-normatively. Fischer (1913) 138 writes in a footnote: “*Daß man im Anschluß an die Nomenklatur der übrigen Biologen auch als Anthropologe von ‘Bastardierung’ und ‘Bastarden’ spricht, halte ich für das einzig richtige, es ist ein festgefügtter biologischer Begriff. – Im täglichen Leben ist ja das Wort unter gewissen Umständen beleidigend, das kann aber von seiner wissenschaftlichen Verwendung nicht abhalten – uns im gewöhnlichen Leben etwa Primaten zu nennen, kann auch als Beleidigung aufgefaßt werden.*” Fischer (1993) 139 also notes that the Rehoboth people call themselves “Bastards.” The term should reflect nonetheless implies the relative stability of an orderly though intermediary category located between pure categories: the term thus stands in contrast to *Mischling*, a pejorative signaling unruliness, unscrutability, and degeneracy but used more commonly than ‘bastard,’ particularly in non-scientific settings such as in the debates in the German Reichstag concerning the question of miscegenation in GSWA. Cf. Smith (1998) on these debates between the years 1904 and 1914.

¹⁴ Cf. Zimmerman (2001) Introduction, and Zantop (1998) 4-5 for consideration of the connections between colonialism and National Socialism. Zantop notes that Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* is most notable for joining the two historical phenomena via their roots in German thought.

¹⁵ Weinreich cited in Proctor (1988) 138.

¹⁶ Proctor (1988) 138.

publication of *RB* that first made such ‘joining of hands’ possible at all. The collapse of the Third Reich in 1945 propelled Fischer into a profound though defensive *Sinneskrise*, characterized by intensely disorienting professional and personal circumspection.¹⁸

Taking *RB* as a building block of Fischer’s scientific authority and professional appeal, this chapter aims to analyze the tools and techniques with which Fischer forges a compelling system of order in which Germans of his era could position both themselves and others. At the epicenter of *RB* stands a thirteen page photographic portrait typology which includes the photographs shown on Fischer’s desk in the above portrait. In its obedience of principles like exclusivity, exhaustivity, and the logic of ‘either – or,’ Fischer’s typology takes a definitive, Hempelian form. Its assertions concerning racial and collective identity are accordingly stringent and cemented, but also – due to qualities to be described below- visually evocative. As such, *RB* can be considered a powerful though inverted contribution toward finding what art historian Wolfgang Brückle calls ‘paths to a German Face of the Nation’ (*Volks Gesicht*); that is, toward the image-formation, via early 20th century photographic portraiture, of German collective identity.¹⁹

¹⁷ Adams, Allen, & Weiss (2005) 246.

¹⁸ Cf. Lösch (1997) 436 – 437 on Fischer’s post-1945 *Sinneskrise*.

¹⁹ Cf. Brückle (1998) 285 – 286. Brückle argues that portrait series by Lerski and Sander, as with Lendvai-Dirksen and others, work as a ‘*Gegenbild zu dem identitätsberaubten Menschen der Großstadt*’ (285). As ‘*Identifikationsbilder*’ (286) they figure as paths to German identity. In the following chapters of this dissertation, I suggest different roles for Lerski and Sander than those assigned by Brückle. Sander, I argue, documents identity loss along the lines of Spenglerian cyclical history, while Lerski’s portraiture works to undermine some of the most fundamental assumptions concerning essentialist identity and humans as ‘types.’ Fischer however, with his typological images of the ‘Bastards,’ does nearly exactly what Brückle claims: his characterization of them as precise, clear, and salient contrasts greatly with his idea of the urban *Mischling* in ways this chapter shall discuss.

How might Fischer's typology figure in the context of paths toward German identity? While a thoroughly comparative analysis would extend beyond the boundaries of this chapter, a sense of the diverse ways of photographically conjuring a *Volksgeist* can be briefly sketched here. For the most polarizing effect, we can compare RB with Richard Haman's "*Köpfe des Mittelalters*" (1917) as a humanistic path greatly at odds with Fischer's 'scientism.' Concerned with the same fundamental issue of identity crisis in Germany in the early part of the 20th century,²⁰ they propose different solutions according to opposing epistemologies.

In his photo book focused on the 'physiognomy' of medieval sculpture, Haman seeks to orchestrate an encounter not between his early twentieth century readers and medieval art, but between the reader and the medieval, German spirit. Such an encounter is paradigmatically humanistic in its conviction that old texts or works of art tracing back to one's cultural forbearers can inform one's sense of self; in a way, the photo book represents a simplified, popular, mass-cultural variation on Auerbach's allegorical concerns in *Typologische Motive in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*.²¹ While Haman's faces serve as figures of introspective identification, even as 'role models' for the viewer in their '*Widerstand gegen jede Geselligkeit und Anpassung*,'²² Fischer's images of the Reheboth people represent lower-ranking Others against whom readers can 'think' themselves in a systematic, hierarchical fashion. While each work suggests a *Wille zur Gemeinschaft*,²³ Haman's does so via identification and empathy; Fischer in contrast

²⁰ Cf. Brückle (1998) on these identity crises. Brückle does not make explicit note of Haman's humanism though his description of the text renders it transparent.

²¹ Cf. Auerbach, Erich. *Typologische Motive in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*. 2. Aufl. Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1964 (orig. 1921).

²² Brückle (1998) 286.

²³ Brückle (1998) 285.

conjures fear of racial ‘disharmony’ and impurity. While Haman turns to the past (an idealized *Mittelalter*) for guidance, Fischer looks ‘overseas’²⁴ – to a colony separate from contemporary Europe in both time and space. While both photographers’ paths reveal an interest in the reconstruction of ideal forms of community and expression,²⁵ Haman uses dramatic lighting to emphasize personal expression and combines this with an essayistic text. Fischer by contrast unites objectivity, distance, and what I will call ‘importunate realism’ with scientific data concerning essentialist racial traits. (Expression in Fischer’s photographs is understood not as the nuanced traces of strong, individual character, but as physiological signs of the genetic traits of a respective ‘class’ or type of ‘Bastard.’)²⁶ Haman emphasizes medieval tropes like brotherly help and collective will, while Fischer emphasizes *difference* as a perpetual threat to solidarity and collective identity.

Finally, Haman’s portrayal of a series of medieval heads contrasts with Fischer’s more global ambition to establish an expanded taxonomy of pure and mixed racial types. In the context of this far-reaching anthropological project, Haman’s limited subject matter – like Lendvai-Dirksen’s (*Das deutsche Volksgesicht*) or Sander’s (images not of ‘*Menschen*’ but early 20th century *Germans*) - is suggestive of *one typological subclass only*. This ‘class’ or subcategory is not presented as dependent on other ones, or Others; instead it is presented autonomously. These photographers thus appear far less concerned with quasi-structuralist cosmos-building than does Fischer, for whom the Reheboths

²⁴ Fischer uses the rather romantic umbrella term “*Übersee*” for the territories colonized by the Empire. In the term alone we see one symptom of the allochronic, visualist mode to be discussed later, namely its repression of power relations and actual events of the colonial era.

²⁵ Cf. Brückle (1998) 293.

²⁶ Cf. Fischer (1913) 58. We are to note in Fischer’s photographs, for instance, the ‘*Eitelkeit*’ of the Bastards who purportedly primed for their pictures. Fischer traces this vanity not merely to the Bastards’ collective sense of superiority over ‘*Eingeborene*’ (natives) but mostly to their gene pool.

represent but the necessary ‘*Menschenmaterial*’ on which to make observations which then serve greater theories and purposes.

My attention here to Haman’s *Köpfe des Mittelalters* serves only to suggest that in finding ways to compensate for what Fischer calls the ‘*Gleichmacherei*’ of modernity, photographic and epistemological strategies were myriad.²⁷ Of course Fischer’s portraits are not of Germans but of a ‘*Bastardvolk*’ in GSWA. What, then, makes his typology a path to a German face of the nation, rather than merely to a path to a *Rehebother Volksgesicht*? How does it represent something other than open, ethnological inquiry or, more instrumentally, a roadmap for native policy in GSWA, as George Steinmetz’s study has attended to Fischer’s work?²⁸

Fischer’s *Anhang* and introduction – as well as countless isolated comments throughout individual chapters- make clear that his study of the Reheboths intends to serve the German homeland by uncovering mysteries associated with racial miscegenation: Fischer sees himself ‘picking the fruits of German colonial soil’ not only in the name of science, but of *Heimat* as well.²⁹ The Rehebother study marks only the beginning of what Fischer fantasizes as a global project of (bio-) anthropological fact collecting concerning ‘bastards’ that would inform racial science and racial hygiene. As noted above, the Reheboths amount to but an empirical means to an end, and Fischer’s bio-anthropological study of this population serves primarily to ground the grander theories of miscegenation Fischer puts forth in his addendum, “*Die politische Bedeutung*

²⁷ Fischer (1933) 6. Fischer berates ‘*die zu internationaler Gleichmachung strebende Großstadtkultur.*’ Cf. also Fischer (1910) on *Gleichmacherei*.

²⁸ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) Introduction.

²⁹ Cf. Fischer (1913) *Vorwort*.

der Bastards.” Here, the ideals of *Solidargemeinschaft*³⁰ common to the photographic works Brückle describes is abundantly manifest in the perceived threat of miscegenation which, as Fischer’s data purports to have confirmed, always leads to *Untergang*.³¹

Fischer asserts,

Ausnahmslos jedes europäisches Volk (einschließlich der Tochtervölker Europas), das Blut minderwertiger Rassen aufgenommen hat – und daß Neger, Hottentotten und viele andere minderwertig sind, können nur Schwärmer leugnen- hat diese Aufnahme minderwertiger Elemente durch geistigen, kulturellen Niedergang gebüßt.³²

Fischer further points to countless locations on the globe and to countless moments in history to suggest the truth of this statement:³³ employing a visual metaphor, he summarizes, “*Ich halte diese Sachlage für so absolut klar, dass ich einen anderen Standpunkt eben nur als den vollkommenster biologischer Unkenntnis ansehen kann.*”³⁴

The Reheboths, therefore, are of interest only in as far as their study can help unlock the secrets of how races develop, how they unite, whether new races are ever born, etc. Fischer puts these questions mostly to rest with the assertion that, in the study

³⁰ Brückle (1998) 295.

³¹ I write ‘*purports to confirm*’ since Fischer’s quasi- aesthetic principle of racial purity for purity’s sake knows no equivalent in Mendel’s plant world. Nor does Mendel rank the hereditary traits of his pea plants hierarchically. For these reasons, Fischer’s conclusions in RB, as well as his position on miscegenation in 1933 -summed up by the clunky mantra in “*Gleichgültig ob gut oder schlecht, wenn andersartig und fremd sind die Linien abzulehnen*” – smack of scientific subterfuge. Cf. Fischer (1933).

³² Fischer (1913) 302.

³³ Cf. Fischer (1913) 302. Regarding supporting evidence for Fischer’s above claim, “*Spanien, Portugal, das ganze lateinische Amerika sind abschreckenste Beispiele, auf [sic! ‘auch’] viele Verhältnisse im römischen Kaiserreich, dann im mittelalterlichen Sizilien, heute in Indien und Inselindien, auf Nordafrika könnte man hinweisen.*” Fischer’s cursory use of history here, as in the speeches “*Sozialanthropologie*” (1910) and “*Der völkische Staat biologisch betrachtet*” (1934) where focus lies in the Middle Ages, would seem to hint at the limits of his natural-scientific worldview to suggest his interest in “broader philosophical biology” and anti-mechanistic thought. (Cf. Weindling.) One might add that Fischer’s evocation of historical paradigms would have been met with approval by Langbehn himself, whose espousal of historical ideas is central to *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.

³⁴ Fischer (1913) 303.

of miscegenation, concern must always lie first and foremost with the *‘Intaktheit unserer Rasse.’*³⁵

The particular self-preservational significance of miscegenation for late 19th and early 20th century Germany aside,³⁶ it should be clear at least since Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) that RB might define the German nation via a discourse of a colonized ‘Other.’ Indeed today, identity is nearly always considered ‘relational,’ relying for its existence on something beyond itself.³⁷ In late Imperial Germany, the Reich’s colonial territories served this differentiating function well. That Fischer’s experience in the colony influenced his view of ‘home’ and identity is clear throughout the study and in later discussions of race, as in 1933, for instance, when Fischer remarked that a formidable void of German racial pride (*Rassenstolz*) lies at the heart of the “so called colonial scandal.” Drawing on his four month stay in GSWA, he surmised, “*Mancher sogenannte Kolonialskandal im Reichstag wäre unterblieben, wäre auch zu Hause nur ein Fünfchen [von holländischem Rassenstolz] noch vorhanden gewesen.*”³⁸ Apparently the fact of living among dark Africans strengthened white settlers’ sense of identity as relational, especially relationally superior. To no small extent, Fischer’s RB employs photography of a mixed race to galvanize a relational sense of genetic identity among metropolitan Germans inhabiting relatively homogenous environments.³⁹

With the loss of Germany’s colonies a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles, focus during Weimar turned toward ‘internal’ Others who needed to be found, identified,

³⁵ Fischer (1913) 304.

³⁶ Cf. Smith (1998) 108.

³⁷ See Woodward (1997) 11.

³⁸ Fischer (1933) 6. *Rassenstolz* in this speech is praised for its political expediency, while elsewhere it is prized for its community-formation. Cf. also Fischer (1913) 20, for Fischer’s admiration the *Rassenstolz* of the Boers in the colonies in RB as well, noting it as “praiseworthy” (*lobenswert*).

or created.⁴⁰ This holds for Fischer whose later work focused on European and continental genetic types, as well as for popular, cultural preoccupations more broadly (such as the works of Weimar photographers focused on domestic faces which interest Brückle).⁴¹

RB thus marks a cultural-historical moment in which a bio-anthropologist / geneticist / proto-eugenicist working in Southwest Africa could innovatively imagine a distinctly collective subject position for a racially German nation. RB encourages readers to envision a nation which, like that of the ‘Bastards’ in Reheboth, is founded on a community of racially transparent (i.e. racially knowable and distinct) members, bonded through common traditions. Unlike the Reheboth people, however, Germans should remain as racially pure as possible so as not to exhibit some of their more uncomely traits like ‘capriciousness,’ or ‘inconstancy,’⁴² and so as not to diminish the purportedly superior qualities of their European gene pool.

Fischer’s typology of a distant, rare, and previously unappreciated ‘*Bastardvolk*’ creates a context in which to understand the crisis Fischer sees unfolding in metropolitan Europe while also suggesting interventions. The typology figures iconographically as a powerful emblem of how anthropologists in Imperial Germany proposed a new basis for

³⁹ This assertion of relative homogeneity holds despite the picture Fischer offers in RB of the urban *Mischling* and racial degeneration in the metropolis, to be discussed later.

⁴⁰ Cf. Schmuhl (2008) 210. Fischer himself speaks to this need in a 1933 speech in which he notes that the Jews’ prominence in socio-cultural and scientific discourse resulted primarily from the fact that this minority constituted the only recognizable one in Germany. Cf. Fischer (1933). One can argue that August Sander’s “*Antlitz der Zeit*” (1927) and “*Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*” are suggestive of this turn toward internal others. Cf. Sekula (2002).

⁴¹ Given the iconic stature of the Fischer-Bauer-Lenz 1920’s Eugenic textbook, *Human Heredity*, the distinction between popular thought and Fischer’s racial theory arguably becomes artificial.

⁴² Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 230, 232 quotes a journalist whose observations on the ‘Reheboth Bastards’ resonate with Fischer’s.

working out the European self through human scientific scholarship,⁴³ one that substituted empathetic interpretation of cultures (associated with an age-old German Humanism) with objective, natural scientific knowledge of a non-European other⁴⁴ – or in Fischer’s case, a half-European Other. Photographs occupy desk space reserved, in other times and places, for old manuscripts and philological tomes. Yet with respect to the most virulently nationalistic kind of humanism, then, Fischer’s study functions as a veritable *Spiegelbild*: though the notorious Art Historian Julius Langbehn (1851 – 1907), for one, reacts unequivocally *against* the rise of the sciences in the late 19th century Germany,⁴⁵ the national crisis of identity he identifies is the same as Fischer’s.

The two roughly contemporary writers can be seen waging a battle over the “brain of Germany,” with Fischer bemoaning humanism’s felt presence in anthropology ‘still’ in 1913, and Langbehn prophesizing – already in 1890 - the immanent demise of natural science as a “kind of Gospel.”⁴⁶ For each writer, the problem was the same: Germans had lost their uniqueness or innate originality; their true character threatened constant diminishment under the “democratizing, leveling, atomizing spirit of the century.”⁴⁷ Like Fischer, the art historian calls on the power of ancestral origins to restore this “deepest

⁴³ Zimmerman (2001) 3.

⁴⁴ Zimmerman (2001) 4.

⁴⁵ Cf. Langbehn (1890) 8 whose treatise explicitly seeks to counter the dominance of ‘foreign modern science,’ rationality, and objectivity in late 19th century Imperial Germany: “Today, many things are examined under the microscope; it would be good to look at some things under the microscope, for a change; *audiatur et altera pars* [let the other part be heard also].” Objectivity, writes Langbehn, “frequently produces nothing but a lack of color and character.” (6) Langbehn further draws on the “deeply thoughtful and sensitive Novalis” who wrote, “He who is missing himself can only be healed if he is prescribed himself,” and formulates his entreaty for the re-education of the Germans as follows: “He who is suffering from objectivity can only be healed by being prescribed subjectivity.” (6) Rembrandt ‘as Educator’ serves as an antidote to the overly scientific education of the German people of Langbehn’s present: “as model [the painter] is ...in perfect harmony with many desires and needs that the German Volk of today has in mind – even if some of them are unconscious.” (7)

⁴⁶ Langbehn (1890) 2. Langbehn’s reverence for Nietzsche and his arguably crude applications of aspects of the philosopher’s thought is felt throughout *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.

⁴⁷ Langbehn (1890) 1.

aspect of the German nature;”⁴⁸ these, however, are not genetic fathers but spiritual predecessors: German *Dichter und Denker*, “educators of the *Volk*” like Goethe, Mozart, Leibniz, Kant, Walter von der Vogelweide, Novalis, Hölderlin, and above all, Rembrandt, the “most German of all German painters.”⁴⁹ For Langbehn, the latter is the ultimate ‘educational type’ needed for Germans of his epoch; his employment of ‘educational types’ however should not be construed as “pedantic,” a distinction which likely intends to contrast scientific notions of the type or stringent typologies.⁵⁰

While Langbehn fixates on the “spiritual physiognomy” of the people, Fischer expounds on genetic laws concerning dominant and recessive traits (easily / readily construed as a modernized version of Lavaterian physiognomy.)⁵¹ For Langbehn, it is a matter of imitating a ‘cult of heroes’, and of Germans “becoming mindful of themselves”;⁵² for Fischer, overcoming *Gleichmacherei* and reclaiming national identity is a matter of literally reconstituting their original German bio-racial purity, an incentive best understood via observation of foreign Others. Langbehn commands, “become human beings like Rembrandt,” while RB draws scientific conclusions as to why Germans should *not* be like mixed-races. In what can be read as an opaque critical allusion to late 19th century anthropology, Langbehn suggest that the ‘humanness’ of Rembrandt, of the Ur-German, be grasped “with the eyes and felt by the heart; *it is no*

⁴⁸ Langbehn (1890) 4.

⁴⁹ Langbehn (1890) 7. That Rembrandt was not ‘politically German’ but Dutch should not, according to Langbehn, dissuade the reader; that the painter was only ‘inwardly’ German somehow vindicates for Langbehn his claim for the ‘eccentricity’ of the German character.

⁵⁰ Langbehn (1890) 7. Langbehn’s Type, in contrast to the ‘template’ “forms itself from the inside out.” A template, however, does so “from the outside in.”

⁵¹ Langbehn (1890) 5.

⁵² Langbehn (1890) 6- 8.

departure into ideal and unknown strange lands; it is a return to the ancestral home.”
[italics mine].⁵³

Langbehn, it seems, underestimates the extent to which human scientists like Fischer could and would proclaim, only with radically different vocabularies, the call of the art historian himself: “be German!”⁵⁴ Or the fact that someone like Fischer would have more in common with Langbehn than with many of Fischer’s own colleagues, such as a certain privy counselor Fritsch who gains mention in Fischer’s journal for having found considerable amounts of ‘*dummes Zeug*’ in RB. (The photographs, however, Fritsch valued as “among the best he’d ever seen.”)⁵⁵ Fischer, as we hear already in a 1910 speech in Freiburg, attributed the professional opinions of Fritsch and others in ‘official circles’ to their inexcusable lack of knowledge of genetics, bio-anthropology, and subsequently of *Sozialanthropologie* - hence to their liberal, *geisteswissenschaftliche* biases (biases deriving from the humanities) more generally.⁵⁶ (Alternatively, Fischer speculates that Fritsch’s rejection of Fischer’s genetics and /or their political application (such as in the addendum of RB), stemmed from an indifference toward *Ausmerzung* and *Untergang*, (excision and decline) and thus testified to his socialism. Socialism, notes Fischer, had always rejected knowledge in this arena and its consequences.⁵⁷)

⁵³ Langbehn (1890) 8.

⁵⁴ Langbehn (1890) 8. Langbehn nonetheless slips on occasion into a discourse of identity which is relational and grounded by tropes of (black) Otherness, as in: “He who gives up the invaluable good of his individuality for the cheap finery of a false education is not wiser than the Negro who sells his land and is freed for a bottle of fake rum and a few beads of glass.”

⁵⁵ Lösch (1997) 78.

⁵⁶ Cf. Fischer (1910) 25: “*Es wird lange dauern, bis [die Äußerung unsere naturwissenschaftliche Meinung] etwas hilft, denn die offiziellen Kreise sind da gänzlich unwissend, ja ablehnend.*”

⁵⁷ Fischer (1933) 16.

Further, Langbehn's evaluation of historical ideals over all others in allowing a 'Volk to understand itself via its past'⁵⁸ underestimates the powerful identity-formative qualities of a historical, a temporal thought as practiced by modern scientific anthropologists like Fischer. Features of this 'allochronism' will be considered in detail later.

The typological images figure as the empirical foundation of Fischer's theory of social decline through genetic impurity; buttressing it is Fischer's expertise in the field of Mendelian genetics, pioneered by the 19th century Austrian botanist and Augustinian monk, Gregor Mendel. Fischer's theory of human heredity and modern social decline is thus put forth not as lofty, philosophical speculation but as scientific evidence. The book's extensive text provides little room for the vast interpretive openness frequently associated with the more artistic typologies of the 1920's that interest Brückle, yet it also suggests the cultural embeddedness and symbolic workings of *any* typological system purportedly concerned with observation and type- definition alone:⁵⁹ it intimates the extent to which such photographic typologies represent but a visual slice of a vast, concealed or subterranean discourse.

According to RB, identity is biological and, to the extent that its determining factors are 'breeding' and genetics, it is essentialist. Nonetheless identity, for Fischer, is decidedly not fixed: instead, it stands forever in jeopardy of diminishment. What Fischer calls the *Verwischung des Einzelvölkischen* poses a grave and eternal threat.⁶⁰ Thus from

⁵⁸ Langbehn (1890) 5-6 draws on Goethe: "What is original in us is best preserved and invigorated when we do not lose sight of our ancestors." He continues, "Like can be recognized only by like; a Volk understands itself in its own Volk comrades; this is the advantage of historical over other ideas."

⁵⁹ Cf. Friedus (1991) 14 on Bernd and Hilla Becher.

⁶⁰ Fischer (1933) 6.

the proto-eugenicist perspective of RB, identity can be *constructed* in that it can be actively preserved. It is hence ‘fluid’ and ‘changing,’ but only in its *failed* attempts at purity, and always only biologically. This position might be given the paradoxical title ‘biological constructionism’⁶¹ in that it attempts to control biology, rather than allowing it to “fall prey to coincidence.”⁶²

Regardless of the nefarious shortcomings of this view (or biological or genetic determinism in general)⁶³ and despite one’s likely impression of Fischer as a crude geneticist determined to reduce all socio-cultural phenomena to questions of ‘blood’, RB could present its early 20th century readers with a powerful symbolic system that created a profound sense of what they were and, more importantly, what Germany as a racial nation could become. While the scientific publication, limited to circulation primarily among specialists in the field, may appear arcane in comparison to the powerful communication technologies geared toward creating a sense of belonging among masses in the later decades of the 20th century (sound recordings, film, television), RB’s power as a largely visual representational system of identity should not be dismissed.⁶⁴ (Surely it is no less technically savvy than Haman’s ‘coffee table book’ of Gothic sculpture.)

⁶¹ Social constructionism of course represents one traditional opposition to biological determinism. See Woodward (1991) Introduction on such binarisms in identity discourse.

⁶² Cf. Fischer (1910) 25: “*Sind wir [...] Herr über unsere Zukunft? Unsere Biologie zu beherrschen, haben wir noch gar nicht zu versuchen angefangen! Da läuft alles, wie es eben der Zufall fügt!*”

⁶³ For an interesting contemporary commentary on the dangers of a biological determinist discourse which has not vanished from American political discussion, see Tom Ashbrook’s interview with Henry Louis Gates: <http://www.onpointradio.org/2010/09/gates-dsouza-gingrich>.

⁶⁴ Cf. Anderson (1983) on the advanced capabilities of 20th century communication technologies to create a sense of belonging among national groups. Anderson notes that their immense capacity to promote the idea of belonging far exceeded anything that had been achieved in the nineteenth century. Though RB may have remained a relatively esoteric text, Fischer did participate in more popular venues for the racialist formation of the German nation: Cf. Gray (2004) 335 on a 1930 photo contest for which Fischer and Hans F.K. Günther reviewed the submitted photographs and selected the winning pictures in several categories. The published volume of *Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse* (1930) contains their selection of the most representative portraits.

That RB was praised for its images and detailed family trees suggests some substantive value for its subtitle: “*Mit 19 Tafeln, 23 Stammbäumen, 36 Abbildungen im Text und vielen Tabellen.*”⁶⁵ Far from empty promotional jargon, the subtitle suggests that the visual structure of the publication would attribute to both its appeal and authority as a realist text; indeed as one 1915 reviewer in the journal *Man* notes, “...no one studying [Fischer’s] genealogies and photographs will doubt the general accuracy of his conclusions;” also based on these, “few will doubt that Professor Fischer has in fact examined a fair sample of the population.”⁶⁶ Taking this reviewer at his word, I ask ‘*why not?*’ and ‘*how so?*’ This chapter aims for an explanation of the text’s and the photographs’ authority, which to no small extent account for the launching of Fischer’s career.⁶⁷

Though Fischer’s particular fantasy of a German community of blood comprises the study’s unconcealed subtext rather than its explicit purpose⁶⁸ (RB intends to be read as a rigorous empirical study, not as bombastic or romantic speculation concerning the foundation and construction of strong national character), Fischer’s rhetoric and visual representations in RB can be understood as working toward these aims. Both his prose and typological photographs aid Fischer in creating a cosmos— an orderly world of

⁶⁵ Cf. Lösch (1997) 78 for favorable analyses of Fischer’s visual presentations. See also the review of RB by C.G.S. in *Man* Vol 15. (1915) 16.

⁶⁶ Cf. Review of RB by C.G.S. in *Man* Vol 15. (1915) 16.

⁶⁷ This appears to be the case although Fischer was considered an expert on racial mixing even before his trip to GSWA; Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 232. On the prestige associated with travel to the colonies, see Fabian (1983) 21.

⁶⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) 3 on being ‘honored to pick the fruits of German colonial soil in service of his country’: “*Wenn bei der Bearbeitung des Bastardvolkes einige Resultate zutage traten, neben einiger Winke und Folgerungen praktischer, wirtschaftlicher und politischer Art ergaben – gerade heute so wichtig, wo die Frage der Mischehen die gesetzgebenden Instanzen noch lange beschäftigen wird – so möchte Verf. alle diese als Dank den genannten deutschen gelehrten Gesellschaften darbringen, besonders erfreut, dass er die Früchte auf deutschkolonialem Boden pflücken und so nicht nur der Wissenschaft, sondern auch der großen deutschen Heimat Nutzen stiften durfte.*” This note from Fischer’s introduction

typological depictions in which early 20th century Germans could insert and imagine themselves. Fischer's data and analyses reflect perpetually back on a white, German readership conceived as an endangered racial community.

While *völkisch* fantasies of community were typical at and around the turn of the century, Fischer's scientific rendering thereof deserves particular consideration on account of the power of its truth claims. How is Fischer's symbolic system of identity produced? On which rhetorical and visual strategies does it rely, and what grounds them? This chapter is somewhat less concerned with Fischer's identity constructions per se as with the rhetoric, style, and visual strategies that conveyed them so coherently and authoritatively. My focus lies on RB as a representational system that accomplishes two central tasks.⁶⁹ First, RB asserts a familiar and seemingly infallible scopic regime which by the late 19th and early 20th centuries was under threat by new theories of vision based on breakthroughs in the study of optics and human physiology.⁷⁰ The conditions of clear and objective vision as Fischer posits them afford his ethnographic, scientific gaze authoritative acumen.

Secondly, RB's strength as a symbolic identity-formative representation follows from a forcefully symbiotic relationship between text and image. Despite being housed in a separate portfolio, typological images in Fischer's typology do not stand *mostly* on their own, as in the realms of art or aesthetics (where linguistically, only captions or titles circumscribe meaning), but work integrally with a substantive text. Text and image in

suggests a 'civic' identity for the man of science; on this identity among humanists and anthropologists in Germany during the colonial era. Cf. Zimmerman (2001) 4.

⁶⁹ On the relatedness of identity and representation, see the 'circuit of culture' in Du Guy, Hall, et al. 1997 *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, London, Sage / The Open University (Book 1 in this series.)

⁷⁰ Cf. Crary (1990) 26.

RB forge what I call a Visualist Manifesto: a careful mélange of prosaic empiricism and imagination; *Sachlichkeit* and urgency. Fischer's *Bildaesthetik* and prose conjoin both stylistically and substantively to create a profound sense of crisis in the Now: the study intends to impact the reader cognitively and affectively, and to do so immediately.

If Fischer can be considered the father of Eugenics,⁷¹ it would appear to follow less from any purportedly pioneering role in human genetics or bio-anthropology (others, particularly in England and France were better known earlier and are cited by Fischer himself)⁷² than with the visual- rhetorical and symbolic and political value of this early text. Throughout RB, Fischer is unrelenting in his assertion that race be understood as far more than a descriptive '*Schädelmesserei*.' Instead, Fischer imagines race and Anthropology's knowledge thereof to be indelibly involved with processes of *Ausmerzung* and *Untergang*.⁷³

These values - his evocation of a reliable scopic regime and his forceful use of text and image in conveying a message- are related in ways that shall be discussed throughout the chapter. I shall first discuss the aesthetic impact of Fischer's images; then their visualist qualities including an analysis of the scopic regime from which they emerge; and finally the text's pronounced manifesto-like qualities. Particular attention is paid to the powerful synthesis of these characteristics in the cultural context of early 20th century, pre-war Germany as an era of social divisions wrought by the rising masses and a perceived crisis of community.

⁷¹ Cf. Lösch (1997).

⁷² I have yet to encounter Fischer's name in the indexes of any histories of genetics.

⁷³ Fischer (1933) 16.

First, however, it is important to note how typological images of the Reheboth people were intended for use in the text. In effect, they serve as so many visual anchors, powerful realist representations holding together a multiplicity of facts, claims, and value judgments. They are best understood as amalgamations with the text, though they should not be reduced to mere illustrations.⁷⁴

2. Typology in Context: Photographic Portraits and Their Use

The image of a woman's face in three-quarter profile, framed and standing beside the window in the early 20th century portrait of 'Dr. Eugen Fischer' shown in Figure 1 above⁷⁵ is, as noted earlier, presented in the photographic typology of RB. As Fig 3 of plate 14, it is surrounded on the page by three other rectangular portraits, each of women's faces shot at various angles. The face is that of 'Katharina Vries.' (See my Figure 2 below) Notation beneath Fischer's image identifies her as a '*Mittl.*' – or Middle Bastard, as opposed to European-dominant Bastard ('*Eu*'), or a Hottentot-dominant Bastard ('*Hott*'): these are Fischer's three classes of 'Bastard' which are to be thought between the poles of pure Boer on the one extreme, and pure 'Hottentot' on the other. (Though 'pure Boer' represents a fourth class of Fischer's typology, Fischer provides no photographs of this racial type.)

⁷⁴ On photographic amalgamations, see Sekula "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning." For a view of the problems of reducing images to linguistic discourse, see Mitchell, *Iconology* (1986).

⁷⁵ I have thus far been unable to track down any context for this image posted online at: http://www.ask.com/wiki/Eugen_Fischer.



Fig. 1. *Lisbeth Slenger*
(203 St. 15) Unb.

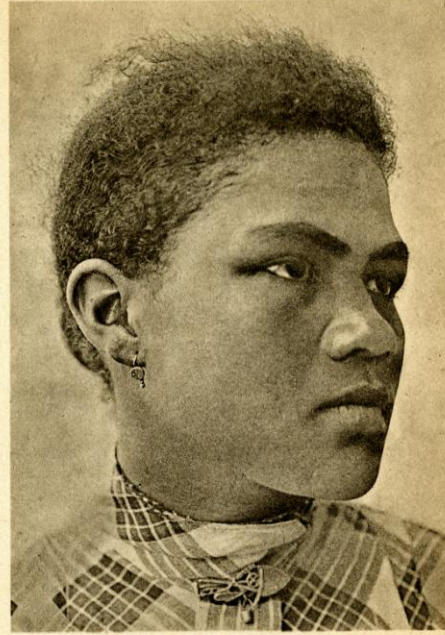


Fig. 2. *Helena van Wyk*
(300 St. 11) Eu.

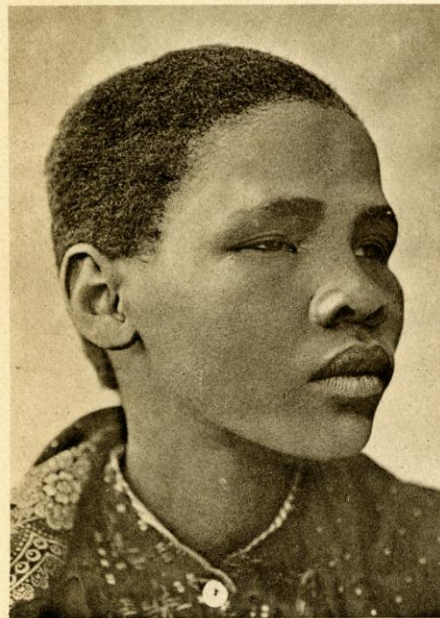


Fig. 3. *Katharina Vries*
(268 St. 12) Mittl.



Fig. 4. *Katharina Beukes*
(89 St. 4) Eu.

Lichtdruck von J. B. Obernetter, München.

Verlag von *Gustav Fischer, Jena.*

Fig. 2: Eugen Fischer, *Die Rehobother Bastards*, Tafel 14.

Further notation refers the reader to Person Number 268 in Family Tree 12, located in a separate folder at the back of the book. When the reader extracts and unfolds Family Tree 12 from its package, he or she can discern countless familial relations: Katharina Vries was the daughter of the cousins Lydia Vries and Jakobus Vries, and the great- great- great granddaughter of another Jakobus Vries, a pure Boer (noted ‘Bur’ by Fischer), and earliest recorded descendent of the family to live in the Cape. An early section of Fischer’s text dedicated to the history of the individual families reveals that this Jakobus Vries must have lived around 1750 that in 1745 a man with the same name was baptized in Stellenbosch;⁷⁶ and that the Vries Family in the Reheboth region included nine independent families. Though intermarried among themselves (‘Vries-Vries’ as in the case of Katharina Vries’ parents), they were also often married to the prestigious Beukes family. The Vrieses, reports Fischer, also made connections with the Engelbrecht and the Claasen families. We learn that the family was not always upwardly mobile but nonetheless managed to accrue considerable esteem in the community. Katharina Vries, as family tree twelve reveals, was one of six children, and the last generation in the family noted by Fischer.

The portraits thus serve ‘*Familienanthropologie*’ as Fischer conceives it: it is focused on family lines rather than on ‘types.’⁷⁷ Fischer’s triadic classificatory scheme, however, nonetheless articulates generalizations concerning three separate ‘classes’ of ‘bastard’ so that ‘family anthropology’ clearly fails to break with typological thought entirely.

⁷⁶ Fischer (1913) 54.

⁷⁷ Fischer (1913) 2.

Fischer's text further instructs us on the physical features characteristic of Katharina Vries as a bastard, but particularly as a “-Mitt”:⁷⁸ one finds “*ein überraschendes Nebeneinander der beiden elterlichen Merkmale*” which corresponds logically with the principles of alternative heredity and dominant / recessive traits.⁷⁹ At the same time, however, we are implicitly encouraged to look for traces of a subsequently divided soul, for “*Ungleichheiten, ja Disharmonien der geistigen Eigenschaften*”: “*Gebildete Rassenmischlinge*” writes Fischer “– vor allem solche aus zwei stark differenten Rassen – fühlen selber die zwei Seelen in ihrer Brust!”⁸⁰ We should look for signs of overwhelmingly ‘African dominance’ like *Gelüste, Sorglosigkeit*, and *Voraussichtsmangel* in the ‘Hott’ group,⁸¹ and ‘European dominance’ (marked by opposite qualities) in the ‘Eu’-Gruppe.

Finally, Fischer's assertion “*Das ist Reheboth – bald wird wohl das Bild sich stark verändern, da inzwischen die fauchende Lokomotive durchs Land eilt!*–“ further impacts our reading of the sitters' portraits. Knowing that the community has been captured at the ‘*Gipfel ihres Daseins*’ suggests their transience and imminent passing. Not only did Fischer discover a secret, empirically valuable population, he did so *just in time*.⁸² That the space-time framing of ethnographic narration so closely parallels the temporal logic of photography, or what Barthes has called its *noeme*, the *this has been*⁸³– accounts for one fundamental compatibility of text and image in this and other works of colonial era anthropology. The effect is one of repetition and reinforcement between the

⁷⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) ‘*Nachweis der Mendelschen Regeln*.’

⁷⁹ Fischer (1913) 166.

⁸⁰ Fischer (1913) 166.

⁸¹ Fischer (1913) 3.

⁸² Cf. also Marcus (1995) 41 on the space-time framing of ethnographic narration which depends upon an “allegory of the pastoral”; on “capturing worlds on the wane, endlessly studying them before their demise.”

⁸³ Barthes (1984, 1981) 76.

text as *Denkmal*,⁸⁴ and the photos as *momento mori*: they document a present that will soon be past. This would have been precisely the effect of the images in 1913: present, real, but almost gone.

Katharine Vries is half-Other, inferior to whites, superior to natives, and an exotic, rare specimen, fascinating to behold. So much from Fischer on the meaning and significance of Fig. 1, Plate 12,⁸⁵ and Fischer's typological portraits as data.⁸⁶

But does this embedded system of cross-referencing exhaust meaning? Taken on a more symbolic level, how might the appearance and aesthetic of RB's typological portraits speak to contemporary readers about their own social identities and their own modernity?⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Fischer (1913) VI. "*Sollte sie untergehen als solche, sollte es auch hier wie anderwärts eine halb-und ganzfarbige unentwirrbare, proletarische Schicht unterhalb der europäischen Bevölkerung geben, wäre für die Zukunft natürlich auch hier anthropologisches Studium unmöglich – dann sei folgendes Buch ein kleines Denkmal für ein reines echtes Bastardvolk – wie es war!*"

⁸⁵ Though the photograph Fischer holds in his hand of a young girl with braids does not feature in the 1913 edition of RB, it undoubtedly belongs to this same typological project: its format, style, and composition, together with the appearance of the girl suggest that it was taken by Fischer in the Spring and Summer of 1908 on his bio-anthropological research trip to German Southwest Africa. Indeed the standardization of depiction and the anti-individualistic method of Fischer's photography make its context clear. On how 'anti-individualismus' succeeded to radicalize the spirit of its times during the Weimar era, see Brückle (1998) 297.

⁸⁶ On even artistic portraiture as data, see Simmel (2005) ch. 1 "The Expression of Inner Life."

⁸⁷ Cf. Mitchell (1986) on how such questions are largely ones of "iconology," i.e., the historically highly contentious 'science of signs' that derives from both the "study of the 'logos' (the words, ideas, discourse, or 'science') of 'icons' (images, pictures, or likenesses)" and from the "rhetoric of images." Iconology, as W.J.T Mitchell asserts, inquires into "what images say" – "the ways in which they seem to speak for themselves by persuading, telling stories, or describing." Iconology is contentious and bears high stakes because, as Mitchell notes, the relationship between words and images reflect, within the realm of representation, signification, and communication, the relations we posit between symbols and the world, signs and their meanings.

3. Aesthetic Meaning and Psychic Effects of Fischer's Sharp, Typological Portraits

If this latter question seems overly ambitious or otherwise misguided (a symptom of hubris in visual studies), Wolfgang Ullrich's study of the history of the 'un-scharp' or bleary (*Geschichte der Unschärfe*) does much to convince us that the aesthetic of images (*Bildästhetik*) can deeply inform larger cultural, even epistemological issues.

Ullrich argues that the *Unschärfe*, a novel aesthetic in painting and photography born in the 19th century but popular as well today, is "kein ideologisch 'unschuldig' Stilmittel" but "lässt sich eher mit programmatisch ambitionierten Verfahrensweisen wie der Abstraktion vergleichen."⁸⁸ By extension, the same applies to images characterized by sharpness, or what Ullrich refers to as *Schärfe*. If Fischer's images are sharp, detail-oriented, direct and objective in their appearance, they should propose a counter-ideology to the 'un-sharp,' and indeed they do. Yet their organization, labeling, and contextualization described above— their typological contents and structure- also impact their ideological claims in critical ways; they combat the threat of sensory *Überreiz* associated with sharp seeing. In this section I shall draw on Ullrich's discussion of *unscharf* as an art term in the 19th century to elaborate Fischer's scientific use of photographic sharpness and its ideological and psychic functions.

Fischer's portraits are sharp. They are arranged grid-like, four to a page (each page referred to as a plate) in a separate, thirteen page portfolio located at the back of RB. They are black and white (veering now toward sepia, no doubt an effect of their age and

⁸⁸ Ullrich (2002) 381.

the printing technology of 1913), tightly composed, relatively close-up face shots rendering a striking amount of detail, and aiming toward mimesis. In the images, the texture of skin and hair, fabrics and other materials as well as the relative tonal values of physical features are set into remarkable relief in a quasi-modernist vein. Indeed what *Der Photograph* reports of Erna Lendvai Dirksen's *Das Deutsche Volksgesicht* (1932) applies equally well to Fischer's images: the extraordinary aspect of the photographs is "die Anschaulichkeit von Linien und Flächen, die gewissenhafte Wiedergabe des Materials: die Stickereien auf dem weissen Umhang einiger Trachten möchte man mit der Hand betasten!"⁸⁹ 'Die Klarheit, die Plastik' are in both cases precise.

Also, Fischer appears to have sought out detail by widening his aperture (at times with apparently limited control: in one portrait, a button on the collar is in greater focus than parts of the man's face). While this technique militates against a snap-shot aesthetic and creates an almost eerie sense of quiet, stillness and stasis, the shallow depth of field also renders some details impeccably clear and others somewhat soft. This effect, however, is only significant in comparison to photographs taken later, with more advanced equipment. The overall formal effect of Fischer's portraits, therefore, is of impeccably precise, detailed, sharp, statuary renderings of human facial features and facial expression. They are paradigmatic, (in contrast to unsharp, atmospheric images whose contents appear both 'there and not there')⁹⁰ for what Barthes calls photography's "exceptional power of denotation."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cf. Kühn (2005) 87 – 88 for a review of Lendvai-Dirksen's 'Das deutsche Volksgesicht' from *Der Photograph*, 1933.

⁹⁰ See Ullrich (2002) 389 – 400 on the pictorial photography of Wolfgang Kuhn (1866–1944).

⁹¹ Barthes (1977) 21.

Finally, pictorial tendencies are stamped out by close cropping, standardized gestures (heads are posed either directly facing the lens, or in $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ position) nearly magnified-looking appearances, natural daylight (rather than the evening, fog, or ‘*Dämmerung*’ of pictorialism),⁹² and by the absence of any props, sense of setting, or grand gestures. Finally, busts and family constellations are presented in rectangles, not ovals – a convention which at the time did much to distinguish the private or social portrait from the scientific. (Compare the image Fischer includes of the esteemed missionary Heidmann.)⁹³

In searching for meaning in Fischer’s objective, sharp aesthetic, we do well to begin with some of Ullrich’s premises concerning the *Unschärfe*. The *Unschärfe*, Ullrich asserts, belongs to one of the greatest discoveries of the 19th century.⁹⁴ It represented a break with Renaissance thinking to usher in a critique of its excesses and hubris.⁹⁵ Clear seeing, until the dawn of the *Unschärfe*, had been held as a virtue: to see more and to see more perspicaciously meant to approach a paradise of sensory and spiritual perfection. Ullrich speculates that the late 18th century trend of wearing monocles and eyeglasses

⁹² Ullrich (2002) 404.

⁹³ Fischer (1913) 27, Fig 2. On the relationship between Fischer and Heidmann, see Steinmetz, chapter **.

⁹⁴ Ullrich (2002) 381. Ullrich’s story excludes an early tradition that associated damaged sight with interior vision that dates back to Augustine. Cf. Schama (1999) 238-240 on this tradition.

⁹⁵ One thinks above all of 17th century Dutch painting in this regard since famously, it defined itself in terms of optical precision. Rembrandt, however – who becomes significant in chapter 4 as an inspirational figure for Helmar Lerski – is frequently considered an exception in his perceived individuality. Cf. Alpers (1983) and Simon Schama (1999). For a similar but elaborately philosophical theory of this exceptionalism, cf. Georg Simmel (2005). For a reactionary veneration of Rembrandt’s originality and individualism as fundamentally *German*, see Julius Langbehn *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890). Simon Schama elucidates Rembrandt’s ideas concerning the “power of sight [as] spiritually dangerous: a sorcerer’s spell” and discusses at length Rembrandt’s paintings of histories which exemplify the “force of interior vision” and of “in-sight” according to Gospel truths. Schama (1999) 238 finds Rembrandt’s preoccupation with blindness remarkable in light of Rembrandt’s own ‘shockingly acute’ perception. On account of his drippy, thick, atmospheric use of paint, it makes sense that Lady Eastlake, cited above, should evoke Rembrandt as counter-model in her critique of photography’s artlessness. (On the other hand, Eastlake’s critique should apply equally well to most 17th century Dutch painting as it does to photography; a style of painting which would also appear artless according to her criteria. Photography is less exceptional than it would at first seem.)

spurred critical questioning of the ambition to see ever more precisely since such fashions were popularly deemed the affectations of an intellectual class. Regardless of the reasons, the idea of unmitigated, perfect seeing became, in the ‘age of anxiety’ (1840’s) a point of social critique.

Ullrich’s primary voice here is that of Goethe’s prophetic young Wilhelm Meister who, rejecting the world as perceived through his glasses, decries the chaos and alienation elicited by overly-clear seeing and the psychic turmoil of ‘seeing more than one should’:

Die schärfer gesehene Welt harmoniert nicht mit meinem Innern, und ich lege die Gläser geschwind wieder weg, wenn meine Neugierde, wie dieses oder jenes in der Ferne beschaffen sein möchte, befriedigt ist.⁹⁶

It does not follow that one’s judgment increases with his power of vision, decides Wilhelm Meister. Little *Erkenntnis* is to be gained from an ever-greater strength of seeing;⁹⁷ humanity will be blessed with no morally desirable effect (*sittlich günstige Wirkung*) won by enhanced vision.⁹⁸

Further, the threat posed by glasses or, less metaphorically, enhanced seeing of detail, is that of ‘losing oneself.’ Ullrich explicates the views of Goethe’s protagonist as follows:

⁹⁶ Cf. Ullrich (2002) 383 on Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.

⁹⁷ Ullrich (2002) 383.

⁹⁸ Ullrich (2002) 383. The question of whether Fisher’s ‘enhanced vision’ itself lead to any ‘morally desirable effects’ extends beyond the concerns of this chapter, despite the visualist critique’s implicit, ethical critique of ‘anti-humanist’ anthropology. This question would have to be considered in the context of Fischer’s programmatic statements in RB (particularly in the addendum), and his career subsequent to RB as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics (KWI-A) after 1933. Recall judgments of Max Weinreich and others cited in my introduction.

Es okkupiert den Wahrnehmenden, lässt ihn nicht mehr ‘bei sich selbst’ sein, weshalb er sich als ‘ein anderer Mensch’ erfährt, der sich selbst nicht mehr gefällt.’⁹⁹

In addition, sharp seeing threatens to render all details of equal importance, shifting the viewer’s attention to ‘*Kleinigkeiten*,’ to unimportant details, and away from the essential.¹⁰⁰ (This critique suggests at least one reason for a Reheboth woman’s objection to Fischer’s attention to her wrinkles: her portrait, she noted, looked nothing like those she had seen of white women hanging in European homes.)¹⁰¹

Beside Ullrich’s examples of painters who worked doggedly against photographic sharpness, one could mention early critiques of photography which took explicit aim at this unsavory quality. A photograph rendered each part of the image equally clear and distinct, complains one critic in 1857: “Every button is seen – piles of stratified flounces in most accurate drawing are there, - what was at first only suggestion is now all careful making out, - but the likeness to Rembrandt and Reynolds is gone! There is no mystery in this!”¹⁰² Charges of decadence loom large since in photography, unlike in ‘Art,’ “the most important part of a picture is *not* done best”:¹⁰³ photography knows neither hierarchy nor subordination, and the dissolution - the ‘decomposition’ - of form can readily result.¹⁰⁴ Further, Ullrich describes how photographic rendering of detail was considered un-physiological, hence foreign to human perception and experience of the

⁹⁹ Ullrich (2002) 383.

¹⁰⁰ Ullrich (2002) 384.

¹⁰¹ Fischer (1913) IV. 3. ‘*Hab und Gut*.’ The photographs referenced by the Reheboth woman are no doubt of a personal, bourgeois if not entirely pictorial nature. With respect to wrinkles, it is interesting to note Lendvai-Dirksen’s attention to them in *Das deutsche Volksgesicht* (1932) in which an overwhelming majority of elderly sitters are portrayed. Wrinkles signal a kind of anthropological or photographic realism that contrasts starkly with more traditional modes of portraiture.

¹⁰² Eastlake (1980) 60.

¹⁰³ Eastlake (1980) 60.

¹⁰⁴ This characterization of the decadent style as a dissolution of form borrows from Paul Bourget. See Weineck (1994) 45.

world. *Unschärfe*, in contrast, bespoke an *Erlebniswahrheit* consistent with the selectivity of human vision.¹⁰⁵

Ullrich goes on to describe the 19th century's general aversion to details in art: details were held to destroy free contemplation, to trap the viewer in the daily world rather than releasing them from it, and to lead him or her toward anxiety rather than toward peaceful reflection. Viewing art should create a mood, and promote *Geborgenheit* and spiritual comfort.¹⁰⁶ Images should make no demands on their viewers but remain unassuming (*'anspruchslos'*).¹⁰⁷

This psychic correlate to the pictorial aesthetic finds its antithesis in both Fischer's writing and in his photographic style and approach. But before exploring the symbiotic relationship between Fischer's realist instrumental photography and the manifesto quality of his prose, it is important to note that Ullrich's story of the *Unschärfe* is told from the perspective of the *Unschärfe* itself. To a great extent, Ullrich offers an excellent and much-needed defense of the mostly ill-reputed pictorial mode in photography.¹⁰⁸ But what does *Schärfe* think of terms like *Reizüberflut*, its alleged *Entfremdungseffekte*; of *Detailaversion* and free contemplation?

Lack of clear seeing is, no doubt, as Ullrich notes, *'ein Makel'*, *'eine Panne'*,¹⁰⁹ for the kind of images which aim toward mimesis.¹¹⁰ But, taking Fischer and his typological portraits as a guide, we see that from the perspective of empiricism and scientific seeing, the scruples contributing to the unsharp aesthetic would – in this

¹⁰⁵ Ullrich (2002) 395-396.

¹⁰⁶ Ullrich (2002) 386.

¹⁰⁷ Ullrich (2002) 386.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Keller (1980) 18 for August Sander's disparaging comments on pictorialism. Sander calls the entire movement, including his own participation in it, a 'misunderstanding': "Upon this foundation pictorial photography developed and continues, out of ignorance, to be labeled as artistic."

¹⁰⁹ Ullrich (2002) 385.

altogether separate domain (science, not art) - signal perceptual and cognitive weakness, fear or psychic frailty, and capitulation before man's most noble challenge of uncovering beneath nature's infinite complexity its fundamental laws.

Wilhelm Meister's critique when understood globally and figuratively takes as its object the scientific habitus and the assumptions of 'the observer': whether one wears glasses or not, it is the presumption of attaining Enlightenment strictly through close-seeing and 'objective' observation that Goethe's character paradigmatically questioned. The implication is that vision becomes overly dominant at the expense of other sensory and cognitive functions.

Fischer, armed with cameras, measuring devices, and degrees of higher education, seemed unburdened by such critical queries, and portrays himself as a sovereign scientist never at risk of 'losing himself.'¹¹¹ Instead, Fischer would agree in spirit with Andreas Feiniger, the new-objectivity photographer for whom the detail adverse individual was a *Schwächling* (a milksop, a coward);¹¹² or with Ernst Jünger, for whom the camera provides a *weapon for seeing*, a mechanical armament allowing one to confront reality head-on.¹¹³ These latter statements by a new kind of artist resonate with the age-old empiricist doctrine that 'sight requires courage,'¹¹⁴ a postulate which Fischer, in his adventurous and at times arduous journey to the colony, would have no doubt endorsed.

¹¹⁰ Ullrich (2002) 382.

¹¹¹ Cf. Fabian (2000) Introduction on his notion of '*außer sich sein*' and the 'ecstatic' among colonial era anthropologists. Compare with Lösch (1997) 436 – 437 on Fischer's post-1945 *Sinneskrise*.

¹¹² Cf. Ullrich (2002) A. 89 on the avant-garde.

¹¹³ Cf. Lethen (2002) 152 who notes that in *Der Arbeiter*, Jünger identifies the "real opponent of his sharp-eyed gaze as an 'impressionistic' vision, which he accords to the epoch of liberalism." That Fischer was also an opponent of liberalism is clear; that he would go so far as to blame impressionistic vision for its perceived evils is doubtful, however, since Fischer was a scientist, but not a 'reactionary modernist' or avant-gardist.

¹¹⁴ Shapiro (1993) 135.

A perceived purpose of the camera is to allow the seer to overcome common perceptual experiences associated with *Erlebniswahrheit*, rather than remaining confined to them.¹¹⁵

The ideas of visual confidence, courage, and conquest reemerge in Fischer's prose to lend it the tenor of a manifesto. If Fischer's *Bildästhetik* can be described as 'importunate realism,' its effects are enhanced and echoed by the language of his text. RB creates a dual sense of crisis: firstly, of racial degeneration in the European metropolis (to be discussed in the following section) and secondly, of bio-anthropology itself, which, despite its promise as an immensely social-therapeutic discipline, had according to Fischer been shamefully bridled, especially where the question of miscegenation was concerned.

Characterized by 'humble material' (*das geringe Material*),¹¹⁶ the scarcity of individuals,¹¹⁷ the preponderance of 'open questions,'¹¹⁸ 'senseless' speculations¹¹⁹ and the lack of 'unobjectionable statistical observations,'¹²⁰ Fischer's discipline had to 'drudgingly observe' while other disciplines could *experiment*. Anthropologists, asserts Fischer, lacked not theories but *Beobachtungsmaterial*.¹²¹ Though Fischer no doubt sees much in GSWA, far more awaits the observation of his discipline: "*Auch Überkreuzungen mehrerer, dreier oder vierer Rassen ist beobachtet, z.B. Europäer,*

¹¹⁵ Cf. Kühn (2005) 22 on the Berlin curator Westheim's celebration of art's capacity to train and improve human vision: "*Das Beste, was die Kunst uns zu geben hat, ist vielleicht nicht einmal das gemalte Bild selbst, sondern die Befähigung sehen, besser, richtiger, anschaulicher sehen zu lernen. Richter, anschaulicher sehen, heisst aber intensiver leben und erleben, heisst aktiver sein als die, die 'Augen haben und sehen doch nicht.'*" Westheim's talk was held at the Reckendorf-Haus – exhibition arena for modernist photography in the 1920's.

¹¹⁶ Fischer (1913) 164.

¹¹⁷ Fischer (1913) 158.

¹¹⁸ Fischer (1913) 175.

¹¹⁹ Fischer (1913) 179. Here Fischer provides a footnote: "Auch Tierexperimente sind da noch nicht eindeutig vorhanden."

¹²⁰ Fischer (1913) 179.

¹²¹ Fischer (1913) 2.

Neger, Indianer oder Europaer, Neger, Hottentot... Aber überall fehlt eine solide Statistik.”¹²²

Fischer’s frequent use of exclamation points highlights this discourse, as in the following protests: “*Aber erklären kann ich sie [die Daten] so wenig wie [der Arzt] Hagen, es ist hier zunächst großes Material zu beschaffen!*,”¹²³ or “*Aber der Zusammenhang ist keineswegs erwiesen!*,” or most emphatically, “*Genaueres und mehr Sicherheit läßt sich noch nicht gewinnen, da ist eben noch kaum angefangen mit wirklicher Arbeit!*”¹²⁴ Fischer despairs of the dearth of anthropological data, and of empirical measurements with respect to European populations:

Um diese geradezu kläglichen Kenntnisse der holländischen Anthropologie durch anthropologische Angaben über andere Europäer zu ergänzen, sieht man sich vergeblich in der Literatur um. Keine einzige ethnische Gruppe in Europa ist anthropologisch wirklich durchgearbeitet!¹²⁵

Though a matter of apparent national and cultural shame, Fischer in RB nonetheless suffices with the ‘close proximity’ between Boers and ‘Badener’ – whom he had personally measured with a colleague (the Badener was, however, of a purportedly elite type: ‘*ausgelesene*’ – *Soldaten und zwar der ersten Batallions, also ‘Große*”).¹²⁶

By positioning his scientific work teleologically, mid-way between the dark unknown of the human past and the illumination of the future via laws of heredity, much drama ensues. With regard to answers concerning more specific hereditary questions,

¹²² Fischer (1913) 182.

¹²³ Fischer (1913) 179.

¹²⁴ Fischer (1913) 220.

¹²⁵ Fischer (1913) 61.

¹²⁶ **Fischer (1913)**

Fischer writes “*Doch das ist alles noch Zukunftsmusik.*”¹²⁷ He incites empirical fantasies: “*Wie lohnend wird dann später einmal derartiges Wissen sein!*”¹²⁸

But what or who is to blame for the deplorable lack of anthropological knowledge concerning miscegenation; the shameful paucity of measurements, data, facts, and statistics Fischer derides? Professionally, Fischer feels himself at war against sheer opinion and racial speculation, as well as humanist naïveté, as already noted. In the pre-war period, Fischer derided those colleagues whose “misplaced humanity” insisted that he see race as a merely descriptive category, *Rassenlehre* as a description of various traits, and Anthropology as a *Schädelmesserei*. In 1933, Fischer comments, “*es soll heute noch gebildete Menschen sogar sogenannte Fachleute geben, die das tun.*”¹²⁹

Fischer’s demands in the realm of increased and enhanced observation give way, however, to the need to experiment; to conduct actual tests and procedures geared toward the acquisition of greater anthropological knowledge. RB thus reads not only like an empiricist manifesto, but a eugenicist one as well. A Jünger- or Feininger-like heroic tenor ensues from the Sisyphus nature of Fischer’s struggle to uncover the laws of human heredity, that is to act and observe. Fischer’s courage and insatiability of vision resonates with a typological *Bildaesthetik* which is synoptic, detailed, and objective (empirical, reserved) but also importunate (*aufdringlich*). This latter quality will be discussed in the following section.

The aims of pictorialism – of the extreme aestheticization of photography in the attempt to make it a legitimate art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries - are clearly

¹²⁷ Fischer (1913) 182

¹²⁸ Fischer (1913) 2.

anathema to those of empiricism, and I therefore do not want to set up a false antagonism. Indeed there is good reason to imagine that Fischer, an avid hiker and member of his local *Heimatschutzverein*, an anti-modernist, metro-phobe, and hobby artist himself, enjoyed pictorial photography and its standard motifs.¹³⁰ Further, the portrait of Fischer shown here is itself less sharp than unsharp: grainy, somewhat atmospheric, it is cast in a nearly *chiaroscuro* lighting in accordance with classical, aesthetic conventions. Clearly, for the purposes of natural science, Heinrich Kuhn's '*Mädchenakte*,' more mood than physiological fact, would reveal little of significance. Nonetheless, an analysis of Fischer's aesthetic is revealing for its consistency with his notions of the German colony, urban modernity at home, and the aims of the empiricist endeavor and scientific seeing more broadly.

In contrast to the aesthetic of the unsharp, Fischer embraces a photographic style which must be considered *aufdringlich*, obtrusive or invasive, hence anathema to the harmonizing, comforting ambitions of pictorialism.¹³¹ Due to what could be called Fischer's *Detailversessenheit* (obsession with detail), the physiognomy and expression of his sitters contribute to a feeling of immediacy if not alienation: their often direct gazes range from the forlorn to the challenging or even confrontational. The sitters' close presence – closer than pictorial images and traditional aesthetic portraits (the Reheboths are cropped at the neck rather than bust) but more distant than many later 'new vision'

¹²⁹ Fischer (1933) 6.

¹³⁰ Cf. Lösch (1997) chapter 1 for biographical sketch of Fischer. Themes of pictorialism as Ullrich describes them include "*Dorfidyllen, ländliche Szenen oder Berglandschaften, aber ebenso Stilleben mit traditionellen Gegenständen wie Obst und Krügen...*" Ullrich notes that such motifs signal a rejection of the metropolis and technology as well as internationalism. Cf. Ullrich (2002) 396.

¹³¹ I owe my discussion of pictorialism, and particularly its quest to eliminate the '*aufdringlich*' (or the 'importunate') to Wolfgang Ullrich (2002) 381 – 413.

shots- is challenging and assertive: sitters do not blend hazily into their surroundings as in the pictorial mode, but accost the viewer. Unless one artificially abandons all context in search for *the innocent eye*,¹³² one's thoughts remain necessarily within the parameters of Fischer's concerns and investments: they are located indelibly in Fischer's 'universe of discourse.' (Hempel).

Even where certain excesses or subjective *puncta* (plural of Barthes' *punctum*) in the portraits challenge the particularities of this discourse (one might cite Fischer's assertions regarding the Reheboth people's *Stumpfsinnigkeit* as refuted by the penetrating gaze of 'Sophia van Wyk, Plate 19, Fig. 1'),¹³³ viewers remain necessarily lodged in its realm. The images are 'thought' within the text and its context. Looking at the portraits today as at the time of publication, viewers enter the world of the German colony of the early 20th century, of genetic speculation, empiricist rhetoric, anti-modernism, eugenic fantasy, the bio-racialization of culture, and urban angst. Whether the images engage the text by inadvertently (or inevitably) challenging its assertions via an inevitable multivalence or polyvalence,¹³⁴ or by illustrating them in faithful collaboration (as Fischer no doubt intended), the photographs, like so many anthropological images in general, remain '*aufdringlich*.' In the faces of Fischer's subjects – his '*Völkschen*' - unencumbered free contemplation is difficult to muster. The Other gazes back, first

¹³² Cf. Barthes (1984) 51 for a description of something like the innocent eye: "What I see [...] is the off-center detail, the little boy's huge Danton collar, the girl's finger bandage; I am a primitive, a child – or a maniac; I dismiss all knowledge, all culture, I refuse to inherit anything from another eye than my own."

¹³³ Cf. Plate 19, Figure 1 in Fisher (1913).

¹³⁴ Cf. Mitchell (1986 and 1996) and Barthes (1977 and 1981, 1984) on the polyvalence of photography, and Edwards (1992) 12, who has applied this notion to anthropological photographs. As curator of the Royal Anthropological Institute in the late nineteen-eighties, Edwards notes: "Photographs can, with close contextual examination, be read as broad texts which reveal [...] 'hidden histories' rather than as individual descriptive documents [...] On examination so much appears to contradict the received, perhaps the anthropological, version of these photographs that the uncovering of 'hidden history' must surely be one of

through Fischer's lens at the German medical doctor and scientist, then at the reader of RB: an unknown, distant European beholder of the image. Whether looking at the lens directly or obliquely, the sitter summons the viewer of her photograph.¹³⁵

the major analytical and interpretive aims in the modern consideration of the photographs of the period under discussion." See Edwards (1992) 12.

¹³⁵ Here the term 'summons' with respect to the countenance of the Other refers obliquely to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995), whose ethical writings centered figuratively on the face (*Otherwise than Being*) have thus far gone unexplored in relation to photographic portraiture (anthropological or otherwise). Levinas writes that the summons of the face says, 'do not kill me': a plea which reinforces the *Aufdringlichkeit* I associate with much anthropological photography. More generally, however, the summoning quality of anthropological photographs accounts for a tendency today, in visual anthropology, to salvage old photographs: that is, to look for hidden meanings, etc. Indeed in a work like Fischers, the photographs appear today as the only trace of dialogic representation: the only location in which sitters speak even remotely for themselves.



Fig. 1. Sophia van Wyk
(147 St. 11) Mittl.



Fig. 2. Elli Vries geb. Beukes
(171 St. 12) Mittl.

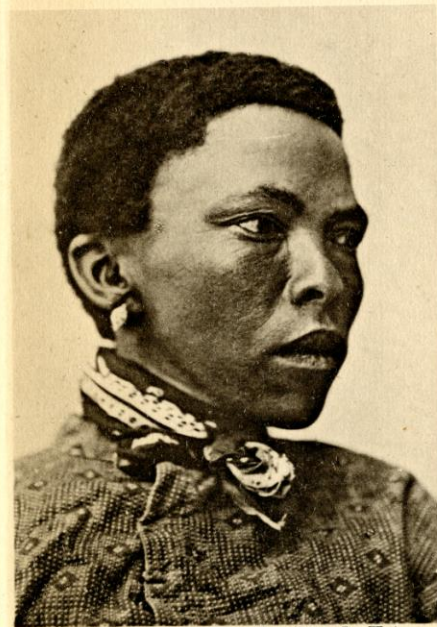


Fig. 3. Sanna Engelbrecht geb. Vries
(190 St. 13) Mittl.



Fig. 4. Katharina Morkel geb. Witboi
(241 St. 17) Hott.

Lichtdruck von J. B. Obernetter, München

Verlag von Gustav Fischer, Jena.

Fig. 3: Eugen Fischer, *Die Rehobother Bastards*, Tafel 19.

Further disrupting an aesthetic encounter with the images is their typological frame. Typological seeing, inherently comparative, is always interactive:¹³⁶ one is required to trace Fischer's references via the notational system described above, but moreover, to visually interrogate the images for oneself with reference to its parts. In analysing the juxtaposed faces, one must flip pages and alternate between panoramic seeing of the whole (the community; the 'mixed race'), and an acute seeing of the parts (ears, lobes, etc.). Though an extreme stasis marks the images themselves, the mind of the viewer is constantly on the move: as Martina Dobbe writes of typological representations, "*es wird keine Bewegung gesehen, provoziert wird allein die geistige Bewegung, die Bewegung des Vergleichs.*"¹³⁷ Such cognitive interaction along quasi-structuralist parameters allows little space for harmonious introspection.¹³⁸

If Fischer not only *represented* in detail, but also *saw* in detail and sharpness, with the help of various measuring instruments, hair and eye plates (*Haar- und Augentafel*), and various indexes,¹³⁹ not to mention degrees of higher education and specialized areas of training (in anatomy for instance), should we assume that the *Reizüberflut* and subsequent crisis of judgment Goethe intimated in *Wilhelm Meister* threatened the bio-anthropologist's experience in the colony as well? Unsurprisingly, neither the stringency of his portraits nor the monological report Fischer authoritatively presents in RB suggests

¹³⁶ Cf. Friedus (1991) 11.

¹³⁷ Cf. Dobbe (2001) 38 with respect to the Becher's typological work.

¹³⁸ Given Dobbe's concern with the Bechers it is perhaps appropriate to note here that the creation of a harmonious, introspective, highly aesthetic mood is, arguably, the unique achievement of their typological work. Much of this work, however, is only superficially typological, which is to say, it aims less at real categorizations of visual phenomena with respect to a specific discourse and problematic, as with presenting a visually stimulating series of related images. (Note the failure of the Becher's work to appear with any regularity in studies of industry, i.e. the 'industrial' or 'engineering' sections of the library.)

¹³⁹ Fischer uses Mollison's *Abweichindex*, for instance, to quantitatively determine his racial subjects' divergence in terms of racial traits from the *Stamrasse*. Fischer presents a complex table charting the

anything of the sort.¹⁴⁰ Fischer is *Herr über seine Umwelt* despite its foreignness, visual complexity, and famed sublimity. From the looks of RB, Fischer's confidence in his own visual and by extension psychic capabilities remained firmly intact during his four-month stay in GSWA.

Only in Fischer's journal do we learn of some of the secret tricks that allowed Fischer to maintain this superior position vis-à-vis the African environment and its inhabitants.¹⁴¹ It is here that we gain a sense of Fischer as a living person, engaging with both the environment and its inhabitants, struggling to attain the data he desired while contending with locals, their modes of transport, and countless cultural surprises.¹⁴² We learn, for instance, that Fischer 'prescribed' alcohol on condition that the Reheboth people sit for their portraits; in church, the minister positioned Fischer beside the altar in a large throne so as to evoke the scientist's majesty (a dramatic *mise-en-scène* which delighted Fischer).¹⁴³

In RB, however, Fischer limits his narrative to a recounting of hypotheses reasonably tested, results to specific inquiries collected and charted, and 'experience' informed and guided by his own bio-anthropological research on the subject pure racial types, of 'bastards' generally and the Reheboth people in particular. In other words, scientific method and the typological episteme allow Fischer to see clearly and in rich detail, to distinguish "*Wichtiges*" and "*Nebensächliches*" in the manner Wilhelm Meister

divergence of the *Eu-Bastards*, the *Mitt-Bastards*, and the *Hott-Bastards* with relation to 'Badener.' Cf. Fischer (1913) 195- 198.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Fabian (2000) on the madness of explorers and ethnographers in Africa during the period of colonial expansion. Fabian reveals their aims and motives as being remote from the rationalism we typically associate with imperial, colonial endeavors.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Lösch (1997) section 1.4, especially page 64.

¹⁴² Cf. Lösch (1997) section 1.4. More recent ethnographic methods like those discussed in James' Clifford's *Writing Culture* signal the reversal of visualist trends via an attention among anthropologists toward writing and the sensory experiences of the field.

deemed crucial.¹⁴⁴ For the competent scientist in the field, the solution to the problem of *Reizüberflut* lies not in recourse to ‘*Weichheit*’ or ‘*Unschärfe*’, or to the normal limits of vision posed by physiology and ‘natural vision’ but in controlled, focused, methodological observation.

The tenets and constraints of scientific or inductive method indeed promise to preempt the kind of unordered, ill-defined spaces and meanings of a ‘*stupid naturalism*’ that follow from a sensory apparatus operating willy-nilly. Here, vision trumps all other senses and is itself trained toward (critics would say ‘reduced’ to) ‘observation.’¹⁴⁵ For Fischer the anatomist, medical doctor, bio-anthropologist, human geneticist, and proto-Eugenicist, decadence is held securely at bay.¹⁴⁶ Fischer can be understood as effectively eliding the crisis of judgment through enhanced vision which Wilhelm Meister sensed looming through the glasses of his contemporaries and which, through a magnifying glass rendered Lord Chandos mute and emotional if not half-deranged. Education, training, and a disciplined sensory apparatus (much as Nordau described it; see ch. 1) could preempt breakdown, synesthesia, sensory *Überreiz*, and *Detailflut*.¹⁴⁷ Fischer’s pointed *Fragestellungen* allow for meaningful abstraction, reduction, and expert ‘carving of nature at the joints’ - to recall again Hempel’s apt expression. (Of course, Fischer’s compulsive concern to ‘prove Mendelian genetics’ may also have limited and constrained

¹⁴³ Lösch (1997) 64-65.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Ullrich (2002) 383 - 384.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Shapiro (1993) Introduction on vision reduced to observation.

¹⁴⁶ Indeed Wilhelm Meister figures as a proto-Chandos, only he is blessed with a greater discipline and reason (or lack of curiosity) that allows him to set the glasses aside, rather than plunge into the disorienting world they open up. Chandos in contrast allows the experience of altered vision through the magnifying glass to challenge his sense of reality altogether. Cf. Chapter 1 of this dissertation, section 4.3.

¹⁴⁷ The purported sources of Fischer’s expert vision thus vary greatly from that of August Sander and Oswald Spengler, as described in the following chapter. For the latter, strengthened powers of vision and judgment are the result not of education and specialization, but of ‘physiognomic tact’ and intuition.

his vision and experience in the colony as well, much as his biographer, Niels C. Lösch, argues.¹⁴⁸)

Typological seeing requires that one analyze visual phenomena closely, then divide it into classes based on common features, and Fischer endeavors to assert his competence in this realm. Based on particular and professional knowledge of ‘Hottentots, Boers, and Bastards,’ (both as classes and as private individuals) and extensive research into both Mendelian genetics and the hereditary histories of the individuals in question, Fischer can identify these discreet groups, generalize their personal traits accordingly, and order them hierarchically in terms of their purported mental and physical abilities. Notably, then, Fischer stops not with standard binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘collective Self’ and ‘collective Other,’ but identifies a third category: this ‘Bastard’ class is sub-divided into a triadic classificatory scheme of *Eu*, *Mitt*, and *Hott* ‘bastards.’ What emerges should strike the reader as an advanced classificatory scheme bearing new, technical jargon (again, Fischer borrows ‘Bastard’ from the field of botany to mean ‘cross-breed’) that appears to eschew simple oppositions in favor of a more complex categorization into subgroups.¹⁴⁹

Divide et impera thus appears not only to be the slogan of the colonial endeavor at the administrative level, but the mantra of early 20th century scientific anthropology as well. In the early 20th century, its lens with respect to humans was overwhelmingly racial, essentializing, and exclusionary.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) 57 on Fischer’s intention to ‘eliminate’ (*ausschalten*) all anthropological observations which would fail to serve his purpose of investigating the question of miscegenation and human heredity. And Lösch (1993) 65- 75.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Webb (1995) 56 on the importance of refining and complicating of classificatory schemes.

¹⁵⁰ This note should not suggest the view that late 19th and early 20th century anthropology was *strictly* a device of colonial administrations. For comments on such arguments see Asad (1973) Introduction.

That Fischer's categorizations purportedly represented *terra incognita* – Anthropologists had previously eschewed mixed races in favor of study of pure types¹⁵¹ – suggests Fischer as the beholder of a refined sense of vision and judgment. Indeed this could be understood as the spirit and theme of Fischer's portrait shown here. It will be discussed later in its iconographic layers.

4. Confident Seeing: Visualism and Fischer's Scopic Regime

The confidence in (rather than skepticism of) vision asserted by the “*naturwissenschaftlich denkender Beobachter*”¹⁵² was not, of course unique to Fischer. The contemporary anthropologist Johannes Fabian identifies this profound trust in a highly accurate, all-important sense of vision as a common trait of anthropologists in the colonial era (and often regrettably beyond), and terms it ‘Visualism.’ Visualism connotes a cultural, ideological bias toward vision as the ‘noblest sense’ – inherited from rationalist thought (Descartes’ *res cogitans* and *res extensa*) and from the empiricists.¹⁵³ Visualism suggests a ‘cognitive style’ which takes different directions – toward the mathematical-geometric or toward the pictorial-aesthetic¹⁵⁴ - approaches which are unified in photographic portrait typologies, the former via their systematic ‘grids,’ the latter via attention to the human face and formal affinities with the art of portraiture.¹⁵⁵ Visualism in either case signals a reduction that emerges from a *visual* bias which asserts

¹⁵¹ Cf. Fischer (1913) 1.

¹⁵² Fischer (1913) 300. This is Fischer's description of himself. In Fischer (1933) he speaks “through the eyes of a biologist.”

¹⁵³ Fabian (1983) 106.

¹⁵⁴ Fabian (1983) 107.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Köstler (1998) 9-10.

that to ‘visualize a culture is to understand it.’¹⁵⁶ According to Fabian, visualist anthropological methods are expected to yield objective knowledge by “filtering out experiential ‘noise’ thought to impinge on the quality of information.”¹⁵⁷ This “quest for distance,” however, is culturally determined; the scopic regime that informs it is artificially constructed rather than purely natural.¹⁵⁸

What authorizes the visualist cognitive style? While Fabian (following Ong) locates its foundations in antiquity,¹⁵⁹ it is Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer* that offers an excavation of its epistemological roots most relevant to Fischer, his historical moment, and as we shall see, his portrait shown above.

Crary, though never employing the term Visualism, implicitly traces its definitive techniques to the camera obscura as a “philosophical metaphor.”¹⁶⁰ As a model for a particular scopic regime and epistemological framework, Crary’s camera obscura aids us in understanding the historical model of vision that helped produced some of the images Fischer employs in RB and their ‘interpretations.’¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Fabian (1983) 106.

¹⁵⁷ Fabian (1983) 108.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Barry, Susan R., *Fixing My Gaze: A Scientist's Journey Into Seeing in Three Dimensions* for an intriguing, recent study of vision. Here Barry recalls her experience of ‘normal’ 3-D vision after receiving treatment for lifelong ‘stereoblindness’ and strabismic vision, i.e. flat vision that cannot perceive depth. She describes 3-D vision – particularly with respect to things like canopies of trees and snowfall - as being unexpectedly ‘embodied’ and corporeal. Barry’s scientific memoir hence offers a contemporary account of distanced, separated vision as being denaturalized; it suggests the constructed nature of the ‘camera-obscura model’ of vision as Crary describes it and its multiple planes of flatness.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Fabian (1983) 118.

¹⁶⁰ Crary (1990) 29. It is worth noting here that Crary was not the first to employ the camera obscura as a philosophical metaphor, or what W.J.T. Mitchell calls the image behind a ‘concrete concept.’ On Marx’s use in *The German Ideology (1845- 1847)* of the camera obscura as the object or image behind his concrete concept of ‘ideology,’ cf. Mitchell (1986) ch. 6. Mitchell here also mentions Locke’s use of the device as a metaphor for understanding based on ‘rational observation’ and the ‘direct reproduction of natural vision’ (9167 - 168). Though Crary does not mention Marx’s appropriation of the same instrument, he, too, treats it as model for a *kind* of ideology (scientific), if not for ideology itself. For both, the camera obscura is the producer of false consciousness, and a source for the distorted representation of the world.

¹⁶¹ Crary associates the camera obscura with the observer of the 17th and 18th centuries. Here I show its persistent relevance to Fischer as a 19th and 20th century scientist, despite Fischer’s actual use of a photographic camera in GSWA. This anomaly may result from Crary’s ultimate aim as he states it, which is

According to Crary, the conditions of vision of the camera obscura, a predominantly 17th and 18th century apparatus of image-production, served as the model for rationalist and empiricist thought, thus for how “observation leads to truthful inferences about the world.”¹⁶² The camera obscura signals a “shattering of the Renaissance adjacency of knower and known,”¹⁶³ and thereby lays the ground for the exotic otherness of human subjects especially notable in the kind of anthropological inquiry Fabian describes.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Fabian suggests that for anthropology’s scientific status to be upheld, the Other, “as object of knowledge, must be separate, distinct, and preferably distant from the knower. Exotic otherness may not so much be the result as the prerequisite of anthropological inquiry.”¹⁶⁵

Thus, it seems that the camera obscura’s de-corporalized vision,¹⁶⁶ though associated predominantly with the 17th and 18th centuries, marks a scopic regime still conducive to 20th century concerns with scientific objectivity: this regime prevented *a priori* “the observer from seeing his or her position as part of the representation,” and thereby provided the distance required to secure the orderliness through which observer and world can be understood as distinct entities.¹⁶⁷

Fischer’s own subjectivity and subject positioning is mostly eliminated from his depictions of the Reheboth people who, especially in typological, photographed form,

not to offer a “true history of ‘what actually happened’ but to make political choices that determine the construction of the present.” (7) Reading between the lines, then, his ‘broad temporalizations’ are aimed at discrediting positivist (or scientific realist? Or all scientific?) vision as legitimate scopic regimes for the 19th and 20th centuries.

¹⁶² Crary (1990) 7.

¹⁶³ Crary (1990) 38.

¹⁶⁴ Andrew Zimmerman also notes that natural scientific methods applied by anthropologists emphasized “the separation of the knowing subject from the known object;” an approach which contrasts greatly with those of humanism that “depended on the hermeneutic identification of scholars with their objects of study.” Cf. Zimmerman (2001) 240.

¹⁶⁵ Fabian (1983) 121.

appear as “synchronic objects for visual-esthetic perception.”¹⁶⁸ This factor contributes to their stark, arresting realism and the sense of stasis and materiality described earlier.¹⁶⁹ Fischer’s portraits, ordered into taxonomic cells (as ‘figures’), and isolated and arranged in synoptic display embody this distinction between knowing subject and known object in a way few other photographic ‘genres’ can. For while many photographs invite the viewer into a scene, typological ones - mostly devoid of setting, background or any sense of space at all- erect an invisible but nearly impenetrable barrier between image and personal subjectivity.¹⁷⁰ According to the camera obscura model of vision Fischer’s film camera can intervene mechanically at the interstice between world (Africa, the ‘*Bastardland*’) and subject (Fischer as bio-anthropologist in the field *and* later, the reader / viewer of RB).

This, of course, is a highly alluring element of Fischer’s empiricist aesthetic: it evokes a fascination reserved for realism, and one which Crary – with his extended attention to late 19th and early 20th century trinkets of embodied vision like the stereoscope, the ‘phenakistiscope,’ and ‘Thaumatrope’ - does little to account for.¹⁷¹ That flat, ‘straight,’ realist photographs seduce viewers well into the 20th century receives inadequate attention in Crary’s scheme.

Given Fischer’s obvious scopic allegiances, how would Crary account for his professional *éclat* in the 20th century? According to Crary’s scheme, Fischer must represent an observer who had not been adequately ‘remade’ by 19th century modernity,

¹⁶⁶ Crary (1990) 39.

¹⁶⁷ Crary (1990) 41-43.

¹⁶⁸ Fabian (1983) 121.

¹⁶⁹ I write ‘mostly eliminated’ because Fischer expresses judgments of the Reheboth people throughout the text; these, however, are posited as scientific conclusions or well-grounded theories.

¹⁷⁰ Sander as an exception shall be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Crary (1990) Chapter 4 for images of these devices.

one who thus represents a ‘marginal and local’ form of vision in the 20th century “by which dominant practices of vision were resisted, deflected, or imperfectly constituted.”¹⁷² I find such characterization of a leading anthropologist, working along lines similar to so many other scientific anthropologists and natural scientists of his age, inaccurately described as ‘marginal’ or ‘local,’ however. This problem suggests the overly tidy and idealistic nature of the picture of vision Crary creates: Crary states that the camera obscura model “collapsed in the 1820’s 1830’s,”¹⁷³ when what he means is that it *should* have collapsed, based on breakthroughs in modern science (which interested apparently only a very few - an elite, an avant-garde of sorts.) Yet the eminence of the avant-garde is another fact which Crary wishes to deny.¹⁷⁴

Where humanism, positivism, realism, and experimentation all vie with one another for legitimacy and appeal (for ‘mastery over the beholder,’ as Mitchell would say),¹⁷⁵ Crary sees only two models of vision – one on the rise, one on the way out; one disproven and one proven (one that is illegitimate; one that is legitimate). Attention to the appeals and fascination evoked by realist, typological photography in particular,

¹⁷² Crary (1990) 7. Fischer accordingly would be “an observer who remains perpetually the same.” (Crary 5)

¹⁷³ Crary (1990) 27.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Crary (1990) 7 on the avant-garde. In admitting that there is no *one* observer in the 19th century or elsewhere, and that the history of resistances and deflections to the dominant model of observation needs to be written, Crary calls forth the very distinction between avant-garde and masses which he claims to want to uproot. There exists a plurality of observers: those who submit to the hegemony of the dominant model of vision, i.e., the masses; and those who do not, an avant-garde. That the avant-garde artists *themselves* did not conduct scientific experiments that would vindicate the radicality of their worldview hardly needs to be argued. But they did pay attention to these experiments, and were willing to adopt them for their own purposes. (Cf. Crary 4 on what he calls a ‘confusing bifurcated model of vision’ suggested by the presence of an avant-garde.) Nor is it news that the enlightened perspectives of the avant-garde, as a relatively small and elite force, failed to penetrate the masses. (Cf. Crary 4 for a debunking of the “myth of modernist rupture.”)

¹⁷⁵ Mitchell (1996) 76.

however, signals instead the contentious co-existence of heterogeneous models of vision. It suggests modernity as a space of crisis defined by a multiplicity of scopic regimes.¹⁷⁶

It is safe to say, however, that the embodied model of vision Crary sees emerging in the mid- 19th century is decidedly antithetical to the one Fischer employs. Its corporeality corresponds instead with late 20th century, contemporary notions of what ethnography and anthropology *should* be: unlike its colonial era counterparts, this mode of vision should “involve effacing the distance of ‘otherness,’ a distance that has been so important in constituting the ethnographic gaze.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, visuality should eschew objectification and leave room for subjective identification.

The portrait included here of ‘Dr. Eugen Fischer’ can be viewed as an icon of renaissance-era, camera-obscura vision, one which has been updated to assert the value and status of human sciences like (bio-) Anthropology and Human Genetics vis-à-vis the fading of humanist ideals in the early 20th century.¹⁷⁸

Depicting Fischer in a lab coat beside a light-filled window, gazing at a photograph featured in the racial typology appended to *Die Rehebother Bastards*, the

¹⁷⁶ Crary’s main weakness, I would argue, is that he fails to convince us that scientific break-throughs concerning the subjective, physiological nature of vision successfully ‘trickled down’ from the experimental laboratories of learned men to the masses. While his lengthy discussion of ‘philosophical toys’ and their popularity among the masses surely aims in this direction, a distinct account of the masses’ *understanding* of these gadgets remains missing. In fact, it makes more sense that as novel commodities and hand-held, private spectacles (in DuBord’s sense), the significance of these devices vis-à-vis the nature of human vision and reality would necessarily be lost, i.e., without impact. One could argue that the devices take precisely the form which new shifts in epistemology and vision would *have to take* should they be effectively tamed, domesticated, and stripped of any profound or disruptive implications whatsoever (such as nihilistic implications like the denial of referentiality, or the fact of ‘non-identity.’) Thus, the ‘core narrative of rupture’ standard to the many accounts of nineteenth century vision which Crary seeks to uproot (4) remains largely in tact: indeed, “classical space is overturned... on the one hand” (5) by scientific breakthroughs and the avant-garde’s adjacency to them, but “persists on the other” among the masses for whom these breakthroughs appear as either common commodities or ‘high art,’ but not as embodiments of a paradigm shift. The masses, despite their obsession with the gadgets Crary discusses, remain *spectators* incapable of true ‘observation’: they do not comply to the rules, codes, and regulations of these devices, but rather purchase them for entertainment and pleasure.

¹⁷⁷ Marcus (1995) 43. Marcus calls this tendency ‘bifocality.’

formal grammar of the portrait relies so heavily on images associated with the camera obscurism of Vermeer that it embodies by necessity the ideals celebrated by the 17th century painter. Not only does the portrait's composition and subject matter, the contemplative male subject engaged with the icons of his work beside a light-flooded window, figure Fischer as the luminous progeny of "The Astronomer" (1688) or "The Geographer" (1668-69), it appears to affirm the common scopic, hence epistemic regime of the portraits' subjects. Valorized is the visualist economy accountable for scientific progress such that what Crary writes of Vermeer's subjects applies equally to Fischer:

Each image depicts a solitary male figure absorbed in learned pursuits within the rectangular confines of a shadowy interior, an interior punctuated apparently by only a single window. The astronomer studies a celestial globe, mapped out with the constellations; the geographer has before him a nautical map.

Fischer, we might add, holds a photograph of a racial 'crossbreed.' Crary continues:

Each has his eyes averted from the aperture that opens onto the outside [...] The somber isolation of these meditative scholars within their walled interiors is not in the least an obstacle to apprehending the outside world, for the division between interiorized subject and exterior world is a pre-given condition of knowledge about the latter. The paintings then are a consummate demonstration of the reconciling function of the camera obscura: its interior is the interface between Descartes's absolutely dissimilar *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, between observer and world.¹⁷⁹

If the images celebrate both man's ever increasing mastery over a fully knowable nature – and its epistemic means of attainment (i.e. the perspectival cognition of Descartes) - they do so in part, as Crary's insightful reading shows, by paying homage to the camera obscura. On the epistemic logic of the Vermeer portraits and, as I argue, Fischer's portrait, Crary notes:

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Zimmerman (2001) Introduction on German Anthropology as especially committed to anti-humanist ideals.

Both [the Astronomer and the Geographer] engage in a common enterprise of observing aspects of a single indivisible exterior. Both of them...are figures for a primal and sovereign inwardness, for the autonomous individual ego that has appropriated to itself the capacity for intellectually mastering the infinite existence of bodies in space.¹⁸⁰

Fischer is their early 20th century progeny, and his presumption of intellectual mastery vis-à-vis an object of study is at the heart RB as a visualist text. This mastery is marked by the discoverer-researcher's production of purportedly truthful knowledge, i.e. the globe, the map, or in Fischer's case, the photographic portrait of a racial 'Bastard.' In each case, the flat surfaces mimic the flat projection surface of the camera obscura.¹⁸¹

This model of cognition assures the knowability of a distinct *out there*, neatly separated from human physiology and what Nietzsche described as the chaos of the senses.¹⁸² It is the foundation of objectivity and, as Daston writes, "belief in a bedrock reality independent of human observers...".¹⁸³ The image thus represents an ode to Fischer, to the power and status of scientific inquiry as a firmly realist endeavor, and to the promises offered by the mastery of Fischer's subject matter, namely 'Man' as the product of human heredity.

Finally, the portrait also represents a more specific, visual assertion of early 20th century Anthropology's challenge to humanism: in aligning itself with the camera-obscura model of vision, it asserts that knowledge of the European self would be gained through scientific study of the other, rather than by focusing on the "canonical texts of

¹⁷⁹ Crary (1990) 46.

¹⁸⁰ Crary (1990) 46-47.

¹⁸¹ Crary (1990) 46-47.

¹⁸² Cf. Nietzsche (2001).

¹⁸³ Galison and Daston (2007) 29.

celebrated cultural peoples.”¹⁸⁴ As ‘a Vermeer,’ Fischer’s portrait asserts that human knowledge lies in natural scientific methods; little distinguishes progress in this field from progress in other objective sciences like those of Geography or Astronomy. (Again we see Fischer and Wilhelm Meister squarely at odds).

Indeed, Fischer located biological knowledge of human beings at the still-awaited apex of Western progress. Until the secrets of human biology could be fully comprehended, argued Fischer in 1910 (between the time of his travel to GSWA and the book’s publication), pretensions concerning the Enlightenment of Western man must be radically circumscribed. In a speech delivered in Freiburg im Breisgau on *Sozialanthropologie*, Fischer expounds with notable cynicism:

Wir sind ja so stolz auf unser vieles Können und nennen uns Herr über die Natur! Ja, was beherrschen wir denn? Mit Schienensträngen und Eisenkonstruktionen Berge und Ströme und mit dem Dampfschiff die Ozeane und mit dem Flugapparat (bald) die Lüfte – und mit Wissen einigermaßen die Krankheiten. Es ist nicht Schwärmerei, wenn man Pest und Cholera und Tuberkulose und Syphilis in naher Zukunft überwunden sieht, wie heute Blattern und Aussatz. [...] Sind wir damit Herr über unsere Zukunft? Unsere Biologie zu beherrschen, haben wir noch gar nicht zu versuchen angefangen! Da läuft alles, wie es eben der Zufall fügt!¹⁸⁵

Fischer’s portrait thus depicts him nobly pursuing this latest obstacle to Enlightenment via scientific means: we see him building a typology of biological knowledge. Its product was RB (as well as subsequent texts like *Human Heredity*, and countless papers published on racial miscegenation and racial hygiene).

Fischer’s portrait as ‘a Vermeer’ signals the extent to which the scientist and medical doctor was proudly of his Enlightenment culture and dedicated to progress in the

¹⁸⁴ Zimmerman (2001) 4.

¹⁸⁵ Fischer (1910) 24-25.

modern human sciences. The portrait positions Fischer, the early 20th century *Bildungsbürger*, as modern apotheosis of the Enlightenment *habitus*,¹⁸⁶ and in doing so, provides a model for European identity forged through the development of the natural sciences.¹⁸⁷ Fischer sits as modern role model or *Vorbild*. In its cultural context the portrait functions as a powerful emblem of Fischer's scientific expertise and of his prestige as leading expert on people of Reheboth during the German colonial period;¹⁸⁸ it further testifies to a particular kind of cultural capital coveted among colonizers and specialists visiting the colonies which Steinmetz calls 'ethnographic capital.' The portrait celebrates Fischer's acuity of scientific perception and judgment with respect to exotic cultures and indigenous subjectivities.¹⁸⁹ Indeed the portrait portrays Fischer as precisely that 'vorzüglicher Mensch' (exquisite, exceptional, first rate person, or in this context, observer) whom Wilhelm Meister imagined as chimerical. Fischer emerges as a modern type of person whose powerful sight (*gesteigerte Sehkraft*) is met by an equally powerful and reliable capacity to judge and reason: his reserved, introspective gaze implies as much.

Finally, if as Crary states, "the camera [obscura] was a metaphor for the most rational possibilities of a perceiver within the increasingly dynamic disorder of the world," the compensatory and interventionist quality of typology (as discussed in chapter

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 47-49 on the status of "middle-class 'academics,'" the *Bildungsbürgertum* in Wilhelmine Germany, and the role of this class in colonial rule.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Zimmerman (2001) 4 on how anthropology could provide Europeans with a 'modern identity as a cultural people whose status depended d less on humanist *Bildung*, or self-cultivation, than on the development of the natural sciences – including anthropology as the study of natural peoples." On the cultural prestige of scientific anthropology, see Zimmerman (2001) 6. Fischer's capacity as role model figured in the style of a Vermeer counters nicely Langbehn's previously discussed call for 'educational types' in the mode of Rembrandt.

¹⁸⁸ Steinmetz (2007) 228.

¹⁸⁹ Steinmetz (2007) xiv. Steinmetz does not focus on scientific anthropologists but refers to 'colonizers' more broadly.

one) in a chaotic world finds in Visualism a powerful ally.¹⁹⁰ The capacity of the former to order and classify unites with the formidably clear, authoritative, and objective vision asserted by the latter. In Imperial Germany at the dawn of the First World War, at a time of extreme economic and social turmoil, typological representations like Fischer's of an Other helped conjure a navigable cosmos: despite RB's preoccupation with decline, it is unequivocally invested in an ordered universe which can disclose universal laws and solutions to modernity's most pressing problems. Fischer's cosmos-formation is inextricable from utopian fantasies.¹⁹¹

The problem with Visualism in anthropology, and Fabian's prime reason for investigating its 'visual-spatial logic,' is precisely this self-serving, compensatory quality Crary notes with respect to camera obscura vision: visualist ambitions, writes Fabian, seem to lie in "construct[ing] ordered Space and Time – a cosmos – for Western society to inhabit, rather than 'understanding other cultures,' its ostensible vocation."¹⁹² This tidy ordering of space and time is remarkably apparent in Fischer's text, a point which my attention to typological identity construction in early 20th century Germany seeks to emphasize.

Like the camera obscura, visualist techniques insist on the *unconstructed nature of facts*: they thus help buttress notions like Fischer's that anthropology can consist in

¹⁹⁰ Crary (1990) 53.

¹⁹¹ On the utopian character of German eugenics and Fischer's program in particular see Crips, Liliane. 1993. "Les avatars d'une utopie scientifique en Allemagne: Eugen Fischer (1874 – 1967) et l'hygiène raciale."

¹⁹² Fabian (1983) 12. In Fischer's defense, Fischer actually never makes such claims for 'Bio-anthropology': instead the proto-geneticist is clear that his subjects represent but a cornerstone of genetic knowledge of miscegenation crucial to German nationhood. On the other hand, chapters and sections of RB dealing with such aspects of life as "*Hochzeit*," "*Aberglaube*," "*Totengebräuche*" suggest that Fischer does

‘teaching and learning plain facts’: “...denn [die Anthropologie und unsere naturforschendene Gesellschaft] wollen nur Tatsachen, wissen und lehren wie’s ist und erschließen, was daraus folgen wird.”¹⁹³ Yet a narrow concern for facts and their proper order represents, according to the visualist critique, a denaturation of visual experience, and does little to encourage understanding of foreign cultures.

Following Fabian’s insightful concept, I approach RB as a predominantly visualist document, symbolically powerful by virtue of allochronic and Ramist qualities to be described below. My particular contribution to Fabian’s notion of visualism, however, emphasizes the normative character of vision so construed: despite the ‘objectivity’ visual techniques and methods purport to render, the visualist worldview asserts that what can be seen is of value while what remains indistinct, blurred, or unrecognizable must be deemed deficient, substandard, or degenerate at worst.¹⁹⁴ This is an aspect of visualism which Ullrich’s history of the (sharp and) Un-sharp does much to confirm. Recall the Renaissance treatise on paradise, wherein heavenly things were purported not only to appear more colorful and more beautiful, but that the *power of sight* in paradise was itself more developed, hence stronger: “*Es lasse sich genauer zwischen verschiedenen Farben und Formen unterscheiden, und selbst aus großer Entfernung...*”¹⁹⁵

This visualist-realist maxim is distinctly ‘typological’: conspicuous, regular forms are *better* than inconspicuous forms, i.e. non-generalizable, chance, or anomalous

profess interest in more than the ‘Mendeln’ of genetic traits in humans. (Fischer 1913, “IV. Teil, Ergologie der Rehebother Bastards.”)

¹⁹³ Fischer (1910) 23.

¹⁹⁴ Notable here is visualism’s divergence from Comptian positivism, which in theory only dismisses the un-seeable as irrelevant: that which is not fact-based simply plays no role. In visualism, however, the non-empirical appears to be the subject of demonization.

entities.¹⁹⁶ The latter are necessarily shrouded in suspicion, (perhaps they even signal hell), a tendency which Fischer's conceptualization of the urban *Mischling* makes clear. Indeed both the positive and negative correlates of visualism's normativity are prominently at work in Fischer's study: here they inspire *affirmation* of the Reheboth people's physiognomic distinction (their status as a uniquely cross-bred "Völkchen" with clear, discernible blood lines) on the one hand, and a *profound fear* through increased and farraginous miscegenation - of the *Verwischung des Einzelvölkischen*¹⁹⁷ (the blurring of what belongs only to one's own people) on the other. Salience is not only a key feature which acute vision renders, it becomes a cardinal value and a virtue unto itself.

Before exploring these ideas as they appear in RB, one significant, historical clue to Fischer's visual bias should be mentioned here. Historian of medicine Paul Weindling draws on an array of sources to describe genetics in Germany as remaining committed throughout the 1920's to a "broader philosophical biology" than the discipline did in other countries.¹⁹⁸ Distrusting the kind of modern type of rational and mechanistic science Germans associated with, for instance, American science, many German geneticists including Fischer distanced themselves from concern with chromosomes as the carriers of Mendelian genes.¹⁹⁹ The concern with the natural vigor of populations in the wild and with Lamarckian environmentalism were sustained long into the 1920's and signaled a profound discrepancy between German genetics and US laboratory confined research. Weindling notes that because German geneticists wished to know more about

¹⁹⁵ Ullrich (2002) 382 quotes from Michael Baxandall's excellent study *Die Wirklichkeit der Bilder*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, pg. 139.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Galison and Daston (2007).

¹⁹⁷ Fischer (1933) 6.

¹⁹⁸ Weindling (1989) 329.

¹⁹⁹ Weindling (1989) 328. Cf. Lösch (1997) 65-83 for a thorough critique of Fischer's apparent unfamiliarity with chromosomes at the time of his study in GSWA.

“the active physiological role of genes” (in Fischer we see concern with genes and laundry practices and, as we shall see later, genes and the style of crafts and tools as fashioned by a particular racial community), German genetics of the 1920’s could thus be seen as being shaped by a “distinctive set of nationalist and scientific values in a search for a dynamic morphology.”²⁰⁰

In Germany, then, human genetics was considered a discipline to be researched at eye level, as it were. Subsequently, genetic study was logically anthropological: it entailed travel like Fischer’s to environments deemed conducive to the observation of human types. As a consequence, it failed to make a distinctive break with physiognomy as a visual study of character while elsewhere, chromosome study (focused microscopically on DNA proteins of cells and their nuclei) uprooted many of the assumptions of this ancient pseudo-science.

A parallel situation to the blurring between genetics and physiognomy would arise later with the conflation of eugenics and genetics, with Fischer’s German Society for Hereditary Science forging and promoting links between the two.²⁰¹ Because Eugenics amounted to an applied form of hereditary science, its discourse was largely visual (if not visualist), focusing on peasants, immigrants, and the like. Weindling cites the Fischer Bauer Lenz textbook, *Human Heredity*, as the most striking example of the concern with practical applications of hereditary science and describes how its introduction emphasized the capacity of science to explain the rise and fall of

²⁰⁰ Weindling (1989) 329.

²⁰¹ Weindling (1989) 329.

civilizations, and provide cures for ‘diseases in the body politic’ as well as a solid scientific basis for population policy and racial hygiene.²⁰²

Though one can readily imagine the visual potential for a discipline concerned with the prescription of genetic principles based on first hand field work in far-off destinations, or the labeling of fit and unfit at home and the teaching of human hygiene to children,²⁰³ no imagination is, of course, actually required. One need only confront the massive archive of eugenic photography amassed in Germany (and elsewhere) throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s.²⁰⁴ In so doing, one may wonder whether eugenics as a popular movement could have existed at all without its photographic dimension – a claim which Anne Maxwell puts forth in her study of eugenic photography.²⁰⁵

Returning to visualism as a powerful strategy of representation in RB, the following section focuses on Fischer’s use of allochronic time as a technique aimed at ‘constructing an ordered cosmos of space and time’ for early 20th century Germans to inhabit.

4.1. Enhanced Seeing through Allochronism: Locating the Metropolis and the *Bastardland*

So far I have discussed Fischer as a self-certain scientist trusting of his discipline’s privileging of vision as a cultivated tool of objective and truthful

²⁰² Weindling (1989) 330.

²⁰³ Cf. Weindling (1989) 330 on how Fischer’s textbook asserted the roles parents, doctors, teachers and priests should play in instilling racial hygienic principles into children. The latter were to learn that they comprised “a subordinate part of a great racial organism.”

²⁰⁴ Cf. Maxwell (2008) for a survey of eugenic photography in the 20th century.

understanding; that is, as a ‘Visualist’ seeing according to the dictates of camera –
obscura vision.

Nonetheless, it is not the case that any and all conditions lend themselves to
expert vision *qua* observation. As in the natural sciences, circumstances and
environments need to be prepared and constructed, and variables require isolation.²⁰⁶ The
inability to construct appropriate environments for experimentation, however,
purportedly separates Anthropology from other sciences. Fischer makes this point
explicit when he writes:

Wo es dem Botaniker und Zoologen leicht ist, im Experiment
generationslange, bestimmte und gewünschte Kreuzungen zu setzen, wo
jene mit vielen Tausenden von beobachteten und genealogisch ganz genau
bestimmten Tieren und Millionen solcher Pflanzen experimentieren, - da
muss der Anthropologe mühsam beobachten, wo die Natur und des
Menschen unberechenbare Laune ihm freiwillig ein Experiment
vormachen!²⁰⁷

In uncovering the laws (and lessons) of racial mixing, how should the geneticist /
Anthropologist come upon appropriate conditions (*Verhältnisse*) akin to those of the
botanist or animal-‘Experimenter’?²⁰⁸

Fischer finds the perfect terrain for arduous anthropological observation
(‘*mühsame Beobachtung*’) in the German settler colony, but to convince us of this, a stark
opposition helps: rural GSWA represents the counter-image to the urban metropolis. The
latter represents modern civilization as crisis while the former conjures happier, pre-
modern relations. First, a discussion of Fischer’s metropolis.

²⁰⁵ Maxwell (2008) 16: “...these photographs did the most to advance the cause of eugenics in [England, Nazi Germany, and the United States], [...] they have been the most instrumental in shaping the modern-day racist imagination.”

²⁰⁶ Cf. Friedus (1991) 20 on the capacity for artistic typological photography to isolate variables and details, see Freidus.

²⁰⁷ Fischer (1913) 2.

²⁰⁸ Fischer (1913) 2.

In positing a profoundly fortuitous solution to the problem of anthropological knowledge in the discovery of the Reheboth people and their uniquely cross-breed community in GSWA, Fischer provides a thinly veiled parable for social crisis in Imperial Germany – (a parable already suggested in this chapter’s earlier discussion of Julius Langbehn). In order to assure the reader of the great empirical value of the Reheboth people as an appropriate sample of genetic material, Fischer contrasts the community with modern European crowds: the Reheboth people are a traceable crossbreed with clear and well-defined traits. This contrasts acutely with the indistinguishable members of metropolitan populations, whom Fischer terms *Mischlinge*.

Bio-anthropologically speaking, the city represented for Fischer the antithesis to labs, greenhouses, and purportedly primitive cultures located at Europe’s distant periphery. While such domains constitute appropriately controlled sites for clear seeing of sensible phenomena, Fischer swiftly characterizes the metropolis as the ever-changing, unstable locus of a formidably inscrutable *Rassenbrei* or *Rassenproletariat*. In his portrayal of urban *Mischlinge*, civilization critique finds a precise object, or type. *Mischlinge* encountered presumably in Berlin or Paris but also in large colonial port cities²⁰⁹ represent for Fischer a *Gemenge*, a mixed batch, but never even a ‘shadow of a Volk,’ or a distinctive class. Instead, these urban ‘products of miscegenation’

bildeten eine soziale Schicht, die gleichzeitig reinrassige Individuen, herabgesunkene, niederste soziale Elemente der Weißen und vor allem aufwärtssteigende Farbige enthält. Eine Schicht besonders in den Großstädten sich haltend die jeder rassenmäßigen Analyse spottet. Es entstand da nirgends und niemals durch das Gemenge dieser reinrassigen mit Mischlingsindividuen jeder Abschattierung ein Volk, auch nie eine geschlossene Kaste oder Schichte eines Volkes, sondern stets ein sozial minderwertiges, stark fluktuierendes, dauernd seiner Zusammensetzung sich änderndes Bevölkerungselement, das einfach alles aufnahm, was zu

²⁰⁹ Cf. Fischer (1913) 16.

ihm hinabsank oder hineinströmte und das dazu wohl noch von der Umwelt, den sozialen Bedingungen, der Ernährung, sexuellen Verhältnissen usw. stark und vor allem wechselnd beeinflusst wurde. Und all diese Dinge dauern fort, bald intensiver, bald eingeschränkt.²¹⁰

In Fischer's *Mischling* we thus see the foil of Langbehn's German who 'follows his own head' and is salient in his 'monumentality,' 'connectedness' [*Gebundenheit*] and Character;²¹¹ if the former acts as fungible atom of an impetuous mass forged by abysmal contingencies, the latter is guided by forces of distinction, true personality, and cultural (or racial) traditions. The *Mischling* is a corruption of the authentic individual which Fischer conceives as part of, and product of, a pure racial national collective.

Fischer's powerful, bio-genetic characterization of urban racial circumstances introduces Fischer's study and provides a relevant context for more prosaic, empirical findings which follow (elaborate double-paged charts tracing hair texture for instance). Indeed, readers are likely to think back to this loaded image of the metropolis as apex of modernity, inhabited by modern racially inscrutable masses (the *Rassenbrei*, the '*Mischlingsindividuen jeder Abschattierung*') united not by tradition but leveled by their common degeneration. Though the unruly circumstances sketched above appear to mark the norm, Fischer nevertheless perceives the processes and products of racial miscegenation as aberrant.²¹² Here, variables effecting individuals – environmental, social, genetic, - are indistinguishable from one another; their respective influences are deemed not only impossible to discern in the first place, but of irregular intensity and

²¹⁰ Fischer (1913) 15-16.

²¹¹ Langbehn (1890) 3.

²¹² See also Weindling's discussion of the Marxist biologist Julius Schaxtel as one of the few biologists of the 1920's who was critical of racial science and condemned *völkisch* demands for racial purity on the grounds of a 'materialist philosophy of life': Weindling explains Schaxtel's perspective that "There was a continual process of historical change in nature. Heredity meant the production of ever-new combinations of genetic material." (Weindling 328.)

significance, operating as if at will. The urban *Mischling* is unknowable, uncategorizable, and hence circumspect.

Indeed for the bio-anthropologist (here a metonym for modern man himself) to see and observe clearly, he must retreat from modern circumstances to situate himself in earlier, less complex, more orderly contexts.

Thus, in addition to Fischer's scientific training, education, and typological competence, another no less significant factor contributing to Fischer's visual confidence and sense-making abilities was the purported nature of the African continent itself - specifically the region around Windhuk in GSWA which Fischer (purportedly in accordance with the community's own terminology) called '*Nation der Bastards*.'²¹³

This peripherally conceived relation of the *Bastardland* to Europe translated temporally: Fischer could observe closely (yet without '*losing himself*,' as Wilhelm Meister suggested) since Africa was held to occupy an earlier, simpler stage of civilization (this despite countless colonial and territorial wars, conflicts, droughts, etc.)²¹⁴ Fabian calls this locating of colonialized or peripheral cultures in a separate time from European modernity the 'denial of coevalence' or 'allochronism.'

Fischer juxtaposes the metropolis and rural Africa in no uncertain terms to suggest that, as a cite for scientific seeing (the witnessing of genetic laws in action), the modern metropolis must be disqualified entirely. At the same time, however, its deplorable social conditions warranted genetic and bio-anthropological study as a therapeutic, interventionist academic discipline.

²¹³ Cf. Fischer (1913) 208; alternatively *Bastardland*, 5.

²¹⁴ Cf. Weindling (1989) 45 on the genetic impact of wars which, however, seemed of little concern to Fischer in RB.

Though Fischer's image is intended to reflect the inscrutability of hereditary patterns in modern life for the discipline of genetics or bio-anthropology, it conjures larger, all-too common cultural fears as well. Indeed the uncontrollable conditions witnessed in Fischer's instable metropolis reflect the fearful visions of generalized decadence, degeneration, and the biological decay of modern society typical of his era, and is further amplified into an apocalyptic feeling of decline by its juxtaposition to imaginations of earlier epochs and social structures.²¹⁵

Given the character of late Imperial Germany as an unstable, even dangerously divided society,²¹⁶ Fischer's depiction of indecipherable, fluctuating blood lines seems metonymic at best for larger social crisis. At a time when protest movements "wrenched traditional political parties, kicking and screaming, into the age of mass politics,"²¹⁷ Fischer's *Mischling* serves as a condensed symbol for the new and highly divided mass; it serves as counter-image to Tönnies' 'family member' or 'friend' around which this sociologist's fundamental category community (*Gemeinschaft*) centered.²¹⁸ This particular juxtaposition is enhanced by Fischer's concern with genetics and 'Familienanthropologie,' and particularly, by his typological photographs featuring families or parts of families rather than solitary sitters. Such photographs suggest the centrality of this biological unit to the strength of the Reheboth community. In the context of Fischer's therapeutic ambitions, it is as if the *Gemeinschaft* could reemerge via exact knowledge of the nation's 'blood,' as it is more or less traceable in families.

²¹⁵ Steinmetz (2007) 230.

²¹⁶ Eley (1984) 925.

²¹⁷ Retallack (1998) 502.

²¹⁸ Cf. Tönnies (2002) orig. 1887 *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.

By the time of Fischer's departure to GSWA, the febrile culture of late Imperial Germany was exacerbated by the Empire's financial ruin. It is conceivable that Fischer's enthusiasm for '*überseeische Dinge*' would stem at least in part from a profound sense of alienation from socio-political, economic, and cultural developments at home.

If this metaphorical reading of Fischer's '*Mischling*' seems incredulous, it becomes less so in the context of Fischer's more explicitly political writings. In a 1910 speech titled "*Sozialanthropologie*," for instance, Fischer refers, as already noted, to the *Gleichmacherei* of modern urban culture, and rejects parliamentary politics as a way out of crisis, favoring eugenics instead.²¹⁹ In a later speech titled *Der völkische Staat biologisch betrachtet* (1933) held before a congregation of NS-supporters, Fischer berates '*die zu internationaler Gleichmachung strebende Großstadtkultur*.'²²⁰ Taxonomic images in RB, in which members of a class are distinctive and categorizable, thus represent an alternative to this trend. Central to Fischer's socio-scientific discourse is the antagonism between forces of sameness and differentiation.

Clearly then, despite Fischer's dreary depiction of urban life and its soulless, identity-less inhabitants, genetic sense could still be made in other regions of the world with respect to other populations. Fortuitously, it was in rural Africa, specifically in the German settler colony, that laws of heredity and social life in general could become transparent. Located 'allochronically,' which is to say outside modern, European time,

²¹⁹ Questions of heredity, health, and smart breeding are, for Fischer, "the real content of any politics," and must replace liberal party politics as usual: Fischer (1910) 21 posits race not only as a new historical hermeneutic with which to decipher the meaning of Greek, Roman, and Italian history, but as the grounds for a new politics altogether. Fischer's allegiance to biology thus endeavors to turn Marx's political philosophy on its head such that race and genetics occupy the position of 'forces of production': in 1933 Fischer notes that "*auch der 'bürgerliche' Staatsgedanke war eine notwendige Zwischenstufe zum heutigen Volkstaat*." Fischer (1933) 15. For similar ideas see also Fischer (1910) 25.

the periphery was not only spatially and culturally distant, but historically remote as well. Allochronic constructions could thus pave the way for classical anthropology to either ignore or take insufficient account of the colonial situation.²²¹ The advantage, from the anti-humanist perspective, however, was that *Naturvölker* (or a half-*Naturvolk* in Fischer's case) could be understood objectively; they remained, in Zimmerman's terms, relatively 'unobscured by the masks of culture and the complications of historical development.'²²²

Representing an earlier stage in the development of civilizations, the development of rural populations like the Reheboth community remained halted at a stage that preceded modernity and hence retained what Fischer called 'solid, comprehensible, established and fixed' characteristics. Fischer's glorification of the pre-modern *Bastardland* juxtaposes the crisis depicted in the metropolis on a nearly point for point basis:

Ganz anders, geradezu gegensätzlich dazu verhält sich das ‚Bastardvolk‘ in Südwestafrika. Eine ganze Reihe Faktoren, starke und dauernde Einflüsse und gleichmäßige, eigentümlich wirkende Verhältnisse haben es fertig gebracht, daß hier durch friedliche Mischung eine deutlich abgrenzbare Mischbevölkerung entstand, die festen Charakter, feststehende, mit Stammbäumen belegbare Mischungsverhältnisse besitzt, die ein eigenes Leben, eigene Geschichte und schließlich soziale und völkische Selbstätigkeit aufwies, kurz zu einem neuen Volk, dem ‚Bastardvolk‘ wurde.²²³

Where modern, urban circumstances create populations which fluctuate and change according to countless inestimable factors, the *Bastardland* is home to a population

²²⁰ Fischer (1933) 6.

²²¹ Forster in Asad (1973) 28.

²²² Zimmerman (2001) 3.

²²³ Fischer (1913) 16.

forged by strong, consistent influences and relationships; the Reheboth people – ‘clearly definable’ or ‘delimitable’ - offer a foil to the seething crowds of the metropolis.

Yet Africa is not ‘entirely different’ (*ganz anders*) from Europe since one can readily recognize in it an earlier stage in the German past: with respect to their dynamics as a *Gemeinde*, Fischer notes, “*Man sieht, man kann die Verhältnisse ganz gut mit den entsprechenden in unseren frühen Städten oder Stadtstaaten vergleichen!*”²²⁴ Clearly, the picture is of tight-knit community of a by-gone era. Even the ‘strong, lasting influences’ at work in forging the Reheboth people into a community were the same as those which characterized ‘early Europe’: Christian morality centered around monogamous marriage and commitment to family and hearth.²²⁵

The early term for GSWA, ‘*Schutzgebiet*’ or protectorate thus takes on added meaning in this context: rather than merely ‘protecting’ its native populations (in an often cynical kind of state-sponsored salvage ethnography), the *Schutzgebiet* is conceived to be *protected against* modernity, *Reizüberflut*, ‘society’ (*Gesellschaft*), even degeneration. It figures as a kind of haven for modern man, and a useful preserve for the modern anthropologist.

This allochronic quality, its purported situation outside of real historical time and into what Fabian calls ‘universal human time’²²⁶ thus accounts for one significant enhancement of Fischer’s vision: in a way, this mode of ‘time travel’, like glasses, makes distinctions sharper and reality clearer. Providing its foundation is the repression of actual history. Though Fischer’s repression of history is arguably less rigorous than in the

²²⁴ Fischer (1913) 237.

²²⁵ Cf. Fischer (1913) 19 – 21.

²²⁶ Fabian (1983) 21. Cf. Walter Benjamin’s ‘empty homogeneous time’ in “Theses on the Philosophy of History” for similarities to Fabian’s ‘Universal Human Time.’

case of anthropologists concerned with ‘pure races’ (Fischer, after all, has to account for how the Boer and the Khoikoi / Herero peoples crossed paths and forge a community in the first place)²²⁷ – or with ‘types’ (*Familienanthropologie* must at least document family history) Fischer *does* omit any sustained historical consideration of the tensions between German settlers and the Herero people, and their culmination in the 1906-1907 Herero uprising, widely considered Germany’s first genocide. Where the conflict is noted at all, Fischer attributes the revolters’ ‘lack of judgment’ to their genetic class: invariably, misguided revolutionaries were the darkest skinned, “*Hott-Bastards*.”²²⁸

This discussion has focused on how allochronic time structures Fischer’s perceived relationship between the European city and the South African *Bastardland* to construe the former as degenerate, and the latter as wholesomely pre-modern. With this opposition, Fischer exacerbates a sense of crisis in modernity (particularly in European cities) and makes a powerful case for bio-anthropological knowledge as starkly interventionist, that is, adept at remedying social ills of a German nation in crisis. As Fabian’s term ‘Visualism’ implies, however, visual representations themselves are most

²²⁷ Despite Fischer’s sketch of this history, the sense of the ‘*Trekboer*’ as colonizer seems underemphasized. His presence in Southwest Africa and the cape is instead rendered natural and benign. Cf. Fischer (1913) 19.

²²⁸ Left virtually unmentioned in RB is the 1897 removal of the Herero to reservations by the German commanding forces; the appropriation of their cattle and pasture land, and their uprising and declaration of war in 1904 (joined soon thereafter by the Nama). Fischer also leaves out of his picture the guerrilla warfare of the 1890’s and the brutal solutions to ‘the native question’ in 1906- 1907 (this despite the events’ arguable impact on family lines). In these years the Germans had succeeded in killing over 60 percent of the African population of what is today southern and central Namibia. Cf. Zantop (1998) 14 and Bley (1968). While Fischer acknowledges that the war was invaluable for inciting German interest in questions of miscegenation, race, and heredity, his only reference to the genocide serves to underscore what he perceives as the genetic inferiority of the lower class of Reheboths. According to Fischer it was this darker, possessionless class who would have liked to wage war against the Germans: the “*Kleinleute*,” “*die Partei, die sich 1904 ganz gerne den Kriegsführenden gegen uns angeschlossen hätte*.” Fischer (1913) 237 -238. Such misguided desires on behalf of the ‘darker’ Reheboths speaks, for Fischer, of collective poor

adept at creating authority and repressing complications arising from real historical time. How some of Fischer's visual representations work in this vein shall be discussed below.

4.2. Allochronism as Representation: Fischer's Ramism

For Fabian, visualism reaches a pinnacle with its mode of representation which he calls 'Ramism.'²²⁹ Ramism, a belated reincarnation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of 16th century pedagogical techniques, refers to the enterprise of academic teaching in which a proliferation of tables, charts, and illustrations serve as devices of inculcation. Its result "is not a dialog rhetoric at all...Ramist dialectic has lost all sense of Socratic dialogue and even modest sense of scholastic dispute."²³⁰ The authority bestowed upon the teacher (or author) suggests further that, as Fabian notes, we should

admit the possibility that striking images, simplified outlines, and overwrought tables were fed to students in order to impress them with a degree of orderliness and cohesiveness which the fields of knowledge taught by these methods never possessed. Not the students' simplicity but the teacher's determination to maintain superior position may have been to blame. The same goes mutatis mutandis for the preponderance of visual-spatial presentation of the Other in anthropology.²³¹

Fischer's own Ramist tendencies are, as mentioned earlier, touted in his title, and indeed, RB is loaded with diagrams, tables, and illustrations, and of course, the arguably most modern of Ramist representations, photographs used as 'Figures,' (i.e. 'Figure 1,'

judgment following from the lower group's racial make-up (*rassenmäßige Zusammensetzung*). Fischer (1913) 237. Indeed, class for Fischer is a largely essentialist, race-related category. Cf. Fischer (1913) 258.

²²⁹ Ramism gains its name from the 16th century minor philosopher, schoolman, logician and dialectician Petrus Ramus (1515-1572). Cf. Fabian (1983) 114.

²³⁰ Fabian (1983) 114.

²³¹ Fabian (1983) 122.

‘Figure 2.’).²³² This title signals a kind of ‘synopticism’ which equates the knowable with the *visualizable*, and treats its human subjects *comme des choses* - a treatment rendered allegorical by the portrait of Fischer included here, which portrays the scientist handling, arranging, and cognizing the faces of Reheboth children as if they were material objects. The materiality of the photograph, its reduction of the sitter to visual integument, helps render them such.²³³

In this section I suggest that the simple contours and tightly circumscribed spaces of Fischer’s schematic visual-spatial representations powerfully communicate a sense of Fischer’s authority, and by extension, the authority and prestige of anthropology as a human science.²³⁴ The final accomplishment of these representations, however, is Fischer’s creation of a cosmos in which the German nation could understand itself relationally with respect to Others.

How is the *Bastardland*, described above, represented or construed visually? Fischer presents us with an oval-shaped map of the region in question no more complicated in form and structure than a diagram of an amoeba. As such, however, it

²³² Fabian does not discuss photography in these or any other concrete terms in his study *Time and the Other*.

²³³ On another more biological level, Fischer’s embrace of ‘agri-eugenics’ of his friend and colleague the botanist Erwin Bauer, compels the scientist to treat human subjects not just like things but *comme des animaux*, or *comme des plantes*. Fischer’s practical and fundamental anthropological questions are in essence the same as those defining the field of animal husbandry. For example, the question concerning ‘*die sogenannte Präpotenz der Vererbung*’ inquires into the influence of the pure, originary races of the cross-breed. Fischer (1913) 192 asks which race attains greater *Vererbungs-kraft* (hereditary strength), and Fischer’s orientation toward botany and animal-domestication (*Tierzucht*) signal RB as a proto-eugenic study. For analogies to *Tierzucht*, see Fischer (1913) 62 on “*aufkreuzen*”; and 135 – 138 on *Löwenmaulpflanze, Mäuse, Hühner, Schnecken*. Cf. Schmuhl (2008) 20 on ‘agri-eugenics.’

²³⁴ Cf. Zimmerman (2001) 4 -10 on the tensions between anthropology and consumer, popular culture. With regard to the latter, Ramist depictions – academic, objective, ‘straight,’ and professional – helped anthropology distance itself from its popular manifestations like ‘freak shows,’ spectacles, and the ‘leering voyeurism (*Schaulust*) of the carnival’ also popular in Imperial Germany. Didactic, ramist representations

touts a function beyond its proclaimed attempt at ‘quick orientation.’²³⁵ The region, we are lead to believe, is virtually cut off from the world and modernity at large, much like a zoo, a petrie dish, or the greenhouse of an Augustinian monastery.²³⁶ As with Mendel’s highly controlled observations made roughly forty years earlier, the risk of questionable results could be eliminated by a hermetically sealed area devoid of multiple variables and outside interferences. The photograph of a church acts as the epicenter of Fischer’s map; granting access to and from the plateau where the *Bastardnation* is situated, only ‘*Räderspuren und Fehlen des Graswuchses*’ exist. This route, which, as Fischer tells us, the “natives call a ‘Pad’” (similar to the German *Pfad*, path or trail), traverses fallen trees, stumps, larger stones, cliffs, and outcroppings.²³⁷ The map suggests a viable (though virtually inescapable) home for Fischer’s unique bastards: it is the secluded terrain on which the discreet “*Völkchen*” could propagate itself peacefully.²³⁸ (Beside the ruggedness of the only trail connecting the *Bastardland* to the outside world, it is the stringent Christian ethics of the Reheboths which secludes them from the greater world. Tradition, loyalty, marriage – these values have constrained them in their “breeding practices.”)²³⁹

Such depictions distract significantly from the possibility that Fischer’s subjects, rather than being ‘*regelmäßige*’ Bastards descendent from reasonably ‘pure’ *Stammrassen*, may have actually existed only as a figments of Fischer’s own scientific imagination. Fischer’s simple map, with well-defined borders and limits, helps

like Fischer’s helped safeguard Anthropology’s status as a highly respectable discipline while still offering plenty to look at, and propagating a *Schaulust* of its own.

²³⁵ Fischer (1913) 5. “*Die Grenzen des Bastardlandes sind in beistehender kleiner Skizze (Fig 1) zu ersehen, die keine Karte ersetzen, sondern nur rasch orientieren will.*”

²³⁶ Cf. Orel (1996) 96 on Menzel’s greenhouses in Brno in Moravia.

²³⁷ Fischer (1913) 14.

²³⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) “*Entstehung der Bastards,*” 15 – 23.

underscore the notion that someone like Katharina Vries was in fact genetically knowable and decipherable, rather than the hereditary product of generations of Nama, Herero, Khoikoi, Dutch, German, and South African intermarriages.

Another particularly straightforward instance of the visualist cognitive style and Ramist mode of representation is found in Fischer's analysis of Reheboth women with respect to their '*Hab und Gut*.'

²⁴⁰ Fischer introduces his discussion by summoning the readers' power of sight and inviting him or her to "*look* at the owners of the [items]– and *observe* their *appearance*" (italics mine.)²⁴¹ Treating the women, their garments, modes of expression, and by extension their subjectivity as objects of direct, positive knowledge, Fischer summarizes not only their apparel but their being with the pithy aphorism: "*der Europäerin zu gleichen, ist ihr höchstes Ziel.*"²⁴² Adjacent to this observation is a photograph (Figure 4 below) whose visual testimony resonates with Fischer's inference: indeed, the women *look* European in long dresses, aprons, and bonnets.

²³⁹ Cf. Fischer (1913) "*Entstehung der Bastards*," 15-23.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Fischer (1913) 244 – 264.

²⁴¹ Fischer (1913) 255: "*Sieht man sich nun nach den Besitzern dieser Einrichtung um und betrachtet ihre Erscheinung.*" If we follow Martin Jay (1993), the preponderance of such visual tropes in our language signals the priority of the visual.

²⁴² Fischer (1913) 256.



Fig. 28. Bastardmädchen.

Fig. 4: Eugen Fischer, *Rehebother Bastards*. “Bastardmädchen.”

Yet this observation-based inference strikes at least the present-day reader as a profoundly incomplete, if not a crudely dismissive rendering of the Reheboth women and their aims and desires, and hardly amounts to a ‘reading.’²⁴³ Historical analyses of power relations in German Southwest Africa around 1908 suggest, of course, that a desire to appear European likely would have little to do with fashion and flattery (Fischer uses the word ‘*hübsch*’ repeatedly to describe the belts and bonnets of the Reheboth women) let alone a person’s genetic constitution. Instead, looking European would represent a sensible strategy of survival in a political economy in which the dark-skinned racial Other was decidedly unequal and thus faced constant physical threats and legal

²⁴³ This sense is compounded by Fischer’s rather shameless exploitation of their purported eurocentrism: Fischer boasts of persuading women to remove their head scarves (bonnets) for measurements or

constraints. Even pastors of the German Protestant church in GSWA had, by 1890 banished ‘half-white’ children from their kindergartens.²⁴⁴ Far from being an essential, biological quality of the Reheboth people, *looking* as European as possible made rational sense.²⁴⁵

How the bonnets and belts signify at the historical moment of being worn, how they may or may not compensate for the German *Bildung* required for the racial tolerance of the ‘*Mischling*’:²⁴⁶ such questions are all but extinguished by simple, realist images and their facile but authoritative, complexity-reducing descriptions. Far from being understood as players in a process, agents in a historical development, or figures in a deeper narrative,²⁴⁷ the Reheboth women stand like dolls dressed in historical garb. The alignment of Fischer’s visualism with objective observation borrowed from the natural sciences, devalues, as Zimmerman suggests, the human both as an inquirer and as a subject of inquiry.²⁴⁸

In comparison to the rigidity and banality of the lackluster photograph of the Reheboth women described above, Fischer’s typological portraits appear far less trifling, far richer and evocative for their sitter’s expressions and Fischer’s exact, quasi-modernist face shots. And yet, what goes for the rigid snapshot of the two Reheboth women described above applies as well to the thirteen page typological portrait portfolio of the

photographs by ‘assuring them that a European lady would never be ashamed to be seen without one.’ Cf. Fischer (1913) 257.

²⁴⁴ Smith (1998) 117.

²⁴⁵ Frequently reported, however, was the tendency of the Reheboth people to consider themselves better than pure ‘Hottentots’ and to freely espouse affection or admiration for Europeanness. Cf. Fischer (1913) 57 and Steinmetz (2007) 237 for such reports. This, however, could likely follow from the psychological internalizations of the colonized; psychic patterns which Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skins, White Masks*, and elsewhere. If the ‘Reheboth Bastards’ considered themselves superior to the ‘natives,’ it may have resulted in part from their treatment by the authorities as ‘favored subaltern.’ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 237 for this term.

²⁴⁶ Smith (1998) 117.

Reheboth people: complex individuals are readily categorized, eminently readable and knowable, and depicted within the strict confines of Fischer's own scientific project. It thus comes as no surprise that Fabian should write explicitly about taxonomy as facile visual – spatial reduction (albeit with respect to the structuralist ilk.)²⁴⁹ Fabian's critique of "the taxonomic satisfaction of having classed away historical discourse" applies to Fischer's bio-anthropological endeavor – this despite Fischer's proclaimed lack of concern with 'types,' but with the genetic-racial *development* and *change* in family lines over generations.²⁵⁰

Yet despite Fischer's polemical eschewing of the type and of physiognomic insight more broadly, Fischer's study leads directly to the division of his subjects into three exhaustive and exclusive groups whose salient features are held to be physically salient (i.e. physiognomic). As previously noted, the 'Bastards' come in three forms, whereby the middle one, called the "Mitt-" group (for *Mittlere*) is the most 'regular,' that is, consistent in its genetic makeup:

Eine große Gruppe sind ganz regelmäßig verbastardiert, haben also gleich viele weiße Männer und hottentottische Frauen als ursprüngliche Ahnen. ... Die Bastardierung ging als regelmäßig, diese Individuen stellen regelmäßige Bastarde III., IV., V. usw Grades dar. Ich nenne sie einfach 'mittlere.'²⁵¹

Though only one class of Bastards is called the 'middle' type, Fischer's consistent focus throughout RB is on the Bastards as a 'Völkchen' in the middle: they are locatable between the white race and the African races in terms of their physical and mental

²⁴⁷ Here I rely on W.J.T. Mitchell's discussion of historical materialism. Cf. Mitchell (1986) 176.

²⁴⁸ Zimmermann (2001) 11.

²⁴⁹ Fabian (1983) 132.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Fischer (1913) 1-4 on 'Familienanthropologie.'

²⁵¹ Fischer (1913) 61.

characteristics (the ‘Mitt’ group, presumably, resides only more exactly in the middle). This normative scheme represents a ‘correction’ to the popular assignment of the ‘bastard’ to the lowest hierarchical position, with the pure African faring only slightly better, and the pure European unequivocally at the top.²⁵²

Fischer thus situates and understands the people of Reheboth in a racial typology of his own (Mendelian inspired) design and renders it *objective* and natural in ways that closely resemble processes associated with Bourdieu’s ‘objectivism.’ Indeed Bourdieu could be describing Fischer’s typological projections, since in them,

the whole world is a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a “point of view” on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring into the object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone.²⁵³

While a human geneticist no doubt maintains the right to interrogate subjects from his ‘*point of view*,’ Fischer’s reduction of all facets of the lives of the Reheboth people to evidence of Mendelian genetics arguably offends sound judgment. As ‘objectivism’ suggests, the part (here the role of genetics in determining human and communal characteristics) is construed as the whole, or totality. For Fischer, even the cultural products of this purportedly pure bastard race exhibit notable traces of “alternative heredity,” i.e. they illustrate and confirm the principle according to which cross-breeds represent not a blending of parental traits, but alternate constellations of those traits. Remarkably, crafts, tools, and furnishings produced by the Reheboth people - *Mitteldinger*, as Fischer calls them – appear to result from Mendelian patterns of recessiveness and dominance.

²⁵² Cf. Fischer (1913) 298.

²⁵³ Fabian (1983) 110 cites this passage from Bourdieu.

Without exaggerated fantasy, one can decipher in Fischer's enthusiasm for Bastard handicrafts a structure of 'not blending' which Mendelian genetics establishes as law: far from representing an amorphous dilution of what were originally pure categories (in the model of racial blending, as remarkable in urban centers home to the *Mischling*), things like chairs, bonnets, tobacco and toiletries are portrayed as manifesting signs of alternative heredity (or alternative inheritance). The folding chair (*Klappstuhl*) for instance, gets its 'klapp' from the European, but its handles, adorned with animal heads, from the 'Hottentot'. It is as if the *shapes* of European chairs are dominant over the shape of Hottentot chairs, while Hottentot *designs and décor* are dominant over European designs or décor (carvings). Indeed, the photograph depicting the *Klappstuhl* shows not a watered down version of either a Hottentot or European chair, but an icon of alternative Vererbung: a salient *Mittelding*. As with the face of Katharina Vries, Fischer seems to delight in the 'überraschendes Nebeneinander der beiden elterlichen Merkmale' mentioned earlier.²⁵⁴

One should also note the biologically determined nature of such a chair as Fischer describes it: "Das Vorbild ist der europäische Lehnstuhl und der zusammenklappbare Feldsitz. Aber indem der Bastard dies nachschuf, wandte er uns der Hottentottentradition entnommenen Motive an." [emphasis on 'indem' mine].²⁵⁵ This *indem* ('in that') signals the inevitability of natural law and the assumption that the 'Hottentot,' due to genetic determinations or constraints, can produce only limited kinds of motives. For the 'bastard,' the decoration of chairs is causal; it is no more a matter of free will than the

²⁵⁴ Fischer (1913) 166.

²⁵⁵ Fischer (1913) 2.

creation of light or dark-skinned children. Instead, it is a question of his or her gene pool and patterns of recessiveness and dominance.

Fischer's Mendelian interpretation of a Reheboth cane / club follows suit: Fischer describes this artifact as an "echtes ‚Bastard'-Produkt" – "zwischen europäischem Spazierstock und afrikanischem ‚Kirri'" – which he calls a *Totschläger*, or club.²⁵⁶

Fischer's special attention to *Mitteldinger* may therefore mark not the limits of his biological worldview, but its acme.²⁵⁷ This would explain the author's otherwise exorbitant attention to the details of these artifacts in a study which purports to include only those anthropological observations which serve the study of human heredity and miscegenation in particular.²⁵⁸ Of twenty-seven photographic images embedded in the three hundred page text, roughly fourteen depict *Mitteldinger*, while other *Mitteldinger* are sketched rather than photographed. All appear in a section titled 'Ergologie,' an odd term which for Fischer may have intended to suggest a derivative branch of human heredity concerned with cultural artifacts as the products of human work. 'Ergologie' would focus not on the influence of work's effects on the mind and body, but *the body's effect on work*.²⁵⁹

If the fanciful idea of crafts, tools and furnishings exhibiting traces of alternative heredity seems unfair even to Fischer, consider the extent to which Fischer's biographer

²⁵⁶ Fischer (1913) 249. This particular 'Mittelding' seems especially adept at serving the needs of a community ostensibly locked between culture and nature, i.e., one comprised of genes deriving from both a purportedly primitive (violent) *Naturvolk* and a civilized (walking, strolling) *Kulturvolk*.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 232 - 237 for an alternative view of Fischer's discussion of *Mitteldinger*. Steinmetz understands Fischer's attention to *Mitteldinger* as a move toward cultural analyses and away from biological ones.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Fischer (1913) 57, "Ziel, Material und Methode der Untersuchung."

²⁵⁹ Cf. Steinmetz (2007) 235 on this term. My inverted understanding of 'Ergologie' based on Fischer's use of it, would fit with another general definition from the field of ethnology which states, "Knowledge originating from the study of the object culture of non-European traditional societies." (See

attributes *Wunschdenken* to the scientist's analyses:²⁶⁰ Lösch discusses various instances in which the mantra "ich wollte es so sehr, es muß sein!" determined Fischer's methods in GSWA. Under such circumstances, 'evidence' for Mendelian genetics would likely emerge in surprising if not fantastical sources.

While Fischer's attention to *Mitteldinger* may have raised the ire of certain contemporary, humanist colleagues of Fischer - leading them to characterize much of his work as 'silly nonsense' ('*dummes Zeug*'),²⁶¹ his stringent, causal interpretations of material culture could also capture the imagination. Indeed they conjure a kind of tight genetic community whose arts themselves bore racially distinctive traits.²⁶² These traits - their salient, authentic characteristics tied to distinct origins- could be understood to militate against modern *Gleichmacherei* on the material front, combating not the problem of human racial '*Brei*' but of the mass cultural '*Brei*' which Fischer also feared and

<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ergology>). It further resonates with the term's association, in French, with physiology, hence with what the body does or produces.

²⁶⁰ Lösch (1997) 65 – 76.

²⁶¹ Cf. Lösch (1997) 78 cites Fischer's unpublished journal which recalls the following: "*Die erste Aufnahme des Werkes durch die Fachgenossen war nicht gerade gut. Der Senior der deutschen Anthropologie Geheimrat Fritsch lobte die Abbildungen der Hottentotten und Bastarde als die besten, die dieser große Kenner Südafrikas je gesehen habe, aber die Darstellung der Vererbungsfragen hielt er offenbar für dummes Zeug.*"

²⁶² Of course this idea is not so different from contemporary popular notions which viewed Gothic architecture as uniquely or essentially German, and the international style degenerate in its lack of authentic, distinctive character. Cf. Brückle (1998) 285-286 on how art historian Richard Hamann, in 1917 describes the Germanness of Gothic sculpture in 'ergological' terms much like Fischer's. On his photographic portraits of sculpture, he writes, "'*Deutsche Köpfe des Mittelalters*'-...*Es heisst,[...] dass diese Köpfe, von deutscher Kunst hervorgebracht, eigentümlichste deutscher Kunst offenbaren, und damit deutschen Wesens überhaupt.*" Brückle explains further: "*Dessen Stärke und Schwäche, so Hamann weiter, träten in jenen Bildern, die sein Buch versammelt, dem Leser mit Deutlichkeit entgegen.*" Here German art is held to expose the German soul or German being *in detail*. Fischer's attention to the *Mitteldinger* of the Reheboth reads remarkably similarly, yet puts forth Mendelian genetics as an answer to *how* such 'mystical' transmissions actually play out (namely through genes). See also Langbehn's often essentialist art discourse in *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, and much later, Paul Schultze-Naumburg's 1928 study, *Kunst und Rasse*. This latter work associated the creation and appreciation of art with certain hereditary racial characteristics, thus providing the pseudo-scientific basis for Nazi aesthetics. Specifically, Schultze-Naumburg equated borrowing from other cultures with miscegenation and argued that the survival of the Aryan race was at stake in the political battles of the day in art and architecture. Cf. Long (1993) 299 for an abridged version of *Kunst und Rasse*.

berated.²⁶³ Finally, Fischer's observations with respect to 'Bastard' material culture could enhance his authority as an observer since to see Mendelian genetics at work in a *Sitzkissen* (seat cushion) would be to see with considerable acumen. When Fischer, coiner of the term '*Erblehre*' in Germany,²⁶⁴ notes that the fur-work (*Fellarbeit*) on a 'bastard cushion' is '*sicher hottentottisches Erbstück*,'²⁶⁵ one may be permitted to take his diction literally, at face value. To understand '*Erbstück*' metaphorically would surely offend Fischer's realism which demands a literal reading.²⁶⁶ Charges of Fischer's visualism, 'objectivism,' scientific or anti-hermeneutic extremism may thus be vindicated.

Fischer's maps, photographs, and biological interpretations of the Rehoboth people and their *Mitteldinger* render Mendelian genetics an extraordinarily cohesive and coherent field of knowledge. Photography, I have argued, is remarkably well-suited to a Ramist episteme aimed at establishing the authority of the teacher – researcher and forging 'objectivity.' Analysis of Fischer's visualist practice helps account for the unique power of RB's typological photographs as a scientific, anthropological path to a German 'face of the nation.' The typology's systematic order is suggestive of vast cosmos in which purified European races can enjoy the self-knowledge of being essentially more *leistungsfähig* and more motivated than darker Others and half-Others in distant, remote regions of the globe. While exploiting modern fears of identity loss and *Gleichmacherei*, RB aimed to inspire eugenic visions of a socially and racially cohesive, modern German community located securely at the pinnacle of a racial hierarchy.

²⁶³ Cf. introduction to this chapter.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Proctor (1988) 146.

²⁶⁵ Fischer (1913) 254.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Van Fraassen (1980) 10 on the literal construal of scientific language among scientific realists.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to analyze Fischer's RB as a 'path to a German *Volksgesicht*' – away from the sameness of modernity and toward an authentic and genetically uncompromised, undiminished collective Self. It has explored how Fischer's early 20th century, anthropological text, its *Bildaesthetik*, rhetoric, scopic regime, and visual representations work collectively toward the creation of a cosmos in which a German nation in crisis could imagine itself. This symbolic system combines photographic realism with an alarmist rhetoric of decline and disciplinary crisis to exacerbate Fischer's purportedly unsettling data concerning miscegenation, social decline, and the jeopardized 'intactness of the German race.'²⁶⁷ As a cosmos, RB – like the scopic regime of the camera obscura- represents the most rational possibilities for a perceiver within an increasingly unruly universe. It intervenes in crisis.

At the outset, I situated Fischer's photographic portrait typology in RB alongside other early 20th century German portraiture that also aimed to intervene in the crisis of German identity; in doing so I aimed to emphasize the variety of ways such interventions could be felt. Implicit in my argument has been the conviction that Fischer's work – despite or because of its academic milieu, its non-aesthetic, non-expressive mode, its scientific jargon, and tedious data-collection – is no less powerful on a symbolic level than artistic and popular images which circulated in German culture in the 1920's and 1930's.

²⁶⁷ Fischer (1913) 304.

Erna Lendvai-Dirksen's '*Das deutsche Volksgesicht*' (begun in 1917 but first exhibited in 1932) makes the point most convincingly on account of its manifold commonalities with Fischer's project. Like RB it portrays a '*kulturpessimistische und stadtfeindliche Haltung*'²⁶⁸ via a glorified ideal of community conveyed through the accoutrements of tradition and racial, *völkisch* salience. In each case ethnographic travel served the basis for 'excellent visual aids' (*ausgezeichnetes Anschauungsmaterial*) concerning questions of race,²⁶⁹ and for a synoptic view of a perceived totality. For both Fischer and Lendvai-Dirksen, a sedentary, mostly peasant population distinct in its racial origins is portrayed in lieu of a far larger urban population; and in each, this rural community is captured before its inevitable demise.²⁷⁰ In Fischer's case a picture of the German racial nation need only be *deduced* via a shift that is definitive of 'negative eugenic' images.²⁷¹ It can nonetheless be readily imagined within the cohesive taxonomic, hierarchical frame Fischer puts forth.

A fundamental question this chapter poses, however, is whether the visualist critique of classical anthropological methods applies in some measure to all photographic portrait typologies as a motley genre. If photographic portrait typologies universally emphasize order through classification; make visual, synoptic truth claims; and insist on their own objectivity, to what extent do they as a 'genre' repress real history and complication in favor of self-interested cosmos construction? This question won't be

²⁶⁸ Ebner (2002) 54.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Kühn (2005) 259 for a 1933 review in *Der Photograph*.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Kühn (2005) 243 for a review in *Vossische Zeitung* Nr. 28, 17. Jan. 1932 on the old-age of Lendvai-Dirksen's sitters.

²⁷¹ Cf. Maxwell (2008) Introduction on 'negative' and 'positive' Eugenics. Lendvai-Dirksen's idealized images of a handsome German community of course represent the latter.

settled here but suffice it to mention that photography scholars have, with notable regularity, launched something like the visualist critique on photography at large.

In the following chapter I suggest a degree of variety within the sameness of photographic typologies: I explore August Sander's *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* as a melodramatic narrative that employs strategies squarely at odds with Fischer's. Unlike Fischer's positivist, dogmatic educational system (discussed above as 'Ramism'), Sander's typological portraits rely on metaphor, analogy, and 'excess' to depict a world perceived to be, in the language of Oswald Spengler whom Sander greatly admired, distinctly '*out of form.*' Like Spengler, Sander portrays society as "Civilization," as "nothing but tension," but also as "destiny."²⁷² More metaphysical, intuitive, and instinctive than *naturwissenschaftlich*, however, the gestures and gazes of Sander's sitters act as signifiers loaded with meaning; the photographer's 'objectivity' focuses on 'masks of culture' rather than on biology to press beyond realism and embrace an occulted narrative of decline and cyclical history.²⁷³ As reference to Oswald Spengler already suggests, however, Sander's differences from Fischer should not immediately align him with enlightened, humanist ethics, an obverse trend which scholarship on Sander also clearly betrays.

²⁷² Cf. Spengler (1991) 191.

²⁷³ I borrow this phrase from Zimmerman (2001) 3.

**Chapter Three: August Sander's Melodramatic Imagination:
Rethinking the Sander Myth and the Heuristic Limits of
Typology**



Fig. 5: August Sander, portrait of two sisters, 1906 (top). Fig. 6: August Sander, "*Bauernmädchen*," 1928.

1. Introduction

In Figures 5 and 6 above we see two sister portraits by August Sander – the first dating from between 1901 and 1906, and the second from the year 1928. The first, a gum-bichromate print commissioned by patrons of Sander’s professional photography studio in Linz, won fourth place in a 1910 contest sponsored by the leading Art Photography magazine *Das Atelier des Photographen*.¹ The second was intended for inclusion in the never fully realized project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* and is representative of Sander’s conscious turn in the 1920s toward what he called ‘*exakte Fotografie*.’²

While the sisters in the first image appear caught in spontaneous, childlike play in a domestic interior where flowers (in vases, on wallpaper, and in one child’s hair) assert natural innocence and youthful femininity, the latter sisters stand contrived and rigid; stuck in place without fitting in. With their matching dresses, socks, boots, and faces; their overly-geometric, acorn-like hairstyles; their twin clenched fists odd stares past Sander’s camera, the sisters stand before a wooded scene to create a nearly palpable sense of the uncanny. As in Peter Brooks’ theory of the melodramatic mode, states of being beyond the immediate context of the image, and in excess of it, appear to bear upon it; we might say that Sander has charged the photograph with “intense significances”³ of an undisclosed nature, allowing a compelling drama to emerge from the ‘banal stuff of reality.’ In the 1906 portrait, by contrast, a scene of domesticity and childhood is easy and familiar, and the image accords with many of the traditional tenets of portraiture by

¹ Sander & Conrath-Scholl & Hochleitner & Lange (2005) 18. Cf. also Keller (1980) 13 for a list of prizes awarded Sander in the 1910s for art photography.

² Cf. Keller (1980) 15 and Sander & Conrath-Scholl & Hochleitner & Lange (2005) 17.

³ Cf. Brooks (1976) 2.

capturing and paying homage to the subject's significance. In the sitters' gestures, a conventional narrative can be easily consumed since the effect produced seems appropriate to its cause. The portrait is natural.⁴

While the first image offers semantic coherence and ease via a snap-shot-like aesthetic despite having been shot in a studio (the wallpapered background is a prop rather than a real wall), the second sister portrait unsettles the viewer's sense of things. Here the sisters appear strained to mean something⁵ - a sensation only aggravated by the portrait's embeddedness in the vast typological frame of *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*: that viewers are summoned to compare these sisters with Sander's other 'types' only exacerbates the sense that their full meaning lies elsewhere, beyond the photographic frame in the realm of human history and (unhappy) spiritual truths. To recall Carl Hempel's philosophy of typology, Sander's latter sister portrait appears to be a photograph of types that is less about observables – things that can be inter-subjectively ascertained by direct observation - than about *un*-observables,⁶ about mysterious forces and secret meanings that await decoding.

If we assume that the sisters photographed in 1928 may have also experienced spontaneous, playful moments of sibling camaraderie, and that Sander's photographic skill would have allowed such a portrayal (this, of course, is my point in comparing Sander's own earlier and later work),⁷ but that he chose to portray them differently, what

⁴ Brooks (1976) 117.

⁵ Cf. Brooks (1976) 1 on similar questions posed by Balzac in *La Peau de chagrin*.

⁶ Cf. Hempel (1952) 24 on 'observables' as directly observable characteristics of physical objects, i.e., properties or relations whose presence or absence in a given case can be inter-subjectively ascertained, under suitable circumstances, by direct observation. Observables, notes Hempel, include such terms such as 'hard', 'liquid', 'blue', 'coincident with', 'contiguous with', etc. and would ideally comprise all scientific operations.

⁷ Beyond establishing the fundamentally novel quality of Sander's aesthetic in *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* and its particular effect of 'pressuring reality,' such comparisons make the case for Sander's

changed for the photographer between 1906 and 1928?⁸ More specifically, what is ‘exact photography’ and its semantic function in *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*? Has Sander merely modernized his photographic praxis according to new modernist-formal trends, or has something changed behind his photographs on the level of substantive meaning; i.e., have Sander’s conceptual prerogatives morphed? Though his involvement with the Cologne Rhineland Progressives beginning around 1920 no doubt helped initiate a turn away from gum prints and other conventions of art photography and toward an appreciation of glossy paper and clean, smooth, enlarged details in portraiture, his newfound fascination with rigid figures trapped in stifling compositions can hardly be attributed to this association.⁹

In this chapter, I aim to answer these questions by first challenging what I call the Sander myth, i.e., the notion – to be discussed in detail later¹⁰ – that Sander’s ‘exact photography’ represents a simple switch from aestheticized subjectivity toward objectivity; from bourgeois story telling to sociological “stock-taking.”¹¹ As the sister-portrait comparison above shows, the difference between Sander’s studio work and *Menschen* lies less in their respective degrees of objectivity and empirical accuracy as in

earlier career as a critical ‘*Erfahrungshintergrund*’ for *Menschen*. Cf. Sander (2005) 7 on Sander’s early career. That the two phases of Sander’s career are linked is a relatively new assertion in the scholarship on Sander, but while Hochleitner and Lange emphasize the various personal and business experiences, social contacts, and artistic influences afforded by his time in Linz, I perceive this early phase as critical for his later development in primarily aesthetic terms by serving as the solid foundation on which the masterful conversion of naturalistic, conventional portraiture into ‘exact photography’ could first take place.

⁸ As the above comparison seeks to show, a ‘fundamental ambivalence’ or ‘anxious mobility of meaning’ is anything but accidental in the image the 1930 portrait, but carefully constructed. Cf. Baker (1996) 110 - 112 who denies Sander’s agency in the ambiguity of his images.

⁹ Cf. Keller (1980) 15 who acknowledges that ideologically, Sander could never reconcile himself to the more radical positions held by the group.

¹⁰ See section 2 of this chapter, “The Sander Myth: *Menschen* as a Document lacking ‘Vision.’”

¹¹ Cf. Keller (1980) on ‘stock-taking;’ Sekula (1981); “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning” in Sekula (1984); and Tagg (1988) for notions of portraiture and photography as bourgeois story telling. Cf. also Osborne in Badea-Paun (2007), Forward on traditional portraiture as an out-moded genre in the early 20th century.

the degrees of naturalism and realism which separate them; i.e., their ‘readability,’ and the images’ respective shares of ambiguity and tension. Both images work as ‘art’; both tell stories, only they differ greatly in both delivery and substance; the later portrait is as expressive of *something* as the former is of youthful, feminine innocence. I shall argue that the images slated for inclusion in *Menschen* and its typology as a whole are, like Brooks’ melodrama, “constantly tensed to catch [an] essential drama, to go beyond the surface of the real to the truer, hidden reality, to open up the world of spirit.”¹² Patrice Petro uses less sensational language to ascribe a similar function to melodrama, namely to forge a “heightened and expressive representation of the implications of everyday life.”¹³

Sander’s project thus bears strong resemblance to the melodramatic novels Brooks discusses, since his archive presents a new kind of portraiture intent on intervening in the same kind of social crises Brooks attributes to the birth of melodrama. In similar ways, both Sander’s art and melodrama seek to register and contend with the disintegration of formal society.

Like the melodramatist, Sander puts his sitters under considerable pressure: their gestures, accoutrements, and location in the photographer’s typology become difficult-to-decode symbols. Their non-naturalism, I argue, is acutely melodramatic;¹⁴ their characteristic deep stares, static poses, and artificial compositions aim, like the face-to-face confidences of the stage, to ‘assure the legibility of signs,’¹⁵ however challenging this ambition may be.

¹² Brooks (1976) 2.

¹³ Petro cited in Barndt (2008) 75.

¹⁴ Cf. Brooks (1976) 47 on the non-natural, unreal style of acting associated with stage melodrama.

¹⁵ Cf. Brooks (1976) 47.

In taking on such qualities, the 1930 sister portrait and countless other images in *Menschen* become suggestive of what Peter Brooks calls the “melodramatic mode.” Infusing his concept with somewhat greater attention to modern conditions of vision and urban seeing, I am concerned with how the “sense-making system” of melodrama renders its subjects (whether sitters for a portrait or characters in a novel or on stage) ‘highly charged vehicles.’ Sander’s sitters exemplify Brooks’ contention that in melodrama, the represented, phenomenal world is employed metaphorically:

The more difficult it becomes to put one’s finger on the nature of the spiritual reality alluded to— the more highly charged is the vehicle, the more strained with pressure to suggest a meaning beyond.¹⁶

In making the case for Sander’s ‘melodramatic imagination’ over and above any aim to create a neutral inventory of Weimar types, I explore the portraits of *Menschen* as a collection of precisely such highly charged vehicles, and suggest a strong conceptual and dramatic overlap between Brooks’ theory of melodrama, Sander’s use of typology and physiognomy, and Oswald Spengler’s ‘morphology’ and ‘method’ in *Decline of the West* – a 1919 ‘best seller’ which Sander himself reportedly devoured.¹⁷ I argue that in the space of this overlap there emerges ‘the spiritual reality’ to which Sander the melodramatist attends: it comprises the barely visible scheme of historical decline and the position of his contemporary society within it. I thus explore in detail the ways in which

¹⁶ Brooks (1976) 11.

¹⁷ Cf. Keller (1980) 39 who notes only that Sander read *Decline*, and not in vain: “He too saw the ‘eternal man’ rooted in the lands and the ‘last man’ wasting away in urban hospitals.” As will become clear, the affinities I establish between Sander and Spengler exceed common concern for these ‘eternal men’ and ‘last men’ but extend to Sander’s and Spengler’s common interests in symbolism, in occulted meaning, polarity, petrification, and melodrama. Cf. Keller (1980) 38-43 on “Philosophy of Decadence,” “decadence theory,” and for a *devaluation* of the ‘systematic arrangement’ of Sander’s images and portfolios vis-à-vis the pictures. Keller sees narrative only in the ‘demonstrative gesture’ staged in the images themselves (29 – 31), but does not accept an over-arching narrative to the work as a whole. The images, he argues, remain untainted by decadence ideology, and asserts that the “final analysis of portfolio work” should be based on the images alone, not on their provocative sequencing. In this chapter, however, I see symbols of

the typological frame of *Menschen* together with Sander's strained (i.e. 'exact') photographic aesthetic helps deliver a melodramatic, Spenglerian grand historical narrative that relies on polarity, antithesis, and contraries to evoke occult powers and spiritual truths.

In these ways, Sander's Spenglerism holds much in common with Brooks' conception of melodrama; yet there are also profound differences. While Brooks is concerned with melodrama's unveiling of a 'moral' occult, Sander (via Spengler) appears concerned to expose a *historical* occult: a system and pattern in the course of historical development, i.e., the rise and fall of cultures, and Weimar as a moment in which the encroachment of civilization makes itself felt- and to some, even visible. Indeed Sander, in a radio speech on photography, appears to embrace the notion of a historical occult when he speaks of history and how it reveals its *meaning*:

The individual does not make the history of his time, but he both impresses himself on it and expresses its meaning. The historical image will become even clearer if we join together pictures typical of the many different groups that make up human society. [...] The photographer who has the ability and understands physiognomy can bring the image of his time to speaking expression.¹⁸

For Sander, physiognomy – to be discussed in detail later - unveils the significance of history. While the photographer likely intends for moral *overtones* to dramatize his portraits - Sander notes that distinctions between good and evil are visible to the eye, and made more so through photography¹⁹ - his melodramatic narrative is less one of ethical decision-making like Brooks'. *Menschen*, I shall argue, is melodramatic in how it serves as a vehicle for the *recognition* and revelation of occult forces more generally.

decadence even in the images themselves; not merely in the cyclical, 'declining' arrangement of the photographs.

¹⁸ Sander (1978) 678.

Similarly, in Spengler's dualistic, polarized system of culture and civilization, *moral* Manichaeism is more subtextual than explicit. Spengler's Manichaeism revolves around the binaristic concepts of cyclical history like 'spirit' and 'intellect'; 'becoming' and 'thing-become'; 'spring' and 'fall:' hyperbolic categories of an either / or nature. Such binaries are nonetheless adept at 'narrating crisis,' as Kerstin Barndt notes of the melodramatic mode.²⁰ My reliance on Brooks' theory of melodrama thus draws less on his or Barndt's concern with a moral occult and ethical decision-making, than on Brooks' broader insistence upon "the melodramatic imagination as an essential mode behind all forms of expressive, modernist aesthetics that push the limits of representation."²¹

My interest of course, lies not in evaluating the accuracy or merit of Sander's or Spengler's historical truth claims, but in identifying their contents and the means through which the photographer postulated them. I discuss how, with *Menschen*, typology still navigates and orients its viewer, yet does so less in the way of objective empirical social facts concerning the Weimar populace as via its melodramatic proposal of "grandiose questions and hypotheses."²² It plots rather convoluted spiritual-historical coordinates rather than mere physical traits of sitters construed as types.

The difference between the sister portraits above thus lies in Sander's fresh concern - now without contracts but benefiting from the upswing after currency reform in 1923-24²³ - with photographing what Spengler called the 'cold hard facts of a late life': that is, manifestations of "Civilization [as] nothing but tension;"²⁴ and the 'out-of-

¹⁹ Sander (1978) 675.

²⁰ Cf. Barndt (2008) 78 who refers to melodrama as an 'aesthetic of crisis.'

²¹ Cf. Barndt (2008) 74 on Brooks.

²² Brooks (1976) 2.

²³ See Keller (1980) 14-15.

²⁴ Spengler (1991) 191.

Formness' of the modern industrial world whose rapid growth both melodramatists witnessed throughout their lives. In Sander's first free-lance project which allowed time for the artist's reflection upon the theoretical foundations of his work, the stone-cold portraits of *Menschen* express the somber 'reality' of a society gripped by petrification and decline. If sitters do not 'gnash their teeth' or 'roll their eyes' (two standard gestures of the melodramatic theatre Brooks discusses)²⁵ it is because their spirit has been diminished. It is not that Sander's interests lie outside 'human pleasures and pain', as Keller states,²⁶ but that his sitters – stricken by something deep and inexplicable - can hardly muster these expressions. The effect of their static bodies and stern gazes strikes the viewer with no less intensity than iconic melodramatic gestures noted above (that is, provided we can still take either kind of unnatural gesture seriously).

Although with respect to the scholarship on August Sander, Spengler has arguably been forgotten as never before,²⁷ it is nonetheless *not* my intention to reduce *Menschen* to an illustrated version of *Decline of the West* - not because I wish to spare Sander from the ethical and epistemological dubiousness of such an alignment (as many of his modernist promoters likely did), but because of the fundamental differences between words and images, and the falsity of what W.J.T Mitchell calls 'linguistic imperialism' in matters of image interpretation. Mitchell employs the concept of linguistic imperialism to refer to

²⁵ See Brooks (1976) 47 on the importance of visual representation in melodrama.

²⁶ Keller (1980) 1.

²⁷ Cf. Adorno (1994) 53. Adorno's investment in not forgetting Spengler is far greater than my own with respect to the philosopher's influence on Sander. I am not, for instance, concerned that overlooking Sander's narrative of decline will compel it to become true. Cf. Adorno (1994) 54. Sander's narrative is significant to me only in as far as it helps, as 'tenor,' to account for his photographic arrangement and style, (i.e. 'exact photography') and in as far as it speaks to the diverse capacities of typology as form. Also, as the 'Sander Myth' suggests, Spengler's ideas were less compelling when communicated through Sander's

the “impossible idea” of “systematic, rule-governed translation between word and image.”²⁸ With respect to Sander, Mitchell’s critique of ‘constructivist readings’ of pictures - i.e., those semantic assessments which would reduce photographs in particular to sheer transmissions of ideology - reminds us that the narrative functions of photographs can never be perfectly dictated by textual or verbal discourses,²⁹ however prominently their ideas may figure in the artist’s work.

Secondly, *Menschen*, as Sander envisioned it, was arguably even larger and more grandiose than Spengler’s two-volume history of decline:³⁰ its 540 intended images (each in large format and rich in empirical and narrative detail) cannot be expected to strictly illustrate – without tangent or distraction- the ideas and concerns Spengler puts forth in his work. I therefore do not intend an exhaustive accounting of each of these images based on Spengler’s text.³¹ The dramatic images in *Menschen* are, as Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison note of scientific atlases generally, the ‘Alpha and Omega’ of Sander’s atlas as well, and to call them ‘illustrations’ would be to belie their primacy and suggest that their function is merely ancillary.³² But although Sander’s images ‘command center

photographic method: viewers like Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin overlooked or repressed the photographs’ concern with the thesis of decline by construing the work as an icon of New Objectivity.

²⁸ Mitchell (1986) 9.

²⁹ Cf. Tagg (1988) 148 this kind of iconoclastic treatment of images. Mitchell (1986) 9 notes that impossible ideals can be worthwhile and productive, provided their impossibility remains recognized.

³⁰ Indeed in a radio address, Sander (1978) 679 suggests *Menschen* as but a first step in arriving at “a total vision of the people on Earth – a vision which would be of enormous importance to our understanding of humanity. This synopticism recalls Fischer’s fantasy of documenting all peoples of the Earth.

³¹ One could, however, pursue such an endeavor by reading Sander’s images of a certain type beside Spengler’s respective ideas on it: for instance, the aristocracy, the artist, the architect, and the athlete all feature prominently in both *Menschen* and *Decline*. To attempt to be exhaustive, would, however, extend beyond the boundaries of this chapter and may even threaten an overly literal approach to what I consider Sander and Spengler’s philosophical and epistemological common ground. It would further represent a counter-offense to Keller’s arguably tedious mapping of Sander’s work onto demographic, statistical, and sociological realities of the Weimar Republic. Cf. Keller (1980) “On the Pictures.” Instead I have focused only on some key points of overlap which help account for Sander’s aesthetic and his exploitation of a typological –i.e. ‘morphological’ – frame.

³² Daston & Galison (2007) 22 on illustrations.

stage,' their formal qualities, arrangement, and apparent epistemological contradictions can be better grasped if we acknowledge their relation to Spengler's thesis of decline, and his own symbolic worldview.

Why go into detail about a relationship between Sander's portrait project and Spengler's philosophy of decline when its broadest terms have been suggested since the 1920s, i.e., Sander's attention to farmers as 'germinal' types and urban masses as 'last men;' the perceived 'facelessness' of his sitters; and the sense that Sander documented the 'advance of the mob' and the replacement of the great characters and leaders of the past with "an army of ants"?³³ Although I intend to suggest several important ways in which Spengler may have put Sander 'on assignment' – i.e., how the philosopher of history could speak intimately through the poetic pages of *Untergang* to the ethos of the creative, auto-didactic photographer to suggest a priori a thesis for Sander's portraiture³⁴ - my primary concern is to expand our appreciation of the flexibility of typological form. This flexibility means that not all typological, 'instrumental' photographs are "hitched to the locomotive of positivism" as Allan Sekula suggests; or regulate the populace via insidiously applied principles from biology;³⁵ indeed taxonomic images can categorize and order while also animating a highly imaginative and quasi-metaphysical "*Kulturwerk*" as Sander referred to *Menschen*.³⁶ Typology can structure a subtle and

³³ Cf. Keller (1980) 54 on contemporary reviews of "Face of the Time" (*Antlitz der Zeit*) who notes that "in the conservative camp, voices of 'cultural despair' were particularly prominent."

³⁴ While section 3 of Chapter One, "Philosophy of Typology" discussed 'true' typology as a strictly inductive praxis, this chapter explores a typology in which ideology and / or narrative precede empirical investigation.

³⁵ Sekula (1981) 16 and Frame (1997) 33.

³⁶ Sander called *Menschen* a "*Kulturwerk in Lichtbilder*." While Sekula aligns Sander with positivism and scientism, my attention to the photographer's melodramatic imagination situates him more in what Sekula would call the realm of 'symbolist influenced photography.' Cf. Sekula (1981) 16.

evocative narrative that asserts intuitive philo-cultural ‘truths’ rather than scientific ones. It can work with symbols, metaphor, and excess to posit an uncertain yet compelling system of meaning, and it can do so unabashedly.

These heuristic strategies and aesthetic aims suggest that typology can occupy a cultural sphere separate from positivism and rationalism; as such, typological thought in the 1920s and 1930s can also feature as something other than the exclusive intellectual property of Weimar’s avant-garde, rationalistic ‘Cool Personas.’³⁷ If Sander follows Spengler’s melodramatic view of occult forces operating on world history and their own epoch, then Sander’s typological mission clearly exceeds that of ‘*distinguo ergo sum*,’ - of ‘isolating elements in the mix’ - as Lethen describes the cool persona’s endeavor.³⁸ This ‘métier,’ however, suggests pragmatism, survivalism, and self-aggrandizement as the cool persona’s goals, rather than psychic-spiritual Enlightenment concerning the passage of time and the cycles of history. In Sander’s case, typology’s pragmatic establishment of fact is but the tip of a conceptual and connotative iceberg.

Further, as mentor for ‘coolness’ Spengler’s persona and philosophical hermeneutics prove profoundly ill suited. Sander’s choice of intellectual role models thus suggests his own lack of coolness and an entirely *un*-avant-garde impetus for his particular brand of typological seeing. Spengler, who regularly lambasted the positivist ethos throughout the pages of *Untergang* and passionately recanted his debt to Nietzsche, complained untiringly of ‘pragmatism’ as “*ein Stück verkappter Naturwissenschaft*.”³⁹ Unlike Lethen’s cool persona, the failed schoolteacher was notoriously self-pitying,

³⁷ Cf. Lethen (2002) on ‘cool culture’ and the ‘cool persona’ in Weimar.

³⁸ Cf. Lethen (2002) 150. “The métier of the cool persona is to isolate elements in the mix, *distinguo ergo sum* its slogan.”

³⁹ Spengler (1991) *Einleitung* 8.

depressed, and all but haunted by metaphysical speculation. He described his desk as a “*Folterinstrument*.”⁴⁰ Above all, Spengler felt ‘personally guilty’ for the ‘great events of the world,’ including the war: “*Wie kommt das? Ich gehe in entsetzlicher Verzweiflung herum, wie ein Missetäter, der dafür Strafe verdient.*”⁴¹ This is to say that Spengler embraced, even embodied, the shame culture which Lethen’s cool persona, in all his rationalized typologizing, sought to transcend.⁴² Arguably, Spengler’s own social misery stemmed from a fundamental incapacity to be ‘cool,’ i.e., to embrace distance and ‘artificiality’ as a social strategy,⁴³ and follow simple behavioral codes; to be ‘relaxed’ about radically new social and technological phenomena of the modern landscape.⁴⁴ The pages of *Decline* hardly read like a dry report of an ‘observer,’ a habitus which, according to Lethen, the cool persona adopts.⁴⁵ Spengler instead wallowed in contemplation, and despite an unrelenting fascination with ‘Caesars,’ himself bore not even the thinnest social or cognitive ‘armor.’

Anything but a cool persona, Spengler nonetheless struggled to attain to a certain level of stoicism characteristic of this later ‘cool generation.’ He emphasized, for instance, that cyclical history and the notion of modernity as civilization should not be construed as tragedy. His philosophy of history was nonetheless charged with *spirit* and *fatefulness*, longing, remorse, and hope: a litany of intense emotions. If the ‘decline of the West’ was not tragedy, it also could not be laughed about.⁴⁶ In Spengler, history as

⁴⁰ Naehrer (1984) 48 cites Spengler.

⁴¹ Naehrer (1984) 53.

⁴² Cf. Lethen (2002) 10 on shame culture.

⁴³ Lethen (2002) 47-57.

⁴⁴ Lethen (2002) 190.

⁴⁵ Lethen (2002) 10.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lyon (1994) who describes Brecht’s *Mann ist Mann* as a *Lustspiel* geared toward overcoming tragic sensibilities through humor. Lyon’s positioning of humor as the ultimate foe of tragic pathos finds vindication in Spengler’s *failure* to ultimately attain stoicism: conceivably, *Decline* could be construed as

melodrama had found its author- a self-described visionary *Schöpfer* who had cultivated the requisite powers of observation and intuition, and attained ‘physiognomic tact’ – or the prescience to discern the symbols of world history.

In shedding tragic pathos and embracing at least a somewhat cool persona, Sander was no doubt more successful. Though critics have spoken of the photographer’s melancholic picture,⁴⁷ they have also frequently noted a sense of wit, humor, and of course *Sachlichkeit*. None of this assures us, however, that Sander did not take his assignment, as it were, from Spengler.

Indeed *Decline* has much to say to the photographer of contemporary times, asserting, for instance, that

the test of value to be applied to a thinker is his eye for the great facts of his own time. Only this can settle whether he is merely a clever architect of systems and principles, versed in definitions and analyses, or whether it is the very soul of his time that speaks in his works and his intuitions.⁴⁸

Sander, who disavowed all interest in ‘sociology’ or ‘sociological theories’⁴⁹ and claimed to employ only his own vision and intuition,⁵⁰ would have likely been struck by Spengler’s celebration of ‘hunter-like’ instincts.⁵¹ For one can readily conceive of Sander - armed with a camera, prowling the landscape in search of a desired type - in similar

something other than tragedy if Spengler betrayed a sense of humor concerning some of the changes wrought by ‘civilization.’

⁴⁷ Cf. Baker (1996) 76 -77 for several such perspectives and an interpretation of Barthes’ *noeme* of photography (the *this-has-been*) as itself inherently melancholic. Baker also discusses Benjamin and left-wing melancholia.

⁴⁸ Spengler (1991) 32.

⁴⁹ Cf. Keller (1980) 23. for details concerning an invitation to subscribe to *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* that accompanied the “Face of the Time” (“*Antlitz der Zeit*”) exhibition in 1929. It states that “the enormous task” of *Menschen* was “not approached from an expert’s point of view. Sander had no scientific aids and was not advised by race theorists or social researchers. In other words, he relied exclusively on the direct observation of human nature, appearance, and environment; he followed his unerring instinct for the authentic and the essential, and embarked upon his mission primarily as a photographer. And he completed this mission with the *fanaticism of a seeker of truth*, without prejudice for or against any party, alignment, class, society.” [italics mine.]

⁵⁰ Keller (1980) 23.

terms. Indeed this is the impression created by an invitation to subscribe to *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* that accompanied the “Face of the Time” (“*Antlitz der Zeit*”) exhibition in 1929. It states that “the enormous task” of *Menschen* was

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Similarly, Spengler’s extensive writing on the deep symbolic significances of portraiture throughout the great epochs of human history must have also delighted Sander.⁵³ Specifically, one might consider Spengler’s characterization of child and family portraits as “among the finest and most intimately right achievements of Western art” in light of Sander’s unique attention (among Weimar photographers) to these subjects.⁵⁴ Spengler writes,

The child links past and future. In every art of human representation that has a claim to symbolic import, it signifies duration in the midst of phenomenal change, the endlessness of life... Endless Becoming is comprehended in the idea of Motherhood, Woman as Mother *is* Time and *is* Destiny...⁵⁵

⁵¹ Spengler (1991) 71.

⁵² Keller (1980) 23.

⁵³ Cf. Spengler’s “Music and Plastic: Act and Portrait” in Spengler (1991) on the location of portraiture at the center of an overlap between ‘macrocosm and microcosmos’; his discussion of its value to ‘the Apollinian soul,’ its meaning in Hellenistic society, in Egypt and China, and in the Baroque era. (Spengler’s distinction between macrocosm and microcosm is also evocative of the double-tiered structure Brooks notes of melodrama; the connections, however, shall not be pursued here.)

⁵⁴ Keller (2002) notes Sander’s predilection for these portraits, and their scantness elsewhere in the Weimar photographic scene. It is also worth noting that for both Barndt and Petro, the family constitutes a primary locus for melodrama. This, however, has less to do with the ‘endless becoming’ or ‘destiny’ as with its unique capacity to personalize public issues. Cf. Barndt (2008) 74.

⁵⁵ Spengler (1991) 139.

Despite Sander's provocative work with themes of family and motherhood, however, Spengler's challenge to the photographer is great: for Spengler's most fantastical metaphysical ideas must translate into empirical detail and style. Where the writer need only *declare* that "The present is a civilized, emphatically not a cultured time-period,"⁵⁶ Sander is left to *show* such grand abstractions via the visual phenomena of 'late life' itself. He must employ his camera and organize his images so as to evoke his era as one of civilization, that is, as a "conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone-built, petrifying world-city following mother earth..."⁵⁷

On the other hand, the camera suggests itself as a highly qualified instrument for capturing the particular *out-of-formness* Spengler associates with 'late life,' and 'Autumn': Sander employs the most tradition-less and dubiously artistic medium – a mechanical apparatus destined to offend traditional aesthetic conventions - to portray the odd and often disturbing details of his sitters. The camera locks them in tension, immobilizing them via uncomfortable formal compositions all while registering the physical world indexically. If for Spengler a period of art is 'in form' when its tradition is second nature, 'as counterpoint was to Bach,'⁵⁸ an epoch may best be understood as *out of form* when modes of mechanical reproduction presume to take on the most spiritual endeavors of earlier epochs, namely the capturing and exalting of the soul of Man.

Before elaborating Brooks' theory of melodrama as a 'mode' descriptive of both Sander's and Spengler's 'sense-making systems,' and before establishing its applicability

⁵⁶ Spengler (1991) 30.

⁵⁷ Spengler (1991) 24.

to the ‘voids’ and ‘crises’ of Weimar reality, I consider the crucial role Sander’s typological structure plays in making the Sander myth stick: i.e., in canonizing *Menschen* as an archival atlas content to describe, document and classify the people of Weimar society.

2. The Sander Myth: *Menschen* as a Document Lacking ‘Vision’

The Sander Myth⁵⁹ which has been promoted since the first exhibition of Sander’s non-commercial portraiture in the late 1920’s, foregrounds the work’s objectivity, its sociological function, empirical discipline, and practical use-value for contemporary viewers. Because of these criteria, *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* has been assessed somewhat restrictively in terms of its efficacy as a social inventory of Weimar society.⁶⁰ Sander himself (wittingly or not) aided the promotion of this myth in talks and writings on truth in photography⁶¹ and by coining the term ‘exact photography’ to describe his work and espouse the virtues of objectivity.⁶²

The empirical backbone of ‘exact photography’ has been underwritten by Weimar cultural icons of no less stature than Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin: while the latter famously labeled Sander a visual sociologist, practicing ‘comparative photography’ as

⁵⁸ Spengler (1991) xxii; 357.

⁵⁹ In my coining of this phrase I am indebted to Molly Nesbit’s study of Eugene Atget’s photographic work and career *Atget’s Seven Albums*. With the “Atget myth” Nesbit refers to the aestheticization, art-ification, de-historicization, and de-contextualization of Eugene Atget’s commercial photographic work by museums and art historians in the 1980’s, and by artists since the 1950’s. Both the Atget myth and the Sander myth are founded on *visual* rather than practical or conceptual affinities between the photographers’ work and other historically different but similar-*looking* photographs. In the case of Atget, composition, style, and even subject matter link him to various modernisms, most frequently Surrealism. With Sander, the look of his typological portraits links him with scientific typology and ‘objectivity’ more broadly.

⁶⁰ As such, it is overwhelmingly considered inaccurate. Cf. analyses by Keller (1980) 43- 53 “On the Pictures.”

⁶¹ Cf. Sander (1978) especially pgs. 676 – 677.

one would practice ‘comparative anatomy,’⁶³ Benjamin praised *Antlitz der Zeit*⁶⁴ (a miniature prototype for *Menschen*) as a practical “*Übungsatlas*,” something like a how-to manual for sharpening viewers’ perception of the particulars of Weimar social and political reality.

Benjamin’s comments suggest that *Menschen* amounted to a reliable guide or handbook, an authoritative and impartial document on which to build knowledge and consciousness, rather than a work of *subjective consciousness itself*. Yet unlike real scientific atlases (of natural history, for instance), Sander’s atlas represented his own observations alone; the knowledge they supplied was ‘individualistic’ rather than ‘universal’;⁶⁵ and the ‘data’ presented amounts in no way to the ‘*collective* empiricism’ on which other atlases ground their legitimacy.⁶⁶ This distinction begs the question as to why Benjamin (or any other viewer) endow Sander with such trust. For Döblin, the analogy to the lab-based science of comparative anatomy (the sterile, etherized medical labs in which this discipline is carried out) evokes disciplined objective analysis grounded on a rigorous methodology that is anything but emotionally expressive, symbolic, or personal in the sense of subjective.

Echoes of Benjamin’s and Döblin’s claims permeate newspapers, art reviews, and promotions by less known contemporary critics, artists of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* with

⁶² Cf. Keller (1980) 15 on Sander’s references to his own ‘objectivity.’

⁶³ Cf. Döblin in Sander (1976) *Antlitz der Zeit*. Allan Sekula (1981) 18 finds Döblin’s preface to Sander’s *Antlitz der Zeit* “deafening” in its echoes of nineteenth century positivism and its Enlightenment antecedents.”

⁶⁴ The 1929 publication *Antlitz der Zeit* consists of sixty portraits and represents a short precursor to Sander’s unfinished project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*. It was also the title of a 1927 photographic exhibit of Sander’s work in Cologne.

⁶⁵ Hempel (1965) 141 writes that “science aims at knowledge that is objective in the sense of being inter-subjectively certifiable.”

whom Sander is often aligned,⁶⁷ and present day art historians, scholars, and critics. George Baker for one refers to Sander's project as "antimythological" and "part of rationalist objectives common to the Weimar intellectual landscape."⁶⁸ Most recently, Wolfgang Brückle has described *Menschen* in the following quantitative, social-scientific terms: "*Sander hatte in statistischer Sorgfalt einen Querschnitt durch die bestehende Gesellschaft Deutschlands angelegt und daraus exemplarische Bilder veröffentlicht; seine Typenstudien sollten das Milieu nach Möglichkeit mit enthalten.*"⁶⁹ Similarly, a 2010 exhibit at the Tate Gallery in London emphasizes the work's methodological and conceptual rigor as enabled by the photographer's subjective detachment: "Sander's process of analyzing and ordering his images was matched by the rigorous, objective style of the photographs themselves. All of his subjects are observed by the photographer with the same neutral distance."⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Daston & Galison (2007) 26-27. Sander's atlas was *not* the product of the "collaboration of investigators distributed over time and space in the study of natural phenomena too vast and various to be encompassed by a solitary thinker..."

⁶⁷ Whether Sander personally associated himself with this movement is not clear from my research. That art historians, critics, and photo theorists align him with it, however, is clear. Cf. Baker (1996) 75; Rosenblum (1984) 363 – 365 and almost any other context in which Sander is mentioned.

⁶⁸ Baker (1996) 110.

⁶⁹ Brückle (1997) 304. Keller (1980) also maps the subjects of Sander's different portfolios against demographic realities of the 1920's and 1930's to suggest, for instance, that the "'farmers' receive an amount of attention that corresponds quite well to their quantitative share of the German population and economy." (43) 'Craftsmen' however far exceed their actual presence in society, and Sander's few examples of salaried workers speak to his "underestimation of their significance." This section of Keller's text, "'On the Pictures'" reads *Menschen* most literally as a social history and concludes, "once again Sander's documentation lags behind the actual stage of economic development in Germany." (45) Keller (1980), wants to make sense of Sander's decisions sociologically rather than artistically or ideologically. One need only point out somewhat crudely, however, that Spengler, too, failed to 'analyze' stenotypists in his melodramatic narrative as well; Cf. Keller (1980) 47 on the 'Gray army' of salaried workers whom Sander neglected. A picture or two of their 'grayness' vis-à-vis Sander's powerful icons of unalienated labor like farmers and craftsmen suffices to intimate occult forces of decline operative on world history. Their representations correspond with their significance in terms of spiritual loss.

⁷⁰ Cf. <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/CollectionDisplays?venueid=2&showid=2800>

If Ullrich Keller's canonical 1980 publication of *Menschen* worked to qualify this myth even mildly (and rather contradictorily),⁷¹ apparently few of Sander's most contemporary analysers have followed suit. Generally speaking, writers on Sander have had difficulty reconciling the pragmatic and documentary aspects of the photographer's work – its status as a typological document and social inventory; a 'cross-section of the existing social order in Germany,'⁷² on the one hand - and its creative, artistic vision on the other.

The problem arguably derives from Weimar photographic culture itself which did much to promote Sander's work as neutral, disinterested, and thus quasi-scientific: in an ideological spectrum dominated by the revolutionary rhetoric of New Vision and Dada on the left and by racial fantasies and *Volksbilder* on the right, Sander promised to occupy a cozy, de-politicized, and narrative-free center: the sobriety of his images has accordingly been construed as a critique of political rhetoric and heroic affect aimed at deflating the 'programs for a new man' – whether socialist, fascist, or eugenic. As Keller sees it, Sander's portrait work "retains moments of social reality which otherwise were blocked out by ideological filters and blinders."⁷³ Critics have also seized upon Sander's status as a 'social democrat' to make the case for the neutrality or objectivity of *Menschen*.⁷⁴ That this milieu also included the likes of Spengler and found itself plagued by profound feelings of disenfranchisement has, accordingly, been downplayed.

⁷¹ As noted earlier, Keller offers excellent narrative readings of individual images to contradict the notion that Sander's aesthetic is 'naturalist' or strictly 'objective'; on the other hand, he denies the full scope of Sander's narrative as a totality.

⁷² Keller (1980) vii.

⁷³ Keller (1980) 11.

In critiquing the Sander myth my aim is not to deny its validity wholesale, but to shift attention away from several overly prominent discourses including the idea that Sander compiles a neutral inventory of social types; or, equally pragmatic but more sinister, the idea that this inventory actually comprises a visual panopticum of surveillance buttressed by essentialist notions of the type.⁷⁵ Alternatively, the myth's over-emphasis on tropes of objectivity, neutrality, and inquisitive empiricism often figures Sander as a left-leaning, socially engaged, curious and analytical precursor of such unbiased, playful post-modern photographers like Thomas Struth and Hiroshi Sugimoto: photographers whose relaxed cosmopolitanism fosters their open, self-reflexive examination of social patterns, identity, and representation. These experimenting photographers embrace the 'series' as a free structure of loose, open comparison and contrast⁷⁶ and remain uncommitted to specific notions of truth - especially ones which entail sultry, grand narratives about the world, society, or history. These artists embrace Daston's notion of *laissez-voir* far more than Sander ever did, and appear, in light of Sander's penchant for firm, conceptual ordering, more like counter-models.

Having moved away from perspectives which have to a certain extent managed and constrained our ability to comprehend Sander's photographic imagery⁷⁷ I shall attend to the more elusive and symbolic dimensions of the photographer's grand typological

⁷⁴ It is coupled frequently with suggestions of Sander's lack of sophistication and general naivité. Cf. Weitz (2007) 206 who writes, "In many ways, Sander never really left his beloved Westerwald, the provincial, rural area in the far western part of Germany where he had grown up."

⁷⁵ Cf. for instance Sekula (1981) 19 on Sander's 'fascist project of domination.'

⁷⁶ Gray (2004) 372. I discuss the 'series' in contrast to typology in section 2.1.1 "Series versus Typology" in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁷⁷ Cf. Sekula (1981) 15 for a descriptive definition of 'photographic discourse' as the "forceful play of tacit beliefs and formal conventions that situates us, as social beings, in various responsive and responsible attitudes to the semiotic workings of photography."

atlas. For between the positions outlined above - Sander as a mechanistic and more or less sinister bureaucrat intent on statistical documentation of society, and Sander the progressive father of the post-modern photographic inquiry⁷⁸ - lies that of the melodramatist: the artist as spiritually invested story-teller who strains to forge a profound sense-making system out of the 'banal stuff of reality.' (Brooks)

2.1. A Physiognomic Typology of Imperfect Types: Making the Myth Stick

What is it about the look of *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* that makes the Sander myth stick? I count three factors, the first and foremost being Sander's exploitation of a typological structure for his portraits. Sander's classificatory gestures work like false advertising in that viewers are sold one thing (a super-drama detailing the clash of Culture and Civilization) in the guise of another (social taxonomy). Typology is associated with certain heuristic limits which Sander as an artist seeks to radically expand. Unwilling to rest at 'natural history'⁷⁹ *Menschen* strives toward a cultural history of "grand-design," a history, that is, which tries to comprehend both the spiritual and the material in man's past in terms of some uniform law, rhythm, pattern, or regularity.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Cf. Stimson (2006) 58. Sander, in other words, becomes the inspiration for the Bechers. Cf. excerpts from the 2010 Tate exhibition which note: "Sander's methodology has influenced subsequent generations of artists. The photographic portraits of Thomas Ruff, Rineke Dijkstra and Paul Graham view their sitters in series, presenting them as individuals but also as part of a related group. A similar technique is applied to spaces and architectural structures in the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Struth and Hiroshi Sugimoto." (<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/CollectionDisplays?venueid=2&showid=2800>) One could also count the sensationalism of much contemporary press photography as another factor thrusting Sander into the realm of 'objectivity.'

⁷⁹ Cf. chapter 1 of this dissertation, section 3 for Carl Hempel on typology as operating on the level of natural history.

⁸⁰ Cf. Fischer (1989) 9. According to Klaus Fischer, "'grand-design' historians" – regardless of their philosophical orientation – "all try to comprehend both the spiritual and the material in man's past in terms of some uniform law, rhythm, pattern, or regularity." He counts among them "some of the greatest speculative minds of modern times": Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee.

Related to typology as a primary anchor of the myth is a falsely mechanistic conception of physiognomy surrounding his project, and lastly, *Menschen's* much-touted style of 'objectivity.' In the following section, I question the appropriateness of these anchors with regard to Sander's portrait typology, and suggest how somewhat different perspectives on each quality (typology, physiognomy, objectivity) can contribute to a sense of *Menschen* as a dramatic narrative instead.

2.1.1. Typology of Downward Classification: A Narrative-Free Zone of Tedium and *Ratio*?

As a portrait anthology structured into 'Groups,' each representing a certain professional, social, or occupational type, and again subdivided into between five and eleven sub-portfolios, associations between Sander's *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* and scientific typology as outlined in Chapter 1 seem inevitable. It structurally orders phenomena according to genus and differentia, class and properties.

The photographic work begins with "The Farmer 'Germinal Portfolio,'" and is divided into 8 sub-portfolios, each representing different kinds of farmers and their various labors. Group 2 comprises "The Craftsman," Group 3 "The Woman", Group 4 "The Professions," Group 5 "The Artist", Group 6 "The Metropolis" including 'vagrants', 'city youth,' even 'good and bad architecture'; and finally, Group 7, "The Last People" comprising one sub-portfolio titled "The Idiots, Sick, Insane and Matter."⁸¹ Morphologically speaking, we are on Carl Hempel's terrain.

Far from being a merely sterile matter of empirical protocol - or what J.W. Burrow calls the "laborious, unglamorous and rather primitive expression of the scientific

impulse”⁸² - however, typologies afford sense-making pleasures associated with downward classification, an ordering practice employed by the sciences since Aristotle. As a system of logic, downward classification has been met with great appeal between the time of Andrea Cesalpino⁸³ and the nineteenth century - due, in part, to its practical advantage of starting with a number of easily recognizable classes (like trees, shrubs, herbs, birds, butterflies or beetles), and dividing them into subordinate sets of subclasses with the help of appropriate differentiating characters (*‘differentiae.’*). In doing so, typology can order the world in exciting, freshly coherent ways; it promises, like melodrama, to articulate some fundamental order of things. In their own ways, both typology and melodrama desire to reveal “all that the conflict involves.”⁸⁴

For instance, Sander’s theory of photography states that “a successful photo is only a preliminary step toward the intelligent use of photography... Photography is like a mosaic that becomes a synthesis only when it is presented en masse.”⁸⁵ In other words, a single photograph is unlikely to ‘say all’ while a mosaic, or compilation, holds far better chances. Much like typology, a mosaic strives toward ‘exhaustivity’ and synopticism. Sander’s statement further suggests that the viewer is expected to search for clues to an image’s deeper, even parabolic dimensions within the context of other images and other portrait portfolios. Typological form allows the weight of all other portraits and portrait portfolios to exert their pressure on the singular image. Indeed it is in relation to the

⁸¹ Cf. Keller (1980) 36 -37 for exact categories of subportfolios.

⁸² Burrow (2000) 68 on taxonomy. Cf. particularly Chapter 2 “Social Evolution and the Sciences of Culture,” “2.1 A Classified World.” Burrow, like Kenneth Bailey, recognizes taxonomy as an “under-acknowledged aspect of the history of science,” particularly in the “vital importance of exhaustive, systematic classification.”

⁸³ Andrea Cesalpino (1519- 1603) is known as the first botanist to classify plants according to their fruits and seeds, rather than alphabetically or by medicinal properties. Cf. Mayr (1982) 158 – 162.

⁸⁴ Brooks (1976) 4 on Balzac in *Gobseck*.

⁸⁵ Cf. Jennings (2000) 29.

‘scholar,’ the ‘gymnasium pupil,’ and the ‘the sculptor’ that the significance of any other type takes shape.⁸⁶

The user-friendliness of a typology of downward classification bestows another advantage: as historian of science Ernst Mayr notes, “No prior knowledge of species was required, only an ability to carry out the procedure of logical division. Any lay person could do this.”⁸⁷

Between its dual appeal as a profound ordering and sense-making system and pleasurable, creative and cognitive endeavor, typology begins to reveal some melodramatic tendencies of its own: indeed tenets like polarization and schematization of extreme states of being;⁸⁸ of demonstrative, heightened representations;⁸⁹ and ‘stark articulation’ appear common to each. Yet rationalizers of Sander seem to overlook the degree to which types can be hyperbolic and exorbitant rather than merely exemplary or ‘typical.’ The relationships between Sander’s dramatic types and their organization beneath what Hempel calls a ‘universe of discourse’ (“*Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*”) allows the photographic archive to disclose a compelling story. In the previous chapter, we saw how Fischer’s typological vision disclosed a story of genetic decline through miscegenation; but while his narrative depended significantly on the text that

⁸⁶ Sander’s typology reads somewhat like a Saussurian diagram in which all relations are presented together in order to define each term negatively. In each case, the most precise characteristic of an entity is being what the others are not. In this way ‘comparative seeing’ is also ‘structuralist seeing.’ Sander’s conception of photography as a “*Mosaikbild*” would seem to support this. Lugon (2002) 83 describes Sander’s concept as follows: “*Der Wert eines Werkes beruhe weniger auf der Anhäufung gutgemachter isolierter Bilder als in der Erschaffung eines kohärenten Ganzen und auf dem Konzept eines Projekte, in das sich jedes einzelne Bild einfügt und dadurch diesem erst seinen wahren Sinn zuweist.*”

⁸⁷ Mayr (1982) “Macrotaxonomy, The Science of Classifying” 158 – 161.

⁸⁸ On these qualities of melodrama see Brooks (1976) 11. Lethen (2002) 150 also relates polarization to new objectivity: “The images of human being conceived under the sign of the new objectivity are marked by the climate of polarization.” Barndt (2008) 71 also notes polarization as a melodramatic form at work in the literature of the late Weimar Republic, and suggests melodrama as an “aesthetic trend that accompanies the ostensibly ‘sober’ aesthetics of New Objectivity and imbues the latter with an undercurrent of urgency.”

⁸⁹ Brooks (1976) 21.

accompanied his typological images, Sander's story is, with the exception of the images' and portfolios' titles, strictly visual. In both cases, typology draws on a narrative tradition: one which we see in the classificatory schemes of natural theologians like Louis Agassiz (1857) who employed typology to unmask something like 'the plan of the designer of the world'; and even in Aristotle, whose biological classification *scala natura* celebrated the majesty of creation.⁹⁰

Yet the Sander myth's focus on the apparent disinterestedness and scientificity of the photographer's typological frame flattens its potential as a dramatic force of meaning or narrative. Taken as a highly motivated, objective structure serving to carve nature (or society) 'naturally' at its joints (Hempel), Sander's typological structure can readily overshadow its equally significant –subjective, diachronic progression. Sander's portfolios move from a noble peasantry to 'last men,' or urban degenerates.

For its sense-making abilities, typology, like melodrama, is said to have experienced greatest popularity in centuries when individuals desired and sought order in the created world,⁹¹ namely during moments of crisis and upheaval. Where melodrama approaches 'voids' of meaning through symbolic, dramatic interpretation, typologies approach the disorder of the unknown systematically and rationally. In the case of Sander, both approaches unite to address the same issue from opposite epistemological positions.

This means that behind Sander's objective aesthetic (if we even consider it such, given the artificial contrivances of 1930 sister portrait and countless others like it) or his systematic ordering of types lies anything but a narrative-free disinterestedness.

⁹⁰ Mayr (1982) 158-159.

⁹¹ Mayr (1982) 159.

Typology itself often contradicts such impartiality since at its heart is a commitment toward revealing meaning – if only in the stringent form of order and system. In Sander’s case, typology works to ‘calibrate the eye’ and ‘teach what to see and how to see it,’⁹² but it does so with as much melodrama as science. Polarization of types in *Menschen* seems less an instance of empirical fact (of snapshooting the people of Weimar, for instance) than of dramatically orchestrating signs and symbols which, in Brooks’ words, work to identify and shape the integral conditions of the world; to make its truths clear and operative.⁹³

Their common ground is most starkly illustrated by both Brooks’ and Hempel’s emphasis on what each calls the “either / or.” Both typology and melodrama can be understood to exclude a middle ground,⁹⁴ to embrace polarity or dualism, and to express its subject matter by way of ‘bipolar’ clashes and contrasts (Brooks) or what Spengler calls ‘antitheses.’⁹⁵ By virtue of this stringency, typology can *approach* if not entirely attain the ‘breathless pitch’ of melodrama; a fact which Galison and Daston’s attention to the ‘opulence’ of 19th century scientific atlases well illustrates.

Galison and Daston characterize these works featuring classifications of things like flowers, birds, fossils, or leaves as follows:

The ambitions of the authors rival the grand scale of their books. Atlas makers woo, badger, and monopolize the finest artists available. They lavish the best quality ink and paper on images displayed in grand format, sometimes life-size or larger. Atlases are expensive, even opulent works that devour time, nerves, and money, as their authors never tire of repeating. Atlas prefaces read like the trials of Job: the errors of earlier

⁹² Daston & Galison (2007) 44-45.

⁹³ Brooks (1976) 36.

⁹⁴ Brooks (1976) 36 speaks primarily about choices and dilemmas of melodrama being constructed on the “either / or” while Hempel discusses typology’s law of exclusivity: the idea that phenomena cannot belong to more than one class. Different as they may be, the logic of ‘either / or’ in each suggests a stringency and potency of effect common to both melodrama and typology.

⁹⁵ Adorno (1967) scoffs at these antitheses precisely on account of their sensationalism.

atlases that must be remedied; the long wait for just the right specimens; [...] the pitched battle with the cheapskate publisher; the penury to which the whole endless project has reduced the indefatigable author.⁹⁶

While this description suggests the specific element of ‘persecuted virtue’ which Brooks highlights in melodrama, the fundamental point is that the pains of atlas-making “are worth taking because an atlas is meant to be a lasting work of orientation for generations of observers.”⁹⁷ Their authors were visionaries seeking “wisdom, not just truth, and enlightenment, not just knowledge;” and it can hardly be surprising if their declarations take on religious tones.⁹⁸ Galison and Daston’s study of the atlas from the 17th century to the present suggests the extent to which Sander’s own epistemology might be ‘parasitic on religious impulses to discipline and sacrifice.’⁹⁹ It is only too regrettable that in Sander’s case, his own ‘trials of Job’ were not overcome in his lifetime; that *Menschen* ultimately could not, like atlases similar in scope and ambition, be “presented with fanfare, as if it were the atlas to end all atlases.”¹⁰⁰

That Spengler considered *Decline of the West* a work on par with such grand, truth-seeking publications as these can hardly be doubted. Indeed the philosopher’s own ‘grand-design, or synoptic historicism’¹⁰¹ offers perhaps the best conflation of the typological (or what he calls morphological) view, and the melodramatic, as notable in his dramatic yet authoritative statement: “In a word: Greek soul – Roman intellect – this is the difference between Culture and Civilization.”¹⁰² For Spengler, historical events and products can be categorized in this binary fashion: a moment bears either the mark of

⁹⁶ Daston & Galison (2007) 23.

⁹⁷ Daston & Galison (2007) 26.

⁹⁸ Daston & Galison (2007) 40 - 41.

⁹⁹ Daston & Galison (2007) 40. One notes the diversified profiles of typologists like Ernst Kretschmar who studied theology, philosophy, and medicine.

¹⁰⁰ Daston & Galison (2007) 26.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Fischer (1989) 9.

spirit and *Geist*, of life and genius associated with the vibrant culture of the ancient Greeks; or it derives from ratio and petrification, death and decay, as associated with the Romans and their civilization.

2.1.2. Sander's 'Physiognomics': A Mistaken Case of Lavaterian '*Wissenschaft des kalten Blicks*'

A second contributing factor to the power of the Sander Myth is the photographer's purportedly rationalist concern with 'physiognomy.'¹⁰³ Sander's archive has been described as a 'physiognomic definition' or 'physiognomic portrait' of the German people of the period,' a 'physiognomic gallery'¹⁰⁴ and a 'collective portrait of his society, a physiognomy of his time.'¹⁰⁵ Vague and abstract as they are, such characterizations can readily conjure the Enlightenment discipline of objective observation of human faces; its methodological discernment of 'natural or motivated signs' of the unalterable bodily form;¹⁰⁶ and of a practice, which, in the view of its founding father Eugen Caspar Lavater, could "certainly become a science definable in mathematical terms."¹⁰⁷ Allan Sekula, ascribing to Sander the logic of Comptian positivism, writes that physiognomy for the photographer was "the highest of the human sciences, which are in turn merely extensions of natural scientific method."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Spengler (1991) 25.

¹⁰³ For the expression "*Wissenschaft des kalten Blicks*," see Mattenklott (1982).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Benjamin (1968) "Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie."

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Hake (1997) 122.

¹⁰⁶ Gray (2004)

¹⁰⁷ Gray (2004) 5, 336. Gray notes that before Lavater, 'physiognomics' signaled 'caricature' and made 'no pretense of offering objective representations of empirical individuals for the purpose of analysis and examination.'

¹⁰⁸ Sekula (1981) 18.

Accordingly, Sekula positions Sander in the realm of modern social scientific disciplines, even tracing his concerns back to Lavater.¹⁰⁹

Lavaterian physiognomics of the mid-18th century was unlike the physiognomics of its predecessors which made use of ‘caricature’ with no pretense of offering objective representations of empirical individuals for the purpose of analysis and examination.¹¹⁰ Connoted as a system of rationally calculable laws linked with the empirical sciences, and buttressed by mechanically reproduced images, Sander’s physiognomics thus conceived would contribute to a sense of the photographer as a researcher, a ‘stock-taking’ inventorist, an impartial if not mechanistic analyzer of human beings. In the 1930’s physiognomy was of course notoriously practiced under precisely such scientific pretenses, and present day Foucaultians see its mechanistic, reductive qualities at work in *Menschen* as well.¹¹¹

Yet in order to pass as an objective scientific discipline (which Lavaterian physiognomics itself often failed to do),¹¹² Lavater was compelled to limit its study to the body’s “firm features,” particularly to the shape and structure of the bones: only these could manifest the authentic, primordial form of the human being.¹¹³ Physiognomics could then entail ‘uncovering the original physiognomic text of the body’ - stripping it, as

¹⁰⁹ Sekula (1981)18.

¹¹⁰ Gray (2004) 336.

¹¹¹ Cf. Gray (2004) Chapter 6, “Constructing Race.”

¹¹² Lavater’s scientific pretensions had been under fire already in his own day. His consistent use of metaphoric language, intensely dramatic rhetoric, and commitment to Christian beliefs each betrayed his claims to positivistic objectivity and scientific exactitude. Lavater’s claims to Enlightenment thinking were recognized by many contemporaries as a mask. Cf. Gray (2004) Chapter 1, “Science and Semiotics: Lavater.”

¹¹³ Gray (2004) 32.

it were, of all contingencies and arbitrariness impressed upon it by incidental cultural and emotional conditions.’¹¹⁴

Lavater’s practice of relying heavily on silhouettes of sitters for illustrations followed from such scientific aims since these images were most adept at systematically excluding all details of facial expression and all manifestations of contingency. As Richard T. Gray points out, silhouettes stressed the stable and unchanging outlines of the face and head.¹¹⁵ On account of their mechanical origins these images were considered ‘objective,’ allowing the viewer / physiognomist to focus on indelible traits of the face and body which could be seen as definitive signs of human character.¹¹⁶

Naked facial features and the mechanical registering thereof thus grounded 18th century Lavaterian physiognomics. Germanist Gerd Mattenklott explains how, epistemologically speaking, physiognomy as a science equated “*Das Wahre*” with “*Der Unverhüllte*”:

...so empfinden wir, und Etymologie und Metaphorik einer alten philosophiegeschichtlichen Tradition bestärken uns bekanntlich darin. Aufdecken, offenlegen, enthüllen, von Vorurteilen entkleiden, etwas so darstellen, dass es nichts anderes ist als...- immer ist in diesen Vorstellung die Wahrheit nackt und bloß... Von außen dringen wir nach innen vor wie Eroberer.¹¹⁷

Yet clearly, this ‘disrobing’ is remarkably at odds with the style and content of Sander’s portraiture itself - wherein ‘hard parts’ (bone structures) comprise but a minute fraction of highly contrived *mise-en-scenes* defined by the figure located in space and his- or her-

¹¹⁴ Gray (2004) 31.

¹¹⁵ Gray (2004) 340.

¹¹⁶ Gray (2004) 340.

¹¹⁷ Mattenklott (1982) 20.

own (self-) presentation before the camera. Thus even Sekula has to admit of the disparity between Sander and Lavater's physiognomy.¹¹⁸ He writes,

of course Sander never proffered so vigorous a mode of physiognomical interpretation for his photographs. [...] I suspect Sander wanted to envelop his project in the legitimating aura of science without violating the aesthetic coherence and semantic ambiguity of the traditional portrait form. Despite his scientific rhetoric, his portraits never achieve the 'precision' and 'exactitude' so desired by physiognomists of all stripes.¹¹⁹

While I do not see scientism pervading Sander's own rhetoric, it may indeed pervade Döblin's, from which Sekula, in part, draws his conclusions.¹²⁰ Secondly, while I agree that Sander's physiognomics is less rigorous than Lavater's, this chapter aims to show that this diminished rigor is the sign of a different epistemology altogether; not merely a diminished positivism. As my discussion hopes to show, Goethe, Spengler, and Sander represent physiognomists of a very different stripe than Lavater.

For Sander restricts his gaze not to Lavaterian profiles¹²¹ nor even to the 'pathognomic' features of the body (i.e, soft parts and gestures reflecting passion or emotion).¹²² Instead he gives us cigarettes, handbags, broaches, families, wallpaper, carved chairs, hunched backs, acne, long moustaches, and medals of honor – not to mention oxen, telephones, dogs, and teacups. Sander's own claims to a 'physiognomic view' appear to have little to do with Lavatarian concerns and the dogmatic laws of translation associated it.

¹¹⁸ Sekula (1981) 18.

¹¹⁹ Sekula (1981) 18.

¹²⁰ Sekula (1981) 18.

¹²¹ Cf. Gray (2004) 344-354.

¹²² Cf. Gray (2004) 353 on pathognomic features excluded from Lavater's science.

In light of Goethe's expanded notion of the physiognomic, it is no surprise that Sander cites the great German poet as the only literary figure of interest to him.¹²³ Indeed Goethe's solution to the problem of segregating 'natural' signs from culturally imposed ones represents nothing short of a complete *inversion* of Lavater's physiognomy by expanding the field of what is physiognomically significant to the point that it transcends the human body itself.¹²⁴ In the 'Addendum' to the first volume of Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1783) Goethe described the rationale behind his altogether *un-Lavaterian* physiognomics:

Man wird sich öfters nicht enthalten können, die Worte 'Physiognomie', 'Physiognomik' in einem ganz weiten Sinn zu gebrauchen. Diese Wissenschaft schließt vom Äußern aufs Innere. Aber was ist das Äußere am Menschen? Wahrlich nicht seine nackte Gestalt, unbedachte Gebärden, die seine inneren Kräfte und deren Spiel bezeichnen! Stand, Gewohnheit, Besitztümer, Kleider, alles modifiziert, alles verhüllt ihn. Durch alle diese Hüllen bis auf sein Innerstes zu dringen, selbst in diesen fremden Bestimmungen feste Punkte zu finden, von denen sich auf sein Wesen sicher schließen läßt, scheint äußerst schwer, ja unmöglich zu sein. Nur getrost! Was den Menschen umgibt, wirkt nicht allein auf ihn, er wirkt auch wieder zurück auf selbiges, und indem er sich modifizieren läßt, modifiziert er wieder rings um sich her. So lassen Kleider und Hausrat eines Mannes sicher auf dessen Charakter schließen.¹²⁵

Unlike Lavater's commitment to 'laying open, exposing, and unveiling,' Goethe's physiognomics and the system of *Umbildung* described here (i.e., the mutual transformation or modification of the individual and his environment) strove to take in all surfaces as symbols. *Hüllen* themselves, by virtue of their very 'mediated' quality, become the ultimate signifiers of truth.

Mattenklott's concept of '*Die Bedeutsamkeit und Bedeutendheit des Mittelbaren*' well sums up the principle of Goethean physiognomy, particularly as it relates to

¹²³ Cf. Keller (1980) 39.

¹²⁴ Gray (2004) 33.

Sander's exact photography wherein the viewer's sense of his sitters stems not from direct exposure to them, but from the subject's donning of multiple, complex layers:

Eine Hülle nach der anderen legt sich um den nackten Körper, und doch haben wir den Eindruck, daß wir der Wahrheit über diesen hier immer näher kommen. Je weiter diese Hüllen werden: die Kleidung, die Wohnung, die Familie, die Stadt, desto tiefer blicken wir ins Leben. [Wir ahnen die verfloßene Zeit, indem wir die Spuren auf den verschiedenen Lebensschalen lesen?...]¹²⁶

Yet whoever believes in such an all-pervasive system of symbolic meaning, in *Umbildung* as a force in the world, beholds the sparks of a melodramatic imagination. He or she embraces a dramaturgy of revelation in physiognomic exposé.¹²⁷ For this individual (as for Mattenklott), "*Nacktheit macht stumm*,"¹²⁸ while layers, by contrast can signify infinitely. Goethe's understanding of physiognomy thus makes inroads into that supra-realist mode of representation and thought wherein, as Brooks states, "Everything must become sign;" "bodily posture and movement...can be of a fearful meaning. It is more than the word, it is thought in action..."¹²⁹

Practiced photographically, Goethean physiognomics unleashes the melodramatic mode upon reality itself so that under Sander's '*geistiger Blick*,' neighbors, workers, even strangers lost in the anonymity of the urban crowd transform into what Mattenklott has termed '*animalische Zwiebel*': armed with the spiritual gaze of Goethian physiognomic

¹²⁵ Mattenklott (1982) 21.

¹²⁶ Mattenklott (1982) 15.

¹²⁷ I borrow this expression from Gray (2004) 337 on account of its resonances with melodrama.

¹²⁸ Mattenklott (1982) 22. This statement is particularly interesting in the context of Lavater who notes: "The silhouette of a human being, or a human face, is the feeblest, the emptiest image, but simultaneously the most truthful and most faithful image that one can attain of a human being; the feeblest because it does not represent anything positive; [...] the most faithful because it is an immediate copy of nature itself." Cf. Gray (2004) 342.

¹²⁹ Brooks (1976) 124.

vision, Sander attempts to capture their emission and reception of signs in the endless construction of culture and social life.¹³⁰

‘Animalistic onions,’ forged by Goethean *Umbildung*, are by definition not subject to Lavater’s ‘cold scientific vision,’ however; they cannot be known through mechanistic laws. As such, the role of the body under scrutiny of the Goethean physiognomic gaze is *not* “so distinct that a photographer like August Sander can snap its photograph,” as Helmuth Lethen has suggested.¹³¹ Sander’s portrait atlas is not Wilhelm Böhle’s *Die Körperbau als Spiegel der Seele* (Body form as mirror of the soul) or F.K. Günther’s *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* – works from the 1920’s and 1930’s which allowed for the facile ‘looking up’ of a type.¹³²

To the contrary, the visual metaphors emanating from and toward the layered body are complex; metaphor, though neat and tidy in its dual components of vehicle and tenor, signifier and signified, is essentially a mode of interpretation – not to be confused with a dogmatic equational system. As Brooks writes of melodrama, meaning is characterized by slow, uneasy recognition.¹³³ Sander’s signs, therefore, are rendered legible not through ‘*knipsen*’ (or snapshotting), but via contemplative staging and arranging – practices related to the ‘re-organizing gestures’ required of the melodramatic mode, to be discussed later.

Counter-intuitively, then, Sander’s ‘exact photography’ may be the product not of a cold scientific gaze, but of a spiritual gaze - one that perceives the body-in-space as a

¹³⁰ Mattenklott (1982) 23.

¹³¹ Cf. Lethen (2002) 156, Keller (1980), and Koepnick (2006), and Gray (2004) 373 on the differences between Sander’s photographic methods and snapshotting. Baker (1996) also notes that there are no snapshots in Sander’s archive.

¹³² Cf. Gray (2004) 346 -353 on Lavater’s progeny in the human empirical and racial sciences.

¹³³ Brooks (1976) 5 on Balzac and 202 for a comparison of melodramatic recognition and psychoanalysis.

complex hermeneutic vehicle whose significations demand imagination, *Geist*, and feeling in order to be deciphered. As such, it is questionable to what extent the signs and meanings emanating from Sander's sitters really manage to "bypass the stress of *prepredicative* experience, stripping the other's orientation of ambivalence" – as Lethen claims for the 'cool persona' and his typological, physiognomic gaze. While Sander's images no doubt intend to *help forge* judgments about his sitters, the nature of contemporary German society, and its historical development; clarify lines of opposition, or even *improve* the decision-making process, it seems unlikely that his kind of looking should accelerate these processes or make them much easier.¹³⁴ If anything, his Goethean hermeneutics slows down looking, and this might be the point.



Kleinstädterin, Herdorf, ca. 1906
Small town lady
Femme, habitant la province

182



Junge Großstädterin, ca. 1931
Young city woman
Jeune citadine

378

Fig. 7: August Sander, "Kleinstädterin," 1906.

Fig. 8: August Sander, "Junge Großstädterin," 1931.

¹³⁴ Lethen (2002) 154 on typologizing as a means of "accelerating the decision-making process."

Sander's '*Kleinstädterin*' (1906)¹³⁵ (Figure 7 above) is a model of *Umbildung* and its epistemological aims. Her fur wrap expresses quite literally her (or perhaps her husband's) effect on the local environment as a hunter and its influence on her identity and appearance, as if in illustration of Goethe's principle:

Die Natur bildet den Menschen, er bildet sich um, und diese Umbildung ist doch wieder natürlich; er der sich in die große, weite Welt gesetzt sieht, umzäunt, ummauert sich eine kleine drein und staffiert sie aus nach seinem Bilde.¹³⁶

Indeed her collar bears an evergreen- or pinecone- patterned embroidery that appears to pay homage to the immediate surrounding of her own 'small world.' The 'small town lady,' however, becomes a visual paradigm not only of a Goethean hermeneutic of personal and social identity, but also for Spengler's purportedly derivative notion of physiognomy, for which the 'landscape-figure' (i.e., landscape) is paradigmatic. Spengler writes that it

gives form to [man's] soul and vibrates in tune therewith. Feelings and woodland rustlings beat together; the meadows and the copses adapt themselves to its shape, to its course, even to its dress. The village, with its quiet hillocky roofs, its evening smoke, its wells, its hedges and its beasts, lies completely fused and embedded with the landscape. The country town *confirms* the country, is an intensification of the picture of the country.¹³⁷

Sander's close attention to setting and background bring landscape into his portraits; indeed, as seen here, they 'give form' to one another. Given the spiritual closeness between small towns and rural areas as described in Spengler's scheme, Sander's

¹³⁵ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 182.

¹³⁶ Mattenkloft (1982) 25 cites Goethe.

¹³⁷ Spengler (1991) 246.

inclusion of the ‘farmer’ group in a portfolio on “small-town people” can hardly elicit confusion.¹³⁸ Both would ‘confirm’ their surroundings in similar ways.

In Sander’s image, for instance, the wooly, gabardine skirt mimics in both form and texture the trees behind its wearer so that tall, wispy triangles adumbrate Goethean – Spenglerian thought. Here it is worth noting that scholars who praise Sander’s ‘irony’ may be guilty of projecting their own discomfort with highly symbolic modes of representation onto a photographer who in fact embraced them and the insights they promised:¹³⁹ in this case, Sander’s evocation of his sitter’s closeness to nature; her profound connection to her rural environment or *Heimat*.

Taken in the context of Sander’s other portfolios and images, the earthy, primitive nature of the lady’s crude string of tails signifies even further to express what now appears to be the ‘small town lady’s’ relative lack of sophistication vis-à-vis Sander’s ‘*Junge Großstädterin*’ (1931).¹⁴⁰ (Figure 8 above). The clothing of the latter, more modern type of woman (note the decades that separate the two images) appears meticulously tailored and overly graphic when compared to the small town lady’s. The only natural product worn by the young city woman (a patent leather handbag) appears to be mass- manufactured, like her rayon-looking hat, gloves, and scarf.

The women’s respective backgrounds also express Goethe’s *Umbildung*: where the small town lady retains a connection to the natural world via the tails, the trees and

¹³⁸ Cf. Keller (1980) 44 for whom Sander’s choice to put ‘farmers’ in ‘small towns’ is ‘puzzling.’ Confusion for Keller stems from his distinction between ‘settlement’ and ‘occupation’ which, according to the principles of *Umbildung*, hardly exist since the two categories mutually inflect each other in visual, ‘physiognomic’ ways.

¹³⁹ On Sander’s ‘irony’ see Koepnick (2006) and Rosenblum (1984) 363 – 365. The latter subsumes Sander’s *Antlitz der Zeit* under ‘The Portrait as Social Document,’ and likens Sander’s ‘clarity and directness’ to 19th century realist painting and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, while also acknowledging an ‘ironic dimension.’

¹⁴⁰ See Keller (1980) Plate 378.

shrubs behind her, the young city woman sits before a black interior backdrop. Her dependence on the natural world, her engagement with it and its influence on her being is minimal if non-existent. These portraits represent in a sense what Sander called a cultural landscape (*Kulturlandschaft*) in which people and landscape work upon one another.¹⁴¹ In Spengler's physiognomic practice, however, traces of profound spiritual loss emerge: the young city girl signifies not just the natural processes of *Umbildung* but a civilizational desire to be 'different and higher' than nature; indeed to 'deny' it, as Spengler's writings propose.¹⁴²

That Sander can also turn *Umbildung* on its head is evident in a photograph of farm girls taken in 1927. Here, the hair bow to which Ullrich Keller attributes a sense of the 'surreal' might be more precisely understood as evidence of an *unnatural*, or failed *Umbildung*:¹⁴³ i.e. a process by which mutual adaptation of man to environment and environment to man comes out of sync. As Keller notes, the 'triumphant bow' against the bleak fields suggests a disparity between social aspiration and reality: "The farm children

¹⁴¹ Cf. Keller (1980) 20 on Sander's 1931 radio lecture number 5. Here Sander announces his intentions for an upcoming project whose concepts resonate acutely with Spenglerian ones: "Having traced the physiognomy of people..., we now turn to their creations, this is, the works of man, beginning with the landscape. Like language it is stamped by man and his works, growing out of his needs; thus man often changes even the biological reality. In landscape formations, too, we can recognize the human spirit of the times and we can capture it by means of the camera. The same is true of architecture and industry, as of all human endeavors, great and small. The landscape, confined by the boundaries of a common language, yields the physiognomical time exposure of a nation. If we widen our field of vision we reach in this way a total panorama similar to that of the universe seen in an observatory, an overall time exposure of the world population, which could be highly significant to the understanding of the development of mankind." Keller notes that "what he wanted to portray was the 'cultural landscape' historically shaped by a particular type of people."

¹⁴² Cf. Spengler (1991) 246.

¹⁴³ Cf. Baker (1996) 77 for a reading of Sander's work as inadvertently surreal. Baker draws on Hal Forester's *Compulsive Beauty* (1993). I however, see very little relationship between Sander's work and surrealism, particularly as theorized by Rosalind Krauss in works such as *L'Amour Fou* (1985). Her work points to the highly personal, male, and psycho-analytic perspectives of surrealism, and emphasizes the role of *chance* in surrealist discovery. Particularly with regard to the latter, I see major gaps between Sander's work concerned with universal truths and hidden histories, and work like Man Ray's and Breton's, which have everything to do with libidinal desire. Nonetheless, Baker's readings of 'doublings' in Sander owe themselves to Krauss; cf. Baker (1996) 99.

no more conform to middle-class fashion codes that they affirm their parents' ideal of happiness."¹⁴⁴ Utterly alien to the scene, the oversized bow suggests the family's or perhaps even the girl's (or the entire younger generation's) desire to put on airs, to break with traditions and appear something more or other than 'farmers.' The farm girl thus represents an *imperfect* type, to be discussed in the next section; she fails as an ideal icon of farm life.

Because the viewer is drawn, in Keller's words, toward "careful analysis and deciphering of a picture," however, and will 'hesitate to accept the portrait at face value, as a simple souvenir,'¹⁴⁵ that viewer's analysis and questioning may lead to profound, even metaphysical questions concerning *why* and what Sander's details mean on a deeper, more spiritual level. His or her interpretive imagination may not stop at the interesting (but altogether benign) sociological observations Keller makes about sitters' self-presentation and self-projection but look for more global meanings in the 'cracks, incongruities, and contradictions' of these self-presentations themselves.¹⁴⁶ In Spenglerian terms, this kind of flawed *Umbildung* would testify to a fundamental characteristic of civilization, but will be discussed later (as melodramatic 'out-of-formness.') Suffice it to note here that the image of the farm girl and the "*Junge Großstädterin*" work emblematically with respect to Spengler's ideas in "Cities and Peoples" quite acutely, since comparative seeing of these portraits readily suggest Spengler's thesis of decline, wherein "It is the late city that first defies the land, contradicts nature in the lines of its silhouette, denies all Nature. It wants to be something

¹⁴⁴ Keller (1980) 2.

¹⁴⁵ Keller (1980) 2.

¹⁴⁶ Keller (1980) 1.

different from and higher than Nature.”¹⁴⁷ These youthful sitters point toward a future trend whereby people, like the Baroque cupolas, spires, and pinnacles Spengler describes, “neither are nor desire to be, relegated with anything in nature.” The girls, as noted earlier, refuse, each in her own way, to “humbly accommodate themselves.”¹⁴⁸

As these readings imply, the union between *Umbildung* and social taxonomy takes on far-ranging significations so that we see not merely singular persons expressing themselves through their immediate surroundings, but an entire culture emitting signs and truths about itself and its members, both as individuals and as a collective whole. This rather grandiose idea grounds the operative principle in Spengler’s *Decline* which he calls ‘universal symbolism’- whose method, he stated, was ‘all Goethe’s’ (the problem and question, all Nietzsche’s).¹⁴⁹ For Spengler’s philosophy of history, ‘physiognomic’ refers to “the morphology of the organic, of history and life, and all that bears the sign of direction and destiny,”¹⁵⁰ and its most dramatic expressions appear in his discussion of “Race as Style,” a diatribe against scientific construals of race based on skull forms and sizes and other ‘*differentia*’ (as posited by Blumenbach, Müller and Huxley - or, one could add, Lavater, and Eugen Fischer.) Here a critique of scientific typology is all but explicit in Spengler’s reference to ‘rational’ comprehension of race via ‘soulless

¹⁴⁷ Spengler (1991) 246.

¹⁴⁸ Spengler (1991) 246.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Naeher (1984) 10 who quotes from Spengler’s 1922 introduction to the *Neubearbeitung des Untergangs des Abendlandes*: “Zum Schlusse drängt es mich noch einmal die Namen zu nennen, denen ich so gut wie alles verdanke: Goethe und Nietzsche. Von Goethe habe ich die Methode, von Nietzsche die Fragestellungen...”

¹⁵⁰ Spengler (1991) 71.

dissection and ordering.’¹⁵¹ For him, “the only mode of approach is not classification, but physiognomic tact.”¹⁵²

For Sander, photography offered a “universal language” with “so great a power of expression that [verbal] language can never approach it.”¹⁵³ For Spengler as Seer, life is so full of pointed signs and symbols that “verbal language would mutiny if we were to attempt to make it do all the work without assistance from tone- and gesture-language.”¹⁵⁴ As we shall see, Peter Brooks would be hard pressed to give a better account of melodrama’s reliance on non-verbal signs. Sander’s carefully constructed and arranged images suggest his concern with a system of meaning which, unlike professional sociology even sociological intuition cannot be adequately communicated through language.

For this reason, I find that the popular portrayal of Sander as (amateur) sociologist stops short of grasping the depth and fantasy of the artist’s philosophical and photographic commitments.¹⁵⁵ If we recognize instead that the picture Sander offers intends to yield the “*full, true terms*” (Brooks) of the present and its past, beyond the

¹⁵¹ Spengler (1991) 256.

¹⁵² Spengler (1991) 256. Spengler’s critique of modern notions of race are similar to critiques of Lavaterian physiognomy as mechanistic. Notably, Spengler disavows skull-form and other anthropometric criteria as decisive features for determining race: ‘the decisive element being not the bone, but the flesh, the look, the play of feature.’ Spengler (1991) 257.

¹⁵³ Gray (2004) 370 quotes Sander in “Photography as a Universal Language.”

¹⁵⁴ Spengler (1991) 258. Spengler here provides clues as to why his own language is comprised of so many invented compound nouns, unorthodox hyphenations, odd capitalizations and italicizations. Are his words mutinying? They appear at least to gesture toward their own burden to say more than they possibly can.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. (Keller) 1980 for the most detailed, balanced, and nuanced portrayal of Sander’s sociological interests; Gray (2004) Conclusion, for the case for Sander’s sociological, humanist physiognomic critique of the racial science of his day; and Hake (1997). It is rather remarkable in Gray’s case that his exploration of Sander’s physiognomics ends where it does, i.e. with Sander representing an “ideological counterforce to the reactionary physiognomics practiced so widely throughout Germany in his day,” (378) given his own extensive attention to both Goethean and Spenglerian physiognomics (chapters 4 and 5). Spengler receives not even a footnote in Gray’s discussion of Sander; nor do Gray’s readings of Sander’s images engage particular principles of Goethean physiognomics.

mere sociological symptoms of its surface,¹⁵⁶ we would align him with the ‘visionary’ atlas makers and melodramatists of the 18th and 19th centuries, and obtain a more complete grasp of his ambitions as an artist and observer.

2.1.3. Sander’s Imperfect Types: ‘Atypical Variations and Extraneous Details’

As my introductory remarks on the Sander myth already suggested, its perpetuation relies heavily on the concept of *objectivity*, touched on again in the above discussion of Lavaterian physiognomy. Once more, it is Ullrich Keller who proves particularly competent in fleshing out what objectivity in *Menschen* means. Objectivity for Keller creates an “air of disinterested observation and classification rather than sympathy and admiration.”¹⁵⁷ It fostered a ‘prosaic arrangement’ of anti-illusionary details which worked to eliminate romantic or sentimental notions.¹⁵⁸ Keller further notes that Sander’s standardization of portrait style is ‘pivotal’ for the scientific validity of the portrait manual,¹⁵⁹ and aids in creating the impression that his pictures were meant more as “visual data than as art works.”¹⁶⁰ For Keller, Sander’s objectivity assures that ‘style’ – which would have made his photographs unsuitable for dependable comparison – is held at bay. As they appear, however, they create a “tone of objective demonstration” and resemble “dry instructive images” of didactic sociology. Finally, Sander demonstrates a “critical reserve” vis-à-vis his sitters, one which stemmed from his disciplined refusal to enter into alliance with them.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Cf. I Brooks (1976) 2 on melodramatic story-telling.

¹⁵⁷ Keller (1980) 29.

¹⁵⁸ Keller (1980) 31.

¹⁵⁹ Keller (1980) 51

¹⁶⁰ Keller (1980) 35.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Keller (1980) 29 – 35.

As the above discussion of Sander's carefully registered traces of *Umbildung* suggests, however, Sander's photographic process actually broke with the new scientific methods for image-making which took form in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁶² For clearly, Sander's precise compositions and dramatization of significant details were not aimed at 'automatism' – i.e., the minimizing of intervention¹⁶³ – like naturalistic (or truly prosaic) photographs would. If Sander's 'types' were carefully selected, interpreted (through hour-long conversations with sitters) and portrayed, then their portraits come closer epistemologically to what Galison and Daston call 'Truth-to-Nature' representations than to "objective" ones.

This 'epistemic virtue' as they call it, corresponds with the exemplary persona of the sage, whose "well-stocked memory synthesizes a lifetime of experience with skeletons or crystals or seashells into the type of that class of objects."¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, Sander (and other arguably self-likening sages like Spengler) did not have to pay 'the high price' which objective representations commanded: indeed they could, and did, weed out 'artifacts and incidental oddities' that 'cluttered their images,' so that the things they depicted always stood for what they were intended to represent.

Alternatively, Sander might better be associated less with the 'sage' than with Galison and Daston's "intuitive expert" who confidently approached his subject matter with a healthy combination of training and unconscious intuition.¹⁶⁵ Though Sander's explicit disavowal of training or expertise disqualifies this habitus for the artist, it could nonetheless be deduced by the nuances of the images themselves.

¹⁶² Daston & Galison (2007) 42.

¹⁶³ Daston & Galison (2007) 43.

¹⁶⁴ Daston & Galison (2007) 44.

¹⁶⁵ Daston & Galison (2007) 46.

In either case, Sander, unlike literal practitioners of objectivity who had to “exercise great self-restraint so as not to smuggle in their own aesthetic and theoretical preferences,”¹⁶⁶ obviously felt free to flex his conscious will.¹⁶⁷ The photographer’s precise visualization of *Umbildung* was rendered by deliberate decision making regarding camera-angles, settings, gesture, and composition and, for all we know, instruction. If objectivity is disciplined, Sander’s practice thereof appears dubiously permissive of subjective intervention, arrangement, and contrived symbolism. Also, the sheer excitement with which Sander recalled having found or tracked down the ‘perfect specimen’ confirms his epistemological alignment with ‘truth-to-nature,’ since only pre-formed ideas and expectations could foster such enthusiasm. Together with its provocative structure and sequence, Sander’s images only superficially suggest the ‘*laissez-voir*’ policies Daston connects with objectivity.¹⁶⁸

Thus one of the most touted factors working to cement the Sander Myth – the photographer’s suppressed subjectivity, his distanced gaze and impartiality – can readily be called into question. Why so much talk of Sander’s *objectivity* then? Though Sander’s images are carefully composed to depict spiritual or occupational types rather than random social matter, his portraits still receive praise for their ‘dissonance,’ – a term employed by Koepnick and Keller alike to suggest the ‘imperfection’ of objective depictions Galison and Daston elucidate.¹⁶⁹ The emphasis ‘dissonance’ puts on disunity and incongruousness can best be understood via the contradictions immanent to so many

¹⁶⁶ Daston & Galison (2007) 43.

¹⁶⁷ Daston & Galison (2007) 46

¹⁶⁸ Daston & Galison (2007) 45.

¹⁶⁹ Keller (1980) 1 – 5 and Koepnick (2006) 227.

of Sander's photographed 'types' (like the farm girl with the bow described earlier.) This quality prevents sitters from seeming idealized and overly coherent, but real instead.

For Lutz Koepnick, Sander's portraits are about how sitters

seek to assume their respective positions in society by negotiating self-images, prescribed cues, personal expressions and dominant templates of identity. In Sander's best work, this negotiation of conflicting impulses and imperatives in fact is often shown as dissonance. By highlighting symbolic background elements or cropping images in counterintuitive ways, Sander's most memorable shots reframe their subject's self-framings, reveal their secret contradictions or point toward excessive pompousness, and thus communicate a certain air of irony.¹⁷⁰

Koepnick's 'dissonance,' reflective of contradictions and counterintuition, thus suggests a primary feature of objectivity, namely its aversion to simple pictorial taxonomies of idealized forms,¹⁷¹ and its devotion instead to 'blind sight' and the imperfections it yields.¹⁷² Dissonance implies that Sander's interests in the people of his century lay not in fitting them into a pre-formed template (like a type) but in documenting their more complex reality in all its inconsistencies and extraneous details. It suggests the photographer's commitment to the potentially idiosyncratic individual rather than to an ideal.

Dissonance, then, evokes the 'cracked rib' Galison and Daston employ in their exploration of objectivity's novelty in the course of history:

...over the long course of making systematic study of myriad scientific domains, the choice of the perfect over the imperfect had become profoundly entrenched. From anatomical structures to zoo-physiological crystals, idealization had long been the governing order. Why would any one choose as the bottom-line image of the human thorax one including a broken left rib? Who could want the image of record of a rhomboid crystal

¹⁷⁰ Koepnick (2006) 227. This quality of Sander's images has been noted at least since Keller's publication of *Menschen* in the mid-1970's, and his observations about the farm girl with the oversized bow. Cf. Keller (1980) 1.

¹⁷¹ Daston & Galison (2007) 11.

¹⁷² Daston & Galison (2007) 16.

to contain a chip? What long future of science would ever need a ‘malformed’ snowflake that violated its six-fold symmetry...?’¹⁷³

Their point is that modes of mechanical reproduction first bring about the ‘messy constellations’¹⁷⁴ of ‘visual scatter’ which objectivity prizes.¹⁷⁵ For these authors, objectivity thus cannot produce the ‘didactically optimal images’ Keller sees in *Menschen*.

In answer, then, to the pointed rhetorical questions above (*who wants broken ribs and asymmetrical snowflakes?*), more than one candidate fits the bill. The person interested in a malformed snowflake or, in Sander’s case, a farm boy dressed like a dandy; a high school graduate looking like a Hollywood producer; or a notary who looks like his dog – this person may be an objective viewer committed to honest depictions. As a sociological observer, he or she understands the tracking and documentation of the *ideal* as a “psychological fault, a defect in perception,” rather than a “high-order scientific virtue.”¹⁷⁶

Beginning in the mid-19th century, such observers began to seek not the ideal, but the real, and called for an ‘objective view’: As Daston explains, “What had been a supremely admirable aspiration for so long, the stripping away of the accidental to find the essential, became a scientific vice.”¹⁷⁷ Sander sounds very much like this proponent of objectivity when he states, “If as a healthy human being, I am bold enough to see things as they are rather than the way they should be or could be, I ask for forgiveness –

¹⁷³ Daston & Galison (2007) 15.

¹⁷⁴ Daston & Galison (2007) 13.

¹⁷⁵ Daston & Galison (2007) 13.

¹⁷⁶ Daston & Galison (2007) 13.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Daston & Galison (2007) 11 – 16 on the British physicist Arthur Worthington and his ‘objectivity shock.’

but I cannot do otherwise.”¹⁷⁸ At the same time, however, the photographer’s sincere apology (his request for forgiveness) for representing an imperfect world suggests a secret philosophy or intellectualization, since for him the ‘objective’ is, as if by default, the ugly, the disturbing, or the unsettling; as the above quotation from Sander implies, reality is *other than* how things *should* be. (Compare this to the *beauty* associated with chance as promoted by photographers like Henri Cartier-Bresson). Only on account of a consistently unhappy world picture would Sander’s work require apology, for given the rationalist cultures of the late 1920’s in both the arts and the sciences, ‘objectivity’ in and of itself should not have posed a problem.

A prophet or Seer of decline represents a second possible proponent of imperfection in visual imagery, since the worldview associated with this persona naturally gravitates toward malformations as signs of ‘out of formness,’ tension, the demise of order, or the fall from grace. A ‘universal symbolist,’ a ‘physiognomist’ fascinated with grand historical narratives that purport to illuminate the crises of the day would embrace instances of ‘dissonance’ as metaphors for larger, occulted conditions of reality. For this individual, a photograph that de-mythologizes a farmer sowing seeds, for instance, would signal not a radical new epistemology called objectivity but a descriptive sign of loss: the symbolist would register an image like Sander’s “*Bauer beim Säen*” (“Farmer sowing,” 1940)¹⁷⁹ despondently, as a sign of modernity’s reduction of the cultivators of the earth to mere day laborers.¹⁸⁰ If Sander does not give us ‘timeless, mythical plowmen’ since his are dressed like urban gentlemen, it need not be out of

¹⁷⁸ Keller (1980) 56. From “*Erläuterung zu meiner Ausstellung im Kölnischen Kunstverein*. 1929.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 51.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Keller (1980) 31 on Sander’s ‘de-mythologized,’ hence objective picture of a harvester.

rational engagement with the actual fashions and economic trends of the late 1920's.¹⁸¹ Instead, his attention to these phenomena might stem from an attraction to loss and the painful disintegration of tradition. If Sander nonetheless manages *not to overdo it* in the vein of Expressionism, i.e., to depict sitters with some degree of realism and reserve, this arguably stems from the nature of the photographic medium and the reality of his sitters. (Expressionism as an all but non-existent photographic genre shall be discussed in the following chapter.)

Sander's imperfect types – farm girls with pretentious bows, sisters bearing no sisterly emotions- can therefore be read narratively as metonymic indications of the 'malformedness' of (social) phenomena in Civilization as a whole – that is, as pictograms of Spengler's thesis of 'out-of-formness.'¹⁸² The photographer's apparent fixation on atypical variations and extraneous details¹⁸³ - his reluctance to 'weed them out' forges an aesthetic value in itself, or what Henry James would call an artist's 'intellectualization.' Galison and Daston quote Henry James (a primary focus, incidentally, of Brooks' study of melodrama beside Balzac) praising the paintings of Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps in 1873: "he painted, not the thing regarded, but the thing remembered, imagined, desired – in some degree or other intellectualized."¹⁸⁴ Accordingly, *dissonance* can figure as a

¹⁸¹ This is what Keller's and Berger's reading of the image suggests. Cf. Keller (1980), Berger (1972) 34-35, and Gray (2004) 373.

¹⁸² Cf. Keller (1980) notes that Sander employed the terms 'decadent' and 'degenerate' with relative frequency to describe people and things in his midst.

¹⁸³ Daston & Galison (2007) 44- 45. Daston & Galison credit the 'strictures of mechanical objectivity' for casting doubt upon judgments of the typical and the essential as intrusions of dangerous subjectivity. This began in the mid-nineteenth century. Atlases refined raw experience by weeding out atypical variations and extraneous details.

¹⁸⁴ Daston & Galison (2007) 37.

consciously elaborated theme rather than ‘regarded accident’¹⁸⁵ - a fact actually implied by Koepnick’s own attention to Sander’s agency in ‘highlighting symbolic background elements’ to reveal the sitter’s identity as discordant. Similarly, one might note that the case for Sander’s intentional highlighting of incongruity is corroborated by the artist’s choice of antiquated photographic equipment that was particularly adept at highlighting such flaws as skin blemishes; his choice of equipment generally obstructed a smooth, pleasing photographic style.¹⁸⁶

Associating Sander not with objectivity but the cultivation of ugliness and discord of course resonates uncomfortably with conservative critiques of ‘asphalt literature’ and much realist ‘degenerate’ art whereby artists are lambasted for their contentious cultivation of a dark or seedy picture of the world. For such critics of degenerate art narratives of decay *seek out* negativity and ugliness for their own sake, which is to say, for lowly entertainment or shock value rather than artistic truth. Typically their unwholesome view is immediately associated with the soiling of one’s own homeland or *Heimat*.

This perspective likely grounded the Nazi’s persecution of Sander and their seizure of his photographic plates, for in comparing Sander’s images to those of Leni Riefenstahl, Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, or Hugo Erfurth – each of whom lent their sitters refinement and nobility – the authorities no doubt saw in *Menschen* not raw, unfiltered,

¹⁸⁵ Daston & Galison (2007) 32.

¹⁸⁶ Keller (1980) 27 on why Sander refused to use small hand cameras and snapshots and why he remained loyal to orthochromatic plates long after the more efficient panchromatic process had established itself.

objective truth, but the photographer's tendentious amplification of a degenerate, vastly heterogeneous and disconnected German Volk.¹⁸⁷

Sander's concern with types (imperfect or otherwise) vindicates this view. For types live from their deviation away from sheer naturalism. Whether Sander worked as a visual sociologist or as a visionary, naturalism's dearth of distinction would in either case figure as a liability for meaning. Galison and Daston explain the inadequacies of naturalism for proponents of 'trained judgment' who called themselves realists: "For the image to be purely 'natural' was for it to become, ipso facto, as obscure as the nature it was supposed to depict: a nightmare reminiscent of Borge's too-life-like map."¹⁸⁸ By extension, we can note that if Sander's sitters were depicted in strictly quotidian terms (moving or working for instance) and in less iconic settings, they would resemble the crowd or the mass which the photographer presumably seized as an 'object of study.' A naturalistic collection of snapshots of *Menschen* would necessarily fail in its mission to dissect and recuperate modern formlessness, but would resemble prosaic journalistic photography instead.¹⁸⁹ Sander's 'straight' photography' therefore seized upon signs of asymmetry, dissonance and anomaly; it cultivated their depiction into a legible aesthetic and narrative.

As my discussions of the 'drama' of downward classification, of physiognomy as a hermeneutic art, and objectivity as a cultivated aesthetic of imperfection all seek to

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Keller (1980) 19 for similar critiques of *Antlitz der Zeit* as a "physiognomic document of anarchy and inferior instincts, not a document of uplift, enthusiasm, *let alone essence*." (italics mine.)

¹⁸⁸ Daston & Galison (2007) 357.

¹⁸⁹ For a contemporary critique of the insipid nature of journalistic photography, see Kracauer's essay "Photography." For a critique of photographic naturalism see Brecht "*Dreigroschenprozeß*," and my discussion of Lerski in the following chapter, section 2.3 "Lerski's Expressionistic Third Way" in particular.

emphasize, the Sander Myth over values the classificatory logic of *Menschen* vis-à-vis the photographer's aesthetic vision and interpretive agency. The myth suggests that if Sander's images fascinate, they do so despite their modest, documentary or archival intentions.¹⁹⁰ But that fascinating tensions should be built-in, that 'excess' should be carefully constructed rather than incidental: for such creative agency Sander is seldom given credit. *Menschen* is treated like a *document without vision*, rather than as a supra-realist work whose empirical details represent but the "merest starting point for an immense construction of connotation."¹⁹¹ (Brooks)

That Sander's melodramatic imagination "needs both document and vision, and it is centrally concerned with the extrapolation from one to another," shall be shown in the following section.¹⁹²

3. Brook's 'Melodramatic Mode' and Weimar as Context

Understanding *Menschen* as melodrama depends on a specific theory of the genre – for clearly, Sander's quiet photographic oeuvre has on the surface little in common with a stage drama accompanied by music to which the term originally referred. Similarly, if we take our cue from modern film studies and associate melodrama tears, with peripetetic plots leading from 'too late' to reconciliation and *deus ex machina* happy endings (however superficial) – *Menschen* and melodrama seem irrevocably at odds. This appears to be the case even though, as previously noted, expressivity arises in *Menschen*, as in

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Baker (1996) on Sander's inadvertant surrealism.

¹⁹¹ Brooks (1976) 10.

¹⁹² Brooks (1976) 9.

melodrama, less from words than from gesture, which in early melodramas took the form of pantomime.¹⁹³

My complication of the Sander Myth thus relies on a more theoretical understanding of melodrama than that which pervades the predominant filmic and literary associations or our vernacular (where ‘melodramatic’ connotes the histrionic or hysterical). *Menschen* becomes melodrama when we follow Peter Brooks to understand the latter as “an imaginative mode” that seeks to stabilize and re-order a formless, post-sacred modernity by recuperating meaning in a crisis-ridden culture. Melodrama is a “reaction to the vertiginous feeling of standing over the abyss created when the necessary center of things has been evacuated and dispersed.”¹⁹⁴

Thus construed, melodrama depends on realism but cannot be contained within it; the text, the narrator, in this case the photographer, ‘pressures the surface’ of reality via excess. He or she postulates a signified in excess of the possibility of the signifier.¹⁹⁵ This means that the structure of melodrama is fundamentally metaphorical, relying on transferences between surface and depth through which significant form can be forged, and meaning read into the ‘indifferences of reality.’

In Sander’s portrait typology, as with the melodramatic mode, excess is characterized by a “constant effort to overcome the gap, which gives a straining, a distortion, a gesticulation of the vehicles of representation in order to deliver signification.”¹⁹⁶ The resulting ‘thing behind’ is that which the Sander Myth represses

¹⁹³ Cf. Brooks (1976) 14.

¹⁹⁴ Brooks (1976) 21.

¹⁹⁵ Brooks (1976) 199.

¹⁹⁶ Brooks (1976) 199.

but which accounts for the fascinating and strange qualities of *Menschen*, and its novel use of the typological structure as vehicle for an elusive tenor of Decline.

3.1. Crises of Spirit and Sight: Foundations for the Melodramatic Worldview

In cultural-historical terms, melodrama holds surprisingly much in common with typology, which as John P. Jackson points out, emerges with greatest force during times of instability, when shifts in power erode political and social cohesion.¹⁹⁷ Similar conditions of instability – what Brooks calls a ‘void’- harkened the dawn of melodrama as well.

Though the modernity to which Brooks refers immediately follows the French Revolution, cultural historians of Weimar will recognize related tropes of loss, formlessness, and psychic unease in the discourse of inter-war Germany as well – a fact far from coincidental given the late and revolutionary establishment of a German Republic. Brooks summarizes melodrama’s role in its original context as follows: “We may legitimately claim that melodrama becomes the principal mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era.”¹⁹⁸

If melodrama’s attendance to morals and ‘desacralization’ nonetheless sounds like a far cry from the concerns of Weimar modernity (despite its preponderance of iconic film melodramas¹⁹⁹), it serves to consider the various critiques of capitalism which circulated ubiquously throughout the early 20th century and their implicit critique of a moral void. Stringent Weimar Marxists were of course concerned with the atomization

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Jackson (2004) on the rise of typological schemes during periods of *de*-colonization and abolitionism, rather than during the stability afforded by slave holding and colonial societies.

¹⁹⁸ Brooks (1976) 15.

and subsequent alienation of man through the division labor and a world comprised via the commodification of exchange values.

Representative of the post-sacral world for related reasons, Georg Simmel's Metropolis comprised cosmopolitans whose 'blasé attitude' stemmed both from the tearing of their nerves by the 'rapidly changing and closely compressed and contrasting stimulations' of their urban environment, and the rationalism of the money economy.²⁰⁰

For Simmel's urbanites,

the meaning and differing values of things, and thereby the things themselves, are experienced as insubstantial. They appear to the blasé person in an evenly flat and gray tone; no one object deserves preference over any other. This mood is the faithful subjective reflection of the completely internalized money economy.²⁰¹

Where money acts as the "the most frightful leveler" to devalue meaning, melodrama seeks to reassert it. Here, parallels between the indistinguishability associated with 'greyness' and Brooks' 'void' become notable. Indeed it is against the flat, colorless world created by the indifference of money that Brooks' 'essential point' about melodrama comes most saliently into relief:

the essential point may be that melodrama, even when it starts from the everyday...refuses to content itself with the repressions, the tonings-down, the half-articulations, the accommodations and the disappointments of the real. ... It insists that the ordinary may be the place for the instauration of significance. It tells us that in the right mirror, with the right degree of convexity, our lives matter.²⁰²

This is arguably where Spengler and more respectable sociologists and thinkers of his day part ways, for where the latter are intent on identifying the causes and effects of modern social problems (and, in the case of Marxists, overhauling capitalist structures)

¹⁹⁹ Brooks (1976) Preface mentions Weimar Cinema.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Simmel in Wolff (2005) "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 409 – 427.

²⁰¹ Simmel in Wolff (2005) "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 414.

Spengler is forever committed to the instauration of deeper meaning: with charging causes and effects with cosmic significances. As melodrama, his thesis of decline itself aims to replenish the core of things which in 'late life' has become hollowed out.²⁰³

Finally, a sense of 'moral chaos' (Brooks)²⁰⁴ during the years of the Weimar Republic receives promotion by romantic anti-capitalist despair in the face of lost *Gemeinschaft*. In the 1920's and 1930's, conservatives' sense of spiritual desperation (*geistige Not*) was prompted by wide-spread democratization which in turn fostered their imagination of a *Kulturideal* that was inseparable from an 'original German folklore' and the image of a pre-industrial, corporate (*ständisch*) society.²⁰⁵ Their picture of a 'new' humanity comprised, in essence, nothing other than the old communities of belief in a Sacred which in Brooks' modernity had disintegrated.²⁰⁶

This cursory view should suffice to suggest that the variously construed spiritual crises of the turn of the century and Weimar map quite neatly upon the sense of final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions which gave rise to the melodramatic mode.²⁰⁷ In Weimar, desacralization was felt primarily via the leveling forces of capitalism and democratization.

²⁰² Brooks (1976) ix. [italics mine].

²⁰³ Cf. Simmel in Wolff (2005) "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 414 on how money 'hollows the core of things;' Spengler (1965) 26-27, 407 – 408 on money, and section XX, "The Form-World of Economic Life: Money."

²⁰⁴ Brooks (1976) 21.

²⁰⁵ Keim (1995) 36. Cf. also Ebner (2002) 48 on Sander's '*starre Ständetypologie*': Kraszna-Krausz notes, "*Sander veräußerlicht [die 'Vielfaltigkeit der modernen Gesellschaft'] zu einer starren ständetypologie, ein zumindest heute doch recht obsoleter Begriff von Individuum und Gesellschaft. Lerski dagegen faßt sie ungleich moderner als individuelle polymorphe Verinnerlichung.*"

²⁰⁶ Brooks (1976) 11 – 21.

²⁰⁷ Brooks (1976) 15.

Oswald Spengler's notion of the 'out-of-formness' of late Culture is but one brazenly metaphysical, speculative, and intuitive expression of the modern sense of alienation and the *hollowness of things*: one whose cyclical structure of rise and fall resonates especially well with Sander's project. Adorno notes that Spengler's worldview owes much to the vitalist (or tradition of *Lebensphilosophie*) shared by Nietzsche, Simmel, and particularly Bergson²⁰⁸ - a fact highlighted concretely by Spengler's attention to modern domiciles as hollowed out 'shells' fashioned 'not by feeling but by the spirit of commercialism.'²⁰⁹ Spengler's concern with the 'disappearance of the old cosmic foundation' and the 'steady diminution of the Destiny-feeling,'²¹⁰ the rise of intellect, and the demise of intuition and nature²¹¹ represents, however, the highly melodramatic expression of their common ideas.

To understand how Sander's portfolio typologies work in the context of grayness and flatness described above, Ullrich Keller's discussion of Sander's 'architectural seeing' proves particularly adept:

Sander used single, double, and quadruple modules in order to build up by methodological steps a structure in which the final family portrait assumes the function of a keystone. Picture sequencing is introduced here as a means to develop a theme in all its dimensions and to make available to the viewer ways of reading and levels of understanding that go beyond the possibilities of a merely anthological and decorative picture selection.²¹²

The portfolios thus represented for Sander far more than handy sources of reference (as they might in an archive). Instead, we can understand them as constituting the narrative elements of a morphology aimed at both sounding the meaninglessness in modern times,

²⁰⁸ Adorno (1967) 67.

²⁰⁹ Adorno (1967) 55.

²¹⁰ Spengler (1965) 250.

²¹¹ Spengler (1965) 246- 248.

²¹² Keller (1980) 50.

and recuperating transcendence in a ‘post-sacral world.’ As Keller notes, “careful selection and sequencing of pictures was to ensure that every portfolio would form a meaningful entity rather than an accidental aggregate.”²¹³ In effect, the portfolios and their subdivisions work to transform modern flatness into relief, grayness into salience.

Yet synoptic, architectural seeing faced considerable challenges in daily life. In “Cities and Peoples,” Spengler notes that modern circumstances seldom allowed for the careful analysis of different social types: he writes that the heads of the final men (those representative of Civilization and the death of Cultures) warrant comparison with “peasant heads, when such happen to emerge in the swirl of the great city’s street life,”²¹⁴ for then, the tense intellects of the former become most dramatically apparent.

Spengler’s phrasing “when they happen to emerge” is suggestive of the disparate worlds peasants and cosmopolitans inhabited in the early 20th century, and of the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* Ernst Bloch perhaps best described. Moreover, Spengler’s statement suggests the unlikeliness of registering differences from one’s embodied, jostled position in the crowd, i.e. from the constraints of modern circumstances vis-à-vis methodological seeing and contemplation. Indeed for Spengler, something like typological seeing – adept at discerning the accidental from the essential (as discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation) - amounts to the challenge of the epoch:

Herein lies the great problem for the twentieth century to solve – to explore carefully the inner structure of the organic units through and in which world-history fulfills itself, to separate the morphologically necessary from the accidental, and, by seizing the purport of events, to ascertain the languages in which they speak.²¹⁵

²¹³ Keller (1980) 50.

²¹⁴ Spengler (1965) 250.

²¹⁵ **Spengler (1965) ****

Spengler, however, employs the term ‘morphological’ to conjure this kind of vision. Embedded in the challenges he identifies are the unofficial contracts for the artists, thinkers, and visionaries of Spengler’s day. In such promptings we sense most acutely Spengler’s hold on Sander, an ambitious portrait photographer from the Westerwald. Did the artist feel summoned as precisely that ‘sensually alert’ man Spengler exalted and called into action in the pages of *Decline*? Sander’s comments on his ambition to arrive at a physiognomic definition of the German people suggests his perceived calling as such a person: “physiognomy,” he notes, “means an understanding of human nature – that understanding which nature imparts freely to human intelligence, although perhaps more to some people than to others.”²¹⁶

Spengler’s glorification of the artist as observer and visionary suggests one way in which the school teacher may have set Sander on his photographic quest: for Sander isolates from the crowd precisely those faces which most interest Spengler, capturing them not via spontaneous, natural snapshots, but as carefully composed portraits. Shot daguerrotype-like, Sander’s portraits worked to slow down time rather than keep up with it; and their effects of haltedness and tension resonate with Spengler’s idea of petrification in the present epoch. Whatever other advantages such equipment proffered (Walter Benjamin suggests the exalted status of its purveyors in the early history of photography),²¹⁷ viewers of Sander’s prints no longer had to wait for the odd moment when a peasant left his natural habitat. They could escape the contingencies of the urban ‘field’ by retreating into an *Innerlichkeit* appropriate to reading and studying the nuances

²¹⁶ Sander (1978) 677.

²¹⁷ Benjamin, “Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie,” (1970).

and idiosyncracies of faces of cultural and civilizational types. The photographic portrait typology registered for reflective purposes signs which otherwise remained elusive.

3.2. Photographic Melodrama: Strategies and Ambitions

At first glance, we can learn nearly all there is to know about the techniques and strategies of melodrama by analyzing the substance, form, and style of Spengler's *Decline of the West*. For here symbolic truths, drama, poetry, and enthusiastic attention to contemporary facts combine in a struggle to "glimpse the ineffable," as Spengler scholar H. Stuart Hughes has noted.²¹⁸

In his impatience with what had conventionally passed as history, Spengler sought to grasp the *Zusammenhang*, or the wider context in which events and expressions could, he felt, alone acquire meaning. This striving, forever palpable in *Decline of the West* renders the grandiose study nothing less than what Brooks has called a "super-drama," so that like Balzac's narrator in *La Peau de Chagrin*, Spengler

pressures the details of reality, hammering at them to make them yield, release the terms and tokens of a truer, more intense drama, a super-drama both suggested in and hidden by the surface of reality.²¹⁹

For Spengler, these aspects are – as Adorno critically notes - more hidden and more intense than the material factors of the early twentieth century like modes of production, economic exploitation, or other concrete sources of injustice.²²⁰

Brooks' concept of melodrama illuminates *Decline of the West* as a text that is dramatic or romantic not only in the standard sense (preferring expression and sentiment

²¹⁸ Hughes in Spengler (1965) xv.

²¹⁹ Brooks (1976) 110.

²²⁰ Cf. Adorno (1967).

over substance and analysis, for instance), but in the sense of operating fundamentally on a belief in the symbolic nature of the external world. For Spengler,

All that is symbolizes. From the corporeal phenomena like visage, shape, mien (of individuals and classes and peoples alike), which have always been known to possess meaning, to the supposedly eternal and universally valid forms of knowledge, mathematics and physics, everything speaks out of the essence of one and only one soul.²²¹

Such a mystical- hermeneutic worldview places Spengler securely in the melodramatic mode as Brooks describes it, for Spengler “strove to go beyond a customary norm – to find words for matters so nebulous that they eluded literary grasp.”²²² Hughes further describes the author-philosopher as one for whom “the ultimate truths of history lurked deep in a realm beyond reconstruction. He who studied it had no recourse but to hit on appropriate or startling metaphors that might afford a glimpse into the ineffable.”²²³

3.2.1. Metaphor and the Ineffable.

Hughes’ attention to Spengler’s use of metaphor as a means of ‘glimpsing the ineffable’ in historiography bears remarkable similarities to what Brooks describes as the question to which the whole of Balzac’s work strives: according to Brooks, this is “the question of what is by its nature not directly representable, yet also the most significant.”²²⁴ With respect to Balzac as paradigm of the melodramatic imagination, Brooks notes that

seeing behind the curtain, finding the significant vision, encounters the problem of expression. Can one say, can one incarnate, what one has glimpsed in the abyss? Can one achieve, in life and in art that victory over

²²¹ Spengler (1965) 88.

²²² Hughes in Spengler (1965) xvi.

²²³ Hughes in Spengler (1965) xvi.

²²⁴ Hughes in Spengler (1965) xvi.

repression which... appears as a victory over the ordinary terms of 'life' and 'reality'?²²⁵

Melodrama, like Spenglerian epistemology, thus seeks out precisely those causes which cannot be seen. Its anti-positivism embraces precisely that which cannot be known. Sander, too, can be seen prowling around the abyss, sounding its depths, trying to make sense of it, and not least, attempting to represent its voids with the powers and limits of his photographic equipment. Again, Sander and Spengler are less concerned with the specifically moral choices which fascinate Brooks, as with laying bare in dramatic terms the essential psychic conditions of the times.

In this section, I seek to establish Sander as an artist who, like Balzac, grapples with the question of how to represent the unrepresentable – the *Truth* behind existence and history; the structure of the past and its relevance for the future. For the socio-historical situations perceived not only by Balzac but also by Spengler and arguably by Sander demanded “the individual reorganizing gesture, both political and artistic.”²²⁶ Echoing Simmel’s view of the ‘flatness’ of modernity, Brooks writes that “the artist, who must see and represent, is required to seek in disorganized and flattened reality for the terms of significant representation.”²²⁷ In Sander’s case it is ‘exact photography’ structured typologically.

With regard to this fallen world and its voids of meaning, Balzac’s *Comedie Humaine* (a critical melodrama in Brooks’ study) and Sander’s *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* wrestle with similar artistic challenges. Like Balzac’s novel, Sander’s *Menschen* serves as what Brooks calls a

²²⁵ Brooks (1976) 115.

²²⁶ See Brooks (1976) 118.

²²⁷ Brooks (1976) 118.

paradoxical monument to a corpus in dissolution, [wherein the artist] returns again and again to the difficulties of representation of a society where those very principles of a traditional drama – class distinctions, hierarchy, manners – have been flattened and have become idiosyncratic and intricate: a time in which ... there remain only nuances where the great figures have faded, where distinctions are purely personal.’²²⁸

In *Menschen*, this paradoxical quality is revealed by the photographer’s apparent embrace of a guild-structure [*Ständegesellschaft*] as a model of society for the Weimar Republic; for the now missing ‘principles of traditional drama’ are the same as those of portraiture: class distinction, hierarchy, and manners. Art historians today can thus note that the *tradition of formal portraiture* has not survived the disintegration of the formal society on which it rested.²²⁹ Sander, as noted at the outset of this chapter, appears to have invented a new kind of portraiture in order to contend with this void – a void which reflects the notions of ‘the masses’ as inscrutable ‘social matter’ (as discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation.)²³⁰

As Keller correctly notes, the “best liberal traditions and the comfort and respectability of the nineteenth century appear to enjoy an Indian Summer” in Sander’s portfolio of middle class professions concentrating on the old, established, prestigious ones like lawyer, doctor, and merchant.²³¹ Yet Sander re-incarnates these figures in order to make present that which was palpably on its way out; to visualize the critical tensions of the era. Thus even Keller himself notes the “stuffy conventional tone [which] takes over in places,” and the “immaculate ready-made clothing [that] tends to level all

²²⁸ Brooks (1976) 117.

²²⁹ Ormond (2007) 11. Ormond notes that these ideas are finally changing.

²³⁰ Cf. also Jonsson (2010) 285.

²³¹ Keller (1980) 48.

differences.”²³² Sander presents these figures as something like the living dead; violin players on the Titanic pursuing their vocations as their demise encroaches. Sander’s aim was not to reinterpret against all reason Germany’s unstable, contradictory social reality in terms of a durable, well-ordered structure, as Keller and others have suggested. Instead he attempts to render its erosion visually. Sander’s typology doesn’t suggest order,²³³ but fall from order and an attempt to account for it in meaningful ways.

The paradoxical structure Brooks notes of melodrama thus appears in *Menschen* as well: Sander appears torn between sounding the depths of a void, and recuperating it. Ultimately, however, the anachronism of these sitters becomes Sander’s way of evoking the passage of a Spenglerian ‘season’ and its attendant pathos of loss. Strict focus on contemporary types alone would fail to communicate such pathos, but would hold viewer’s attention in the documentary present instead. As such the gripping thesis of decline – its perception of the present as the doomed culmination of the past – would be lost.

With metaphor serving as the fundamental mechanism of melodrama, the vehicle’s success in pointing beyond itself to ‘another kind of reality’ depends heavily on perceptive realism - on the detailed and convincing depiction of surface realities. Only thus can metaphor manage to “put us in touch with the conflict of good and evil played out under the surface of things.”²³⁴ Discussions of good and evil will be tabled for later;

²³² Keller (1980) 48.

²³³ Keller (1980) 42.

²³⁴ Brooks (1976) 4.

for now, it is sufficient to note that melodrama, as Brooks writes, cannot be “wholly constrained within a realist aesthetic.”²³⁵

With adequate ‘pressuring’ of surface reality, however – of clothing, gesture, mannerism, physical appearance, setting – melodrama can point to the ‘thing behind.’ In order to describe how realism can put pressure on the surface of things to such an extent that its effects become dramatic, Brooks turns to Balzac’s *Le Peau de Chagrin*, where Balzac’s narrator

applies pressure to the gesture, pressure through interrogation, through the evocation of more and more fantastic possibilities, to make it yield meaning, to make it give up to consciousness its full potential as ‘parable.’ / Throughout these opening pages of *Le Peau de Chagrin*, we can observe the narrator pressuring the surface of reality (the surface of his text) in order to make it yield the full, true terms of his story. [...] Use of the word *drama* is authorized here precisely by the kind of pressure which the narrator has exerted upon the surface of things. We have in fact been witnesses to the creation of drama – an exciting, excessive, parabolic story –from the banal stuff of reality.²³⁶

Brooks describes how in Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*, the narrator uses “things and gestures of the real world, of social life, as kinds of metaphors that refer us to the realm of spiritual reality and latent moral meanings.” This part of melodrama, then, would seem particularly amenable to photography. Yet the next step threatens to prove far trickier for mechanical, indexical rendering: for these same things must cease to be merely themselves. Gestures in melodrama quit being merely “tokens of social intercourse whose meaning is assigned by a social code; they become the vehicles of metaphors whose tenor suggests another reality.”²³⁷ If *Menschen* is melodrama, it must move beyond the empirical sociological analysis Keller so poignantly describes, and even

²³⁵ Brooks (1976) vii.

²³⁶ Brooks (1976) 1- 2.

²³⁷ Brooks (1976) 9.

behind the *Mentalitätsgeschichte* (of coolness) in which Lethen positions Sander. The gestures of his sitters are not just ‘dramatic’ instances of social phenomena, but for Sander as for Brooks, the “token vehicles of a grandiose and sometimes ineffable tenor.” They aim to refer to a world behind and beyond the apparent world, to the realm of occult forces, forces hidden but also operative, that must be wrested into language.²³⁸ In Sander’s case, they must be wrested into portraits. Which endeavor proves more difficult is an interesting question to be taken up elsewhere.

Melodrama’s metaphoric structure, as noted at the outset, requires both document and vision. This fact helps us understand Sander’s spiritualist - realist, typological-narrative portrait typology, for it, like “the melodramatic imagination” is centrally concerned with the extrapolation of meaning from one plane to another.²³⁹ It is not enough, in other words, to convey the surface however precisely; the melodramatist must also penetrate it.

A 1927 - 28 portrait titled ‘Travelling Mason’ (“*Wandernder Maurergeselle*”)²⁴⁰ (Figure 9 below) serves as a suggestive example of how Sander rises to the promethean challenges of photographic portraiture as melodrama. Here, clothing, title, caption, pose, and setting all work together to make explicit the sitter’s social, occupational identity as a traveling mason. The mason not only wears the traditional garb, but stands to the side of the road literally to be traveled, in front of precisely the kind of stones he would himself mason. He is portrayed doing neither activity, however: he neither works nor walks, but stares immobily at Sander’s camera. Similarly contrived, hence odd, is the overwrought harmony and balance of the composition in terms of both value (tone) and form: the

²³⁸ Brooks (1976) 110.

²³⁹ Brooks (1976) 9.

speckled lights and darks created by foliage in the upper left corner are mirrored in the shapes and tones of the rock pile in the lower right. The figure of the boy divides the image along a vertical axis through the middle while the horizon and the line of his shoulders define the image's equator. The white walking stick appears (photogram-like) as the negative of the dark tree trunks behind it.



Wandernder Maurergeselle, ca. 1927/28
 Travelling mason
 Apprenti mason itinérant

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Fig. 9: “Wandernder Maurergeselle,” 1927-1928. Fig. 10: “Prämonstratenser,” 1904.

Though the image makes certain appeals toward beauty and harmony, its enigmatic overtones disrupt any pure experience of such qualities. With respect to the modesty of its alleged documentary intent, the scene appears so contrived, so theatrical, so overwrought with meaning - indeed excessive - that the viewer, in questioning its straightforwardness, is prone to search for what Brooks would call a ‘thing behind.’ “What dark and unavowable relationships determine the mason’s being?” he or she may

²⁴⁰ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 104.

wonder.²⁴¹ And indeed, photo critics ask similar but spiritually keyed-down versions of this question when they speculate, time and again, as to what Sander might have said to his sitters to get them to appear the way they do.²⁴² That Sander understands photography as a medium adept at answering such ‘deep’ questions is made clear by his comments in a radio speech: as a universally understood language, photography, he asserts, can “express the whole brutal, inhuman spirit of the time in universally comprehensible form.”²⁴³

In a portrait like that of the mason, Sander has “pressured the surface” of reality by postulating a signified in excess of the possibility of the signifier:²⁴⁴ elements of the image appear to suggest more than what a mason might merely look like as a social type; and more even than what might be suggested by the physiognomic interpretation of *Homo Faber*, i.e., the idea that a person’s work determines his or her spirit and physical appearance. Instead, his types are conceived as historical types, as Sander’s following statement on physiognomy makes clear: “The *time* [...] will be most evident in certain individuals whom we can designate by the term the Type.”²⁴⁵ (Italics mine.) Thus Sander portends to show how this mason might exist, spiritually, in his age: namely petrified and immobilized by the rapid changes wrought by modern life; separated from others of his milieu and society; devoid of any participation in a still-operative sense of ‘we’ – as

²⁴¹ See Brooks (1976), 132 on ‘dark and unavowable relationships in melodrama.’

²⁴² Cf. Berger (1980) for an investigation of this question. Though many writers on Sander agree that Sander’s instructions to his sitters entailed allowing him or her to perform freely before the camera, the consistency of stern demeanors throughout *Menschen* renders this assertion dubious.

²⁴³ Sander trans Halley 676.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Brooks (1976)199.

²⁴⁵ Sander in Halley 678.

Spengler might say.²⁴⁶ The mason holds fast to a traditional way of life which has already begun to wash away. Sander has de-mythologized this type through an uncomfortable *mise-en-scène* which is anything but strictly objective. Though Sander's composition is constructed in excess of the modest label, "Traveling Mason," it is, however, still hazy with respect to deeper, fundamental truths of human history and existence.

The semantic situation is otherwise in an earlier 1904 photograph of a 'Prämonstratenser' (Figure 10 above) never slated for inclusion in *Menschen*. Though Sander's sitter wears the traditional white shirt, vest, and collar of this prestigious clan of Roman-Catholic *Chorherrren*, his naturalness of expression and pose preempt any sense of excess which, in the mason portrait, unsettled meaning and split Sander's depiction into integument and 'thing behind'; concrete vehicle and murky tenor. Here, the plane of representation fits and contains the plane of signification to assure the viewer that meaning begins and ends with the sitter's *Abbildung*. The portrait signals no greater purpose than to communicate the man's appearance, social duty, and general respectability. It is utterly conventional.

It is therefore (somewhat ironically, given the types in question) the mason's world rather than the monk's which is 'double-tiered' in accordance with the structure of melodrama: it is the 1927 portrait which suggests a *beyond* and struggles toward parable.²⁴⁷ It is the melodramatist, as Brooks notes, and not the realist (i.e., Sander the

²⁴⁶ Cf. Spengler (1991) 265 on "we": "That which distinguishes a people from a population, raises it up out of the population and will one day let it find its level again in the population is always the inwardly lived experience of the 'we.'"

²⁴⁷ Brooks (1976) 121.

early, commercial photographer) who “refuse[s] to allow that the world has been completely drained of transcendence.”²⁴⁸

What the parable in the photographs is one cannot be sure, but the boy’s stone-faced expression and chiseled physiognomy looks uncannily similar to the stones piled at his feet. The effect is the same in the portfolio’s previous image of “*Wandernde Zimmerleute*, 1928”²⁴⁹ standing awkwardly before a white brick wall, and in the following image of a ‘*Dachdeckermeister*’ (‘Master tiler,’ 1932)²⁵⁰ whose face and head only slightly distinguish themselves from the medieval stone rampart of a Nuremberg ruin against which he leans. If we read these images and others like them - images wherein the figure in space takes on the austere or graven qualities of that space itself (via processes of Goethean *Umbildung* described earlier)- within the discursive context of Spengler’s philosophy of decline, we may note that here, “costumes, even faces, are adjusted to a background of stone.”²⁵¹

In ‘Cities and Peoples,’ Spengler proclaims that Nürnberg imparts a language, as does “Florence, Damascus or Moscow, Peking or Benares” and speaks of the facades of buildings as ‘*faces*’; he talks of the “visages of towns” and their ‘*mien*.’²⁵² Sander, for whom photography was, as noted earlier, a universal language, employs photography to capture Spengler’s ‘universal symbolism’; he uses the camera as a ‘clock for seeing’ – not just of one moment of the past (as with Barthes), but of historical - spiritual patterns through the ages.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Brooks (1976) 22.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 103

²⁵⁰ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 105.

²⁵¹ Spengler (1965) 247.

²⁵² Spengler (1965) 245-246.

²⁵³ Cf. Barthes (1984, 1981).

What in many of Sander's portraits can readily be interpreted as the 'armoring' of a particular cool persona resulting from a civilizing process that "links the idea of autonomy to the disciplining and 'cooling' of the affects"²⁵⁴ can thus also operate in a more subterranean register: sitters look vacant in the 'autumn' of culture; they are petrified by the forces of decline, diminished if not dominated in soul and spirit; and deprived of a certain life source. It is therefore less the case that Sander *himself* is neutral than that his sitters are *neutralized*. They appear ineffective in their un-natural presentations; in Spengler's language, petrified.

Take for instance Sander's athletes who, far from not fitting in as Keller suggests,²⁵⁵ represent a culture of recreation demanded, in Spengler's terms, by the 'intellectual tension' of the modern era. In his account of Spengler's resonances with his readers, Adorno cites Spengler's position on sport:

Genuine play, *joie de vivre*, pleasure, ecstasy are produced by the rhythm of the cosmos, and their essence is no longer understood. But the relief from highly intensive, practical, intellectual work through its opposite, consciously practiced idiocy, the relief of intellectual tension produced by the 'excitement' of competition and gambling, the replacement of pure logic of daily work by consciously savoured mysticism – this recurs in every metropolis in every civilization.²⁵⁶

While Sander's stern group pictures of gymnasts and soccer players suggests the futility of sport as an adequate substitute for real cosmic joys (they look anything but relieved or relaxed), his picture of the tall wrestler beside the short, grinning one suggests, though not harshly, the 'idiocy' Spengler identifies in the civilizational trend of sport.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Lethen (2002) 47.

²⁵⁵ Keller (1980) 44.

²⁵⁶ Adorno (1967) 56.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 85.

The image of farmers playing cards (1919-1920)²⁵⁸ makes a similar point. Keller notes that Sander unmistakably directed the scene by persuading the farmers to “paradigmatically demonstrate for the benefit of the camera all the characteristics of a sociable evening of these pleasures.”²⁵⁹ One could add: except the sociability and pleasure. The rigidity of the farmers suggests that their attempts at joy and camaraderie are made in vain.

Sander’s commitment and consistency in depicting the ‘people of the 20th Century’ in this frozen way can thus attest to the photographer’s philosophical investments at least as much as they disclose a concern with ‘objectivity.’ That Sander’s transcendence, following Spengler’s, is particularly *noir* and bespeaks a fateful decline changes little. Here, transcendence means only that history is guided follows patterns to render crises of the present somehow more explicable and palatable.

Sander’s contemporaries look as if something has neutralized them: this appears to be the disturbing effect registered by one contemporary reviewer in the *Kasseler Volksblatt* who wrote,

Man erschrickt, wenn man inne wird, wie grauenhaft diese Gesichter aus den verschiedensten Ständen und Berufen entleert, verwüstet sind bis zum absolut Wesenlosen hinab, wie hoffnungslos verbittert oder erstarrt: mit Ausnahmen der Bauerngestalten, eines älteren Handwerkers, einiger Arbeiterphysiognomien und etwa noch des Münchner Schankkellners sind all dies Menschen [...] ohne wesentliches ‘Gesicht.’²⁶⁰

What so ‘horrifies’ this reviewer? Arguably, the images signal doom and decay. Metaphorically speaking, Sander’s apparent attention to the apparitional, to non-

²⁵⁸ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 56.

²⁵⁹ Keller (1980) 30.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Brückle (1998) 298.

distinction, *Verwüstung* and *Erstarrung* suggests the ‘Out-of-Formness’²⁶¹ Spengler associates with Civilization, as opposed to the distinction characteristic of a people of Culture, i.e., ‘a race,’ by which Spengler refers to a community whose customs and traditions are ‘second nature.’²⁶²

Spengler relies on a sports metaphor to describe this quality, writing

A field of steeplechasers is ‘in form’ when the legs swing surely over the fences, and the hoofs beat firmly and rhythmically on the flat. When wrestlers, fencers, ball-players, are ‘in form’ the riskiest acts and moves come off easily and naturally [...] Practically everything that has been achieved in world-history [...] has been the product of living unities that found themselves ‘in form.’²⁶³

H. Stuart Hughes tells us that Spengler’s parallels between the petrification of the late Roman world and his own time “gripped his readers with horror and fascination alike.”²⁶⁴ Indeed the reviewer’s reaction noted above implies having caught a glimpse of a similarly profound ‘superdrama’ involving life and death, and - in Brook’s own melodramatic terms - “the force of desire caught in a death struggle with the life force.”²⁶⁵ Though Sander’s bartender (and several other natural-looking figures) appears to be faring well, the mason and the master tiler, with their odd relationships to stones and walls, appear less well off. They and countless other sitters locked in rigid postures and penetrating stares suggest something of the effect of Spengler’s ‘Cosmopolis,’ or ‘stone Colossus’ purported to stand “at the end of the life-course of every great Culture”:

Its image [...] contains the whole noble death-symbolism of the definitive thing-become. The spirit-pervaded stone of Gothic buildings, after a

²⁶¹ Cf. Spengler (1965) “The State: The Problem of the Estates,” and “State and History.”

²⁶² Cf. Spengler (1965) xxii, 265.

²⁶³ Spengler (1965) 357.

²⁶⁴ Hughes in Spengler (1965) x.

²⁶⁵ Brooks (1976) 2.

millennium of style-evolution, has become the soulless material of this daemonic stone-desert.²⁶⁶

A “thing-become” but no longer being or changing is, we might note, a subject immensely amenable to photographic representation, as critiques of photographic reification suggest. To presume that stasis and rigidity take over Sander’s images naturally, however, is to deny his earlier successes as an art photographer, and his tireless agency in the construction of ‘exact’ photographic portraits as they appear in *Menschen*.

What might Sander’s ‘unqualified lawyer’ (*Winkeladvocat*) (1945)²⁶⁷ or his portfolio neighbor the “*Heilkräuterkundiger*” (1928)²⁶⁸ symbolize in the context of ‘out-of-formness’? Everything about the *Winkeladvocat*, his awkward posture, strikingly malformed ear lobes, and untidy desk littered with props of the man’s profession - conspires to reveal his lack of certification or fraudulence, and to “push through manners to deeper sources of his being.”²⁶⁹ (Brooks) Likewise, the herbal doctor is off center and apparently off balance in his frame; his fingers look oddly bulbous and a lazy eye is conspicuous. He and other similarly dubious types in Sander’s portfolios may serve the purpose of suggesting the fraudulence or emptiness of the era, and an unsettling element of untrustworthiness in one’s fellow citizens. Rather than reflecting Sander’s interest in merely the personal or psychological circumstances of individual sitters (their unique sense of identity, or the apparent contradictions thereof, as Koepnick and Keller assert), Sander’s ‘exact photography’ would aim to portray larger social, historical trends as they manifest themselves in particular subjects. Sander’s accumulation of so many similar kinds of portraits – images that are unsettling, over-determined, contrived or convoluted-

²⁶⁶ Spengler (1965) 248.

²⁶⁷ See Keller (1980) Plate 231.

²⁶⁸ See Keller (1980) Plate 226.

may well aim to suggest that socio- historical conditions are at work in them: the ‘mosaic’ quality of his archive discussed earlier works to create a picture of the era, not just of an incidental sitter.

Suggestive of ‘out-of-formness’ in a different manner is a painter (“*Lackierer*, 1932”).²⁷⁰ (Figure 11 below). Sander shows this worker wearing a smock and wooden clogs the middle tones and speckles of which repeat in both the chipping paint on the doorframe before which he stands, and in the speckled concrete floor beneath his feet. Here all things and surfaces beg to be coated with fresh lacquer (including the painter’s own smudged, stained arms) while the black abyss of the doorway suggests the unpaintable itself, and the futility of the worker’s task. One notes the utter inadequacy of the small gray, speckled container of paint he holds in his hand. This, it appears, is not the expert steeplechaser symbolic of a flourishing culture.

²⁶⁹ Brooks (1976) 4.

²⁷⁰ Keller (1980) 122.



Lackierer, Köln, 1932
Peintre
Vernisseur

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Fig. 11: August Sander, “*Lackierer*,” 1932.

The point is that, as spiritual metaphor in *tableau* form, the painter’s portrait is not content to show a painter; instead it strains to articulate man’s plight and circumstance in the modern world. For initiates of *Decline* the image pronounces: “And the yokel stands helpless on the pavement, understanding nothing and understood by nobody, tolerated as a useful type in farce and provider of this world’s daily bread.”²⁷¹

What about Sander’s less striking, rather banal portraits? How might they suggest a ‘melodramatic imagination’ on behalf of the photographer? Sander’s professionals – for instance the higher ranks of the occupations – have been remarked upon for their

²⁷¹ Spengler (1965) 247.

boringness; they are widely considered the least successful of Sander's portraits.²⁷² Grey, studio-like backdrops and few props distinguish these portraits from what I have been describing as the pressurized *mise-en-scène* found in other portfolios.

When examined closely and in the context of Sander's chronological typology, most of these professional faces, however, appear anything but conventional or normal. More than Sander's portrayals of children, peasants, or homeless people, these images – with their preponderance of three-piece suits, rings, pocket watches, handkerchiefs and devious grins - resemble slick Hollywood film stills to suggest the most contemporary specimens of deviant modern, capitalist culture. A cigarette smoking Cologne lawyer (1931)²⁷³ bears the weight of the world on broad, robed shoulders, the painfully down-trodden expression of his eyes betraying the suaveness of his pompadore. A colleague, (“*Rechtsanwalt*, 1931”),²⁷⁴ however, appears far tougher, clutching documents and staring fiercely, pit-bull like at the camera: visible on his cheeks are fencing scars from fraternity days, the traces of stoicism in the face of danger.

The first lawyer conveys a profound sense of spiritual defeat, the second of victory at a price. Like the doctors, pharmacists, and bankers surrounding them in Sander's sub-portfolios, these sitters speak of radical accommodations of the self to the state of modern affairs. Sander seems committed to depicting them not as upright community leaders but as jaded or damaged men of ambition - as dubious if not duplicitous types who arrived at the heights of their culture by sacrificing something immanently human and natural to themselves.

²⁷² Keller (1980) 47 - 48.

²⁷³ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 234.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Keller (1980) Plate 232.

For Spengler, they would represent the “outstanding men of the Civilizations” whose heads are “dominated exclusively by an expression of extreme tension.”²⁷⁵ Before Sander’s lens, the intellectual capacities of this class betray a Spenglerian postulate concerning men of the ‘megalopolis’: “intelligence is the replacement of unconscious living by the exercise of thought, masterly, but bloodless and jejune.”²⁷⁶ They are ‘all eye and intellect’²⁷⁷ – a proposition of spiritual lack that finds emphasis in Sander’s paired-down compositions. Their crinkled brows, folded hands, self-satisfied postures, cigars and demonically lowered foreheads expose not the dignity of *Bildung* or even common sense and mother wit, but what Spengler would call “only the capacity for understanding at high tension.”²⁷⁸

We know that Sander himself was concerned with the ‘intellectualism’ of his age on account of his radio speech on physiognomy,²⁷⁹ and this concern receives visual rendering with the photographer’s use of blank interiors as backdrops: this compositional strategy serves as a masterful visual means of conveying the extent to which these such ‘final men of a Culture’ have been cut off from the “sensed beat of life” by their “cosmopolitan intelligence.”²⁸⁰ (Spengler) Sander’s aesthetic of boringness, therefore, is but a strategic function of their role in the Spenglerian parable: unlike the lower orders of farmers and craftsmen, they have ‘advanced’ away from “peasant wisdom”; they are “dominated by cosmopolitan intelligence.”²⁸¹ They fulfill both typology’s and

²⁷⁵ Spengler (1965) 250.

²⁷⁶ Spengler (1965) 250.

²⁷⁷ Spengler (1965) 245.

²⁷⁸ Spengler (1965) 250.

²⁷⁹ Sander in Halley 676. Sander here speaks of “our age of intellectualism.”

²⁸⁰ Spengler (1965) 250: “...in every Culture these heads are the types of its final men.”

²⁸¹ Spengler (1965) 250.

melodrama's requirement for polarization and extreme states of being, and the 'either / or' logic of each.

In Brooks' terms the rather plain professional figures discussed above are thus in good position to put us into contact with "the conflict of good and evil as opposites not subject to compromise;"²⁸² they suggest the extent to which even Sander's keyed-down, photographic melodrama, the world is built on an irreducible manichaeism.²⁸³ While Spengler's temporal Manichaeism of cultures on the wane and civilizations on the rise is only implicitly moral, as noted earlier, we still sense in such modern sitters as these the moral overtones of his thesis of decline.' Though Spengler's cyclical history purports to avoid moralizing and to advocate stoicism in the face of decline, there is little escaping the sense that Civilization is corrupt and Culture morally and spiritually pristine. In Sander's visual language, the soulless professionals function as the polarized obverse of his peasants and their families - his "*Urmenschen*" - who sit with both intense dignity and modesty on basic wooden chairs positioned before the edges of forests and meadows. As Spengler writes of this type, he is "eternal man, independent of all Cultures. The piety of the real peasant is older than Christianity, his Gods are older than those of any of the higher religions,"²⁸⁴ and the drama of this statement resonates with Sander's depictions since in nearly half of the portraits of single sitters, hands clutch books which can only be bibles. In the remaining images, hands are folded in prayer in a manner that suggests the religious significance of women's covered heads and black clothing. Clearly these types represent a time and culture before civilization, the fall, and decline. But they also intend to represent the first and most devastating sacrifices to Civilization.

²⁸² Brooks (1976) 36.

²⁸³ Brooks (1976) 36.

Craftsmen and artisans take a close second. Statistically overrepresented with respect to their demographic make up in Weimar,²⁸⁵ their relative abundance in Sander's typology corresponds instead with the degree of spiritual loss which they signify for the artist and others receptive to ominous notions of decline. Their rich visual signifiers are also irresistible to the Goethean physiognomic gaze, and to the melodramatic imagination which relishes non-verbal expressions of dress, prop, gesture, and setting. Their visual salience appeals to the typologist as well.

One would therefore be better off thinking about Sander's portfolios in terms of spiritual demographics and 'spiritual physiognomics' (to recall Langbehn's terms of discussion in *Rembrandt als Erzieher*)²⁸⁶ rather than historical, statistical ones: for as Keller notes, these workers own their own tools and their products represent a personal accomplishment rather than the cumulative result of divided labor.²⁸⁷ They thus symbolize the autonomy that Civilization erodes, and their collective picture is not a happy one. They clutch tack hammers, trowels, and stitching machines like militia men bearing arms. Determined to stand their ground, the craftsmen and artisans resemble Edward Curtis's Apaches in all their noble regalia. With these figures we see again the suitability of the photographic tense – Barthes' '*this has been*' – for the depiction of mythical constellations of time and history, be it the 'allochronism' of colonial era anthropology, or the 'cyclical history' of Spengler.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Spengler (1965) 245.

²⁸⁵ Keller (1980) 44.

²⁸⁶ Langbehn (1891) 5. There is also a portrait of Sander's wife gazing at a Rembrandt self-portrait printed in a book she holds. Cf. Sander & Conrath-Scholl & Hochleitner & Lange. Cover image for *August Sander. Linzer Jahre, 1901 – 1909*.

²⁸⁷ Keller (1980) 44.

²⁸⁸ See my discussion on allochronism and Barthes' photographic tense in section 2 of Chapter 2.

We can conclude that nearly all of the exact portraits intended for inclusion in Sander's exorbitant photographic typology appear to exceed the objective, 'inter-subjectively verifiable,' definitional intention suggested by their titles. This raises the question of how definitional and strictly typological the titles and the artist's ambitions actually are. The labels given the portfolios ("The Artist," "The Woman"), subportfolios ("The Painter," "The Elegant Woman") and exempla ("The Small Town Lady")²⁸⁹ in fact appear consistent with what Brooks calls melodrama's exteriorization of conflict and psychic structure to produce a "drama of pure psychic signs – called Father, Daughter, Protector, Persecutor, Judge, Duty, Obedience, Justice – that interest us through their interplay...."²⁹⁰ Sander's titles thus appear both melodramatic and typological: in keeping with the latter, they preserve the transparency and immediacy of the photograph by not obscuring it with excessive verbal signs.²⁹¹ In accordance with the former, they suggest his sitters' status as 'psychic signs.'

The point is that these captions and labels work not in the natural way of daily language (in its 'lower key' as Brooks writes), but emphatically. The same goes for Sander's epic title *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* which in actuality refers only to Germans of turn of the century through the 1940s.²⁹² Sander's chosen title, however, allows for a transfer between the empirically specific (the actual sitter with an undisclosed name and a particular life and existence outside Sander's photo session) and their deeper, more dramatic cultural, spiritual, and historical identities. A title referring to

²⁸⁹ Interestingly, Sander's artists are not divided into *exempla*, but are labeled with the proper names of the sitters, i.e., "The Dadaist Raoul Hausmann," or "The Painter Anton Räderscheidt." This break with the standard labeling practices of *Menschen* can also be interpreted, of course, to imply the sovereignty, significance, and irreducibility of the artist to generalities.

²⁹⁰ Brooks (1976) 35-36.

²⁹¹ Cf. Daston & Galison (2007) on captions for scientific images.

²⁹² Exceptions are several 'circus people' who appear to come from the colonies, and some 'gypsies.'

Germans would, by comparison conceptually limit the project while flattening the metaphorical structure comprised of surface and depth on which melodrama subsists. More specific titles and labels would refer only back to themselves. Without this fundamental transfer, however, between what Hempel would call a typology's 'universe of discourse' (its subject defined in terms of genus and differentia) and a hidden, other, occulted discourse, one would be left with definitional typology all but stripped of symbolic content.

Sander's typology thus allows for a 'transaction between contexts' which, for I.A. Richards, describes the purpose of metaphor. Specifically, text and sequencing of the typology create a scenario of surface and depth, with the empirical portrait of a sitter representing surface and the structure and style suggesting depth. It is in a similar vein that Spengler writes of '*Das Abendland*' when his concerns in fact lie primarily with problems facing the German Empire on the dawn of the First World War. Both Sander's and Spengler's titles are therefore suggestive of the latter's claim, however abstract, that "for real historical vision, the crucial words are not 'correct' and 'erroneous', but 'deep and 'shallow.'"²⁹³

In this section, I have tried to suggest the melodramatic employment of metaphor in both Sander and Spengler. Both observers refused to take the political circumstances of the day, evident on the surface of events, at face value. With Sander, the typological structure of *Menschen* helps visual details signify something beyond themselves. As in melodramatic representations, meaning in Sander's typology evolves from a

²⁹³ Spengler (1965) 71.

confrontation of contraries.²⁹⁴ Together with the contrived *mise-en-scènes* employed in Sander's images, typology forces his portraits to take on more meaning than they could on their own, in an isolated picture frame.²⁹⁵

Sander's typology thus sets in place the kind of metaphorical structure Brooks assigns to melodrama and its mode of excess. Excess is characterized by a "constant effort to overcome the gap, which gives a straining, a distortion, a gesticulation of the vehicles of representation in order to deliver signification"²⁹⁶ – a strain which I have sought to highlight in my readings of Sander's portraits. Via Spengler, I have tried to attend not only to Sander's 'primary context' – Weimar and the photographer's sociological observations of its members– but also to a 'secondary context,' a tenor, as well. My intention has been to assert something like the 'full, true terms' of Sander's story, and to argue for the heuristic flexibility of typologies: their ability to go beyond the empirical description and classification of discreet phenomena to a serve as dramatic narratives about the cultures they represent.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has gone into considerable detail concerning Spengler's melodramatic imagination, Sander's kindred spirit, and the inter-medial resonances between *Untergang des Abendlandes* and *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*. And indeed, there are many more aspects of this dialogue which deserve consideration.

²⁹⁴ Brooks (112).

²⁹⁵ Cf. Keller (1980).

²⁹⁶ Brooks (1976) 199.

How transferable, for instance, is Adorno's trenchant critique of Spengler onto Sander? Besides entailing an evaluation of the 'mercilessness' of Sander's view of human suffering *vis-à-vis* Spengler's, this question would probe the differences between visual, specifically photographic representation, and literary, historical prose. In estimating Sander's own complacency with world-historical events (an argument implicit, incidentally, in several contemporary and present-day analyses of *Menschen*),²⁹⁷ this question would have to consider photography's capacity to operate in a future tense – that is, its ability, like Spengler's text, to 'soothsay' and 'prognosticate' – functions which Adorno equates with Spengler's maleficent 'siding with the Caesars.'²⁹⁸

Such questions are important because, having established certain strong links between Sander and Spengler, they might suggest ways in which the photographer, unlike the philosopher, provides an image of the *utopia* "silently contained in the image of its decline" and a "summons to redeem mankind in the future."²⁹⁹ (Adorno). Deeper investigation of these issues would allow us to be honest about Sander's intellectual framework and photography's competence in executing it.

The fundamental point of this chapter, however, concerns the nature of typology. Looking at the structure and style of Sander's *Menschen*, it becomes clear that real existing typologies are not always Carl Hempel's. Sander's admiration for Spengler's *Decline of the West* suggests the potential for of non-inductive typologies: ones which

²⁹⁷ Cf. Lethen (2002) 156 who cites the constructivist Franz. W. Seifert's critique of Sander: "This 'bourgeois' artisan, to be sure, does not come quite up to the standards of the conceptual realists," (Lethen 156). Cf. Baker (1996) 89 who notes that Siewert "felt it necessary to wish for a 'clearer sociological formulation' that would more strictly adhere to the concepts elaborated by Marx in *Capital*."

²⁹⁸ Cf. Adorno (1967).

²⁹⁹ Adorno (1967) 71.

take leads and cues from a philosophy that resides beyond their immediate, empirical object of study; typologies that work to fill in details and confirm knowledge attained at least in part from elsewhere.

This means that Sander's images trade in both description *and* theory; observation and explanation; his visual vocabulary is both definitional *and* narrative.³⁰⁰ If taken as a true document of sociological study, *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* would thus unite separate stages of scientific knowledge formation into a grandiose totality: it welds together the simple empirical generalizations associated with taxonomy and the comprehensive theoretical accounts attained in more advanced stages of investigation. This is possible because subjective interpretation can be embedded in the empirical details and arrangements of the 'types' themselves: cognitive analysis, judgment, philosophical prejudices, and desire can forge the very *exempla* of typology so that the sensory phenomena represented merges with the typologizer's view of them. The visual salience of Sander's social types of the first half of the twentieth century gives way to their identities as enigmatic spiritual types who ominously or despondently clutch onto the symbols of their changing identities.

In terms of science Sander's lack of discipline of course reeks of prenotion and *idola*, but in terms of art it suggests the power of the human imagination and its ability to intellectualize experience in ever-new and meaningful ways. In his own words, Sander asserts that "taking photographs means that one works with forethought – that is, tries to understand a scene, or to bring a conception out of its beginning in a complex of ideas into finished form."³⁰¹ I have likened Sander's art to that of melodrama as conceived by

³⁰⁰ Hempel (1965) 140.

³⁰¹ Sander, Halley 679.

Brooks because both seek to uncover essential truths obscured by modern social crises via contrived, highly expressive forms of representation. As Derrida has observed, ghostly distortions of ‘objective’ fact open up alternatives to historicist narratives and empirical proofs.³⁰² This is a perspective which Sander’s reliance on intuition (if not Spengler’s ‘physiognomic tact’) seemed to embrace. The typologist as Seer or Sage (not just observer) wants to go beyond the plane of the ordinary to the extraordinary- not by accident, naivety, or deceit, but by the dictates of epistemological conviction.

My discussion of the artist’s melodramatic imagination has sought to highlight the propensity for typologies to tell stories, not just find and arrange characters. Indeed the unnaturalism mandated by typology’s ordering and sense-making prerogatives would seem to set them on narrative course. Classification gives way to drama almost by default.

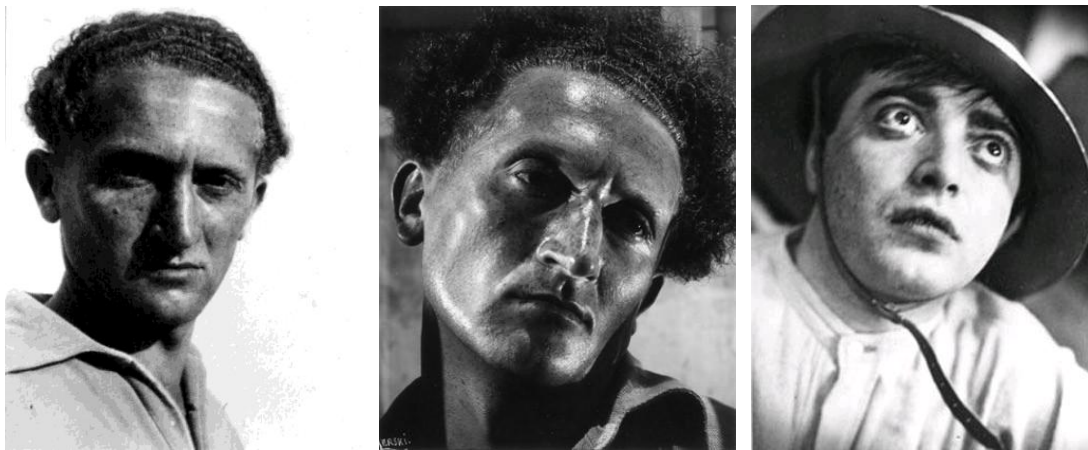
This tendency was already noted in Chapter 2, where Fischer’s scientific language, his measurements, mathematical equations and quasi-anthropometric photographs gave way to exclamation points, the divining of a racialist cosmos, and a call for Germans to take their assumedly rightful seat at its top. The highly contrived and narrative compositions of Sander’s photographic typology, however, attempt to mold the viewer’s perception by all *visual* means available: with minimal recourse to language, *Menschen* employs powerful *mise-en-scènes* and is not content to function as a mere touchstone for objectivity, or as a tool of the primitive and preliminary ‘natural history stage.’ Instead it seeks to assert its own, full blown account of cultural history. The ‘double-tiered’ quality of *Menschen* is structured by metaphor and its translations between more- and less- visible contexts, so that melodrama’s occult meanings and

³⁰² Cf. Winkiel (2008) 17.

‘things behind’ map well onto Sander’s artistic and epistemological worldview. *Menschen* is melodrama for the simple reason that in Sander’s scouting, observing and pressing of the shutter, there is always a moment where the “eye’s photographic registration of objects yields to the mind’s effort to pierce surface, to interrogate appearances.” (Brooks.) This is what melodrama does expressly but what typology achieves as if by inertia.

In the following chapter, I suggest what an all-out, *anti*-typological critique in modern photographic portraiture might look like. While *Menschen* worked to expand the scope of what a classificatory scheme can achieve, it remained loyal to basic typological precepts, such as the notion that humans - like leaves or birds - can be ordered into classes and subclasses. Individuals are not anomalous creatures but are knowable through patterns of similarity and difference. Helmar Lerski’s 1936 portrait series, *Verwandlung des Lichtes*, by contrast, issues a timely and powerful assault on these very assumptions. In espousing idealist notions of the autonomous Self, however, the work encounters obstacles which threaten to derail - if not subvert - its meaning altogether.

Chapter Four: Dialectics of Transformation: Lerski's
***Verwandlung durch Licht* (1936) between Expressionist Anti-**
Typology and Portrait of the *Charakterkopf*



From left to right: Fig. 12: Helmar Lerski's "Ausgangsbild" in *Verwandlung durch Licht*. Fig. 13: Portrait from *Verwandlung durch Licht*. Fig. 14: Peter Lorre as Brecht's 'Galy Gay' in *Mann ist Mann*, 1931.

1. Introduction: *Metamorphose* as Dialectical Image

Between the first two images taken from Helmar Lerski's *Verwandlung durch Licht* (1936) above, a transformation occurs: according to Lerski, we are to witness how, on the formal level, a traditional, conventional portrait aesthetic gives way to a subjective, expressionistic close-up of the same person, Leo Uschatz, whom Lerski simply called Uschatz. Symbolically, on the level of individual identity, we are to understand the anonymous *Nummer-Man* or fungible *Masse-Mensch* pictured in the

former image - called the *Passbild*, the *Ausgangsbild*, or 'Usual Picture'¹- as an individual who has been leveled by modern circumstances and the crowd, and made adequate to bureaucratic operations.² In the second image however, and in all subsequent ones, Lerski exposes Uschatz as the cultivated *Seelen-ich*, the richly protean *Einzelmensch* full of pathos, meaning and soul. Indeed the intensely circumspective figure above transforms, in one critic's words, into "...a pilot of the 20th century, a monk of the 13th century, an artist in his late years, a young girl or a mature woman, Napoleon or Baudelaire [...]."³ The photographer's strategic and novel use of light (to be discussed in detail later) aims to reveal the multifaceted, complex personas of a single sitter, the depth of the human spirit, and the creative subjectivity of the photographer himself. Uschatz, under Lerski's direction, strives to assert "*Ich bin ich*" and appears to revel in what Goethe called the '*höchste Glück der Erdenkinder*,' namely individual personality⁴ and *Innerlichkeit*.

In each of these respects *Metamorphose* represents a pinnacle of Lerski's photographic work begun in the first decades of the twentieth century but reaching greatest acclaim with *Köpfe des Alltags* (Everyday Heads) (1930). *Metamorphose* represents a culmination of the ideas and aesthetics notable in the photographer's Weimar series *Köpfe des Alltags* since in each, exalted individuals are unveiled behind their commonplace appearances: epic figures replace familiar but anonymous social types which under normal circumstances, and normal diffuse lighting, would collectively be

¹ Ebner (2002) 71.

² See Jonsson (2010) 281 - 283 on the founders of mass psychology Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde.

³ Ebner (2002) 39 cites a 1936 review of *Verwandlung durch Licht* in the *Bourse Egyptienne*, and notes that such descriptions were common.

⁴ Wege (1982) 297. I borrow here from Bernhard Diebold's 1926 review of Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, which begins with this Goethean vignette of the exalted individual from *Über Autobiographie*.

described and disparaged as the ‘masses’: in *Köpfe* we see cleaning ladies transformed into paradigmatic figures like the madonna.⁵ While Lerski’s *Köpfe* re-figures the crowd in fresh, less elitist terms than those inherited from late 19th and early 20th century discipline of mass psychology,⁶ his ‘*Metamorphose*’ focuses more intensely on the autonomy of the individual self. Thematically and aesthetically, Lerski considered it his magnum opus⁷ and, as a symbolic system of representation, it aims to recover the sovereignty of the individual. It is decidedly anti-typological.

Despite the straight-forwardness of this intentionalist account of *Metamorphose* inspired by Lerski himself and his circle, the work has been met with rabidly disparate interpretations, ranging from those which lambast Lerski’s purported fascism, to those which celebrate his proletarian consciousness and humanist ethos, or his modernist formalism.⁸

One cause for the ‘confusion’ surrounding Lerski’s work may be Lerski’s protracted biographical complexity:⁹ Lerski was sixty-five years of age at the time he completed this project on his rooftop terrace in Tel Aviv. Behind him was a unsensational stint as a stage actor and stage designer in the U.S. (1893 - 1905) and a profoundly influential career as cinematographer of some of the most iconic silent films of the nineteen-tens and twenties produced at ‘Bioscope’ (later ‘Ufa’) studios in Berlin, such *Ahasver*, *The Tale of the Wandering Jew* (1917); *Nerven* (1919); *Opium* (1919); Paul Leni’s *Die Wachsfigurenkabinett*, (1924); *Neuland* (1924); *Die Perrücke* (1925);

⁵ Kühn (2005) 222.

⁶ See Jonsson (2010) 281 on the inherent elitism of 18th and 19th century mass psychology.

⁷ Ebner (2002) 43.

⁸ Cf. this chapter, section 3.1.2. “Lerski as *Gefühlsingenieur*: Portraiture as a (solipsistic?) Two-Image Repertoire” of this chapter, and Eskildsen (1982) 100 - 103.

⁹ Cf. Horak (1997) chapter 3 and Estkildsen (1982) 8.

Abenteuer einer Banknote (1926) with Bertholdt Viertel and script by Bela Balazs,¹⁰ among others. Moreover Lerski's adult life was marked by a constant fluctuation between film and photography,¹¹ and clear traces of sharp, edgy, angular New Vision aesthetics are notable in his portraiture. Finally, in Palestine Lerski worked on multiple propagandistic-yet-artsy films funded by Zionist cultural commissions with titles such as *Aviv B'Eretz Yisrael* (1928) and *Adovah* (1935): of the latter short documentary, the National Center for Jewish Film writes, "Lerski's expressive style creates an almost mythic image of the Jew in Palestine, toiling and triumphing amidst the sweeping desert landscape."¹²

In the vast context of his life experiences as émigré, 'Theatermensch,' stage designer, expressionistic and propagandistic filmmaker, and photographic portraitist, his images speak first and foremost to a commitment to finding novel photographic ways of visually articulating a modern *Menschenbild*: sharp *and* subjective, New-Vision but inwardly soul-oriented, theatrical and expressionist, but steel-like in patina and materiality. For these reasons, film and photo critic Andor Kraszna-Krausz could remark on how Lerski's work distinguished itself from that of both avant-gardists like Moholy-Nagy and Francis Bruguière, and the realists like Renger-Patzsch or Edward Weston.¹³

More complicating, however, is Lerski's conglomerate portrait aesthetic when read in the context of the contentious *Menschenbilder* of the first three decades of the 20th century Germany. As one contemporary film and photography critic of Lerski's portraits

¹⁰ Lerski's career as cinematographer brought him into contact with iconic German actors like Emil Jannings, Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauss, and Henry Porten. Cf. Horak (1997) chapter 3.

¹¹ Cf. Horak (1997) chapter 3.

¹² Cf. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026090/>.

notes, “whether conservative or left-wing, each saw what they wanted to see in the images, indicating a certain ideological ambiguity inherent in the project.”¹⁴

Lerski’s conceptual and aesthetic ambiguity stems from the photographer’s own contradictory remarks concerning his photographic intentions: for instance, he proclaimed to ‘expose the soul’ of his sitter on the one hand, yet to express nothing but himself as artist on the other.¹⁵ With Lerski, then, visual-formalist discourses translate awkwardly into ‘philosophical’ ones – a fact which divides critics into friends and foes: those who knew Lerski well tout his humanity – his ‘*Wohlwollen, Güte, Lebens- und Menschenfreundschaft*’¹⁶ – and its traces in his portraiture. Foes, however, insist on the artist’s inhumane, fascist aesthetic committed to racialist glorifications of Aryan physiognomy; an aesthetic which attests to Lerski’s inability to escape the predominant ideology of 1930’s.¹⁷ *Metamorphose* in particular functions as a contentious *Projektionsfläche*. Already in 1913, Sidney Allan (alias Sadikichi Hartman), one of the most prolific critics of the day, prophesied that because “Lerski is a breathless experimenter [he] will meet with many difficulties.”¹⁸

These difficulties are most sociologically pressing and thought provoking when considered in the context of contemporary notions of the mass, the collective, and the individual. Take for instance the image of Galy Gay, portrayed by actor Peter Lorre, in Figure 14 above: Brecht’s Galy Gay – protagonist of *Mann ist Mann* – is, like Lerski’s

¹³ Eskildsen (1982) 8.

¹⁴ Horak (1997) 56.

¹⁵ Cf. Lerski in Eskildsen (1982) 23 and Ebner (2002) 54.

¹⁶ Cf. Fünberg (1958) 5 – 6. Fünberg writes that these qualities “*kamen überall zum Ausdruck, besonders natürlich in den Meisterwerken, die sein Genie über das Medium der fotografischen Linse hervorbrachte.*” He also speaks of Lerski’s missionary effects, his “*Lebensdienst.*”

¹⁷ Cf. Eskildsen (1982) 98.

Uschatz, an individual, yet apparently of a very different constitution. Here and throughout his famous 1931 performance as Galy Gay, Lorre appears far more frenzied, manic, and overwhelmed than Lerski's Uschatz ever did – that is, until his character transforms into a killing machine. Even as the soldierly type and member of a (military) collective, however, Galy Gay appears more berserk and more lunatic than Uschatz, in his serial depictions - forever straight-faced and focused in his gaze; *'beherrschend,'* commanding, and controlling - ever does.¹⁹ Despite or because of his apparent isolation from a social world, collective, and any human interaction, Uschatz remains forever sovereign. As symbolic figures for humanity Galy Gay and Uschatz, I find these two personas sharply at odds. In this chapter I suggest that tensions surrounding *'Lerskibilder'* (as his photographic works were collectively called) come to a head when one reads Lerski's 'transformation' beside Brecht's 1926 *'Lustspiel'* *'Mann ist Mann,'* and compare the representational 'biographies' of Uschatz and its protagonist Galy Gay.

Indeed Brecht's play provides a concrete lexicon adept at expanding Lerski's project into a highly dialectical, socio-philosophical project since Brecht's radically modern ideas on the individual and the collective ruffle the straight-forward story of Uschatz as 'unique totality' told above. My aim cannot, of course, be the diachronic examination the entire sociological discourse of the individual, the mass, and the collective in 1920's and 1930's Germany, however.²⁰ Instead I seek to bring into relief

¹⁸ *Image* (February 1961) vol. 10, Number 2, 5-7.

¹⁹ Cf. Arnold Zweig, "Porträt eines Porträtisten" in Fürnberg (1958) 11; and Estkildsen (1982) 100. While Zweig lauds this quality, filmmaker Jutta Uhl disparages its apparent allegiance to a fascist, 1930's aesthetic.

²⁰ Cf. Jonsson (2010).

the complex interplay between aesthetics and sociological cognition in Lerski's work,²¹ to show how Lerski's *Metamorphose* represents a "crystalization of antithetical elements in one graphic visual moment" – which is to say, a dialectical image of sorts.²² In so doing, I hope to render the work's tensions productive rather than aggravating.

I therefore examine several themes that appear throughout "*Die Verwandlung des Packers Galy Gay in den Militärbaracken von Kilkoa im Jahre neunzehnhundertfünfundzwanzig*," such as the transformation of the common man; the nature of the mass; the steeliness or malleability of individual character; the impact of representations on identity; and the significance of the 'ID card' (*Pass* or *Ausweis*) - themes found in Lerski's *Metamorphose* as well. I thus employ the play as an immanently relevant dialectical model for reading Lerski as a complex work that oscillates between contradictory aesthetic and ideological gestures. The apparent confusion immanent to Lerski's project as noted by Horak and others (it "threatens to defy comprehension altogether";²³ "*Helmar Lerski konnte man nicht klassifizieren*"²⁴) in fact enriches *Metamorphose* as a dialectical image of individual identity. Reading the images in the context of Brecht ensures that they remain a provocation rather than a reified sign, i.e. 'something that always says the same thing.'²⁵ This attribute applies as much to Lerski's formal photographic practice (lodged awkwardly between New Objectivity and Expressionism, pictorial ideals and avant-gardist experimentation;

²¹ Cf. Mitchell (1986) 158 on dialectical images and their "merging of the aesthetic and the cognitive," and the "interplay between philosophy and metaphor, science and art." As to the difficulty of ascertaining what a dialectical image actually is, see Max Pensky, *Melancholy dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the play of mourning*.

²² I borrow here from Buck-Morss's description of Benjamin's notion of the 'dialectical image.' Cf. Pensky (1993) 214.

²³ Horak (1997) Chapter 3.

²⁴ Estkildsen (1982) 8.

²⁵ See Mitchell (1986) 158 – 159 on hypericons and dialectical images.

Theaterfotographie, Rollenporträt, and social-documentary²⁶) as it does to his intellectual position on the individual in modern society, and the ethics of his photographic portraiture.

My aim in this chapter is two-fold. First, I read Lerski before the specific cultural-historical backdrop of typological thought in Germany between the turn of the century and the 1930's to position *Metamorphose* as "Anti-typology." In delineating Lerski's typological and physiognomic critique against some of the ideas explored in previous chapters of this dissertation, many of the contradictions of Lerski's work outlined above can be settled in a consistent manner, at least for a while. *Metamorphose*, I argue, comes to life against Typology as an often visualist, synoptic, 'either/or' enterprise of quasi-structuralist classifications.

My second aim, however, is to re-think the virtues of such an anti—typological project in light of Brecht's anti-expressionistic, '*sachlich*,' proto-Marxist lexicon, *Mann ist Mann*. While typology up to this point in my dissertation has appeared indelibly marred by the reductive, often instrumental practice of classifying humans by 'type', Lerski's *Metamorphose* as Anti-typology can - in the context of the era's most avant-garde notions of the individual, the mass, and the collective - appear anachronistically sentimental or even '*menschenfeindlich*' at worst- but serendipitously dialectical at best.

Clearly, then, in discussing *Metamorphose* as a kind of dialectical image, it is not my wish to declare it 'utopian' in anyway. I mean only that the work is consistently reflective of opposing concepts of the individual, either of which can be considered authentic or inauthentic. In achieving such dialectical tension, *Metamorphose* speaks to the nature of photographic meaning- its inherent openness, even contrariness. I aim to

²⁶ Ebner (2002) 51.

emphasize the extreme polyvalence of *Metamorphose* as ‘an object in the world, as representation, as analytic tool, as rhetorical device, as figure.’²⁷

That Brecht knew and admired Lerski’s work, and planned even to write a 1954 introduction to a publication of *Metamorphose* which never materialized (neither the book nor the introduction), is, however, of only negligent and necessarily speculative concern. My interests lie fundamentally in the dialogue between Lerski’s work and Brecht’s contrary contemporary discourse of the individual. Estimations of Brecht’s actual interpretations of Lerski’s project will nonetheless be addressed briefly in the conclusion.

Before reading the transformation play *Mann ist Mann* with Lerski’s ‘*Verwandlung durch Licht*’ (referred to from here on out as *Metamorphose*)²⁸ I shall examine Lerski’s photographic project in its incipient conceptual clarity as a multi-faceted assault against the ‘typology craze’ that pervaded Weimar and 1930’s Germany – a critique which I shall align with Lerski’s ‘expressionistic photographic portraiture.’ Though Nazism is not an explicit focus of this chapter, I do note that its hegemony by 1936 plays no small role as the context for the work’s complicated ideological fluctuations.

²⁷ Cf. Mitchell (1986) 205 on dialectical images.

²⁸ Despite the original title of the 1936 exhibition, critics most commonly refer to this project as *Metamorphose*.

2. *Metamorphose* as Expressionist Anti-typology

2.1. Lerski's Conceptual Critique of Typology

As in Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, Lerski's *Metamorphose* beholds an idea; "*eine Idee steckt drin*;" it offers a "*dünn verbergte Philosophie*."²⁹ The rather transparent idea in *Metamorphose* is, as noted at the outset, to unveil the multifaceted, complex and autonomous individual; to create and celebrate a *Menschenbild* which asserts that, in Lerski's words, "*In jedem Menschen steckt alles*."³⁰ Lerski supplies members of the 'faceless crowd' or mass with dramatic visages, thus excavating the fundamental and richly diverse human qualities which purportedly bind us – but which typically remain hidden beneath our surfaces and the trivial physical traits that divide us. The individual's exalted status is obscured by the high-paced operations of modern life and banal, mass medial depictions of modern people.

With *Metamorphose*, asserting anti-typological, anti-essentialist ideals is relatively facile: where typologies break down an array of human forms into classes, subclasses, hence 'types,' and do so usually in an attempt to aid social navigation, *Metamorphose* depicts one and the same person in 138 serial images – and this with very little structure or system except the one described above, through which a 'Passbild' gives way to a plethora of expressive, dramatic close-ups. These, however, are arranged and conceived in no apparent order or hierarchy.³¹ Labeled with numbers ranging from

²⁹ Cf. Wege (1982) 297 - 300 for Diebold's critique of *Mann ist Mann*: "*Eine dünne Philosophie verdirbt die Atmosphäre*." (299) One might note that ideological content was arguably less problematic for photography of the 1920's and 1930's than it was for early 20th century theatre.

³⁰ Variations of this mantra are found in nearly all the literature on Lerski. Cf. Walter Marti in Estkildsen (1982) 98: "*Im Menschen sind alle Möglichkeiten, es kommt nur auf die Umstände an*."

³¹ Cf. Ebner (2002) 14 - 15 on Lerski's numbering of the images. Ebner cites Anneliese Lerski who states that the photographer "*zeigte die Bilder der 'Metamorphose' immer wieder anders; er teilte sie nicht in*

500 to 638, some images in *Metamorphose* look nearly exactly the same (i.e., 579 / 580, 599/600, 609/610), while others correspond through opposition (515/516, 540/541, 543/544), and still others stand formally alone from the rest (approximately ten images in the series dispense with the close-up aesthetic characteristic of the others). Rigorously undermined by such conceptual fluctuations is the principle of taxonomic exclusivity, whereby a thing belongs to one and only one class.

Thus if Lerski's project is structured typologically or in accordance with the principles of downward classification, its lack of transparent logical terms seems more intent on *Komplikationserschwerung* than on the *Komplikationsreduktion* associated with the natural and human sciences of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In supplying navigational buoys, Uschatz, the forever capricious, protean being, is of course useless: Lerski's images make a mockery of pragmatic attempts to establish socio-historical coordinates or bypass modern obstacles via a visual(ist) knowledge of Others. One imagines sailing a channel roguishly littered with countless, randomly placed and ambiguously marked signs. Between Uschatz as monk of the middle-ages and coy adolescent, *Metamorphose* appears to lack any meaningful umbrella category; in Hempel's terminology, there is no "universe of discourse," except of the broadest kind, namely Human Types over the Ages. (Lerski's humanist inclinations will be discussed in a later section.)

Gruppen ein. Er zeigte sie aber stets so, dass innerhalb der Verwandlung eine dramatische Steigerung sich ergab."

2.1.1. Series versus Typology

Rather than subscribing to the stringent logic of typology, then, Lerski's *Metamorphose* represents a series: a collection which can be (dis)organized according to a vast array of principles, such as 'variations on a theme,' modified forms, homogenous elements, heterogeneous elements, etc.³² A series as Katharina Sykora describes it is marked by an un-hierarchical '*Nebeneinander*' of representations of equal value intended for view as a whole.³³ A popular artistic principle of the 19th and 20th centuries, series, like typologies, aimed to get hold of new environments and new circumstances,³⁴ yet they did so in ways which, with respect to rigid classificatory schemes, were far more open and experimental, even 'phenomenological.'³⁵ They thus function as hallmarks of perspectivalism and the contingency of vision. Throughout the 20th century, series have aimed to thematize *skepsis vis-à-vis* the power and objectivity of human perception.³⁶ Gaining popularity first in the industrial age, they are 'younger' than typologies which - as discussed early on in this dissertation - date back to the dawn of the scientific age and have served as hallmarks of logic and reason particularly in times of crisis and disorder.³⁷

Clearly, self-reflection and dialectic are more at home with series than with typologies, so that as a rule, navigation and orientation via classificatory definition play little role in serial presentations.³⁸ Instead, emphasis is frequently on repetition, change,

³² Cf. Sykora (1983) chapter 2.

³³ Sykora (1983) 6-7.

³⁴ Sykora (1983) 178: "*Die Künstler standen in einer Umbruchzeit der sich ändernden Lebenszusammenhänge und der sich ändernden Mittel ihrer Bewältigung. So griffen sie die dem naturwissenschaftlichen Experiment und der Fotografie analoge Methode der seriellen Darstellung auf, um ihrer Umwelt noch einmal habhaft zu werden.*"

³⁵ Sykora (1983) 179.

³⁶ Cf. Sykora (1983) 180: "*...die Skepsis des Künstlers im 20. Jahrhundert, [...] in Form der thematisierten Verunsicherung der menschlichen Sehweise und Erkenntnismöglichkeiten wider in den Vordergrund.*"

³⁷ Cf. Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

³⁸ Cf. Sykora (1983) 6-7. According to Sykora, the series also aims at representation that is exhaustive.

and variation – with little or less concern for theoretical causes or the steadfast laws of (human) nature, history, or society.³⁹ The liberating openness of serial depictions finds emphasis in a 1936 gallery invitation to an exhibit of Lerski's *Metamorphose*: "The photographic study of one model [...] gives us the most astonishing characterizations, the countenance of different worlds and times."⁴⁰

2.1.2. Lerski's Warm Persona

The idea of the individual as a rich, protean, and complex interior Personality appears anathema to Weimar's craze for typology⁴¹ and its fixation, as Helmut Lethen describes it, on distinction, Otherness, and the masks of 'attitude.' (That it can also appear sentimental and retrograde in its return to 18th and 19th century ideas of the individual shall be discussed later in the context of *Mann ist Mann*.)

In a statement acutely critical of what Helmut Lethen calls the outwardly-directed 'cool persona' of the Weimar era – the typologizing, conduct-code following, anti-psychologizing New Objectivity type – photography, film, and theatre critic and friend of Lerski's Andor Kraszna-Krausz writes a much celebrated 1931 review of Lerski's *Köpfe des Alltags*:

An diesen unbekannt Menschen erweist es sich nun, wie unbekannt uns Menschen sind. Dass wir keine Zeit haben, dass wir an ihnen vorbeischaun, dass wir alle vertypisieren. Zu Marken, nach

³⁹ The paintings in series on which Sykora focuses include those of Monet, Cezanne, Jawelensky, Josef Albers, Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol. None aim at categorization or definition, as typological depictions do.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ebner (2002) 39, *Einladungskarte*. What Sykora's study arguably underestimates is the potential for series to bore the viewer – a critical position with which Lerski's work has occasionally been met. See for instance Ebner (2002) 39 and Sterne (1932) 16 – 20.

⁴¹ Cf. Lethen (2002). Cf. Brückle (1997) 3 – 24 on the concept of 'masks' and '*Maskierung*' in Weimar photographic portraiture.

Berufsklassen, in Serien. Das Gesicht und das Geschick anderer hat unkompliziert zu sein. Grundsätzlich.⁴²

According to Krausz's quasi-moralistic reading, Lerski's portraiture reproachfully takes on instrumental and reductive essentialist notions of the purportedly static and knowable Type to return us to the exploration of more complex, indistinct, and neglected interior human qualities. Lerski's photographic praxis is construed, in effect, as a visual echo of Nietzsche's postulate that 'we are scientific out of a lack of subtlety.'⁴³ *Metamorphose* thus demands close, quiet perception and the identification of the viewer with the individual sitter in all his authenticity and originality: this despite – indeed because of – the much hyped '*Halt- und Rastlosigkeit*' of the modern age.⁴⁴ Similarly, and also best understood in the context of Weimar's 'cool culture' and its attendant speediness ("*Rasendes Tempo, rasende Arbeit, rasender Sport*' – *darin ließe sich das Glaubensbekenntnis zeitgemäßer Lebensführung fassen.*")⁴⁵ Curt Glaser's introduction to *Köpfe* emphasizes that "*jeder Mensch habe ein Gesicht, man müsse sich nur bemühen, es zu sehen.*"⁴⁶

As Weimar photographer, Lerski thus emerges as a rare and unjaded warm persona, a relic of an earlier age thus committed to demasking the superficiality of the type and exploring his inaccessible ('armored') interior.⁴⁷ Photographically, he seeks to *undo* what Inka Mülder-Bach called the 'photograph faces of modernity' which made their appearance in the New Objectivity decade, and according to Lethen expressed the homogenization of the individual by the conditions of mechanical reproduction. As

⁴² Cf. Kraszna- Krausz in Kühn (2005) 223, and Ebner (2002) 52.

⁴³ Cf. Stafford (1998) 64, who cites Roland Barthes citing Nietzsche.

⁴⁴ Brückle (1997) 6.

⁴⁵ Brückle (1997) 6.

⁴⁶ Lerski (1931) x.

previous chapters of this dissertation suggest, however, real modern circumstances themselves like increased urbanization, industrialization, massification, and social leveling also de-animated the ‘photograph face of modernity.’ The talk surrounding Sander of the ‘*Gesichtslosigkeit*’ of his *Menschen* – wrought according to Döblin by the leveling forces of Society (*Gesellschaft*) - is therefore with Lerski inverted. Also, Lerski is less interested in the avant-gardists’ mission to create new figures of identification appropriate to new historical circumstances than in exhuming, behind appearances, the good *bürgerlich* individual of the past – albeit via a modern, hard, cool, sharp aesthetic.

2.1.3. Rembrandt as Role Model

Lerski’s elaborate lighting techniques and unorthodox compositions thus aim to rescue figures drowning in the “anonymity of a sociological type,” and to recussitate his or her profound but normally unsuspected individuality and meaning.⁴⁸ That Lerski draws on a Rembrandtian model of portraiture to achieve his rescue act makes profound sense: Rembrandt’s name and work is all but synonymous with a non-conformist, idiosyncratic *subjectivity of the painter*; and secondly, Rembrandt, as the most ‘painterly of all painters’⁴⁹ has long been considered at loggerheads with Vermeer, (discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation),⁵⁰ who constitutes in Mitchell’s words, the “right analogy for [an optical, scientific reconstruction] of vision.”⁵¹ That is, for the kind of vision associated with positivism, objective truth, the knowability of the world out there, and as Crary discusses, the camera obscura as philosophical metaphor.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lethen (2002) 44 on the ‘armor’ of the 1920’s and 1930’s cool persona.

⁴⁸ Lethen (2002) 23.

⁴⁹ See Schama (1999) 25.

⁵⁰ See “Confident Seeing: Visualism and Fischer’s Scopic Regime” in Chapter 2.

Lerski's anti-typological critique intends to bear the stamp of Rembrandt, the painter known for individualization, for scrapping the generic, for liberating himself and sitters from the stereotype, all while infusing sitters with a living, breathing quality that accounts for the painter's unique spiritual, painterly realism. Lerski's contemporary, the conservative art historian Julius Langbehn, construes the painter himself as someone who could not "fit into any template; he defies all attempts to lay him down on any kind of learned Procrustean bed."⁵² (Implications of Lerski's veneration of Rembrandt in the era of the painter's eulogization among conservatives in Germany shall be discussed in more detail later.)

On Rembrandt, Lerski wrote the following notes:

Simmels Formulierung trifft nicht ins Schwarze, wenn er annimmt: Rembrandts Porträts gäben in der Hauptsache das Resultat des betreffenden Gesamtlebens. Rembrandt zeigt tatsächlich wenig von dem, was man Charakter nennt, ihm liegt wenig daran zu zeigen, was uns trennt, inwiefern wir uns voneinander unterscheiden, vielmehr was uns eint, was uns allen – trotz äußerlicher Verschiedenheit – gemeinsam ist, das Sichtbarwerden von Ähnlichkeiten, wodurch wir uns im anderen wiedererfinden, dies vermittelt uns seine geniale Menschendarstellung. Trägt nicht jedes Rembrandt-Porträt dessen eigene Züge?⁵³

Lerski's somewhat skewed interpretation of Simmel's writings on Rembrandt or portraiture aside,⁵⁴ Rembrandt, Lerski implies, returns to the adjacency of known and

⁵¹ Mitchell (1986) 27.

⁵² See Langbehn (1890) 7: "The model for today: Rembrandt." Langbehn continues: "He cannot be turned into academic programs and school formulas, as is the case with Raphael and others; he is who he is: Rembrandt. [...] Now that the Germans are suffering in their education from specialization and hackneyed patterns, the pronounced universalist and individualist Rembrandt can help them. He can lead them back to themselves."

⁵³ Cf. Ebner (2002) 85.

⁵⁴ In *Rembrandt: Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch* (1916), Simmel (2005) 78 - 80 describes at length the painter's lack of concern in any traditional sense with 'Character' as a "once and for all" or as an "invariable factor," as deemed by the abstract mode of the humors. Further, in his essay on portraiture "*Ästhetik des Porträts*," Simmel (2001) 192 emphasizes the portrait's status as something fundamentally *opposed* to a *Buchstabenschrift* that might be associated with physiognomic correlations or the human sciences, and even links the belief that a portrait is a *Buchstabenschrift* with instrumental prerogatives: "Solcher Glaube kann nur der Prärogative entstammen, die die Seele des Menschen für unser praktisches

knower: i.e., a subjective, non-‘objectivist’ (Bourdieu) experience of the Other as Self. A distinctly humanist idealism notable in Lerski’s comments insists on universal bonds despite superficial, outward, physical distinctions, and the fractured political realities of Weimar and 1930’s Germany. Lerski calls on Rembrandtian tropes of subjective identification to insist on the ability of finding oneself through others with whom a common but profound human spirit binds us. For Lerski, Rembrandt figures as the father of anti-typological portraiture and the counter image of his times.

The photographer’s indifference toward the *Ähnlichkeit* of his sitters⁵⁵ and the not-so-mimetic quality of his portraits accords with a long tradition of Rembrandt reception which asserts the painter’s primary devotion to the living, breathing quality of his sitters, and their power as a source for viewers’ identification. Accordingly, Lerski notes in a journal: “*Alle guten Rembrandt-Porträts sind Selbstporträts... Alle seine guten Porträts sind eine Selbstbespiegelung und ein Selbsterkennen; er erkennt sich tief innerlich im anderen.*”⁵⁶ This tradition of Rembrandt reception vindicates the fact that in

Interesse besitzt, und der gegenüber der Körper nur Träger und Werkzeug ist.” Why Lerski asserts that Simmel ‘misses the mark’ concerning Rembrandt’s notion of ‘Character’ is thus unclear. Indeed Simmel and Lerski appear to agree on the fundamental duty of portraiture to avoid scientific reductions of the individual while also making significant traits visible and salient. Simmel (2001) 192 thus remarks on the virtue of the portrait in the context of streaming life:

Das Bild, das wir von einem Menschen in Anwesenheit wie Erinnerung haben, besteht in einem Durcheinander und Ineinander sinnlicher und seelischer Eindrücke, aus dem die ersteren reinlich und bestimmt herauszulösen meistens weder Interesse noch Möglichkeit vorliegt. Nicht weniger hindern Bewegtheiten und Aktionen des Menschen, die Verflechtungen der Umwelt und die Zufälligkeit seiner Lagen, endlich die Interessen und wechselnden Standpunkte des Beobachters – alles dies hindert das Zustandekommen eines klaren und eindeutigen Bildes der Erscheinung.

Here Simmel provides at least part of the chaotic perceptual backdrop against which, according to Krasznakrausz and Lethen, the ‘cool persona’ hones his skills of typologizing the masses. Lerski’s serial images of the same person serve to celebrate rather than reduce the movements of life and the actions of man, while still creating a clear image of the individual.

⁵⁵ Cf. Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1982) on *Ähnlichkeit* and Krausz in Eskildsen (1982) 7. The latter notes, “‘*Ähnlichkeit*’ war offensichtlich in Helmar Lerskis Betrachtungsweise von untergeordneter Bedeutung.”

⁵⁶ Notes in Lerski’s journal, cited in Ebner (2002) 98.

Lerski's case, "None of the photographs recalled the model; and all of them differed from each other."⁵⁷

Physiognomy as an art or science, of course, depends almost entirely on an allegiance to *Ähnlichkeit*: to represent features wrongly (i.e. in accordance with one's own feeling, will, or intuition rather than objective empirical fact) would be to assert an altogether erroneous Type, and to promulgate false conclusions. Further, among the principle tenets of typological thought, the banishment of subjective identification with the objects of classification ranks second to none.

2.1.4. Lerski's Ethnic 'Types'

Finally, my assertion of Lerski's 'typology critique' in *Köpfe* and especially *Metamorphose* finds support in Lerski's own familiarity with typological thought – indeed with his own evocation of ethnic Ur-types in other photographic projects.

Lerski's "Jüdische Köpfe," "Orientalische Typen," and "Juden und Araber"⁵⁸ proffer titles which alone conjure a typological, racist discourse of the Other to suggest a biological, xenophobic, or more innocuous cultural quest for a *Volk*. Indeed in each of these series, Lerski presents a relatively homogenous class of Others set in juxtaposition to other Others. In each project, however, as in *Köpfe des Alltags*, basic textual classificatory gestures in the form of generalized titles concerning a 'type' are drastically effaced by the photographer's domineering use of dramatic light – one which sculpts all sitters in equally theatrical appearances. One is likely more struck by Lerski's animation

⁵⁷ Kracauer (1997) 162. Though Kracauer here celebrates Lerski's erosion of the equation *Photography = Reality*, Rembrandt's disconcert with *Ähnlichkeit* in his own era was still famously irksome among his milieu. Cf. Schama (1999) 267.

⁵⁸ Ebner (2002) 43.

of the people he encounters – low angle shots of chins and stage-like lighting of dusty streets- than with any classificatory intentions. Types blend into one another; the distinctions offered by photographic frames and typological cells break down in a sensuous maelstrom of human visages. Here the loose organizational style of a series, as discussed earlier, gains emphasis. (With *Köpfe* and *Metamorphose*, the pretenses toward any ordering of salient types is abandoned altogether.)

Indeed the wishful claims made for August Sander's work – that the photographer expresses love of humanity by treating all subjects with an equality suggestive of disinterest in anti-modernist discourses of decline – is far more convincing when applied to Lerski. Lerski, unlike Sander, uses seriality and standardization not as a means of establishing distance from his specimen (of maintaining 'existence at a distance,' as Lethen writes of the cool persona's ambitions),⁵⁹ but as a means of engaging sitters and viewers intimately, up close, and intensely, in an attempt to ruffle preconceptions that go unchallenged throughout the hectic self-preservational activities of daily life.⁶⁰

So although Lerski voices a standard documentary photographic aim of the day – the revelation of an *Urtyp* and its branches⁶¹ – this and other projects shot in Palestine were nonetheless construed as emphasizing the '*Ewigmenschliche*' and displaying '*Pathos und Ethos echter Humanität.*'⁶² Humanist – universalist intentions aside, however, Lerski's concern for racial / ethnic *Ur*-types in the face of crisis (i.e. 1935) in these projects comes closest to an aesthetic version of the Visualist denial of history,

⁵⁹ Cf. Lethen (2002) 132.

⁶⁰ Bertold Viertel in Fürnberg (1958) 8 notes that the closeness with which Lerski shot his subjects was closer than any technician had ever thought possible at the time. Lerski's cinematography was also lauded for similar technical prowess.

⁶¹ Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1982) 14. "*Ich will vielmehr nur den Urtyp in seinen Verzweigungen zeigen, und zwar so intensive, dass man dem Urtypen alle späteren Verzweigungen ablesen kann.*"

albeit of a ‘social romantic’ – I shall make the case for ‘expressionist’ kind- rather than imperialist ilk.⁶³

On the other hand, when compared with the highly circumscribed, propagandistic and stereotypical images of “the Jew” circulating in Germany and much of Europe in the 1930’s, Lerski’s attention to specific Jewish cultures stemming from all the regions of the middle East and Africa, India, Iran, Irak, Afghanistan, and the Caucasus seems intent on complicating typical representations and conceptions. Its categories like the Yemenite from Morocco or the Polish and Russian Jew resident in Palestine suggest the superficiality of ‘The Jew’ as a specific, easily identifiable, singular concept, much as it was construed in Germany at the time.⁶⁴

In these loosely typological projects celebratory of universal human values, we therefore catch a glimpse of how Lerski uses light to erode difference and unify sitters in a common spirit; a unity rendered visible by serial means which may remind one of typology but ultimately undermine the rationalistic impulses of taxonomic schemes. This deconstructive quality of Lerski’s work was, no doubt, often overlooked. One contemporary reviewer in the *La Bourse Egyptienne* noted with respect to *Köpfe des Alltags*, for instance:

⁶² Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1982) 20. Specifically characterized as such were his photographs published in the Palestinian newspaper “A Land in Construction” (*Sondernummer* ‘Eretz Israel’).

⁶³ Eskildsen and Horak call Lerski “ein Sozialromantiker, der in dem Glauben an das Schöne, an das Gute im Menschen, sich ganz auf seine eigenen Wünsche, Vorstellungen und Fähigkeiten konzentrierte.” Cf. Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1982) 22.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ebner (2002) on the Palestinian socio-political context in which Lerski worked. Nonetheless, Lerski’s ‘*Sammelwerk*’ supplies a far-reaching and diverse picture of an international ‘*Volks-gemeinschaft*’ and works to create, in its own way, a ‘*Volks-gesicht*’ – to borrow again from Wolfgang Brückle’s terminology. In support of the project, Albert Einstein emphasized its living quality, “*Wir wollen lebendig erfassen, was wir meinen und fühlen, wenn wir ‘wir’ sagen. Möge dem Künstler sein schwieriges Unternehmen gelingen.*” See Einstein’s letter to the photographer in Fürnberg (1958) 21.

Wir sehen somit eine Sammlung sehr deutlich charakterisierter Typen. Einen Fliegerpilot des 20. Jahrhunderts, einen Mönch des 13. Jahrhunderts, einen Künstler an seinem Lebensabend, ein junges Mädchen oder eine reife Frau, Napoleon oder Baudelaire, einen Menschen der Dekadenz oder einen ganzen Menschen, eine Totenmaske oder eine Maske voller Leben.⁶⁵

Only for Lerski, of course, these clearly characterized types *are called one thing as they evoke another*: they are therefore fundamentally metaphorical or allegorical, but never stringently definitional; Kracauer thus calls them ‘fictions.’⁶⁶ It is the *Putzfrau* who appears as ‘The Mother’ and the accountant who resembles a Christ figure. Later it is Uschatz, the ordinary face, who takes on such timeless identities. Lerski renders anonymous sitters ‘*deutlich*’ while in real life, they were mostly invisible. In doing so, he replaces the coherence of the type with fluctuations of mood, soul, personality, and the unruly nature of the individual.

In Lerski’s view, every one - including those lumped tyrannically by an elite into the category of ‘the masses’ – is actually divine in his or her rich personality. Thus he mythologizes the masses via mythical figures (Ebner writes of his *Lichtmythologie*):⁶⁷ not only do its members have faces, these faces are the profound, steely, timeless visages of monks, nuns, dictators and other charismatic figures. Everyone possesses individuality, whether as a sign of divine creation or Enlightenment: in lieu of the ‘big, vacuous, round O’ – as Robert Musil describes the modern individual⁶⁸ - *Metamorphose* offers a hopeful, indeed messianic pedagogy of respect (if not denial, since here, no entanglements

⁶⁵ Ebner (2002) 39.

⁶⁶ Kracauer’s assertion that Lerski’s characters are ‘fictions’ would appear to reflect his notion of the individual as expressed in “The Mass Ornament” (1927), in which he abandons the notion of an idealized *Vollindividuum*. Because he no longer believes in this idealized, autonomous form of human individuality except as a mythic ideal, he calls it – and Lerski’s images of man – fictive. Cf. Jonsson (2010) 289- 290 on Kracauer’s changing theory of the individual.

⁶⁷ Ebner (2002) 56.

⁶⁸ Jonsson (2010) 289.

compromise realization of personality), and an aesthetic solution to the problem of the modern individual.

In taking on the persona and agenda of humanist photographer, and an old master painter as inspiration, Lerski traversed an aesthetic and conceptual minefield, attempting to avoid pictorial tropes like *Verunschärfung* and ‘*Grenzverwischung*’⁶⁹ typically associated with *Innerlichkeit* and subjectivity (and Rembrandt) but already considered ‘embarrassing’ for the history of photography.⁷⁰ At the same time, however, Lerski sought to avoid the equally unsavory realist photographic practices associated with the ‘*Fotomaton*’ like reportage and documentary on the other.⁷¹ Thus Lerski, as Curt Glaser’s introduction to *Köpfe* makes clear, searches for something like a photographic Third Way which can secure photography as art, yet can also overcome the mechanistic quality of the ‘*tüchtigen Bildjournalisten*.’ The pretenses of the objective report toward an apparently ‘objective similiarity,’ has, notes Glaser, “been driving us mad for a long time already.”⁷² Lerski endeavored to treat the subject uniquely rather than as a horde of ‘statistically-mechanically captured details’ which would reduce the sitter to meaninglessness. On this level he aimed to eschew empiricist photography while also abandoning the outmoded techniques and aesthetic of ‘*bildmäßige Fotografie*’ - empiricist photography’s formerly formidable foe.⁷³

⁶⁹ Cf. Glaser in Lerski (1931) 4.

⁷⁰ Recall that in disparaging photography’s acute realism, Lady Eastlake in Trachtenberg (1980) commented that any Rembrandtian quality to the photograph was eliminated. Pictorialism in photography marks a movement which sought to acquaint the technical medium with the spirit and aesthetic feeling of paintings like Rembrandt’s.

⁷¹ Cf. Glaser in Lerski (1931) 5.

⁷² Glaser in Lerski (1931) 10 notes, “*Aber man wird seit langem schon irre an jener scheinbar objektiven Ähnlichkeit, deren sich die Fotografie zu rühmen pflegt.*”

⁷³ Cf. Ullrich (2002) on pictorial photography.

How Lerski endeavors to express essentially ‘painterly’ pictorialist ideals of interiority and profound humanity while pursuing a ‘hard,’ sharp aesthetic (‘*der höchsten erreichbaren Schärfe und Genauigkeit*’) associated not only with New Objectivity shall be described below.⁷⁴ The conceptual complications which evolve shall, as noted, be discussed in the context of Brecht’s *Lehrstück* about the individual and the collective.

2.2. Light as Vehicle for Typology-Critique

Lerski’s artificial *Lichtkunst* exposes realism as an elaborate construction to beg questions like: who decided what kind of light is natural? How did flat light come to mean true light? Why are objects under the latter held to be more accurate in their forms than objects cast in light from above, below, or the side? Though the answers no doubt reside in the relative consistency of flat light versus the fluctuations in degree, intensity, and angle of directed, *chiaroscuro* lighting, there is nothing more true (ontologically) about objects in diffuse light than in sharply directed light. Flat light is merely more conducive to standardized depictions, hence to the aesthetic and rhetoric of objectivity: it better creates the conditions of ‘inter-subjective verifiability,’ as Hempel calls the objective foundations of (scientific) truths.⁷⁵ These standard depictions, contends Lerski, cannot accommodate the personality of real, subjective individuals, however.

Obviously, such a *Lichtbildner* can reveal considerable virtues in the context of Fischer’s instrumentalized knowledge of the Other, or even Sander’s use of portraiture to validate a melodramatic, anti-modern, Spenglerian doctrine of Decline. Without subsequent theorizing or cosmos-construction, Lerski uses light to render physiognomy

⁷⁴ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 14.

alien; his felt achievement was the “*Umformung seiner Modelle,*” the “*Neugestaltung ihrer Gesichter*”;⁷⁶ hence the penetration or even obliteration of taxonomic realism and physiognomy as arguably fetishized systems of correspondences and pseudo-truths.

Lerski does with light what other photographers – like Marta Astfalck-Vietz of his own generation - achieved via props, costumes, and gestures:⁷⁷ he destabilized identity, rendered it fluid and changing, as a function of contexts and performances. The iconic post-modern incarnation of such deconstructive practices is of course Cindy Sherman. Each photographer posits identity as a question of theatrics, not unrelated from film or the theatre, from costume, lighting, or gesture.⁷⁸

Yet in significant contradistinction to these artists, Lerski still felt himself photographing something *beyond* or beneath physiognomy that was ultimately truer: “It seemed to me as if I saw inside the man, as if I could make visible the invisible,” he recollected of his first experiments in portraiture. “From these first experiments I became a man possessed.”⁷⁹ In other words, Lerski engages not in happy, deconstructive play, but in the intense exploration of his own probing subjectivity. For Lerski, there was still an

⁷⁵ See “Carl Hempel and the Philosophy of Typology” in Chapter 1.

⁷⁶ Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak (1982) 8.

⁷⁷ On Marta Astfalck-Vietz see http://www.stk.niedersachsen.de/live/live.php?navigation_id=1196&article_id=2566&psmand=6: “*Sie war Modell und Kostümbildnerin, Choreographin und Bühnenbildnerin, Beleuchterin und Fotografin zugleich. Sie inszenierte sich als ‘Südseeinsulanerin,’ ‘Geisha’ und ‘Biedermeier-Dame.’ Das Repertoire dieser Rollenwechsel reicht dabei von der Verfremdung bis zum surrealen Traumbild und wirkt noch heute aktuell.*”

⁷⁸ Though not employed consistently, Lerski also used simple props in some of his portraits of Uschatz. Their effects are uncanny. In image 587 in Ebner (2002), for instance, the sitter wears a dark cloth around the forehead that drapes behind the neck and shoulder: Uschatz, elsewhere striking in his athletic, even aryan appearance, appears here as the quintessential Eastener. Indeed the compositional similarities between this image and several of Lerski’s ‘Arabs’ is striking. Cf. Ebner (2002) 51 who notes the similarities between figures in the *Metamorphose* and Lerski’s early film promotional portrait (‘*ein Rollenportät*’) of the actor Carl de Vogt for *Ahasver* (1917). In the next image, 588, the same cloth frames Uschatz face into an icon of Catholic spirituality: a monk, nun, or even diabolical figure, the Western religious overtones of the portrait are unmistakable.

⁷⁹ *Image*, volume 10, number 2, February 1961. (page numbers unavailable.)

internal and socially independent essence, a foundation, on which individual identity could be built, however protean or elusive.

Needless to say, Lerski's unorthodox techniques like the use of up to sixteen differently positioned mirrors on music stands, failed to universally enchant. His wife, herself a portraitist and descendent of a prominent American photographic family, was hardly impressed by Lerski's first images: "The nose is in shadow,"⁸⁰ she complained of an early portrait of a friend, as if all meaning and aesthetic import had thereby been extinguished. With traditional portraits, as with the typological, shadows were taboo; for Lerski, however, they suggest the visually expressive function of body parts: we see the effects of light on the nose, not the essence of the nose itself. It is a medium for light, not a signifier of racial, social, or historical truths. The novel and dramatic use of light and shadow indeed carve out a third way with which to avoid the '*gnadenloser Realismus*' of much photography, and the romantic obstruction of details in pictorial photography – and its anti-modern spirit.⁸¹

It is thus not extraneous to note that Lerski's photographs represent the first discussed in this dissertation where shadows fall on noses. Of course if Fischer had produced serial images in differing light of his sitters, his bio-genetic, essentialist claims would have lost considerable credulity.⁸² Finally, Lerski's statement on shadows reiterates the oft-proclaimed arbitrariness of classificatory traits, i.e., his photographic practice asks why the researcher, in her attempt to categorize types, should gauge skin tone rather than foot size, or hair texture as opposed to neck-length.⁸³ Lerski writes that

⁸⁰ *Image*, volume 10, number 2, February 1961. (page numbers unavailable).

⁸¹ Cf. Ullrich (2002) 385 who quotes Baudelaire.

⁸² Cf. "Aesthetic Meaning and Psychic Effects of Fischer's Sharp, Typological Portraits" in Chapter 2.

⁸³ Cf. Jackson (2004) 56-60.

Diffuses Licht, das keine Schatten wirft und alles gleichmäßig aufhellt, zeigt das Objekt flach, undifferenziert und bedeutungslos. [...] Gerichtetes Licht wirft Schatten. Es kommt darauf an, worauf man Licht wirft und was man in den Schatten setzt: aus beiden entsteht die Aussage.⁸⁴

For Lerski, it is the qualitative effect of light and where it falls that determines meaning, but never the quantifiable terms of the body on its own.

With *Metamorphose*, planned already in 1930, Lerski brought this idea of penetrating the surface of the face to its peak: on his terrace in Tel Aviv, he found himself obsessed with the idea of using the region's hard sunlight to penetrate the surface. Lerski considered it his *Hauptwerk*,⁸⁵ and absolute proof that the photographer could create according to his own will. In more modest terms, Lerski's project was simply one of seeing light: filmmaker and friend Walter Marti reports that it was Lerski who taught him how to 'see light' and work with it, rather than merely with color, action, movement.⁸⁶

Though Lerski's photographic methods and formalist pretensions are clearly caught up in an already dated debate concerning photography's status as art,⁸⁷ his determination to create and sculpt the human face through light nevertheless did much to annihilate traditional notions of 'physiognomy' as a transparent, reliable, or even relevant domain. His striking, unorthodox portraiture also provides a pointed critique of realism⁸⁸ in that the multiple mirrors and their refractions recall metaphors of non-identity⁸⁹ rather

⁸⁴ Ebner (2002) 13 cites Lerski.

⁸⁵ Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak (1982) 17.

⁸⁶ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

⁸⁷ Cf. Kühn (2005) 202-206 on how Lerski's participation in the 1930 exhibit '*Gezeichnet oder geknipst?*' at the Kunsthalle in Berlin arguably exacerbated tendencies to insist on photography as a fine art.

⁸⁸ Cf. Krazna-Krausz in Eskildsen (1982) 9: "...sein wichtigster Beitrag für uns ist die Erkenntnis, daß die Fotografie – ebenso wie andere Medien – Wahrheit und Fiktion, Realität und Fantasie, lebendige Gesichter und deren Masken gleichermaßen vermitteln kann."

⁸⁹ Cf. Richter (2002) for a reading of a portrait of Theodor Adorno sitting with a camera on a tripod behind his back but faces a mirror. Adorno holds a shutter attachment and shoots an uncomfortable-looking self-

than the dubious art or science of reading and representing character.⁹⁰ His consistent concern with the orchestration or staging (*Inszenierung*)⁹¹ of his sitters implies from the perspective of typology a subversion of essential categorizations and an acceptance – even a celebration- of human mystery and uncategorizability – a penchant for myth and a repudiation of the cult of Realism: “*In einem Gesicht ist alles, es kommt nur darauf an, wohin das Licht fällt.*”⁹²

Lerski’s mantra recalls his statements in a 1953 article in which he explains that for him, the world represents a “*Verwandlung ins Endlose*” in which man acts as “*unübersehbares Wesen.*”⁹³ In part for this reason, Lerski reportedly emphasized that one cannot express a person in a single image.⁹⁴ This statement reads like a treatise of *Lebens*-philosophical photography intent on deconstructing the “*Ist-Zustand.*”⁹⁵ Where rivers and moving water comprise Simmel’s symbolic lexicon, light sustains Lerski’s. When compared with the classificatory logic of Typology which Hempel describes as essentially “*Either / Or,*” the critical power of *Metamorphose* becomes clear.”

portrait, the odd angles and refractions of which recall Lerski’s own elaborate constellations. Richter convincingly interprets the portrait as visual treatise on Adorno’s concept of non-identity.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Image* vol. 10, number 2, February 1961. Sidney Allen already in 1913 criticized Lerski’s disinterest in ‘*Charakterstudien,*’ (Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak) 7-8. Allen referred to Lerski as ‘*bis auf die Fingerspitzen teutonsich*’ – a reference which given Allen’s emphasis on the ‘*erfindungskraft*’ of his portraits and Lerski’s occupation in the theatre –likely refers to the photographer’s debt to German Expressionism.

⁹¹ Cf. Eskildsen (1982) 8 on Lerski’s early practice in this mode.

⁹² Lerski’s friend Alfons Himmelreich recalls this as being Lerski’s common pronouncement. Cf. Eskildsen (1982) 19.

⁹³ Cf. Lerski in Eskildsen (1982) 20.

⁹⁴ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

⁹⁵ Cf. Ebner (2002) 71: “*...wie fremd für Lerski die Vorstellung eines Menschenbildes war, das sich mit dem ‘Ist-Zustand’ begnügte oder den Akzent stärker auf den Akt der Auswahl und der konstatierenden Aufnahme legte.*”

2.2.1. Sharpness and Photographic Alienation: 'The Camera Eye'

Lerski's critique of human types as convenient, Procrustean images of man emerges on account of the extreme sharpness of his images— a sharpness, (as discussed earlier via Ullrich's "*Geschichte der Unschärfe*") typically more appropriate to empirical investigation than to spiritual musing.⁹⁶ Here however it gives way to disorientingly rich detail which rebuffs the salience of Types.

Kracauer's comments on Lerski's *Metamorphose* take place in the context of his discussion of 'Propaganda' in *Theory of Film*, and suggest that the photographer's deconstructive potential emerges in fact on account of the sharpness and detail of his images. For Kracauer, Lerski's work debunks filmic realism, i.e. the idea that documentary films are plainly 'true to fact' and represent irrefutable evidence; that pictures 'taken on the spot cannot lie.' *Metamorphose*, according to Kracauer, illustrates the semantic magic of lighting as an interpretive tool:⁹⁷

A change in lighting, and one and the same face appears in a new guise. (This is confirmed by a fascinating experiment which the German photographer Helmar Lerski made in Palestine during the thirties. His model, he told me in Paris, was a young man with a nondescript face who posed on the roof of a house. Lerski took over a hundred pictures of that face from a very short distance, each time subtly changing the lights with the aid of screens. Big close-ups, these pictures detailed the texture of the skin so that cheeks and brows turned into a maze of inscrutable runes reminiscent of soil formations, as they appear from an airplane. The result was amazing. None of the photographs recalled the model; and all of them differed from each other. Out of the original face there arose, evoked by the varying lights, a hundred different faces, among them those of a hero, a prophet, a peasant, a dying soldier, an old woman, a monk. Did these portraits, if portraits they were, anticipate the metamorphoses which the young man would undergo in the future? Or were they just plays of light whimsically projecting on his face dreams and experiences forever alien to

⁹⁶ See "Aesthetic Meaning and Psychic Effects of Fischer's Sharp, Typological Portraits" in Chapter 2.

⁹⁷ Here Kracauer writes of lighting much as Barthes in *Image-Music-Text* writes of 'Trick Effects': "in no other treatment does connotation assume so completely the 'objective' mask of denotation." Barthes (1997) 20.

him? Proust would have delighted in Lerski's experiment with its unfathomable implications.)⁹⁸

Though one can only speculate as to which implications of Lerski's project would have most delighted Proust,⁹⁹ *Metamorphose* resonates with what Sarah Danius calls the 'camera-eye' scene in *Remembrance of Things Past*, in which Marcel sees his living grandmother as 'a photograph.' Having caught a glimpse of the woman reading in a chair without her knowing of his presence, the narrator sees her in entirely new ways – ways which contrast greatly with the traditional, comfortable manner in which one invariably perceives loved ones in daily life. For in daily life, they are

in the animated system, the perpetual motion of our incessant love for them, which, before allowing the images that their faces present to reach us, seizes them in its vortex and flings them back upon the idea that we have always had of them, makes them adhere to it, coincide with it.¹⁰⁰

Indeed Marcel experiences her as a '*Schreck*' much like critics of realist photography experience the world through the mechanistic medium of photography.¹⁰¹ The cause lies in the detachment of visual detail from subjective knowledge.

The passage recalls Wilhelm Meister's assertion, discussed in the context of Fischer's sharpness, that, through glasses, "*die schärfer gesehene Welt harmoniert nicht*

⁹⁸ Kracauer (1997) 162. Kracauer's question, "Did these portraits, if portraits they were, anticipate the metamorphoses which the young man would undergo in the future?" seems to hint at the project's Expressionist tenor by suggesting its affinity to Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung* (1918); Kracauer speculates as to whether Lerski presents the drama of Uschatz as the drama of Toller's Friederich, who as an Everyman assumes various roles throughout his transformation into a New Man. These roles include that of a soldier, an onlooker in the hospital, a priest, a prostitute's customer, a prisoner, a wanderer, and a mountain climber.

⁹⁹ Cf. Barnouw (1994) 180 – 181 for a discussion of Kracauer's Lerski passage, particularly with respect to Kracauer's Proustian circumspection. Cf. Sykora (1983) 21-23 on Proust's principle of '*Wiederholung*,' and especially '*variierende Wiederholung*,' '*aufdeckende Wiederholung*' and '*Wiederholung als Perspektivierung*' in the same novel. These are principles which find clear echoes in Lerski's *Metamorphose*.

¹⁰⁰ Danius (2002) 14 cites *Remembrance of Things Past*, 2:141.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Ullrich (2002) 384 who cites Achim von Arnim on the negative experience of seeing closely and clearly, as felt after the mid-18th century (i.e. with the new trend of wearing glasses.)

mit meinem Innern."¹⁰² Yet here, Proust critically analyses the molding of perception to the demands of personal subjectivity whereby visual appearances are made to fit the frame of our emotional categorizations (here it is the procrustean character of our own emotions which takes on tyrannical qualities by fitting phenomena into their own categories: here, Proust and Wilhelm Meister occupy opposite sides of a debate on perceptual truths). The camera, however, alienates, so that the 'photo image' and the 'memory image' (central also to Kracauer's work) stand in a relationship of antithesis.

The erosion of this antithesis was, of course, the aim of pictorial photography and its attempts to replicated 'natural vision' despite its mechanical nature. Pictorialism rejected photographic detail and sharpness out of fidelity to human perception and *Wahrnehmungsbilder*.¹⁰³ In pictorial photography's hazy, foggy, or soft images, physiognomy is nearly entirely effaced, while with Lerski, it is larger than life, arial, and abstract yet profoundly expressive.

Though Lerski's *Metamorphose* centers not on a loved one, as with Proust, but its opposite - an anonymous being who would have conventionally passed for a particular social type in everyday life - the effects of photographic alienation associated with the 'camera eye' are nonetheless the same. What we *expect* to see in the person is foiled by the visual details one actually perceives; details which the medium and the

¹⁰² Cf. Ullrich (2002) 383.

¹⁰³ Ullrich (2002) 397 even calls their images '*Erinnerungsbilder*' and '*Vorstellungsbilder*' to express this correspondence between photographic vision and true, physiological vision. Since Ullrich makes the case for pictorialism in this essay, he is less interested in possible critiques of photography as memory image. Proust's 'camera eye' scene, however suggests the extent to which pictorial photography relied on viewers' preconceived and forever un-challenged notions of its subject matter, not merely natural or physiological vision. Kühn's *Mädchenakt* is blurry so that the girl in question can look as appealing as the girl (or grandmother) in the viewer's own imagination; indeed whether Kühn's sitter is old or young is actually indiscernible. Pictorialism, one could say, never challenges or disrupts the viewer's own worldview, but forever validates it. This works because, as Ullrich (2002) 398 notes, "...*das Bild zeigt das allgemeine Schema einer Szenerie, gleichsam ein Grunderlebnis, das jeder für sich ausschmücken kann.*"

photographer's technique compels one to see.¹⁰⁴ Lerski's goal, then, despite the art and beauty rhetoric notable in the promotions of Glaser and others, was not to create harmonious images adept at aesthetic contemplation alone. Though Lerski's portraits aimed to unsettle our perceptions and especially our stereotypes regarding the masses, Lerski, like the pictorialists, sought to transform 'superficiality' or 'surface' into 'deep moods.'¹⁰⁵ Though for Proust the alienating effect of the camera-eye results from its objectivity, healthy alienation for Lerski is marked by the infusion of subjectivity into an overly-objective world.¹⁰⁶

With Lerski, pores of skin, individual brow-hairs, freckles, and sweat pearls are cast in a metallic patina while natural and unnatural light reflects from multiple directions to mold the features of the face into sculpture; Lerski is a 'dermatological portraitist.'¹⁰⁷ Lerski's close-ups leave no aspect of the face 'softer' than another: though details are obscured by shadows, hard lines drawn with highlights and lowlights define the facial forms presented in the images. Where sharpness in Fischer was '*aufdringlich*' (importunate), sharpness in Lerski is alienating in the sense of acutely disruptive of norms and common experience.

Lerski's close-ups disorient the viewer while typologists opted for standardized formats that would reiterate the comfortable physical distance maintained by individuals

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Danius (2002)14.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ullrich (2002) 394 on pictorial photography.

¹⁰⁶ In this, Lerski appears to follow a formula Langbehn (1890) 6 borrows from Novalis: "He who is suffering from objectivity can only be healed by being prescribed subjectivity." There is, however, no indication that Lerski read Langbehn, and certainly no traces of the art historian's xenophobic nationalism in Lerski's photographic work or writings.

¹⁰⁷ Ebner (2002) 8.

in Western culture.¹⁰⁸ Though one critic notes that extreme enlargements are usually ‘more successful with plant and mineral subjects,’ than with human countenances,¹⁰⁹ Lerski’s subject-matter and the portrait genre gain the critical advantage of eroding the distance of the standard ‘ethnographic gaze’ or the ‘physiognomic gaze’ whose aim is seldom associated with love or inclusion, but exclusion and violence. “Practicing physiognomics for the promotion of human love” was for Lichtenberg, in his famous assault on Lavater, like “ravaging and burning to promote the love of God.”¹¹⁰ The debate is one which Richard Loewenberg revived in the crisis years 1932 – 1933, arguing that with the science of physiognomics as practiced in the 1930’s, people do not formulate their interpretations of other human beings “out of responsibility and love,” but rather for the purpose of “attaining mastery” over them.¹¹¹ And indeed, concern with physiognomy strikes one as the first casualty of Lerski’s deconstructive *Lichtkunst*. Lerski’s radical animation of his sitters makes them invulnerable to pseudo-scientific reductions and asserts their utter autonomy. Against the background of physiognomy and its purported will toward overempowerment and self-empowerment, Lerski’s *Metamorphose* indeed signals a humanist universalism that bears little relation to the fractured political reality of Weimar.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ As a rule in both Sander and Fischer, images are composed so that sitters are close enough to the lens to be seen clearly, yet far enough away so as to not threaten the viewer or invade his or her sense of space. They are at a distance appropriate to observation, but also at a distance that is socially comfortable.

¹⁰⁹ Sterne (1932) 16-20.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Gray (2004) 9 on “*Der Streit um die Physiognomik*.”

¹¹¹ Gray (2004) 9.

¹¹² Cf. Jonsson (2010) 296.

2.2.2. Lerski's Slow Cinematic Erosion of Stasis

As Johannes Fabian has argued, it is the standard and monological quality of typological representations which contribute to their profound sense of stasis;¹¹³ in portraiture, one gains the sense that 'sitters' never change or develop, but remain one essential Type over time. In its attention to change and development of Uschatz as a spiritual being, *Metamorphose* offers a dynamic conception of human character which can be considered cinematic.

Perhaps on account of his status as a '*ständiger Grenzgänger*' between the modern media of film and photography,¹¹⁴ one sees in Lerski's multi-layered, multi-perspectival use of light something that is changing, non-static. Translated conceptually, identity is on the move, just as movement for film is the "alpha and omega" of the medium.¹¹⁵ Ebner describes Lerski's still images as '*aufwendig*' and '*verschachtelt*' and notes that the lack of a discernable primary light source can 'irritate' the viewer profoundly.¹¹⁶ It is as if movement and sequence has been collected up and compressed into still images, creating highly unnatural views in a quasi-cubist vein: time is piled up and layered over a subject in one still but visually contradictory image. Light emerges from each side as if reflecting the moving surface of a body of water. Formal compositions of individual portraits are also often diagonal, thus reiterating a sense of movement. In this context, Lerski's seriality offers a spiritual correlate to those photographic series geared toward the exploration and dissection of motion: much like

¹¹³ Cf. Fabian (1983) 131.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ebner (2002) 6 and Horak (1997) ch. 3.

¹¹⁵ Kracauer (1997) 158.

¹¹⁶ Ebner (2002) 13-14.

the trotting of Edward Muybridge's horses, Uschatz's personality is presented as a morphological flip-book.

If Lerski's series is lit filmicly and structured sequentially, the photographer's point, however, was not to embrace avant-garde-like the urbanized tempo of the times whose '*Schockwirkung*' film so expeditiously mimicked as a training grounds.¹¹⁷ Lerski's is a slow seriality, one which erodes stasis associated with essentialism, but in doing so promotes intense, reflective engagement. The experience of looking is thus more akin to reading than to the physiological, kinesthetic effects of film that result from its "dynamic optic essence."¹¹⁸ For Lerski (as for the later serial photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher) we imagine film being 'too fast.'¹¹⁹ Finally, with Lerski, there are no 'resonance effects' as Kracauer theorizes them: instead, the subtly changing series of faces focuses and steadies the mind into a meditation-like state. Serial photography, like the serial painting of his contemporary Alexi Jawlensky, thus amounts to something like a religious ritual; the repetition of Uschatz's faces resembles a messianic experience.¹²⁰ This is suggested by Lerski's confession of veritable photographic obsession and possession noted earlier, and the quasi-religious quality of his work will be discussed briefly in the following section on the photographer's expressionist leanings.

Though classificatory logic plays no role in *Metamorphose*, we have seen that the intense, quiet, cognitive seeing that Typology inspires and requires remains fully intact.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Benjamin (1936) "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 217 – 214.

¹¹⁸ Here again I borrow from Kracauer's filmic discourse in Kracauer (1997) 157 – 172 ("The Spectator"). Cf. Brückle (1997) 4 on the changed status of reading and literature in Weimar modernity.

¹¹⁹ Dobbe (2001) 38 cites the Bechers on *Filmbilder* and their contrast to their own still photographs. The photographers report film being 'zu schnell.'

¹²⁰ Cf. Sykora (1983) 179 on seriality as *Heilserfahrung*.

As Krazna-Krausz's reproachful comments on coolness suggested, Lerski's mission was to retrain and re-discover an older perceptual apparatus and its painstaking attempts to penetrate surface and *identify with* others, rather than merely *identify*, i.e. define and navigate them. *Metamorphose* aims not toward the assimilation of the sensory apparatus to new conditions, but toward the recovery of older, quieter perceptive modes. Intellectual organs more than sense organs are called into play; 'powers of reasoning' – albeit in their more emotional variations like *Verstehen* or even empathy- are engaged more than 'visceral faculties.'¹²¹

It is fitting that Lerski's most sustained and dramatic attempt to invoke such faculties – one could say to promote *Erfahrung* or 'reflective experience'¹²² - takes place on a warm, sunny terrace in Palestine, above the bustling traffic of the no-doubt busy Tel-Aviv streets, thus leaving far behind the cool culture of Weimar and especially the racial politics of the Nazi regime. This specific photographic space signals respite from a 'life world' which, as Jonsson describes, "has grown so dense, so rigid, and so intrusive, that it effectively prevents every one from expressing his or her individuality."¹²³

Lerski's erosion through light and movement of physiognomy as a coherent system is arguably responsible for the transformative quality of the images, and the impression among many viewers that "they're never merely types": light rather than the inherent quality of physical features themselves determines meaning. As a reviewer of a recent exhibit of Lerski's work in Berlin in 2009 noted, sitters "appear luminous, alive,

¹²¹ Cf. Kracauer, (1997) 158 – 159 "Impact on the Senses."

¹²² Cf. Benjamin (1939) 155 – 201 ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire") on *Erfahrung* as an older mode of integrated experience.

¹²³ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 285.

and after all these years, shockingly present”¹²⁴ – a quality commonly associated with Rembrandt’s particular kind of realism as well: though highly detailed, it is praised for avoiding ‘taxidermical inertness’ at all costs.¹²⁵

The living quality described here and its effect of ‘presence’ differs greatly from the temporality of typological works like Fischer’s, Sander’s and – as briefly discussed – Lendvai-Dirksen’s – all of which operate preservationally in the attempt to halt Civilization on the wane or to capture Decline photographically. Their portraits are artifacts. Like film, however, little in Lerski’s work suggests Barthes’ photographic *noeme*, the ‘this has been’ – a “superimposition” of “reality and the past”¹²⁶ common also to allochronic constructions of time (as discussed via Fabian in the Fischer chapter.)¹²⁷ If death plays little role in our understanding of Uschatz and his myriad photographic appearances (i.e., if *Metamorphose* is anything but a death mask or a *momento mori*, and the fact that Uschatz once lived irrelevant to our experience of the work), the portraits remain somehow unknowable and open to fresh analysis and experience.

Just as Lerski’s project asserts that the *Passbild* cannot define the individual, neither can photographs of social ‘types,’ a point which Lerski’s earlier *Köpfe des Alltags* did much to maintain.

Mit Staunen und Ergriffenheit werden wir gewahr, welche Kraft und Fülle edlen Formgehalts in solchen Antlitzen geborgen sein kann. Mit welchem Erfolg, Ernst und redlich geübte Tätigkeit, Sorgen, Leid, primitiver Lebenskreis Gesichter prägen kann.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Aletti, Vince, “Light is Might” in *The New Yorker*, May 17, 2010.

¹²⁵ Cf. Schama (1999) 470 on Rembrandt’s ‘Self-portrait at the Age of Thirty-four,’ c. 1640. Schama notes: “Though the degree of attention verges on the zoological – the glossy plumage and the glittering eye of the *rara avis* leaving nothing omitted – there is no danger of this creature being seen as taxidermically inert.”

¹²⁶ Barthes (1984, 1981) 76.

¹²⁷ Cf. Barthes (1977) on photography’s *noeme*. The idea that photography and film have little in common, especially with regard to temporality is relatively common.

¹²⁸ Kühn (2005) 222.

The emphasis here is on heretofore hidden faces, repressed expression and underestimated pathos: Lerski brings out expressionist values in real human sitters.

In the following section I intend to locate Lerski's anti-typological posture generically within 1920's – 1930's visual culture. In making the case for the Expressionist quality of this anti-typological critique, I read *Metamorphose* in the context of some key tropes, aesthetic conventions, and concepts of this movement, as well as against other contemporary photographic movements like Constructivism and New Objectivity. To grasp Lerski's expressionist mode is to hone in on his *Menschenbild*, and to establish one analytic pole of *Metamorphose* as a complex photographic statement about the individual in society.

2.3. Lerski's Expressionistic Third Way

On account of the dramatic, 'alienating,' effects of Lerski's *Lichtkunst*, the photographer's fundamentally 'un-naturalistic' aesthetic should be clear:¹²⁹ standardized human 'types' encountered in everyday life can, under the proper light, erupt into polyvalent transformations before our eyes but especially before the alienating experiments of the 'camera-eye.' For obvious reasons related to the formal methods and aesthetic of this transformation, Lerski's un-naturalism has thus been associated with

¹²⁹ Ebner (2002) 69 – 77 makes the case for Lerski's unnatural aesthetic via reference to standard 'Fotohandbücher' of the era, such as Franz Fiedler's 1934 'Fotohandbuch' which offers the following advice: "Das Bildnis soll ein Dokument von unbestechlicher Naturtreue sein, neben der selbstverständlichen Ähnlichkeit scharf und deutlich die lebende Oberflächenstruktur wiedergeben, zugleich eine physiognomische Veranschaulichung des 'Innen-Menschen' geben und nicht einer schön beleuchteten Wachspuppe gleichen." Reference here to nicely lit wax figures devoid of inner life could come straight from the mouths of Lerski's critics.

New Vision and other techno-centric modernist movements, yet on a philosophical and conceptual level, it resonates far more deeply with Expressionism; this although the a-political ‘faith’ of this spiritual-aesthetic movement seemed anachronistic after the war.

Nonetheless, Expressionism appeared to react against everything for which photography stood: “*Like any God of this kind Expressionism is not to be photographed and not to be defined.*”¹³⁰ Here Ludwig Marcuse suggests that the dramatic aesthetic and metaphysical - spiritual ideals of the movement were decidedly at odds with the document and the objective report of photographic realism, not to mention the mechanical nature of photography itself. Unlike melodrama as discussed in the previous chapter, Expressionism can live from vision alone, and can do without the ‘document.’¹³¹ One thus notes the absence of ‘Expressionist photography’ as a term or genre.

At the same time that ‘expressionist photography’ can appear so oxymoronic, however, Marcuse’s above reflection on Expressionism’s *opposition to definition* suggests the movement’s beef with typology and taxonomy: classificatory systems which in chapter 1 I discussed as fundamental offshoots of concept definition. For typology and taxonomy, as discussed in chapter 1, comprise definitive schemes concerned with the ordering and structuring of relationships between like phenomena according class and subclass.¹³² Nothing, it appears, could seem more at odds with Expressionism than photographic portrait typologies – an assertion which Helmut Lethen’s study of New Objectivity culture would support.¹³³

¹³⁰ Cf. Marcuse in Raabe (1974) 299: “It was a hotch-potch [sic!] of tendencies, names, and associations.”

¹³¹ Cf. Brooks (1976) 9.

¹³² Cf. Chapter 1 section 3 of this dissertation.

¹³³ For Lethen (2002) cool culture evolves distinctly as a rejection of Expressionist shame culture, and offers antidotes to most of Expressionism’s tropes, concepts, and conventions.

Lethen's own discussion of New Objectivity and Expressionist portraiture should therefore help make the case for Lerski's Expressionism. Indeed, if we follow Lethen on the difference between Expressionist and New Objectivity portraits, Lerski's would appear to figure as 'expressive surfaces open to internal stimulation' associated with the former rather than the 'closing off of the face by the head' notable in the latter. Lethen notes that in New Objectivity images, "The interior of the characters becomes opaque; the hat pulled down over the face [a characteristic feature of new objectivity paintings] prevents expression from coming into view at all."¹³⁴

But although nothing conceals the many faces of Uschatz, Lerski nonetheless complicates this scheme since the sitter's expression is a function not of *internal* stimulation, but of the heat and sunlight on Lerski's terrace, the unruly constellation of mirrors and cameras surrounding the chair on which Uschatz sat, and Lerski's protracted process of arriving at myriad camera angles and close ups. Expression, in other words, was not Uschatz's own, but a thing to which he was subjected; indeed the sitter himself maintained the same pursed lips and distant gaze in nearly every portrait while Lerski 'sculpted' him through light. As with Duchenne de Boulogne's famous 1860's photographic documentation of his facial electro-shock experiments, Lerski figured as the active producer of his sitter's expressions. In each case, the sitter acted as expressive 'material' on which to work: in Lerski's words, he is "*Menschenmaterial*," and "*Rohstoff*." Though Lerski would no doubt prefer a Rembrandtian simile in lieu of a neuro-physiological one, the domineering force of Lerski's agency is indeed a central component of his portraiture. In figuring *Metamorphose* in dialectical terms this agency

¹³⁴ Lethen (2002)140. That Lethen writes about painting rather than photography hardly seems consequential, especially considering the dearth of anything like 'expressionist photography,' as mentioned

becomes decisive, and shall be discussed in the following section on Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, in particular with respect to the three 'Gefühlsingenieure' of the play.

Although Lerski was a photographer rather than a painter, and although his style formally resembles more radical photographic practices of the era, the following comparison between *Metamorphose* and a similar work of 'serial' photography highlights some fundamental differences.

2.3.1. Lerski's 'Non-Synthetic' Portrait of Expression

Despite certain similarities between Lerski's 'non-synthetic' *Metamorphose* and Rodchenko's portrait series of the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky – a constructivist project which rejects single image portraiture - i.e. 'synthetic portraiture,' in favor of the snapshot¹³⁵- Lerski critically opposes objectivity, 'newspaper' or journalistic photography, and snap-shooting with a force equal to Rodchenko's advocacy of these same 'truly modern' phenomena.

In his well-know essay "Against the Synthetic Portrait, For the Snapshot," (1928) Rodchenko lauds the extensive file of snapshots of Lenin as a safeguard against the leader's 'idealization or falsification' - an idealization which appears to be the *raison d'être* of Lerski's *Lichtbildnerei*, particularly in the context of its concern with elevating members of the masses discussed earlier. As Lerski's friend Walter Marti reports on Lerski's views, it was the *banalization* of the individual which the photographer feared most:

Alle Machthaber haben ein Interesse zu verflachen, haben Interesse, das Individuum in die Masse einzubauen, in diffuses Licht, damit man die

earlier.

¹³⁵ Rodchenko (1989) 238.

Massen bewegen kann; *es sei eine Schande, wie die Zeitungen die Menschen zeigen.*¹³⁶

This is perhaps Lerski's clearest statement of socio-political conviction concerning the masses and their representation (albeit filtered through a friend), and in it he holds fast to the ideal of the autonomous individual. Unlike sociologists like Simmel or 'radical' social thinkers like Brecht, Lerski views the fragmentation of the individual as fundamentally *untrue* - a manipulative hoax promulgated by those in power. If modern life and capitalism reduces the individual to a *quantité négligeable*, to a grain of dust,¹³⁷ it is only the product of manipulations of those in power which compels it (not modern capitalist society itself, for instance). For Lerski, it is the artist's job to free the individual from trite and simplistic representations that seek to reduce his complexity and richness; this unleashing or unmasking is the providence of the artistic sensibility (a sentiment which buttresses Lerski's veritable diatribe, cited earlier, against the offenses of '*diffuses Licht*.') Social problems are thus essentially representational and therefore require neither new theories of the individual, nor stark political *Führung*, but the Artist to re-present the obscured individual for what he really is – thus to return us to old humanist ideals of (high) culture.¹³⁸

Where constructivists played up the machine, Lerski did the opposite, advising those critical of photography not to get hung up on the medium's mechanical qualities:

“Stoßen Sie sich nicht an der Maschine! Es ist ja auch hier der Geist, der die Werte

¹³⁶ Ebner (2002) 98. Italics mine.

¹³⁷ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 285-287 citing Simmel's "Metropolis and Mental Life." Lerski's view thus differs from those Simmel, for whom the new, compromised position of the individual in not only imagined and exploited, but also real.

¹³⁸ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 282-284 on disparate solutions to the problem of individuality loss in the first decades of 20th century Germany.

schaftt...”¹³⁹ *Geist* is thus not only the subject of *Metamorphose* (Uschatz’s) but the purported source of its creation as well: Glaser assures his readers that Lerski works as a photographic artist since “human Spirit and Will render the camera their instrument.”¹⁴⁰ Espousing the dominant view of art which throughout the ages has presupposed a conception of the authentic and creative individual,¹⁴¹ Lerski unsurprisingly downplays the mechanical quality of photography as incidental (i.e., repressible) rather than decisive: this position is buttressed by his admiration for Rembrandt – a dubiously ‘bourgeois’ if not outright reactionary, Langbehnian trend throughout the teens, twenties and thirties.

Fittingly, Rodchenko himself draws a sharp line between painting and photography, and even lambasts photographic adaptations of a specifically *Rembrandtian* indifference toward the “outward resemblance to any particular person.”¹⁴² Clearly, musings on Rembrandt were in the 1920’s and 30’s remarkably at odds with productivist / constructivist declarations for the end of easel painting and appeals for the death of art¹⁴³ and artists’ direct participation in industry, commercial advertising, even propaganda - as Rodchenko’s brief allusion already signals. And although *Metamorphose* was no doubt intended for ‘the masses,’ (on account of its broad human appeal and internationalist gestures) rather than an exclusive elite, it nevertheless drew its viewers into the traditional space of the gallery.

¹³⁹ Cf. Kühn (2005) 204 for Lerski’s comments on the occasion of the 1930 exhibition “*Gezeichnet oder geknipst?*” at the Reckendorf-Haus in Berlin. Lerski responds to Ludwig Meidner’s dismay regarding the exhibit’s ‘*Gleichsetzung*’ of painters and ‘men behind camera machines.’

¹⁴⁰ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 5.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 298 for brief mention of this tradition as it contrasts with the modernism of Moholy-Nagy.

¹⁴² Rodchenko (1989) 239.

Finally, for avant-gardists of the twenties and early thirties, it was the Engineer who figured as model, not the painter or actor.¹⁴⁴ This thespian persona, however, served as a veritable icon of Expressionism since, as Ludwig Marcuse points out, Expressionism “came to life on the stage [...] The stage made it into a cult.”¹⁴⁵ It is no wonder that where constructivists did hit the stage, they performed a biomechanical style of acting that sought to cut all ties with earlier dramatic practices. Rodchenko’s essay on portraiture concludes with the promise that allegiance to constructivist principles like objectivity and anti-synthesis will ensure truthful depictions of contemporary human beings: “And we will be real people, not actors.”¹⁴⁶

Uschatz, however, like the characters of Expressionist drama, serves as something very much akin to what Marcuse calls a ‘nameless, symbolic cipher of human suffering, experience, and protest.’¹⁴⁷ Glaser (patron of Expressionist art)¹⁴⁸ asserts as much in his introduction to *Köpfe*, whose models

saßen zwei Stunden lang vor seiner Kamera, und wenn sie fortgingen, blieben von ihnen Bilder *menschlichen* Elends und *menschlicher* Größe, Bilder von einem Reichtum des *Ausdrucks*, der ungeahnte Tiefen seelischer Möglichkeiten enthüllt [...] Das Licht verschönt sie, und das Objektiv läßt sie edel und rein erscheinen.¹⁴⁹

Again we see in Lerski evidence of a humanist cult of beauty, only by 1936, Lerski’s visages and their function as universal human ciphers resonate powerfully against the backdrop of a craze for typology and *Sachlichkeit* which reached its zenith under

¹⁴³ Cf. Rodchenko (1989) 239: “Art has no place in modern life. It will continue to exist as long as there is a mania for the romantic and as long as there are people who love beautiful lies and deception. / Every modern, cultured man must wage war against art, as against Opium.”

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Brückle (1997).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Marcuse (1974) 293.

¹⁴⁶ Rodchenko (1989) 242.

¹⁴⁷ Behl in Raabe (1974) 291.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. <http://www.dictionarofarthistorians.org/glaserc.htm>.

¹⁴⁹ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 9. Italics mine.

National Socialist rule and its cult of scientificity. Here it suffices to note the difference between ‘cipher’ and Type: if the former is a null, a void, or a blank – a non-entity- it is antithetical to the categorical identification of a *class* of person exploited as a buoy or daybreak in navigating the social landscape.

2.3.2. *Rollenportrait* as ‘Non-Recognition of the Empirical World’

What Marcuse calls Expressionism’s ‘non-recognition of the empirical world’ assumes the pure expression of Lerski’s *Rollenportrait*¹⁵⁰ - a photographic genre which, like Expressionism, values broad emotive gestures over specific substantive knowledge or information. For reasons Marcuse explains, Expressionism is at odds with attention to milieu, since “Where the infinity of cosmic spaces becomes of prime importance the particular milieu disappears.”¹⁵¹ Though space is radically compacted in Lerski, a similarly Expressionist erosion of milieu results in Lerski’s *Rollenportraits* since Uschatz, like expressionist figures, was “plunged into darkness, in front of black curtains, picked out by a magic beam of light.”¹⁵² like expressionist paintings, the tenets of linear perspective are with Lerski, for the most part, suspended.¹⁵³ Recall Kracauer’s aerial landscape metaphor cited earlier which also pronounces the breakdown of linear perspective via a more embodied and disorienting perspective.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1983) 7 for reference to Lerski’s ‘*Rollenportrait*.’

¹⁵¹ Marcuse in Raabe (1974) 295.

¹⁵² Marcuse in Raabe (1974) 295. Marcuse’s attention here to the spatial dimensions of Expressionism is interesting in light of Sander’s Goethean physiognomic practice, in which the sitter’s immediate surroundings (as attended to by the photographer) work to conjure his or her milieu and identity in an often highly symbolic fashion.

¹⁵³ Cf. Benson (1984) 35 who quotes Paul Weiglin on Robert Neppach’s stage design of Toller’s *Die Wandlung*, whose tableaux were in “that expressionist style which reminds us of paintings by children’s hands because of its unconcerned manner and perspective.”

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Kracauer (1997) 162: “Big close-ups, these pictures detailed the texture of the skin so that cheeks and brows turned into a maze of inscrutable runes reminiscent of soil formations, as they appear from an

Lerski's *Metamorphose* receives the most blatant Expressionist treatment in 1936 exhibit at an exhibit in Vienna which its curator the Rembrandt expert Max Eisler titled 'Der Mensch.' Max Eisler explains that "*die unbegrenzten Wandlungen des Gesichts ... doch nur ein Gesicht..., zusammen nur das Gesicht des Menschen zum Ursprung haben.*" Out of this one face evolved "*alle männlichen ernsten Charaktere, alle Stimmigkeiten und Geistigkeiten, ja alle Menschen...*"¹⁵⁵ As Ebner notes, Eisler's emphasis on the interconnectedness and commonality of man would become standard by the 1950's and would contrast greatly with the social polarization of the inter-war years. Eisler's discourse could be considered an idealist, universalist physiognomics.

In sum, the isolation or withdrawal from real, empirically informed social or historical circumstances is decisive in both Lerski and Expressionism,¹⁵⁶ and results in part from the use of light as a directional aid in interpretation. What was true of lighting on the expressionist stage was true of Lerski's lighting in portraiture: neither were used merely to light the scene, but to interpret the subject by spotlighting and highlighting characters in a dramatically abstract manner.¹⁵⁷ As Krazsna-Krauss notes of the photographer, "*Lerski zeigte keine Neigung zur Realität.*"¹⁵⁸

airplane. The result was amazing." The passage resonates visually with ones in Hofmannsthal and Nietzsche, who in *Gay Science* 28 writes, "What is required...is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of Appearance." Both aim in similar ways to express alienation and the artificial nature of 'objective' reality. Compare with Hofmannsthal's language in '*Ein Brief*' which is remarkably evocative of Nietzsche's here. Both when Chandos looks through the magnifying glass and later when describing his ride '*im tiefen, aufgeworfenen Ackerboden*' and "*welligen Feldern.*" Hofmannsthal (1969) 108.

¹⁵⁵ Ebner (2002) 41.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Sterne (1931) 19 who subsumes Lerski under a group of photographers committed to 'the angle shot' - a 'one-time novelty' by now 'exhausted by the cinema.'

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Benson (1984) 36 on Karlheinz Martin's 1919 stage lighting of Toller's *Die Wandlung*.

¹⁵⁸ Krausz in Eskildsen (1982) 8.

If Lerski's anti-typological work dating from the 1920's reacts against what Wolfgang Brückle calls the '*Verlustängste des Weimarer Modernisierungsschubes*,'¹⁵⁹ it is as an echo of a pre-war, "Oh-Mankind" type of verse: "precisely the kind of thing the present-day generation (which ought to be called the 'Cool Generation') despises," notes Marcuse in reference to the New Objectivity generation.¹⁶⁰ That Lerski sought to employ a photographic variation of expressionist poetry and its 'humanitarian demands' (Marcuse) is further implicit in his reflections on the photographer's work and the individual:

Und ich glaube, dass heute der Mensch das Wichtigste ist und das Verhältnis des Menschen zum Mitmenschen. Nicht banalisiert und standardisiert wollen wir den Menschen zeigen, sondern mit Güte und Achtung betrachtet, in das rechte Licht gesetzt und wiederhergestellt in seiner natürlichen Schönheit.¹⁶¹

The anomalous reference to *natural* beauty aside, Lerski's comments and photographic works emphasize, above all, the power of personal, subjective expression. Moreover, like expressionist poetry, their non-description ('*Mensch*'; '*das Verhältnis des Menschen zum Mitmenschen*'; '*Güte*', '*Schönheit*') appears to represent what Marcuse defends as "a faith in the a historical, a temporal revolt in favour of timeless values!"¹⁶² To critics of Expressionism like Lukács, statements like these represent hollow cries: "emotive yet empty declamatory manifesto[s], the proclamation[s] of a sham activism."¹⁶³ For Carl Schmitt 'naïve, humanist expressionism' amounts to an 'infantile disorder.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Brückle (1997) 293.

¹⁶⁰ Marcuse in Raabe (1974) 294.

¹⁶¹ Lerski in Fürnberg (1956) "Helmar Lerski über sich selbst," 19.

¹⁶² Marcuse in Raabe (1974) 294-5.

¹⁶³ Lukács in Long (1993) 316, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline," orig. 1934.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Lethen (2002) 44.

If Lerski's expressionist worldview wasn't entirely an apolitical faith, it could at least be associated with what Lethen calls the "warm zones of the traditional-minded social democratic communities;"¹⁶⁵ or what Lukács, in this same treatise against Expressionism called "middle-classness;"¹⁶⁶ he has been called a '*Sozialromantiker*.'¹⁶⁷ Lukács echoes Marcuse's emphasis on timelessness, albeit critically, since for him, the Expressionists' protest against the First World War was marked by a "struggle against war in general, and not against the imperialist war."¹⁶⁸ Lerski's status as a 'burning anti-fascist' but not a Marxist perhaps resonates here,¹⁶⁹ as would his problematic refusal to take a position – as sought by his editors - on the concrete problems facing modern-day Jewery in his project 'Jewish heads.'¹⁷⁰

Finally, Lukács writes of the 'near solipsism' of Expressionist subjectivity,¹⁷¹ a paradigm of which is found in Lerski's assertion that a photographer's work should amount to a personal / professional *carte-de-visite*:

Ich glaube, dass der moderne Porträtfotograf bestrebt sein sollte, mit Hilfe seiner individuellen Lichtgebung sich ganz persönlich auszudrücken, seinen eigenen Stil zu schaffen, in jedem seiner Porträts seine 'Visitenkarte' abzugeben, so dass man ihn in jedem dieser Werke erkennen könnte, wie man einen Picasso, einen Renoir, einen Cezanne voneinander unterscheidet.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Lethen (2002) 132.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Lukács in Long (1993) 314. Lukács refers to the movement as 'sham-revolutionary' and 'sham-oppositional.'

¹⁶⁷ Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak (1982) 22.

¹⁶⁸ Lukács in Long (1993) 315. The expressionists' struggle thus comprised only a 'mock-battle.' The expressionists' universalism, their inadequate grasp of capitalist economics, and obliviousness to the real enemy ground Lukács' critique.

¹⁶⁹ '*Glühende Antifaschisten*' but not 'Marxists' is Lea Grundig's description of those who met at the Lerski's in Tel Aviv on Saturdays. Cf. Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak (1982) 19.

¹⁷⁰ Ebner (2002) 53 – 55.

¹⁷¹ Lukács in Long (1993) 315.

¹⁷² Ebner (2002) 19.

Portraits of others should so bear the mark of the artist's subjectivity that the sitter's own persona becomes irrelevant. Lerski's success in this endeavor was declared by popular reference to '*Lerskibilder*,'¹⁷³ – i.e. photographs bearing the indelible marks of Lerski's style - be they of actors, unemployed engineers, or models encountered on the street.

This analysis of *Metamorphose* as Expressionist Anti-typology has relied on conceptualizations of typological thought and representation discussed throughout this dissertation, and on oppositions between Lerski's expressionistic values and more contemporary practices associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or Constructivism – practices which were indelibly bound up with the 'anti-individualism' that radicalized the spirit of the times.¹⁷⁴ The chapter has interpreted Lerski's formal gestures and his associations with film and theatre not as evidence of an all-out anti-realism, but as a visual treatise against reductionist pigeonholing of 20th century humanity, and against essentialist characterizations thereof.¹⁷⁵ My genre-speculation has not aimed at situating Lerski once and for all, however; nor have such considerations been made sheerly for their own sake. Instead, I have sought to provide a perspective from which the extreme polyvalence of Lerski's project can best be felt. The position established here shall, in the following sections, be discussed in its relationship to Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*.

¹⁷³ Ebner (2002).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Brückle (1998) 297: "*Dieser Anti-Individualismus beerbt (und radikalisiert) den Geist der Zeit.*"

¹⁷⁵ Krazsna-Krausz in Estkildsen (1982) 8.

3. *Mann ist Mann*: Pro-Collectivist Satire of the Individual and the

Military as Collective

The earnest, tragic values of Expressionism as an aesthetic movement and bourgeois worldview were of course precisely the unripe objects of Brecht's satirical critique in *Mann ist Mann* in 1926. James K. Lyon notes that the play's designation as a '*Lustspiel*' aimed to underscore the play's satirical quality vis-à-vis tragedy, i.e. '*Trauerspiel*,' and that the title *Mann ist Mann* both echoes and mocks contemporary expressionist drama, since

like many expressionist plays, it avoids a proper name in its title and uses instead an impersonal generic designation referring to a type, e.g., 'Der Sohn,' 'Der Bettler,' or 'Der Einsame.' But instead of emphasizing the universality of those types, as Expressionists had done, Brecht cleverly undermines this view of his title figure with a designation that emphasizes his anonymous sameness or nonidentity as the link to other humans, thereby negating the expressionist notion of the unique individual.¹⁷⁶

More broadly recognized than the play's explicit subversion of expressionist tropes and ideals, however, is Brecht's own oppositional personality which, even before his formulation of the theory of 'epic theatre,' took aim at what he considered to be the calcified, hopelessly outmoded nonrelevance of theatre as a cultural institution.¹⁷⁷ As Lyon notes, Brecht played with theatre, had fun with it, "*er spielte*,"¹⁷⁸ while previously, as in the Expressionist era, the theatre's dramatic plots and dire figures had been overburdened with a 'bourgeois' pathos of identification. As if in rebuttal of this affective identification, and of Lerski's intimate, serial portraits of a single sitter, (his

¹⁷⁶ Lyon (1994) 515.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Lyon (1994) 513. (Lyon describes Brecht as having earned "a reputation as one of the most complicated humans in this century...").

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Lyon (1994) on *Lustspiel*, *Trauerspiel*, and Brecht's '*spielen*,' i.e. the idea, as expressed by Elisabeth Hauptmann, that Brecht "*war auf Spass aus*." Lyon (1994) 514 concludes that "Here, too,

insistence that a person cannot be expressed in one image)¹⁷⁹ Brecht's soldier Uria states: "Über weniger als 200 [Leute] kann man gar nichts sagen."¹⁸⁰ Similarly provocative with respect to an Expressionist worldview is Brecht's replacement of the 'Jedermann' protagonist with the 'Garniemand' (as the transformed Galy gay reflects on his former self as lone individual.)¹⁸¹ Finally, if dramatic productions were traditionally touted as the products of individual genius, Brecht's collaboration of course signaled an affront. Also, his plays incorporated vaudeville, Variété, and elements of film and other media cultures – that is, fragments of modern popular culture previously considered at odds with great works of art – concern for which Lerski and his supporters like Glaser, Krausz, and Eisler clearly exhibit. For the latter, commenting in 1936, *Metamorphose* represented nothing less than the "Sonderfall eines Genies;"¹⁸² Krausz spoke of Lerski's 'virtuosity' and 'die Grösse und Tiefe eines wirklichen Genies.'¹⁸³

In undertaking a comparative analysis of the representational 'biographies' of Lerski's Uschatz and Brecht's Galy Gay, I hope to unsettle the straightforward, intentionalist reading of Lerski's *Metamorphose* posited above (i.e. its primary 'idea' being the glorification of the average, anonymous *Masse-Mensch*), to account, in part, for the work's vastly mixed reviews throughout the history of its reception. Specifically, Brecht's play, itself 'a central and extreme *Menschenbild*,'¹⁸⁴ raises questions concerning

Brecht was shattering conventional stereotypes. Among the many innovations one can attribute to him is the revision of our image of the earnest writer laboring in solitude over a serious work of art."

¹⁷⁹ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

¹⁸⁰ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 183.

¹⁸¹ Brecht (1926) Act XI in Wege (1982) 221.

¹⁸² Ebner (2002) 30.

¹⁸³ Kraszna-Krausz in Eskildsen (1982) 9.

¹⁸⁴ Ebner (2002) 5 cites Eskildsen on Lerski's *Metamorphosis Through Light*: it represented "ein zentrales und zugleich extremes Werk des fotografischen Menschenbildes im 20. Jahrhundert."

the fundamental strength of the lone individual: its collectivist stance suggests that Lerski, like the society Brecht's soldiers ridicule, makes too much 'fuss over the individual.' If we take the parole of the Brecht's military collective, '*Einer ist Keiner*' as being in some sense viable (rather than merely sardonic), what might it say about Lerski's eulogization of the lone, autonomous sitter, eternally unto himself?¹⁸⁵ And by extension, about Lerski's own *Menschenbild*?

In order to answer this question, (and before exploring in detail the extent to which *Galy Gay is Uschatz*, and visa-versa) it serves to quickly underscore the extent to which *Mann is Mann* was a farce, not a tragedy; a critical satire rather than a strictly absurdist comedy. For when protagonist Galy Gay encounters three soldiers looking to replace their fourth man, the play erupts into a comical critique of the military as the only institution which (in Germany) has fully understood the value of beheading the *Charakterkopf*, i.e. empowering the invariably meek, modern man with will and direction.

Yet for Brecht, the military itself figures as a dialectical image of sorts, prized for providing meager and unguided men 'with spines' via its collectivity, thus for rescuing bourgeois man from his crippling individualism. On the other hand, the military is hopelessly debauched on account of its ignobly debased, self-serving, imperialist agendas. The play dismisses the individual as a pitiful yet comic victim of fate or circumstances who, as a Type – ie. member of a collective- however, emerges as little more than a 'killing machine' and '*Kriegsberserker*.' Upon his transformation, Galy Gay emerges stronger and more willful than previously: he goes from a *Garniemand* to a

¹⁸⁵ Brecht's soldier Polly remarks, "*Man macht zuviel Aufhebens mit Leuten.*" "*Einer ist Keiner.*" Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 183.

Dschingiskhan.¹⁸⁶ Where buying a fish was previously an onerous and dangerous task, the play concludes with Galy Gay blowing up a fortress (*‘Die Bergfestung Sir el Dchowr beginnt zu versinken’*), an action no doubt symbolic for Brecht’s contention that *“In den wachsenden Kollektiven erfolgt die Zertrümmerung der Person.”*¹⁸⁷ This conclusion also appears to be in direct dialog with the conclusion of Toller’s *Die Wandlung*, where the birth of a child symbolized the birth of the New Man. As Brecht tells *Die Literarische Welt* in 1926, his transformed protagonist is ‘not particularly’ (*‘nicht sonderlich’*) a model for the Ideal New Man.¹⁸⁸

The play’s tension between the ideal of the New Man and heretofore reality is essential to Brecht’s critical *Menschenbild*: his jabs at the military represent jabs at the failure of man to collectivize *progressively*, not at collectivity as a general principle, or at the military solely for its own sake. This rather subtle ideological distinction – between ideal and debauched Collectivity, and the fundamental weakness of the modern individual- was however, revised out of later versions of the play and downplayed in nearly all performances so that *Mann ist Mann* is known today primarily as a straightforward anti-military *Lehrstück*. The focus away from the fundamental qualities of the modern individual was exacerbated by Brecht’s own *‘Konkretisierungsvorschlag,’*

¹⁸⁶ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 222.

¹⁸⁷ Brecht (1967) GW Band 20, 61.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Wege (1982) 285 for the following dialog with Brecht in Bernard Guillemin, *“Was arbeiten Sie / Gespräch mit Bert Brecht.”* In *‘Die Literarische Welt,’* 30.7.1926):

“Und woran arbeiten Sie noch?”

“An einem Lustspiel: ‘Mann ist Mann’. Es handelt sich um die technische Ummontierung eines Menschen in einen anderen zu einem bestimmten Zweck.”

“Und wer nimmt die Ummontierung vor?”

“Drei Gefühlsengineure.”

“Gelingt das Experiment?”

“Ja, darauf atmen alle auf.”

“Entsteht dabei vielleicht – der ideale Mensch?”

“Nein, nicht sonderlich.”

according to which Galy Gay's transformation could occur on the *Reichsparteigelände* in Nuremberg, or even in the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹

The play's ideological transformation throughout its history no doubt resulted (at least in part) from the opacity of its dialectical position in 1926. Brecht, notes theatre critic Otto Münsterer in the same year, presented "untruths without truth."¹⁹⁰ Incredulous with respect to Brecht's claim that the new, militarized Galy Gay represented an improvement over the solitary, domestic Galy Gay, audiences found themselves 'shaking their own *'Charakterkopf'* in confusion.'¹⁹¹ Münsterer remarks of the apparent absurdity of Brecht's apparently pro-military position, especially with the First World War still so indelible engrained in recent memory: "*Friedericus Rex hätte Brecht zum Hofdichter ernannt.*"¹⁹²

Similarly, Ihering notes that "*solange als die Welt noch das Problem des militärischen Menschen, das Problem des Kollektiv- und Individualmenschen tragisch und philosophisch betrachtet, kann sie sich nicht auf Humor umstellen.*"¹⁹³ (Evidence of this tragic view has of course already been traced throughout this dissertation via Fischer's fear of *Gleichmacherei* and Sander's Spenglerian, etiological excavation of 'facelessness;' and more broadly through recurring discussions of Decline.)

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Wege (1982) 22 (section VIII). In a March 2007 performance in Washington D.C. at the Arena Stage, for instance, the 'utterly absurd Iraq war' becomes a veritable subtext. See <http://www.culturevulture.net/Theatre/MansaMant.html>.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Münsterer in Wege (1982) 266: "...weil sich bei den Verwicklungen des Stückes zwar jeweils die Unwahrheit, nie aber die Wahrheit erweisen lasse." Münsterer continues, "*Die ganze Argumentation leuchtete mir damals offenbar wenig ein, und Brecht mußte mit seinen Anschauungen über Freiheit und Determinismus herausdrücken.*"

¹⁹¹ Weimar theatre critic Bernhard Diebold thus shakes his own head at the play's dubious intentions as comedy, tragedy, or satire: "*Aber wieviel ist Ernst an dieser Devise?*" Cf. Diebold in Wege (1982) 298.

¹⁹² Diebold in Wege (1982) 298.

¹⁹³ Cf. review in Wege (1982) 304.

Finally, theatre critic Bernhard Diebold reacted defensively to the play, suggesting that while some men of the pre-war era were ready to transform themselves from ‘*Seelen-Ich*’ to ‘*Nummer-Mann*,’ a ‘*Verwandlungskur zum Einheitstypus scheint heute [1926] nicht das dringendste Bedürfnis.*’¹⁹⁴ For Diebold, Brecht’s declaration of the death of Western individualism¹⁹⁵ via the *Charakterkopf* Galy Gay and the apparent celebration of the *Masse-Mensch* made little sense. This latter Type was, after all, already passé (and Brecht’s moral hence anachronistic) since German society, according to Diebold, had already learned its lesson: its current democratic, republican culture, boasted a stern commitment to unyielding individualism, and had little taste for Brecht’s fantasy of ‘*Selbstauflösung im Milieu.*’¹⁹⁶

As these reviews suggest, worthy collectivist alternatives to the military had to be conceivable to (Western) audience members themselves, in advance, in order for them to grasp the larger tensions of the play. Yet given the preponderance of melancholic, indeed tragic interpretations of the loss of individuality which pervaded the Weimar era (on the retrograde periphery of avant-garde cool culture, if we follow Lethen),¹⁹⁷ conceiving of the collective as a formidable force of good remained difficult for many even a decade after Expressionism’s acme during the First World War.¹⁹⁸ For many, the transformation from Expressionism to *Sachlichkeit* – from tragedy to *Zeitstück* -would occur only in uncomfortable steps and stages, if at all.

¹⁹⁴ Diebold in Wege (1982) 298.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Lyon (1997) 520.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Diebold in Wege (1982) 297.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Lethen (2002).

¹⁹⁸ Escaping the yoke of tragic pathos was profoundly difficult, but not, of course, for all. ‘Cool’ critics like Critic Elisabeth Langgässer in Wege (1982) 297 understood Brecht’s desire to decapitate the *Charakterkopf*. In a 1926 review Langgässer wrote, “*Bert Brecht, der junge Zukunftsträchtige, will nicht anderes, als was wir alle erstreben: Die heitere und entschlossene Liquidierung der privaten Nöte, das*

With respect to Lerski's *Metamorphose*, appreciation of the dimensions of Brecht's *Lehrstück* as critical farce is imperative since the play scoffs not only at the military's debauched attempt to guide and empower the individual, but –more critical to my concerns- at the individual's purportedly exalted status. “*Brecht geht an gegen die individualistische Empfindsamkeit*,” writes Ihering in 1927 (upon a second viewing of the play),¹⁹⁹ which is to say, Brecht combats Lerski's expressionistic *Menschenbild* and the ‘*rein und edel*’ pretenses of Lerski's lone, expressive Individual.²⁰⁰ How the photographer's picture of man is transformed into its opposite in the manner of a dialectical image is the subject of the following ‘comparative biographies’ of Uschatz and Galy Gay.

3.1. Uschatz as Galy Gay

Like the unemployed Uschatz, Brecht's Galy Gay is a common man - ‘*kein Prominenter*’;²⁰¹ like Lerski's sitter, we imagine him to be an “outstanding uninteresting type without a single distinguishing feature” – the last face “one would have expected a photographer to choose for such a monumental multiplication.”²⁰²

Audiences first encounter him in an interior space, discussing with his wife the logistics of purchasing and cooking a fish: which kind, which size, when the water should

Absterben der bourgeoisen, verruchten Sentimentalität und die tapfere Eingliederung in die öffentliche Front, in den eisernen Takt der Arbeit und des Allgemeinen.”

¹⁹⁹ Ihering in Wege (1982) 311. In this 1927 review of *Mann ist Mann* Ihering traces his own gradual grasp of the not-yet-articulated principles of epic theatre.

²⁰⁰ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 9.

²⁰¹ Cf. Kühn (2005) 223 on the significance Lerski assigned to using common sitters for his portraits.

²⁰² Ebner (2002) 38 cites an author in the *Palestine Post* with regard to the upcoming 1936 exhibit of *Metamorphose*.

be boiled, and where it might best be acquired. Though his identity as a ‘simple packer’ is clear early on, it is apparent that Galy Gay perceives himself as a private, ‘*mittelloser*’ man and identifies more with his domestic sphere (the wife and the fish in the kitchen) than with his class or social milieu: later in the play’s Interjection (*Zwischenspruch*), Widow Bebeck speaks disparagingly of his ‘private fish.’²⁰³ Except for the paycheck his work affords, broader social relations seem inconsequential to Galy Gay.

He is characterized as a ‘*Charakterkopf*’ with a nefariously ‘*weiches Gemüt*.’²⁰⁴ In the initial scene, we learn that he can’t say no, and observe that his inability to do so will spur most of the play’s action. As a *Charakterkopf*, Galy Gay repeats verbatim precisely what others say about him so that, in a pitiful attempt to extricate himself from a protracted evening at the pub, for instance, he explains “...*ich bin wie ein Personenzug, wenn ich ins Laufen komme:*”²⁰⁵ he thereby recites the precise phrase which his wife used in the previous scene to describe his habit of unwittingly attracting people (mostly of ill-repute) while floating distractedly from one encounter to the next. Similarly, only shortly after the soldiers Jesse and Polly remark that Galy Gay is “*ein Mann, der nicht nein sagen kann,*” Galy Gay responds to their offering of a cigar, “*Nun, da kann ich allerdings nicht nein sagen.*”²⁰⁶ Lacking authentic will, personality, even ‘expression’ of his own, he takes on chameleon-like whatever qualities others demand or assert of him. Galy

²⁰³ Brecht (1926) *Zwischenspruch* in Wege 190: “*Dem Mann wird menschlich nähergetreten, / Er wird mit Nachdruck, ohne Verdruß gebeten, / Sich dem Laufe der Welt schon anzupassen / und seinen Privatfisch schwimmen zu lassen.*”

²⁰⁴ Brecht (1926) Act I in Wege (1982) 161

²⁰⁵ Brecht (1926) Act I in Wege (1982) 161. It seems possible that Brecht’s use of the term *Personenzug* plays on the idea that personal traits (*Charakterzüge*) come and go like passengers on a train: the term would thus express the inherent instability of the individual, and the coming and going of the ‘contents’ of his character.

²⁰⁶ Brecht (1926) Act III in Wege (1982) 168 – 169.

Gay's reflective internalization of others' comments and opinions mirrors the predicate nominative structure of Brecht's title *Mann ist Mann*.

3.1.1. Uschatz: A Raw Egg?

Already then in the first moments of the play, Galy Gay's weakness as an individual reflects poorly upon Uschatz' credibility as an Expressionist, humanist Ideal: for Galy Gay's impuissance is expressed in terms uncannily similar to those intended to signal Uschatz' unrestrained individualism. In each, we see personal isolation (from others and society in Lerski; from a collective in Brecht) coupled with extreme malleability of form and personality: only in *Mann ist Mann*, however, does this malleability of character underscore modern man's dire fungibility. What appears in *Metamorphose* as the mercurial richness of the unique individual now signals the false and compensatory facades of a human subject entangled in a network of functions and abstractions that deprive him of his individuality.²⁰⁷ We begin to see how Uschatz, like Galy Gay and the modern individual more generally, could be conceived as existing under "unprecedented forms of unfreedom."²⁰⁸

Indeed Uschatz, much like Galy Gay, is depicted as one who, taking on whatever qualities Lerski divines to see in him, ultimately "can't say 'no.'" Like Galy Gay, he lacks self-control, but is for that, "just a '*Mann*.'" Galy Gay declares as much when, after having apparently slept with a woman in the middle of a train for all to see, he states: "...*ein Mann ist ein Mann. Er ist nicht immer ganz Herr seiner selbst.*"²⁰⁹ In each case, a meek creature succumbs to his drives and / or the will of others, but is incorrigible and

²⁰⁷ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 286 on these functions and abstractions.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 286.

incapable of more. The slogan ‘*Mann ist Mann*’ under Brecht’s direction suggests, among many other things, not the revolutionary quality of human agency but the ever-same revolving pattern of man’s most fundamental habits and drives, the recurrence of his weaknesses.

As ‘*typisch Mann*’ Uschatz, like Galy Gay, thus reveals a tendency to subordination, despite the imposing physical qualities of each (Uschatz was a competitive athlete; Galy Gay a ‘*Mammut*’ and an ‘*Elephant*’),²¹⁰ or the ‘*beherrschend*’ qualities with which Lerki endows Uschatz. For on the inside, Uschatz is apparently as ‘soft’ and as pliable as the packer who, during his transformation appears “*weich und fließend in seinen Umrissen.*”²¹¹ What previously appeared as the sitter’s radical insurgency against reductive typologizing – a breaking free of Procrustean representations - now looks like an identity crisis: Uschatz, like Galy Gay during the countdown to his faux execution, doesn’t ‘know who he is.’²¹² His serial depictions speak to the equation of being ‘more than one person’ and ‘being no one.’²¹³ Indeed a ‘nobody,’ a ‘*Garniemand*’ is precisely how Galy Gay recalls his former self as ‘*Charakterkopf.*’²¹⁴

Again, the apparently doting remarks of Galy Gay’s wife about her husband figure as both expert socio-psychological analysis and prophesy: “*Würden Sie es glauben, daß er, der so groß und dick aussieht, innerlich ist wie ein rohes Ei.*”²¹⁵ The soldiers thus literally pack Galy Gay into boots that are too small. In the context of tendencies toward subordination, the harsh, sharp, severe qualities of Lerski’s quasi-New Vision aesthetic

²⁰⁹ Brecht (1926) Act X in Wege (1982) 213.

²¹⁰ Cf. Langgässer in Wege (1982) 307 on the tendency toward subordination in the play.

²¹¹ Brecht (1926) Act III in Wege (1982).

²¹² *Zwischenspruch* Nr. 4, 202: “*Glaub mir, und lacht nicht, ich bin einer, der nicht weiß, wer er ist.*”

²¹³ Cf. Bentley (1964) 109, who in reference to the modern problem of identity in *Mann ist Mann*, alludes to one of Pirandello’s titles, “I am some one, no one, and a hundred thousand people.”

²¹⁴ Brecht (1926) Act XI in Wege (1982) 221.

takes on the exaggeration and denial of wishful ('bourgeois') thinking. In spite of Uschatz's stone-like visage, Lerski proves himself free to search for and create in Uschatz the '*passende dramatische Rolle*' of his choice.²¹⁶

3.1.2. Lerski as *Gefühlsingenieur*: Portraiture as a (Solipsistic?) Two-Image Repertoire

In terms of photographic portraiture, Uschatz's effaced ego becomes clearest in the context of Barthes' "four-image repertoires," i.e., the closed field of forces of which the portrait photograph represents an intersection and a compromise. If a portrait's sitter (Barthes' '*I*') is at the same time "the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art"²¹⁷ – Uschatz abandons himself fully to the last two forces: that is, to the will of the photographer.²¹⁸ His own *I* (ego, *Ich*) is entirely eradicated, a fact to which Uschatz's observance of Lerski's 'rule' of maintaining a distant gaze and ever-pursed lips attests: "*Der Mensch spielt nicht mit in diesem Drama des Lichtes.*"²¹⁹ Instead, Uschatz assents to his own reduction to what Barthes calls an 'object' and what Lerski calls *Rohstoff* and

²¹⁵ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 186.

²¹⁶ Cf. Ebner (2002) 50 on Lerski as an '*inszenierender Regisseur*.'

²¹⁷ Barthes (1977) 13.

²¹⁸ Barthes' scheme also helps garner evidence for the Expressionist artist's (i.e. Lerski's) purported 'solipsism,' as discussed earlier via Lukács: if a portrait typically consists of four image repertoires, the expressionist's consists of but two, or even only one.

²¹⁹ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 7.

Rohmaterial.²²⁰ Brecht (like Fischer) calls human matter *Menschenmaterial*, (i.e. “*Aber die Armee hat ungeheuer viel Menschenmaterial, Herr!*”)²²¹

Yet unlike Barthes’ experience and analysis of the self’s transformation before the lens of a camera, and unlike the experience of expressionist transformation into the New Man, there is, in Uschatz and Galy Gay, little struggle on behalf of the subject.²²² Uschatz, like Galy Gay, not only can’t say ‘no,’ but seems to ask (slavishly like the packer to the soldiers) “*Könnte ich Ihnen nicht auch da behilflich sein?*”²²³ As symbols of humanity, both conform to the soldier Jesse’s impression of the *Charakterkopf*: “*So einer verwandelt sich ganz von selber. Wenn ihr den in einen Tümpel schmeißt, dann wachsen ihm in zwei Tagen zwischen den Fingern Schwimmhäute.*”²²⁴

Characterizations of the malleable and contingent individual hold much in common with depictions of the *masses* as ‘social matter,’ i.e. as prey for the forces of

²²⁰ Glaser in Lerski (1931) 6-7: “*Das Modell [ist] nicht mehr als ein Rohstoff, den zu formen Aufgabe des gestaltenden Willens bedeutet.*” Cf. also Krazsna-Krausz in Eskildsen (1983) 100. “[Lerski] stellte **offen** fest, dass seine Modelle lediglich ‘Rohmaterial’ sei.”

²²¹ Brecht (1926) Act XI in Wege (1982) 220. One critique of Lerski’s work hones in specifically on the compromise in photographic portraiture suggested by Barthes’ discussion of the „**four** image repertoires”: At the 1982 discussion of Lerski’s work in Nyon, film maker Klaus Wildehahn in Eskildsen (1982) 99 notes the following: “*...In den ganzen Diskussionen, die ich im Ohr habe, behaupten Filmemacher, daß man sich subjektiv ausdrücken muß, seine Subjektivität ins Spiel bringen, gestalten muß. Es gibt die ganz andere Denkrichtung, der ich mich sehr viel mehr verpflichtet fühle, daß die schöpferische Leistung darin besteht, daß man die Menschen und die Dinge auf sich wirken läßt. Man stellt sich selber ja damit gar nicht zurück, aber man konzentriert sich, das zu sehen und zu erfassen, was wirklich vorgeht, und drückt nicht dem andern den eigenen Blick, sozusagen die scheinbare Subjektivität auf. [...] Es ist eine Frage des Handwerks und des Arbeitsanges. Und wenn ich überhaupt etwas aus dieser ganz kurzen Serie sehe, dann, daß der Weg des meditativen Schauens, der einene Dokumentaristen auszeichnet, bei Lerski nicht vorhanden ist.*”

²²² Ebner (2002) reports on Uschatz’ reactions to his portraits, first seen years later, and indeed, the engineer seems not to have suffered from any of the sensations of inauthenticity or imposture which Barthes, in his discussion of the ‘four-image repertoires’ describes. Cf. Barthes (1984, 1981) 13 – 14 on ‘feeling himself become an object’ and a ‘specter.’ Toller’s *Die Wandlung* of course bears the subtitle, “The Struggle of a Man.”

²²³ Brecht (1926) Act IV in Wege (1982) 175. Here Galy Gay offers the soldiers additional help after already packing himself into another man’s uniform and taking the place of Jereiah Jip at roll call. He now offers to assist in shaving Jip’s head as well.

²²⁴ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 183.

power.²²⁵ For Brecht, of course, the distinction between the mass and the individual is a false one since more unites these entities than separates them. Writing against the conservative, often defensive and elitist tenets of 18th and 19th century *Massenpsychologie*,²²⁶ he thus describes the *Individuum* as a *Dividuum*:

Das Individuum erscheint uns immer mehr als ein widerspruchsvoller Komplex in stetiger Entwicklung, ähnlich einer Masse. Es mag nach außen hin als Einheit auftreten und ist darum doch eine mehr oder minder kampfdurchtobte Vielheit, in der die verschiedensten Tendenzen die Oberhand gewinnen, so daß die jeweilige Handlung nur den Kompromiss darstellt.²²⁷

This passage renders Lerski's *Metamorphose* exceptionally contradictory since it de-glorifies the complex individual by asserting his status as a crisis- or tension-ridden plurality whose identity and actions can only represent a compromise between opposing forces and pressures. While Lerski exalts the masses (by unmasking the richness of its faceless members) Brecht deflates the individual to the unruly and chaotic level of the crowd. Where Lerski sees strength behind the artificial façades of a typical *Einheit*, as represented by the '*Passbild*,' Brecht sees vulnerability and weakness. What both Brecht and Lerski see in the *Passbild* or *Ausweis*, however, is a red herring: a sham (realist) image which effaces a real state of affairs. As will be discussed in the conclusion, each artist, despite the divergences of their *Menschenbilder*, declares the falsity of realist depictions.

The playwright's picture thus strangely recalls Fischer's *Mischling* as a synecdoche for a larger (urban) population characterized as *Rassenbrei*²²⁸ ('*Dividuum*' is to '*Masse*' as '*Mischling*' is to '*Rassenbrei*'). Of course for Brecht, the attenuation of the

²²⁵ Jonsson (2010) 282 - 283.

²²⁶ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 283.

²²⁷ Brecht (1967) GW vol. 20, 62.

individual personality is a function of the modern capitalist economy, not racial degeneration. Moreover, the ideal of the autonomous individual has been, for Brecht, a bourgeois fantasy all along: at its foundation is a denial of the social character of humans, one which differs little from the social nature of animals:

Zur Überwindung von Schwierigkeiten bilden sich in der Natur Kollektive (Schwalben beim Nachdemsüdenfliegen, Wölfe bei Hungerzügen und so weiter), negiert: Der Mensch ist nicht vorstellbar ohne menschliche Gesellschaft. (Das Denken des Individuums, das Denken findet anatomisch im Individuum statt, ist ohne die Sprache unmöglich, diese aber entsteht in der Gesellschaft.)²²⁹

Thus, this (not so) new, modern person – dependent, ‘weakened’ - is nothing to cry about. Brecht’s increasing *Sachlichkeit* is less a function of personal callousness, contrariness, or ‘radical’ politics than a particular sociological worldview:²³⁰ for man, even in the age of the machine, can become whole through enlightened forms of collectivity, and can gain ‘uniqueness’ via membership to more than one collective.²³¹ This is a theory which throws into relief the mitigating (rather than liberating) circumstances of Uschatz’s solitariness as portrayed by Lerski – and the conditions of his ‘abuse.’

Brecht’s insistence on man’s interdependence for survival further stands in contrast to the previously mentioned ‘*Oh-Mensch*’ pathos of Lerski’s highly poetic work, that is, the photographer’s proclamation of man’s eternal sovereignty. For Lerski, the modern, purportedly compromised or fragmented individual is - as noted earlier - but a

²²⁸ Cf. “Confident Seeing: Visualism and Fischer’s Scopic Regime” in Chapter 2.

²²⁹ Brecht (1967) GW vol. 20, 61.

²³⁰ Herbert Ihering in Wege (1982) 305 notes that “*Brecht ist der erste deutsche Bühnendichter, der die Mechanik des Maschinenzeitalters weder feiert noch angreift, sondern selbstverständlich nimmt und dadurch überwindet.*” Ihering writes in a 1927 review that Brecht’s development moves in the direction of increasing *Sachlichkeit* and *Schmucklosigkeit* – an aesthetic he credits with moving beyond bourgeois, individualistic sentimentality.

devious construction exploited by the mass media and those in power; as such, the photographer's aim is to recover, through appropriate representational strategies, the radiance of an intact personality- thus to radically disavow the reduction of modern man. (Only Walter Marti's assertion that Lerski sought to explore "*Die menschliche Möglichkeit des Tieres Mensch*,"²³² comes close to Brecht's leveling of humans and animals, and suggests the photographer's objectivity or *Sachlichkeit*, that is, his stoic acceptance of identity loss.)

In light of Brecht's notion of the *Dividuum*, however, Lerski's visual panorama of metamorphosis exposes – in Brechtian fashion – the transformation of Subject to Object. In doing so, it appears cruel. In the initial portrait (*Ausgangsbild*) Uschatz is an *Einheit*, but becomes exposed as a vulnerable, instable *Vielheit* in all latter images. This fact could explain present-day critic Michael Pilz's sole appreciation for Uschatz' initial and more natural-looking *Passbild*, and his discomfort with all other portraits: "*Die Art, wie er das Gesicht sieht ist einfach für mich nicht mehr sympatisch. Das einzige Bild mit dem ich etwas anfangen kann, wo ich aufgefordert bin hinzugucken, ist das Passfoto...*"²³³ The latter images, it appears, smack of the photographer's undue manipulations of the sitter and tell a tragic or unsavory story of the erosion of what Brecht would call '*Seelenstärke*.'²³⁴

Whether financial gain played a role in unemployed Uschatz's willingness to transform is unclear.²³⁵ For Brecht, however, such survivalist instincts respond to the

²³¹ Cf. Brecht (1967) vol. 20, 62, notes on *Individuum and Masse*: "*Wodurch wird die 'Eigenheit' des einzelnen garantiert? Durch seine Zugehörigkeit zu mehr als einem Kollektiv.*"

²³² Marti in Eskildsen (1982)100.

²³³ Cf. Michael Pilz in Eskildsen (1982) 100.

²³⁴ Wege (1982) 221.

²³⁵ It is not difficult to imagine Lerski offering financial compensation to the unemployed Swiss émigré Uschatz for his time.

functions and abstractions of capitalist reality, and lie at the root of modern man's lack of autonomy, which is to say, at the foundation of his modern *Menschenbild*. Indeed Brecht shows that this Galy Gay's *ummontieren* works because the character fixates on his ensuing financial reward, espousing to himself: "*Heute morgen, Galy Gay, bist du fortgegangen, um einen Fisch zu erstehen, und jetzt hast du schon einen Elefanten, und niemand weiß, was morgen sein wird. Dich geht es nichts an, wenn du deinen Scheck hast.*"²³⁶ Brecht's *Charakterkopf* is thus in part a symptom of modern, capitalist society. The subterranean nature of its functions and abstractions – their invisibility but omnipresence in the social and phenomenal world- also accounts for the playwright's beef with naturalist photography – to be discussed briefly at the conclusion of this chapter.

I have already mentioned the confusion, even defensiveness, with which theatre-goers in 1926 viewed *Mann ist Mann*. On the subject of Lerski reception, the outrage among devotees of naturalism in photographic portraiture has been no less vociferous than the purportedly 'sentimental' reactions among audiences to the *ummontieren* of Galy Gay. Indeed Lerski, like Brecht, shows that one can transform a man into whatever one wishes. For Lerski's detractors, Uschatz – as the discussion of the 'four image repertoires' above suggests - figures as something like the colonized subject of imperial exploitation akin to the subjects of late 19th and early 20th century anthropological photography; he is a sitter subjected to the gaze of another but lacking agency of his own. One critic sympathizes that the model "passively sat, expressionless, in a crossfire of

²³⁶ Brecht (1926) Act IX, no. 2, in Wege (1982) 194.

lights.”²³⁷ Panelists’ accusations of *Unmenschlichkeit* and exploitation suggest Lerski’s *Lichtbildnerie* as the product of a *Gefühlsingenieur* - despite Lerski’s and Uschatz’s Jewish backgrounds and émigré status.

That which might justify Lerski’s use of sitters as *Menschenmaterial* – i.e. the seemingly benign rhetoric of a creative aesthete (in for instance Lerski’s treatise on portraits as the photographer’s *Visitenkarte*) takes on fascist dimensions, so that art students at the *Züricher Kunstgewerbemuseum* in 1948 spoke of ‘*Verwandlung*’ becoming ‘*Vergewaltigung*.’²³⁸ „...*Was maßt er sich an?*” wondered one film maker²³⁹ whose objections are echoed in comments regarding Lerski’s “*harten Gesichtsausschnitte*,” and how the face looks “*wie aus Stein gehauen, unlebendig, tot;*” “*...von dargestellten Menschen her sogar unmenschlich bis brutal.*”²⁴⁰ “*Den Bildern mangelt es an Menschlichkeit...*”²⁴¹ Erika de Hadeln, director of the 1982 international Filmfestival Nyon where *Metamorphose* was exhibited, speaks of “*ein Schauen, das versteinert*“; and Moritz de Hadeln, with an eye for the 1930’s and the Holocaust, speaks of “*Ein Schauen, das mit seiner Kälte, seinem Mangel an Humanität die Greuel ermöglicht, die nacher passierten. Diesen verächtlichen Blick auf das menschliche Wesen findet man praktisch in all diesen Bildern.*”²⁴²

Clearly the panelists understand Uschatz’s seriality not as the idealization of the unique and complex *Vollindividuum* (as Kracauer once coined the richly autonomous

²³⁷ Cf. Eskildsen (1982) 100.

²³⁸ Ebner (2002) 42. Cf. Bentley (1964) 103 – 113 (“Brecht and the Rule of Force”) for an explication of the themes of sexual and ‘social’ rape in Brecht’s early plays. These are themes which find echoes in the most pointed critiques of Lerski’s *Metamorphose*.

²³⁹ Walter Marti in Eskildsen (1982) 100. (Marti only initially responded to Lerski’s work in this way; he later accepted and appreciated Lerski’s photographic method and aesthetic.)

²⁴⁰ Ebner (2002) 42.

²⁴¹ Film director Jean-Jacques Lagrange in Eskildsen (1982) 99.

²⁴² Eskildsen (1982) 100.

individual before later converting to a more modernist view)²⁴³ but as a maleficent expression of post-individualism and the apparent devaluation of the unique personality: in their interpretations, they prove anything but ‘*sachlich.*’ Forgetting modernist sociology of the Weimar period and beyond, Lerski’s post-individualism appears strictly fascist.

Here the timeliness of *Metamorphose* no doubt plays a decisive role, and we are reminded of Barthes’ assertion that codes of connotation are historical.²⁴⁴ Given the coincidence of the work’s ‘determined’ steely aesthetic and Nazi militarization, the regime’s racial laws and eventual ethnic-racial genocide, Lerski himself figures as a dangerously predatory creature lacking enlightened reason. He appears similar to Brecht’s soldiers who, in the opinion of the civilians in Brecht’s play, have no scruples when it comes to effacing the individual.²⁴⁵ To the dogmatic enthusiast of naturalism, Lerski represents an abuse of force much like the soldiers: he, like them, says politely enough to his ‘victim,’ “*Das ist es, Sie können nicht, wie Sie möchten [...] Wir danken Ihnen, mein Herrn.*”²⁴⁶ Arguably, the photographer’s visit to the *Arbeitsamt* in search for a model parallels the opportunism of the soldiers, who say to Galy Gay, “*Ihre Erscheinung gefällt uns, und was mehr ist, sie paßt.*”²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Cf. Jonsson (2010) 289 – 290.

²⁴⁴ Barthes (1977) 22.

²⁴⁵ Brecht (1926) Act I in Wege (1982) 161: Galy Gay’s wife worries that the soldiers - “the most terrible people in the world” - lingering near the train station will harass her husband, but notes, “*man muss froh sein, wenn sie nicht einbrechen und töten.*” Similarly the palace owner Wang, in effort to take action concerning the disheveled and apparently unconscious man in uniform found in his Palankin surmises, “*Da er ein Soldat ist, kann er keinen Verstand haben.*” Yet in neither case should audiences view these judgments as crude or empty stereotypes since in each instance, they intuit precisely the subsequent course of events, hence the actual state of affairs. (Following the wife’s prophetic statements, we see the soldiers steal and murder; and Jip, the forlorn soldier found in the palace, has in fact proven himself to be ‘*ausser Verstand.*’)

²⁴⁶ Brecht (1926) Act IV in Wege (1982) 171.

²⁴⁷ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 183: Polly to Galy Gay, directly before the transformation.

The fact that Lerski was a photographer rather than a soldier appears to bear little weight on the subject of his ethics: “*denn er hat natürlich dieses Gesicht bis in seine letzten Möglichkeiten ausgebeutet. Frage: darf man das?*”²⁴⁸ Of the panelists at Nyon, only the film journalist and art historian Hans Schmidt answers in the affirmative to conceive of the possibility that a photographer can respectfully use sitters as ‘*Material*.’²⁴⁹ Likely it is Schmidt’s background in the history of painting, sculpture, and other non-mechanical arts which makes Lerski’s disconcert with ‘*Ähnlichkeit*’ (resemblance) tolerable; stylistically, he associates Lerski with ‘Late Expressionism.’²⁵⁰ Here, as elsewhere, approval of Lerski’s artistic license is buttressed by the seemingly benign language of theater and Expressionism: “*Er hat die Gesichter inszeniert. Dieser Mann ist ein Regisseur;*” Lerski practices creative ‘*Umgestaltung*.’²⁵¹

While likening Lerski to proto-fascist *Gefühlsingenieur* (or *Abschaum*, as civilians in Brecht’s play refer to the soldiers) may seem like gross overreaction, it serves to point out the fundamental role which overreaction itself plays in photographic discourse and interpretation: to make sense of photography is to understand it symbolically, hence, often enough, to see the camera as a gun (Susan Sonntag) or at least a tool of reification; or to align colonial travel or anthropological photography with real bloodshed. If this is the nature of photographic discourse, positing Lerski as a *Gefühlsingenieur* merely suggests that his photographic practice translates poorly into ethical concerns for the sanctimony of the individual.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Hanne Schmidt in Eskildsen & Lerski & Horak (1982) 98.

²⁴⁹ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

²⁵⁰ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

²⁵¹ Eskildsen (1982) 100.

In forfeiting considerations of Weimar sociology like Brecht's to a reproof of 'fascist aesthetics',²⁵² however, the discussion in Nyon deprives Lerski's *Metamorphose* of certain philosophical and cognitive richness; the more subtle questions concerning Lerski's ethics and Uschatz' freedom and agency get short shrift. For the common ground occupied by Galy Gay's *weich*-ness and Uschatz' steeliness can also attest to positive, protean qualities of human survival like versatility, flexibility, and adaptability. The acutely critical tone in Nyon thus comes at the price of recognizing in Lerski an 'alternative to bourgeois values' ("*eine Alternative zur Bürgerlichkeit*,") - a possibility suggested in 1962 by Konrad Farner whose planned introduction to *Metamorphose* appeared in an edition of *Sinn und Form* that year.²⁵³

3.1.3. The Vitality of the *Charakterkopf*

A philosophical discussion between two of Brecht's soldiers implies this possibility:

Jesse: Es ist schon ekelhaft, wenn ein Mammut, nur weil man ihm ein paar Flintenläufe unter die Nase hält, sich lieber in eine Laus verwandelt, als daß er sich anständig zu seinen Vätern versammelt.
Uria: Nein, das ist ein Beweis von Lebenskraft.²⁵⁴

Here, Uria speaks to Brecht's conviction that the ability to adapt signals the survivalist instinct and the necessary quality of the New Man. That versatility is a virtue in the modern world is illustrated negatively by Blody Five's self-castration: an act which results from the sergeant's inability to accept a pluralistic identity as both military officer

²⁵² Eskildsen (1982) 100. Several panelists note similarities between Lerski's aesthetic and the 1930's idealization of the 'nordic profile.' "*Für mich ist das alles sehr germanisch*," notes one participant. In Eskildsen (1982) 99.

²⁵³ Farner in *Sinn und Form* (1962) cited in Lerski & Eskildsen & Horak (1982) 22.

²⁵⁴ Brecht (1926) Act X in Wege (1982) 218.

and dandy. From the sargeant's gruesome act, Galy Gay learns the dire consequences of obstinence in matters of identity, i.e., "*wohin diese Hartnäckigkeit führt und wie blutig es ist, wenn ein Mann nie mit sich zufrieden ist und so viel Aufhebens aus seinem Namen macht!*"²⁵⁵

Here, a name takes on the definitional status of a Type: it is a fixed label that refers to a particular, coherent and stable norm or ideal and its salient features. It is in this same sense that the now vincible Blody Five understands a name since his self-mutilation follows from the fact that "*Mein Name ist Blody Five*": "*Ich bin eine große Kanone gewesen.*"²⁵⁶ Unlike Blody, Galy Gay knows what it takes to survive, how to alter oneself in the name of accommodation, and the necessity of becoming a new type by shedding old identities. Galy Gay's entreaty to his superior, however, comes too late: "*Halt! Tue nichts wegen deinem Namen. Ein Name ist etwas unsicheres: darauf kannst du nicht bauen.*"²⁵⁷

The stringently definitional status of a name is reiterated throughout the play via the theme of identity cards. While in Lerski the *Passbild* signals something superficial, reductive, and arbitrary, the military ID (*Ausweis*) in *Mann ist Mann* counts as the only sure thing in a unstable world of contingency in which all people are interchangeable, hence exchangeable. "*Etwas schwarz auf weiß,*" the ID card identifies a person when nothing else can. As Uria states in an early scene of the play, "*Die Militärpässe dürfen nicht beschädigt werden. Denn ein Mann kann jederzeit ersetzt werden, aber es gibt nichts Heiliges mehr, wenn es nicht ein Pass ist.*"²⁵⁸ Here the holiness and sanctimony of

²⁵⁵ Brecht (1926) Act IX in Wege (1982).

²⁵⁶ Brecht (1926) Act X in Wege (1982)

²⁵⁷ Brecht (1926) Act X in Wege (1982) 216.

²⁵⁸ Brecht (1926) Act II in Wege (1982) 164.

the (Expressionist) individual receive direct satirization: where Lerski maintained that the *Passbild* fails to represent the individual, Brecht asserts that, in a post-individual society (especially in a debauched collective like the military) an ID card is all that matters.

4. Conclusion: “Any One Can Say ‘A Man’s a Man’”

This discussion of the contrary and oscillating social meanings of Lerski’s *Metamorphose* as *Menschenbild* has in effect vindicated Brecht’s assertion concerning the polyvalence of the expression, “a Man’s a Man”:

Herr Bertolt Brecht behauptet: Mann ist Mann. /
Und das ist etwas, was jeder behaupten kann.
Aber Herr Bertolt Brecht beweist auch dann, /
dass man mit einem Menschen beliebig viel machen kann.²⁵⁹

As we have seen, Lerski asserted his own interpretation of the expression ‘a man’s a man’ in his anti-typological projects of the 1920’s and 1930’s: I have argued that Lerski worked as a humanist with strong Expressionist leanings to assert the dignity of the purportedly “faceless” individual of the modern era; the common bonds of humanity that unite mankind; and man’s profound irreducibility to labels. In so doing, Lerski’s portraiture exposes typology as *doxa*. In stressing his own artistic license in the depiction and interpretation of his sitters, *Metamorphose* visualizes a Nietzschean faith in the subjective nature of truth and the uncategorizable quality of the individual. With respect to vision, mimesis is all but insignificant, as discussions of Rembrandt and ‘*Ähnlichkeit*’ have sought to stress.

²⁵⁹ Brecht (1926) *Zwischenspruch* in Wege (1982) 190.

In *Köpfe des Alltags* we saw the glorification of common men and women aimed at elevating their profiles in the eyes of the fast-paced, oft distracted, ‘cool’ personas of the 1920’s and 30’s. Here Lerski asserts “*Man is man!*” in the most valiant, humanist terms to suggest the banalization of individuals when construed as mere social types: “*Der Wäschefahrer’ könnte auf Universitätskathedern sitzen. Die ‘Fabrikarbeiterin’ lächelt das Lächeln einer gotischen Holzmadonna. Die ‘Waschfrau’ ist die Mutter.*”²⁶⁰ Modern workers take on timeless human virtues - a situation which contrasts greatly with my readings of Sander’s darker portrayal of Spenglerian ‘out-of-formness’ and encroaching civilization in *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

In *Metamorphose*, we see a critique of banal mass medial representations which, in Lerski’s mind, intend to subjugate the crowd. Lerski unmasks the era’s objectivity as a hoax by revealing, through the changing close-ups and dramatic angles of a highly original *Lichtkunst*, the protean richness of the exalted, complex *Jederman*. Here too, Lerski visually asserts that ‘*a man is a man*’: members of the human family are united in sovereignty, equality, and uniqueness. My attention to the ‘*Oh-Mensch*’ verses of Expressionist pathos has aimed to emphasize the humanist and highly aestheticized quality of Lerski’s *Menschenbild*. In Lerski’s preferred diction already cited, *Mann ist Mann* reads like a spiritual mantra: “*In jedem Menschen steckt alles;*” with it, he declares one dignified face for humanity.²⁶¹

With these projects, Lerski provides a powerful, visual disavowal of the rationalistic organization of mankind into exhaustive and exclusive classes of people based on highly selective (at worst arbitrary) criteria of difference and similarity. ‘Types’

²⁶⁰ Ebner (2002) 55 cites the musings of Andor Kraszna-Krauss in 1931 with respect to *Köpfe des Alltags*.

²⁶¹ Ebner (2002) 41.

– he maintains – are slippery and elusive, always capable of erupting into polyvalent transformations before our eyes, but especially before the alienating experiments of the ‘camera-eye’ (to recall again Danius’s term.) *Ähnlichkeit* is overrated when it comes to understanding the individual.

What Brecht asserts in his *Lehrstück* and states explicitly in the above lines of the *Mann ist Mann* song, is that the eulogization of man’s universal humanity is but one glorified interpretation of the adage ‘*Mann ist Mann.*’ Specifically, the Expressionist ideal represents a rather naïve and sentimental image of the individual in society – particularly in light of modern-day capitalist reality. While for Brecht ‘a man’s a man’ suggests the failure of the individual to overcome his weakness as a lone wolf, the idea of the collective and of larger social contexts for the individual appears utterly foreign to Lerski’s serial portraiture of one and the same person. (Theatre critic Diebold, mentioned earlier for his disavowal of the modern man’s will to merge with a milieu, would no doubt have preferred an exhibit of *Metamorphose* over a performance of *Mann ist Mann.*)

It has been my aim to highlight the rather remarkable (if not jolting, shocking or pyro-technic)²⁶² versatility of Lerski’s photographic aesthetic as one which transmits both its intended meaning and its Brechtian rebuttal with equal power. Lerski, in fully embracing his own artistic license and creative will as photographer, appears to devalue his sitter’s own personal character by suggesting its fundamental malleability and potential for subjugation. *Metamorphose* is, on this level, a parody of its own worldview in much the same way that *Mann is Mann* satirizes Brecht’s own faith in collectivity.

²⁶² These are of course adjectives typically associated with the dialectical image as Walter Benjamin construes it. Cf. Pensky (1993) 223.

On account of the photographic series' capacity to take on two such unreconcilable ideas on the individual and society, I have referred to Lerski's *Metamorphose* as a kind of dialectical image – a provocative intersection of opposing concepts that disrupts any smooth transmission of a singular truth or meaning. Though the discussion of Lerski's work at the film festival in Nyon and Ebner's review of its decades-long reception validate my focus on the work's tensions, I have also no doubt overstated the differences between Brecht's image of man and society and Lerski's.

Ebner's exhaustive documentation of *Metamorphose*, for one, mentions Brecht's admiration of Lerski in several contexts: in 1949 Brecht wrote in support of the appeal for Lerski's admittance as professor at the *Deutsche Akademie der Künste* in East Berlin: "*Fotografie, da fände ich Ihren Vorschlag Lerski wunderbar. ... Kurz man müsste die modernsten Leute für die modernsten Künste bekommen!*"²⁶³ Further, Brecht along with Arnold Zweig and Louis Fürnberg helped make Lerski one of the most prominent figures in the history of photography in the GDR. Finally, Brecht even intended to write the forward to *Metamorphose* as a book, but died before this promise to Anneliese Lerski could be fulfilled.²⁶⁴

In structuring Brecht's and Lerski's apparent oppositions in such binary fashion, then, both sociological and aesthetic commonalities have arguably received short shrift. With respect to their *Menschenbilder*, for instance, both Brecht and Lerski emphasize the broad potential for the individual to take on diverse identities; both assert the changeability of one's face, so that when Kracauer remarks on how Uschatz looks

²⁶³ Ebner (2002) 42.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Ebner (2002) 42 – 44. Ebner does not mention whether drafts of Brecht's proposed essay ever existed. Anneliese Lerski notes Brecht's alleged promise to write an introduction in a letter to Frommhold dated January 23, 1961.

nothing like the man portrayed in his *Lerskibilder*, he echoes Galy Gay's wife: "*Das ist ungeheuer! Freilich, wenn ich ihn anschaue, Sergeant, ist es mir fast, als sei er etwas anders als mein Mann Galy Gay, der Packer, etwas anders, obgleich ich nicht sagen könnte, was es ist.*"²⁶⁵ Brecht's *Charakterkopf*, however, is amorphously dependent on social contexts while Lerski's Uschatz figures as a monument to the heroically protean and sovereign Self. For Brecht, the notion of an integrated individual gives way to the idea of a 'Dividual' destined to 'compromise'; for Lerski the individual persists throughout the 20th century in all his glory but is constrained only by the forces of the mass media and those who control it.²⁶⁶ It is thus possible that in reading *Metamorphose* Brecht would have identified in its 'idea' not the humanist-expressionist pedagogy of respect outlined above, but a cognitive pedagogy on the decentering of humanity exacerbated in early 20th century modernity, i.e. Uschatz as *Charakterkopf*.

It is with respect to their theories of representation, however, that Brecht and Lerski most obviously join forces: Lerski's Expressionist pathos aside, both fundamentally agree on the obligation of modern art to eschew naturalism in favor of something constructed ('*aufgebaut*') – "*etwas 'Künstliches,' 'Gestelltes.'*"²⁶⁷ Certainly Lerski's style of portraiture and its critical concerns echo Brecht's critique of a simple photograph of the Kruppwerke or the AEG:

Die Lage wird dadurch so kompliziert, dass weniger denn je eine einfache 'Wiedergabe der Realität' etwas über die Realität aussagt. Eine Fotografie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG ergibt beinahe nichts über diese Institute. Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funktionale gerutscht. Die

²⁶⁵ Brecht (1926) Act VIII in Wege (1982) 187.

²⁶⁶ One might ask why Lerski held only the mass media responsible for the reduction of the individual, but not artists of the New Objectivity and their fascination with types, nor typological discourse at large, which was, as this dissertation has sought to show, ubiquitous in a wide range of academic and popular discourses, and did not stem from one single source.

²⁶⁷ Giles (1998) 469 cites Brecht's *Dreigroschenprozeß*.

Verdinglichung der menschlichen Beziehungen, also etwa die Fabrik, gibt die letzteren nicht mehr heraus.²⁶⁸

Yet whether Lerski's particular brand of Art diverges radically enough from what Brecht calls 'the old idea of art' (*'der alte Begriff der Kunst'*), i.e. from traditional, idealist aesthetics, remains an open question. As the discussion of Lerski's expressionist humanism suggests, his attention to 'Man' as the psychologically complex measure of all things appears to underestimate the extent to which reality, as Brecht sees it, has slipped into the functional.

Another suggestion of an at least partial meeting of the minds between Brecht and Lerski is the photographer's extensive involvement with the film industry and the filmic qualities of his new kind of portraiture. For Brecht, Lerski's multi-medial adroitness would suggest a thoroughly progressive technologization of the portrait, and 'new functions' for it.²⁶⁹ One could add that Lerski's experience with *silent* films in particular speaks to the representational conventions Brecht so admired in film, namely the externality of the characters, their roles as objects rather than deeply psychologized beings²⁷⁰; this despite the fact that Lerski's professed ambition was the 'penetration of the soul' through photography. Clearly, Brecht's advocacy for Lerski would rely on an emphasis of the technologized aspect of the photographic work and a downplaying of the artist's fascination with Rembrandt and his subsequent repression of the camera as 'apparatus' or 'instrument': this for Brecht amounted to a thoroughly bourgeois gesture.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Giles (1998) 469 on Brecht's concern with new functions for art in *Dreigroschenprozeß*.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Giles (1998) 54 - 55 on the "apparatus" in *Dreigroschenprozeß*.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Giles (1998) 58 who argues that Brecht's positive evaluation of film depended on the cinematic externalism and objectivism typical of silent movies alone.

²⁷¹ Giles (1998) 54.

Fundamentally, it cannot be ascertained whether Brecht's endorsement of Lerski's work represents an avant-gardist high-jacking of the photographer's expressionistic-humanistic view of individuality, hence a coup-like violation of the photographer's intentions; or a literal embrace of the photographer's obvious glorification of the proletariat, his promotion of technologized art, and his depiction of a '*Dividuum*' however idealized.²⁷²

What in the end perhaps most unites Lerski and Brecht was their common ineffectiveness in the way of critique: though both espoused highly constructed realities as an appropriate pedagogical medium, both artists also proved largely too subtle and aesthetically rich to be entirely effective. This, notes Barthes, was Brecht's impasse.²⁷³ As this explication of *Metamorphose* as a largely failed dialectical image suggests, it was also Lerski's.

²⁷² Such modernist or avant-garde high-jackings of artistic works were arguably not rare. Chapter 3 of this dissertation discussed a similar injunction whereby Benjamin and Döblin appear to have repressed Sander's conservative romanticism (i.e. his melodramatic Spenglerian worldview) for the sake of more modern sociological readings of his work.

²⁷³ Barthes (1984,1981) 36.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This dissertation has focused on photographic portrait typologies in their diversity and has argued that their visual strategies, epistemologies, and *Menschenbilder* are myriad. It has attended to the cultural embeddedness and symbolic workings of typological systems purportedly concerned with objective, empirical observation and type-definition alone, to show how classification takes crisis as its object.

Through various dialogues with major and minor figures – from Max Nordau, Lord Chandos, Wilhelm Meister, Vermeer, Goethe, Lavater, Simmel's Rembrandt, Langbehn's Rembrandt, Lerski's Rembrandt, Proust, Simmel, Brecht, and Spengler, as well as other photographers – the chapters intimate the extent to which photographic typologies represent but a visual slice of vast and intricately related cultural discourses. In each conversation, typology has expressed itself as an ordering system based on classification schemes aimed at making sense of a culture and society in crisis. But in doing so, the assumptions about vision and the empirical world, and the use of visual and rhetorical strategies, have differed considerably.

In rather global terms, I have argued that if the history of vision obeys a telos as Jonathan Crary expects or desires it to do, the first three decades of the 20th century appear to be detained in severe traffic incident – a long-standing pile-up where no single, dominant mode of seeing could order the wreckage. Though new technologies emerge

“for imposing a normative vision on the observer”¹ and though typological structures are well-adept to help realize this ambition, my study leads toward a somewhat different view of the “normalization of and subjection of the observer.”² Photographic portrait typologies could ‘hail’ viewers, and ‘attract the beholder’³ (Mitchell) in part because early 20th century viewers *sought* and *desired* a more normative vision – one that might preempt personal and spiritual crises like those of Lord Chandos; punish decadence; and ‘halt decline.’ As tools for seeing a complex social world clearly, photographic portrait typologies promised the liberation of clear seeing more than subjugation to a regime.

Since I have provided abstracts in my preface and at the end of each chapter, this conclusion aims to track some results of my study as they relate laterally to one another.

We have seen ‘straight’ photographs range in tenor from Fischer’s militant, manifesto-like, ‘importunate realism,’ to Sander’s ‘melodramatic’ compositions which are rooted in a metaphorical engagement with empirical fact and a faith in occult forces. Lerski’s photographic expressionism, however, endeavors to bypass the insidious gestures of what he considers a reductive mode of realism in popular photography. In his desire to penetrate the banality of the ‘*Passbild*’ and the empirical world, his images connect with a kind of meditative seeing: one which elevates the masses to exalted icons of personality and Geist.

If we wanted to treat the dissertation as an ordered typology whereby photographic portrait typologies and their scopic alliances occupy spaces on a continuum of similarity and difference, Fischer represents an uncompromised Renaissance model of

¹ Crary (1990) 19.

² Crary (1990) 17.

³ Cf. Mitchell (1996) 76: “The immediate desire of the picture looks like a version of the Medusa effect: that is, it ‘hails’ the viewer, verbally, and tries to transfix him with the directness of its gaze [...]”

vision, while Lerski works to erode its purportedly false objectivity. *Metamorphose*, with its close-up perspectives and dramatic shadow formations, stands as an ideal representation of an embodied, subjective vision. Sander, in turn, occupies a middle ground between these scopic poles: his ‘double-tiered’ melodramatic imagination suggests a worldview which embraces empirical reality, but mostly as symbol. For Sander, it is up to the photographer’s intuition to read these symbols, and his mental and technical skill to represent them in their fullest dimensions.

While Fischer employed the camera as a tool for reducing vision to observation, for stamping out subjective and experiential aspects of seeing, Sander employed the camera as a kind of ‘pressuring’ device; a tool for finding excess in the visual world, and profound meaning beneath it. Though I discussed Lerski’s perception in terms of the ‘camera-eye,’ it is actually the case that each portrait typology analyzed here takes its subjects ‘out of the animated system’ in which they naturally belong. As noted by Simmel in his “*Ästhetik des Portraits*,” this is a primary function of typology as a descriptive and visual practice, and portraiture as a genre aimed at honing in on the soul, and stripping it from the clutter wrought by normal, chaotic sight and the ever-changing flux that engulfs the individual in society. Each work, however, has established various relationships to these conventions.

In an attempt to resist the seductions of iconoclastic critiques geared toward bashing the falsity of images, my dissertation has attended more to narrative than to ideology; to story-telling more than to (Nordau-like) determinations of pseudo-science. Imaginative narrative, let alone melodrama, is of course a structure which, according to the rules of scientific method, should remain separate from typology’s strictly

observational and classificatory prerogatives; i.e. its confinement to the ‘natural history stage.’ In Fischer and Sander, however, the rigid cells of typological form mapped spatially on the page give way to accounts of a racial cosmos, or of clandestine cyclical histories. In Fischer’s case, the story is a scientific theory of racial decline through miscegenation, and a manifesto determined to curb the perceived crises of identity and national vitality which racial-mixing purportedly incite. In Sander, a drama of culture on the wane quietly emerges. While Sander’s images seek to render decline visible, Fischer aimed to intervene in it. In each of these works, typology exhibits a strong temporal element, reinforced by what Barthes calls photography’s *noeme*: the *this-has-been*.

On account of their ‘human’ contents, the photographic typologies analyzed here have espoused a *Menschenbild*, an ‘image’ or ‘idea of man.’ Fischer conceives the individual as a bio-genetic entity reliant on communities forged by pure blood lines. He sees the German collective Self *relationally*, vis-à-vis three types of racial ‘cross-breeds’ in German Southwest Africa. Sander’s *Menschenbild*, though also the result of relational, structural seeing, is highly parabolic: his sitters represent not only occupational and social types, but spiritual and Civilizational types. They are mobilized and framed as indexes of ‘late life,’ and signs of the passage of a ‘season.’

Since I have made no pretenses toward ‘exhaustivity’ in this dissertation, I can ask what might sensibly succeed Lerski’s Expressionist “anti-typology.” In offering a complex and challenging *Menschenbild* immanently concerned with vision and scopic regimes, the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas would serve as an extreme but profoundly provocative pole. Levinas, like Lerski, is concerned with the instrumental rationality from which representations stem. (Rather unlike Lerski, however, Levinas is

adamant about the fact that we are ‘always already in social relations’ - a postulate which Lerski’s *Metamorphose* does little to suggest.) Levinas sees representations as characteristic of modern barbarisms, and thus develops an ethical philosophy aimed at *undoing* these representations, and at perceiving ‘the other as the same.’ His “ethics as first philosophy” aims to *precede* the concreteness of ‘clear and distinct data,’ and to search for that which can ‘remain other to knowledge.’ As an ethics fully at odds with typology’s arguable fetishization of visible, physical bodies, and its ‘rigorously ontological order,’ Levinas’ writings like *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961), *Otherwise than Being* (1974), and *Time and the Other* (1948) would radically expand the discourse.

Levinas’ statements concerning the ‘unmasterable quality of human expression’ and ‘the other as an event I can neither predict nor control’ are profoundly relevant to the ideas discussed in this dissertation. Above all his ethical philosophy would forge a rich and subtle dialogue with photographic portrait typologies that would explore and thematize their instrumentality in *new* ways: ways concerned less with (relatively easy but ineffectual) iconoclasm as political intervention, than with forging new ways of knowing and not-knowing. With regard to the kinds of photographs investigated here, Levinas encourages us to think about the conditions under which photographs of faces might promote ethical investiture and responsibility, and imagine crisis in altogether new ways.

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